

Dear 2025 PMEA All-State Orchestra Member,

Congratulations on Being selected to perform in the 2023 PMEA All-State Orchestra. Your dedication, talent and hard work have earned you a place among the finest young musicians in the state and this achievement is a testament to your passion for music. As you join this exceptional ensemble, you will have the opportunity to collaborate with fellow musicians, and create unforgettable musical experiences. We are thrilled to have you as part of this prestigious group and I am looking forward to the incredible performance ahead.

My name is Michael Hall and I am the Music Director of both the Kennett Symphony in Chester County PA and the Prince George Symphony Orchestra in British Columbia, Canada. I have had the opportunity to conduct different district orchestras including one that included my stepdaughter playing horn. It was very memorable to be able to help instill in her the love of orchestral music.

Let me start by outlining why I have chosen these three specific pieces.

Jessie Montgomery is one of the hottest composers on the scene today, and her Overture is very dramatic and full of tension. Peter Boyer's piece, by contrast, flows like the river it describes. Both pieces, I feel, compliment the Mahler, as Totenfeier exhibits drama and tension, as well as tranquillity and pastorality.

On a personal note, Totenfeier is a tone poem of Mahler's that he eventually reworked as the first movement of his 2nd symphony. This symphony was one of the first pieces that had a profound effect on me as a musician in my teens, and I am especially thrilled to bring this piece to life with all of you.

Allow me to mention a few pertinent things about each of the pieces we will perform together.

### Jessie Montgomery- Overture

Program notes by Jessie Montgomery

Overture is a one movement orchestral tutti steeped in harmonic textures inspired by a fusion between jazz and American classical harmonies, Baroque rhythmic gestures and polyphonic tension

OVERTURE/ Jessie Montgomery : [https://youtu.be/9v\\_Q2eoskVE?si=WVPUUvSfPnLQOMLT](https://youtu.be/9v_Q2eoskVE?si=WVPUUvSfPnLQOMLT)

For the strings - There are many high notes for your instrument. Work carefully on intonation in order for the thick harmonies to be as clear as possible. There are many sudden dynamic changes. Please don't anticipate, (that is crescendo or diminuendo) into the new dynamic, but practice hard to do it immediately as written

Don't be afraid to use the entire bow in all the forte sections. With such a large string section, the sound will be huge.

## **String Divisi**

a 2 inside/outside on each desk

a 3 - by person, so for example - Front outside desk - 1, inside front desk - 2, outside second desk - 3, then it starts again... inside 2nd desk -1 etc

a 4 - outside front desk -1, inside front desk -2, outside 2nd desk - 3, inside 2nd desk-4, etc

Please practice all the parts, as we don't yet know the string seating

## Peter Boyer - Rolling River (Sketches on "Shenandoah")

Program notes by Peter Boyer

For Rolling River (Sketches on "Shenandoah"), I was asked to create a new orchestral setting of this American folk song. My approach in creating Rolling River (the title comes from a lyric in the song) was to put this beautiful tune front and center, and to surround and highlight it with the rich colors of the symphony orchestra. The request was for something sweeping and "cinematic," and I attempted to deliver that in this setting, including suggestions of a rolling river in the woodwind writing.

ROLLING RIVER (Sketches from Shenandoah)/ Peter Boyer:<https://youtu.be/PxqfITGHJuA?si=u1RlaNmAXpgjwmLz>

Just concentrate on the legato phrases being very smooth to mimic the smooth flowing of the river.

Solo flute m. 40 and m.41

## Gustav Mahler - Totenfeier

Translated as "Funeral Rites" it was written as a tone poem in 1888, later incorporated as the 1st movement of his Symphony no. 2 "Resurrection" As the title suggests, this is a piece about death and the meaning of life.

TOTENFEIER/ Mahler

SCORE and MUSIC: SCORE and Music: <https://youtu.be/oH8-bj8C6cl?si=DyQZ4Y0fP1umkd2n>

Make sure you understand all the German instructions that Mahler has put in the score. They will help you in your approach to this piece

This is an expansive and deeply searching piece. In order to accomplish this, everything needs to be at the extreme: dynamics, articulation, accents etc fp should immediately go to piano. Sometimes your dynamic is different from your colleague. Make sure you stick to what your part has written.

**The top ranked chair on each part will be assigned to play the part.**

**Horn:** from m. 98 to m 160  
m.392 to m. 416

**Trumpet:** 2 mm. Before REH 8 to REH 8  
m. 288 to REH 19  
m. 392 to m. 394

**Trombone:** m.288 to REH 19  
M. 420 to m. 425

The woodwinds will be: 1 player on part 1 - 1 player on part 2 - 2 players on part 3

Once again, congratulations on this incredible achievement! Being part of the All-State Orchestra is a remarkable opportunity to grow as a musician, connect with others that share your passion, and create something truly special together. I can't wait to make music together. See you soon!