

Smith College Wind Ensemble FAQ

How much does the Wind Ensemble rehearse?

We rehearse once per week, on Monday nights from 7-9pm. The evening rehearsal time makes it easier for students to commit to the schedule around their other academic classes. We're lucky to be able to rehearse in our performance venue, on stage at [Sweeney Concert Hall](#).

How many concerts does the Wind Ensemble play?

We do two concerts per year, one each at the end of the fall and spring semesters. There is also at least one additional smaller performance, usually during Parents' Weekend.

What kind of music does the Wind Ensemble play?

We play a variety of pieces written for wind band. As the director, I'm personally very committed to playing more contemporary works by living composers, especially those who have been historically underrepresented. You can see some recent concert programs [here](#) and [here](#). The SCWE is also a member of the [Mexican Composer Incubation Project](#), which provides feedback and reference recordings to Mexican composers who write educational works for wind band.

How big is the Wind Ensemble?

In Spring 2024 we had about 55 performers, and the group tends to hover somewhere around 50-60.

Is Wind Ensemble a class? A club? Do I have to take it for credit?

Wind Ensemble is simultaneously a 1-credit course, and a registered student organization. The vast majority of students take the class for credit, though it is possible to participate in the ensemble without registering (however, the expectations are the same). As a student organization, we also have a student board who manages social activities and other group events.

Do I have to audition? What's the playing expectation?

We are a non-auditioned ensemble*. Anyone who participated in their high school music ensemble program is well prepared to join the SCWE. Those who play an instrument but didn't have a traditional high school band experience have also been great additions and very successful in the group. Even though we are non-auditioned, the group is held to a high standard and produces wonderful concerts.

New members will have an informal one-on-one meeting with the director at the beginning of the semester where we'll chat about your background and you'll play something of your choosing (it can be

anything! A prepared solo, a favorite pep band tune, or even just a scale). This helps with part assignments, and making sure the director understands the strengths of the ensemble.

*Occasionally, when the group is large and there is a lot of interest in a particular section, auditions are held for new members. This is simply because of the capacity of our rehearsal and performance space. Students who aren't selected are highly encouraged to consider joining the group in subsequent semesters when space is available.

Do I have to have my own instrument?

The vast majority of SCWE members (except percussionists) use their own instruments. The music department has a limited number of instruments, mostly specialty (bassoon, bass clarinet, English horn). However, we've been able to work out borrowing or rental agreements for other instruments with other local band programs or music stores - contact us if this is a concern, we can always work something out. Lockers are available for storage in Sage Hall.

What's the practice expectation?

Members are expected to address individual practice needs outside of rehearsal, which varies greatly from player to player. Many members are able to get all their individual needs worked out within our regular rehearsals. The music is selected carefully to challenge the players, but also to be cognizant of the busy schedules of Smith students. On average, there might be a total of 1-2 hours of individual work needed outside of rehearsal, mostly at the beginning of the semester when the music is new. The director is always available for one-on-one help.

What's the director like?

Hi, that's me! My name is Meghan MacFadden, and I have been the director of the SCWE since 2022. I strive to create a welcoming, safe, and enjoyable environment for our ensemble members to have a change of pace from their other academic classes every Monday night. There are jokes, there are memes, but most importantly there's a ton of beautiful music-making. More info about me [here](#).

How do I sign up?

Contact me via the email address below, then register for the course (MUS 957-01) via Workday. There may be a little bit of red tape involving "instructor approval" or a waitlist, but that's just so I can know what instrument you play.

I have other questions, who do I ask?

Send me an email! mmacfadden@smith.edu. General questions about music at Smith (including other course options, lockers, and borrowing instruments) can be directed to the Department Administrator, Anna Goudreau agoudreau@smith.edu.