

Special Music School at Kaufman Center

GENERAL INFORMATION
GRADES 3-8

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:
MARCH 16, 2012**

**AUDITIONS GRADES 3-8:
MAY 2, 2012**

About the School

The Special Music School, P. S. 859, is a unique public school that combines a full academic program with performance-oriented music training within the regular school day. The music program includes private instrumental lessons and classes in music theory, ear training, Dalcroze Eurhythmics, chorus, and music history. The academic program emphasizes an integrated learning approach that develops problem-solving skills through hands-on cooperative learning experiences. The dedicated staff and faculty are committed to helping each child realize his/her full potential musically, academically, and socially.

The Special Music School is a public/private partnership between the New York City Department of Education and the Kaufman Center. As a public school, the Special Music School is tuition-free. The Department of Education, through tax levy funds, provides the academic program and materials, while the Kaufman Center, through its annual fund-raising efforts, provides each student with a full, merit-based music scholarship. The School is located in the Kaufman Center's facility at 129 West 67th Street, west of Broadway.

Admission to the Special Music School

The Special Music School is a fast-paced, intensive environment designed for those students who are serious about pursuing classical music professionally. On each instrument (piano and orchestral instruments), there is a separate instrumental curriculum broken down by grade, and students in each grade are expected to meet specific curricular goals. We are only able to accept students whose achievement on an instrument already exceeds, meet, or closely approaches the standard for the grade.

The academic program at the Special Music School is also rigorous. Because of the dual focus of the curriculum, students and their parents should be prepared to work longer and harder towards meeting the educational goals. Successful continuation at the School is contingent upon consistent progress in all elements of the curriculum, including music classes such as theory and chorus. Grades from all classes are included on each student's Dept of Ed report card.

Parental support is essential. This support includes setting daily time aside to monitor and supervise music practice in addition to providing guidance on academic and music homework assignments. It is not necessary to have music background in order to provide the support that your child needs, but it does require time and commitment.

Successful applicants for grades 3-8 may be placed on a waiting list. Because the class size at Special Music School is extremely small (15 per grade), openings become available only when students leave the School. Current SMS students in the 5th grade are asked to re-audition for 6th grade, and not all are accepted or choose to continue; therefore, the greatest chance for openings is in 6th grade.

Information Sessions and School Tours

The Special Music School holds four Information Sessions spaced throughout the school year; you will find these listed on an accompanying sheet. These hour-long sessions will provide you with the opportunity to hear about the mission and daily life of the School, and to have many of your questions answered. No reservations are necessary for the Information Sessions.

In addition, students and their families who are interested in auditioning for grades 3 and higher are strongly encouraged to attend one or more of the many free public concerts given by Special Music School students. To request more specific information on concerts, please call 212.501.3390.

Because of space and time considerations, we cannot provide tours of the School to interested applicants. Tours of the School are conducted once an applicant has been provisionally accepted and scheduled for a final interview.

Audition Information

Please take the time to fill out the accompanying application form as completely as possible. Of particular importance is the list of pieces the applicant is studying/has recently studied. Students whose list of musical pieces is significantly easier than the curriculum for that grade may be notified that the application is "not suitable." This is not meant as a statement about the applicant's potential or talent, but rather indicates that, based on the student's current level of study, it is highly unlikely that he/she will be accepted to the School, even pending a well-performed audition. Students who receive such a letter may still request an audition time, which will be assigned only if there is time available. **Please note: students who receive a "not suitable" letter and do not audition for the School will have their application fee refunded in full.**

Students whose applications are deemed "suitable" will be contacted by e-mail or phone to schedule an audition time, which will take place in the spring of 2012. The audition will include prepared pieces (please see "Audition Requirements" for more information) and may also include sight reading and a brief ear training test. Those students auditioning for grades 4 and above will take a written theory test following the audition in order to assess their skill level. This test does not factor in to the admissions decision.

Audition Requirements and a Sample Repertoire list of representative pieces have been included with the application. In addition, students and their parents are highly encouraged to attend one of the many free student concerts held at the Special Music School. Please call 212.501.3390 or email smsa@kaufman-center.org for details.

Notification

We will notify students of their status two to four weeks following their audition. Accepted students will either be provisionally accepted, pending an interview, if there is an opening in that grade, or placed on a waiting list. Students will be taken off the waiting list if and when places become available. We cannot reveal the order of the waiting list, but it is not likely to be more than a few students in each grade. Students who are not accepted are encouraged to continue studying their instrument and reapply in a coming year.

Final Interview

The final step in the audition process is an interview with the parent(s) of the applicant, conducted by representatives from the music and academic departments of the School. While there is no "score" on this interview, it is a chance for both the family and the School to determine whether this is going to be the proper environment for the student. If time allows, it may be possible for the family to tour the School at this point.

Following a successful interview, the family will be sent an official acceptance letter and contract, or informed that a place will not be made available for the child. If a child is accepted into the Special Music School, the family can either accept or reject the offer, or request the scheduling of a school tour, if this has not already happened. The school tour must be scheduled within two weeks of the date of the acceptance letter, so that there will be sufficient time to meet with families if you choose not to accept the offer. If there has been no communication from the parents at the end of two weeks, the child will be placed back on the wait list.

Unfortunately, it is not possible for applicants to come and visit classrooms independently (i.e. "spend the day"), although once acceptance has been finalized, there will be an opportunity to meet fellow students in a social setting before the end of the school year.

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Instructions for the Application Process

1. Application Form

Please complete the enclosed application form and mail it as soon as possible to the address indicated. Please do not fax your application. Make sure you complete the entire application, which includes a questionnaire. Applications will be processed in the order in which they are received. Applications for grades 3 – 8 received after the March 16, 2012 deadline will be processed only if there is room in the audition schedule.

2. Birth Certificate

A copy of the child's birth certificate must be enclosed with the application.

3. Application Fee

The **non-refundable** application fee of \$25 should accompany the application. A check or money order may be sent by mail, made out to "Kaufman Center" (checks or money orders made out to the School cannot be processed). If you pay the fee in cash, please bring the application and fee to the Center in person and wait for a receipt. Checks that are returned to us will be subject to a \$20 fee, and that amount will be added to the initial \$25 due (total of \$45).

If you are unable to pay the \$25 fee, please indicate so on the top of the application.

Applications without the accompanying fee (or waiver) will not be processed.

4. **Teacher Evaluation Forms**

The enclosed Academic and Music Teacher Evaluation forms must be completed and mailed directly by your child's academic (classroom) and music (instrument) teachers, respectively, by the application deadline. If included with the application, please ask the teacher to give it to you in a sealed and signed envelope, in order to ensure the evaluation's confidentiality.

5. **Audition Appointment**

After we have received your completed application—along with the fee and a copy of your child's birth certificate—we will contact you with an appointment for your child's audition. This will be approximately two weeks before the audition date. Please be sure that we are able to reach you easily during the day by phone, email, and/or fax, if available. **We highly recommend that upon applying, you add the following SMS Admissions e-mail to your e-mail provider's address book/safe list: smsa@kaufman-center.org.** Although we make every attempt to be sure that our communications are received, adding the admissions e-mail to your address book/safe list will prevent our notices from going to junk mail.

Suggestions for Parents

1. **IMPORTANT:** Arrive at least 15 minutes before your audition, or 60 minutes prior if you are planning to use a School-provided accompanist (see below). Children who arrive at the last minute are less likely to be relaxed and confident. Children who arrive early have the chance to get used to a new location, warm up in a practice room, use the restrooms, etc. Because there are many applicants and a limited number of audition slots, we will probably not be able to reschedule your child if you are late for your appointment, and the Special Music School is under no obligation to do so.
2. You must notify us immediately if you are unable to keep a scheduled appointment so that we can attempt to reschedule. Appointments missed without prior notice will not be rescheduled. **Please note:** if you need to cancel your child's audition, the application fee cannot be refunded.
3. Prepare your child for the audition by insuring that s/he has a good night's rest, eats a good breakfast or lunch, and has adequate time to warm-up beforehand.
4. No accompaniment is required for the audition, but applicants are welcome to bring their own accompanist or use one provided by Special Music School. If you plan to use an SMS accompanist for your child, the fee for the rehearsal and audition is \$35.00. This is payable by check, made out to "Kaufman Center," or in cash (exact change only, please), on the day of your child's audition. Students who use an accompanist will need to arrive 60 minutes in advance of their audition time in order to have a short rehearsal. You can indicate your desire to use the School accompanist when we contact you to schedule an audition.

If you have any questions or need assistance with the application, please call the Admissions Office at (212) 501.3390 and leave a message, or send an email to smsa@kaufman-center.org. We will reply as soon as possible.