

Dear musicians and music fans,

The Tennessee Fiddle Orchestra has some very important news. We have decided to make some rather substantial changes to our group that will improve the TFO experience for members and listeners alike. First of all, we are going to move to a new schedule in which we will meet to rehearse for ten-week periods and then take off three weeks. We will still meet on Mondays at 7:00, but we will now rehearse at Trinity Lutheran Church at 705 Wilson Avenue in Tullahoma (on the corner of Wilson Avenue and Cedar Lane). We will have a lot more space and a much quieter room, and this location seems to be very convenient for many folks.

The fee to participate will be reduced to \$90.00 per person per ten-week period. This should make the TFO more affordable, particularly for families who have multiple participants. We want to remove as many of the financial and logistical obstacles as possible for people to join.

We will concentrate on giving at least one performance for each of the four periods, but hopefully, we will do more. This means many more opportunities to share our music with others and gain valuable experience. Although there will continue to be the same strong emphasis on the educational dimension of the TFO (and that means, as before, everyone is encouraged to participate, regardless of experience or skill level), we are going to implement a subtle paradigm shift in that we will approach our repertory and concert selections much in the same fashion as a professional orchestra. This means that while we will normally add four or five new pieces per period, we will draw on the extensive library of material that we have developed over the last two years. We will move away from the scholastic, this-is-the-material-for-this-semester's-concert model and move toward model of a working ensemble. This should provide much more continuity and momentum.

Following on these internal changes, we will present our music to a wider audience (both demographically and geographically) by performing more often in different venues that are acoustically suitable for our ensemble. This will enhance each performance experience for the TFO members and audiences. We want to reach out and become a fixture in the entire region and carry our music to as broad an audience as is possible. We will be exploring performance opportunities with civic groups, churches, schools, arts councils, community centers, and so on.

We have been very blessed to have many great musicians perform as guest artists with the TFO, and this will most definitely continue to be our goal. As in the past, we want to encourage up-and-coming talent from our own area to join forces with us, as well, and in general, our commitment to developing everyone's musical potential is our highest goal.

We also want to say a word about the meaning of the TFO experience in the broadest sense. We believe deeply that God gave us the gift of music to help us to grow (both individually and as the human race), and the main reasons for the existence of the TFO are to give people a place to have fun and develop their talents and to experience the incredible power of community. This does make the world a better place.

As far as the business end of things, we are planning on establishing a 501(C3) status with the IRS. For the time being, we will collect the fees here at Jim Wood Music. Members can simply

pay for the period at the first rehearsal. (Just on a personal note, Inge and I keep the fees as low as we possibly can and still remain able to afford to run the TFO.) On another personal note, we would not be where we are by any stretch of the imagination if it were not for all the work of Harry Hill. His dedication to the cause has really been the tipping point for the whole enterprise. Lisa Quick also deserves a special thanks for her work with us as conductor.

We will begin the new period on August 31st. No pre-registration is necessary, but please try to come by 6:30 the first time so that we do not let business cut into our playing. As you can imagine, with changes come glitches and adjustments and such; so, please be patient with us as we shift gears. Overall, we are very confident that these changes will make the TFO more flexible to meet the needs of its members and improve everyone's experience.

The original letters that we sent out when the TFO was just beginning still says as well as possible who we are and what our mission is; so, I am just going to copy and paste it below. I do want to emphasize that we need as many members as we can get; so, please help us to get the word out. One of the most critical features of an orchestra is its size, and we need big sound. If you have been in the TFO, please continue. If you have thought that you might enjoy it, join now. If you know someone who might be a prospect, encourage him or her vigorously. Please call if you have any questions (Jim or Inge at 931-695-5613 or jim@jimwoodmusic.net or Harry at 931-247-4837 or hillfamily@charter.net, and we will talk you into joining. You will be glad you did!

Tennessee Fiddle Orchestra Mission Statement

The Tennessee Fiddle Orchestra includes musicians of all ages and experience levels on fiddles, violas, cellos, and string basses as well as orchestral woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and saxophone), brass (trumpet, trombone, French horn, and tuba), and guitar and mandolin. Our goal is to provide an orchestral outlet for any and all musicians interested in folk music. Our repertory covers the world of fiddle music, with tunes from the Appalachian, old-time, bluegrass, western swing, Irish, Scottish, folk, country, Canadian, and Latin American traditions. From an educational viewpoint, we heavily emphasize the interaction between the various sections of the orchestra, and because our group is unique in that we accept anyone regardless of skill level, we utilize four violin sections (as opposed to the traditional two) that range in degree of difficulty from advanced to rudimentary. A part exists for anyone, regardless of experience or skill level.

Obviously, we have the ulterior motives of community building and expanding the number of fiddlers in the region. We grew from forty-two members last fall to seventy-four members by our second semester, and our second concert saw almost 800 people in the audience. Community awareness is high, and our group seems to have limitless potential. Our arrangements provide a nice balance between ensemble work and opportunities for soloists to step forward and play advanced passages with orchestral accompaniment. Our ranks include several musicians with professional and championship credentials.

Please help us to spread the word. We want to see the orchestra grow, both in numbers and musical quality. This is a very unique opportunity (I know of nothing else exactly like it). It has been a lot of fun for the musicians and should continue to evolve into something culturally significant. Middle Tennessee is at the center of one of the great grassroots music scenes in the whole world, and we have the opportunity to embrace and to enrich this living tradition by directly becoming involved. Musicians from both traditional and classical backgrounds should feel comfortable.

Thanks,
Jim