

**Sharing Midwest Clinic Trip/Performance  
by my former students at  
Johns Creek High School Orchestra (2012, 2017) and  
Centennial High School (2005)**

*"I loved Midwest, and I would love to leave a note. Here's what I would say:*

*Midwest was an amazing experience for me. The amount of work we put in was something I had never really experienced ever before, and that set me up to succeed throughout high school in academics and as a musician--plus, I even wrote college essays on it. It really opened my eyes in terms of what musical expression, teamwork and communication, and hard work really are. I know I practiced every single day for the conference, and it was incredibly rewarding. I met my best friends during the (grueling) rehearsals and on the trip, so make the most of the time that you have--it might feel long now, and you might even want to give up (I did at one point)--but I can hardly remember the grind, or even the performance, now. I just remember the experiences in Chicago--seeing art, ice skating, eating the deep dish pizza (of course), playing video games in the room, falling asleep to heavy metal with my roommate Steven, and crying with the violas after the concert was over. This trip will form deep bonds that will last for the rest of your time at Johns Creek and longer.*

*I want to thank Mr Kim for encouraging us before and throughout this opportunity! You won't have another chance quite like it, probably for the rest of your life. I don't think I'd be the same person had I not gone on this trip."*

*-- Micah Lingle, JCHS Class of 2020*

*"Congratulations on getting into Midwest! You guys are going to have an amazing time in Chicago. It's an amazing city with tons of awesome stuff to do and see, and there's nowhere else with deep dish pizzas. The Midwest conference was such an awesome experience. I was a freshman when we went on the trip and it was really the reason why I got so involved in Orchestra later throughout high school. It was a lot of work getting ready for the convention, and we worked really hard every week, but throughout the process I got to bond with the people who would become my closest friends in my four years at JCHS! The friendships you'll make next year will last you for a lifetime and being able to explore Chicago with your closest friends will be amazing! Make the most out of this awesome opportunity!*

*-- George Pan, JCHS Class of 2016*

*"First, I want to say congratulations for being selected to perform at Midwest Clinic! For me, this was one of the most fulfilling experiences I've been lucky to have in high school. The reason for this is two-fold: process and destination. It really is a special feeling to pour your heart (sweat, blood, tears, etc.) into something and experience the pay-off of that hard work. That's exactly the feeling I felt after our Midwest performance. Midwest was memorable because all the students worked so hard and intensely together. During the rehearsal hours and pizza party breaks, I got to know orchestra members a lot better too. I believe that the preparation was at least 70% of the Midwest experience. Being in Chicago and attending the Midwest Clinic was an amazing experience as well. The city is beautiful (and really cold in December), and we got to have a*

*lot of fun eating deep dish pizza, exploring the art museum, and being very touristy at the Bean. At the convention center, I learned a lot just from roaming around with friends, listening to performances and talking with vendors. Again, congratulations on this amazing opportunity! I hope you find it as worthwhile as I did.*

**-- Annie Su, JCHS Class of 2016**

*"The Midwest Clinic was one of the most memorable experiences of my high school career. As the world's largest music conference, the Midwest Clinic was an extremely prestigious event that I knew was an extreme honor and achievement by our group. All the blood, sweat, and tears that we poured out into each rehearsal and individual practice were completely worth it. We were able to perform in Chicago before an international audience, displaying all the hard work that we dedicated to delivering our best possible performance, and the audience was simply blown away by the precision and musicality of a high school group. It was also such a blessing and honor not only to perform at such a venue, but also to listen and learn from some of the best ensembles in the world.*

*Not only was the experience rewarding in a musical sense, but it was also so much fun. Through all the rehearsals, the flight, and the trip itself to one of the nation's largest cities, we orchestra kids grew even tighter than ever before. We had a lot of time to explore the city together, taking pictures in front of the Chicago Bean, eating a deep dish pizza for the first time, visiting the art museum, and so much more. I am so excited and proud that the Johns Creek students will once again have this once in a lifetime opportunity to perform at the Midwest Clinic and also to grow in community together."*

**Priscilla Kim, JCHS Class of 2014**

*CONGRATS on once again successfully challenging and helping the orchestra grow and achieve another selection to perform at Midwest!! I can't say that I'm surprised; the amount of dedication and hard work that goes into perfecting every piece is demonstrated at every single concert! And although this honor did not come as a surprise, it is still something to be truly grateful for, because, after all, it is an honor.*

*Having the opportunity to go to Midwest my sophomore year was such a memorable experience! Traveling to Chicago with my closest friends made the Midwest experience so much greater. Playing in an international stage and holding the Johns Creek High School orchestra reputation was a truly fruitful and humbling experience. I can't wait for you all to have all your hard work pay off and have some fun while doing it! Best wishes!*

**-Mariana Rodriguez, JCHS Class of 2015**

*"CONGRATS JC ORCHESTRA! You are all obviously amazing and talented and spectacular individuals AND a stellar group. You all accomplished this together- so get ready for one of the greatest trips you will EVER take with each other! I can honestly say I took this trip for granted during my time, and I wish I hadn't! You don't get to do cool stuff like this at just any high school with just any director with just any orchestra. We got to see the coolest and best parts of Chicago (which I now know going to school here), all because we **earned** it as Johns Creek Orchestra with Mr. Kim!*

*It goes without being said that this trip takes time, practice, effort, hard work, and discipline. You all have those passionate and deterministic qualities: you wouldn't be in this position otherwise. I don't need to tell*

you to work hard during these next few months because I know you all already have that drive within you! Just **keep up** that hard work (so just no slacking!!) and it will surely pay off. No matter what, please enjoy these next few months and the trip that makes it all worth it! Enjoy a slice of deep dish, the view from the Hancock building, and even a crazy shopping spree at Water Tower. Hey-maybe you'll even get a pic at the bean if you tell Mr. Kim that you NEED to see it like I did (hehe). Additionally, make sure you enjoy all the resources and people you meet at the expo. These are world-class musicians and sponsors with crazy connections and opportunities. Make use of it! I can't say anything other than live every moment to the fullest. Sending love always! Go JC Orch! (& Go 'Cats!)

-- **Leigh Healey**, JCHS Class of 2014

Congratulations to you all for being selected for the Midwest Clinic again!! This is such exciting news as it is a testament to all the work you have put in and the amazing talent that the orchestra program has.

My Midwest Clinic experience was in December 2012, and I have so many fond memories of it. The performance itself was a unique experience. It feels different to be performing outside of the high school auditorium, but it's an exhilarating feeling to be so focused and in-sync while performing with everyone and so rewarding to see the huge audience that comes to listen and applaud after you're done. Besides the performance, participating in the clinic was also a new way for us to engage with music. It was so cool to listen to other groups perform and showcase different pieces. I remember listening to a marimba (I think) concerto which was something completely new to me, and I was kind of mind-blown. Not only that, but walking through the conference center and seeing different instruments and talking with vendors and different music groups was really interesting and fun.

Outside of the clinic, we had such a fun time exploring Chicago. I'm studying at Northwestern University now, and whenever I go to downtown Chicago and see the places we went to, it brings back so many great memories and reminds me of all the amazing people I got to experience the city with. I honestly still talk about it today! Enjoy the opportunity and savor every moment!!! (And don't forget to breathe and move together.)

-**Janet Mao**, JCHS Class of 2015

"The Midwest Clinic was an amazing opportunity for our orchestra. Travelling to Chicago to perform not only meant we were being recognized for our hard work and achievement, but also that we had the honor of sharing our music on a much greater level than what we were doing in Georgia. So many different people come to the Midwest conference - it is a real treat as a young musician to take in all the different ensembles, music companies and professionals who gather in one place to grow from one another.

I will never forget it! Midwest was additionally special to me as it was the first time I truly got to see Chicago - the city in which I grew most as a music professional and where I currently work and live. It is home to an amazing orchestra and encourages the arts in every way possible. When we played at Midwest, Chris Martin (who had just won principal trumpet in CSO and was about to leave Atlanta) soloed with our orchestra. He was incredible then; and I still enjoy watching him onstage every week I can with the symphony. What a treat that was!

There is a lot to learn from the Midwest Conference and the city of Chicago. Take in everything you can and

*have fun! These opportunities are special, make the most of them."*

**-- Allegra Montanari, CHS Class of 2006**

*"At first the prospect of going to Chicago and attending Midwest with other musical groups from around the country was a little intimidating. As a group I believe we all felt the pressure of performing. But once we were there, and the reality of it set in it became an unforgettable experience. Being in a big city made me feel small, looking up at the tall buildings; but then I would look around me and see all the people that were there with me sharing the same feelings. It was probably the best bonding experience I had in my four years in orchestra.*

*During the performance we were all so focused and determined. We were all relying on one another to play our best and to represent not only our school, but each other to the best of our abilities. You just have to remember that you all are there because of your hard work and your chance to show how proud you are.*

*Enjoy Midwest, because it is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity that you will remember forever. Don't forget to breathe and move together. Good luck to you all."*

**--Jessica Vet, CHS Class of 2007**

*"Attending Midwest with the Centennial orchestra in December 2005 was one of the highlights of my high school career. The summer before Midwest, I remember receiving the sheet music for one of the songs we'd be playing and spending hours practicing with much anticipation and excitement. Collectively as an ensemble along with the wonderful leadership by Mr. Kim, we worked together, rehearsing twice a week outside of school in preparation. Those long rehearsals that were often times very intense were what contributed to the success of the orchestra. Midwest was definitely a rewarding experience and it was a showcase for all of the hard work each individual put into it.*

*Additionally, the trip in and of itself was very enjoyable; going to the great city of Chicago with your peers to perform at such a prestigious clinic while also being able to sight-see amounts to the perfect package. I look back fondly and am so grateful that I was able to attend Midwest."*

**--Raha Sabet, CHS Class of 2007**

*"The trip up to Chicago to participate in the Midwest Clinic was a blast. The opportunity to play music at such a high level in a prestigious clinic is definitely an experience worth having. Not only is the music great, but you also get the chance to go on a trip to a new city with a large group of friends, which won't come by very often in your life. The experiences you have on your Midwest adventure will form fun memories that you'll keep with you forever."*

**-- Chris Gay, CHS Class of 2007**

*"That's so exciting to hear, congratulations!!*

*I'm glad that all their hard work is paying off :) I remember from my Midwest experience that whatever work you put in at the beginning, it pays off in the end. We worked hard preparing so that by the time it came down to the performance we could just enjoy it.*

*My advice would be to not let the easy stuff catch you off guard: you don't want to mess up on something silly. And I would also strongly suggest the students go for it, traveling with the orchestra is a LOT of fun. It's work to prepare for the performance; but, once they're in Chicago I'm sure they'll love the performance aspect of it, as well as touring the whole city. Chicago is cold in the winter, but it's an awesome city to be in with friends - there is so much to do! Even after graduating college, I still remember this trip."*

**-- Katie Wagner, CHS Class of 2008**

*"First, I want to say CONGRATULATIONS to you all for your selection to perform at the Midwest Clinic in Chicago!!*

*I went to the Midwest Clinic in Chicago when I was a freshman, and it was truly an AMAZING experience. I learned so much as a musician in preparing for Midwest, such as the importance of listening to each other, watching for cues from the conductor and each other, breathing and moving together, etc... I didn't realize this at the time, but these are simple things that play a critical role in making a phenomenal performance.*

*I remember looking back at the tapes and thinking to myself: Wow, we look and sound like a professional orchestra. We worked so hard and all our hard work really paid off! One of my favorite parts of the day was getting a compliment from the composer of one of the pieces we played: The "Black Sea" by Gary Gackstatter. I was blown away.*

*I also had a great time exploring Chicago with my new orchestra friends, and getting to know everyone in the orchestra. We saw a Blue Man Group Performance, which was awesome! I have no doubt in my mind that you all will have an incredible time!! The Midwest Clinic is something that I will rave about for the rest of my life!!!*

*Keep up the hard work!!"*

**-- Koushy Biack, CHS Class of 2009**