

North Hills High School Music Department



Information Handbook for Students & Parents 2015-16 School Year

Courses:

Symphonic Choir
Women's Choir

Room:

Choir Room B119

Periods:

Symphonic Choir – periods 4 & 8
Women's Choir – periods 5 & 9

Instructor:

Mr. Cloonan
cloonans@nhsd.net
412-318-1400 x3047

The NHSD Music Department

Mission: Believing that music study is an essential and integral part of every child's education, we will prepare students for success through music allowing them to become lifelong music learners.

Vision: To serve our students and community by creating one of the nation's finest school music programs.

Values: The North Hills Music Department is committed to the ideas that:

- Music is a unique and integral part of the human experience
- Music performance stimulates the entire brain in powerful ways
- Music study positively impacts other experiences within a school and in a community
- All students can and should learn a sequential and standards-based music curriculum delivered by certified music educators as a critical component of the program of study
- Music study can develop students who are critical thinkers, self-directed learners, effective and creative communicators, informed and responsible citizens, collaborative workers and quality producers

Class Structure

Here's what to expect when you enter the classroom:

1. You will take a music folder from the shelves and quickly find your assigned seat, throwing away any gum or candy you may have before class begins. ***Chorus is a "no gum zone!"***
2. *As soon as the late bell rings*, you should end conversations, stand up, face the front of the room, and begin silent stretching. Our general warm-up routine will be stretching, then breathing, then singing exercises.
3. During warm-ups, talking is not permitted, as you must focus completely on relaxing your muscles, focusing your breathing and singing, and following the directions of the teacher. If you are carrying on a conversation with your neighbor, you will distract others and might miss instructions. Important announcements are made and attendance is taken during warm-ups. If you are in an incorrect seat or are wandering around the room, you may be marked absent and written up for a class cut.
4. The hall pass may be used **after warm-ups are completed**, one at a time. Please do not abuse the hall pass or the privilege will be taken away from you.
5. Keep homework put away unless you are told that there is free time or that you may work quietly. Since we do not have desks or books, our choir music is like our textbook, and should always be out so that when parts of the music are discussed, you can follow along, make markings, etc.
6. When class is over, make sure that your music is put neatly back in the pocket of your folder and that you return your folder to the correct shelf. Please do not leave music on a chair or the floor.

Grading

Report cards are distributed at the end of each semester, and grades will be kept current through ProgressBook online. Grades are a reflection of your participation, attention, and motivation. Here is how the percentages are calculated:

- 50%** **Daily Participation:** arriving to class on time, having music and a pencil daily, participating in all required activities, marking vocal scores properly, focusing attention on listening activities, displaying a positive attitude, staying on task, demonstrating good singing posture, and exhibiting proper vocal technique
- 25%** **Vocal Hearings and Assignments:** hearings are times when you will be singing in small groups to demonstrate progress on pitches, parts, and memorization of concert selections, to allow Mr. Cloonan to check for changes in range, a chance to discuss any problems you may have with sections of a song. Any assignments given will be completed during class (theory/sight-singing worksheets, written observation of concert video) You will not receive homework outside of class, except to make sure songs are memorized for the concert.
- 25%** **Concerts & Combined Rehearsals:** attending scheduled pre-concert rehearsals, participating in the 3 required evening concerts, following the dress code for concerts

As you can see, the largest part of your grade is your daily participation. As long as you follow directions and sing when asked, those should be easy points. ***It takes work to fail choir!*** You have to make a conscious effort to not participate, to not follow directions, to show disrespect for others, and to not attend rehearsals and concerts. The only thing preventing you from having a 100% in choir is YOU. Strive for excellence...be the best you can be. We'll be a better choir because of it!

After-School Rehearsals

After-school rehearsals are also a part of your class grade. Since each choir is divided into 2 class periods, we need to hear what the full group sounds like as we prepare for concerts. These rehearsals are **very** important, because it is here where we can properly check for balance between sections, practice coming on and off of the risers, figure out standing arrangements, and work with our piano accompanist and other instrumentalists.

Attendance is required, and it is your responsibility to make arrangements to be there. Talk with your bosses, coaches, sponsors, and parents to make sure you can attend. To us a sports analogy: missing these rehearsals is like not showing up to the practices right before a game, meet, match, or competition...you would be confused if the coach changed something and you didn't find out ahead of time (and may not be allowed to play/cheer/etc.), causing the team to lose. The choir "team" counts on every voice to be there.

Mr. Cloonan is flexible and understanding when it comes to sharing and helping to set priorities *as long as it is brought to his attention ahead of time*. Obviously you will be excused if there is a cross country away meet and you have an early dismissal to go there. But if you choose to go to a practice that you have every day instead of coming to our once per month rehearsal, that will be considered the same as a class cut (though you won't be written up, just receive a "0" for attendance/participation). Often students will split their time as well, coming to the first half of our practice and going to the sport/club practice/meeting for the next 45 minutes or so. The important thing is that you COMMUNICATE and PLAN AHEAD.

See the calendar-at-a-glance at the end of this handbook for specific after-school practices for each ensemble. There will be times when it is just Symphonic Choir, just Women's Choir, and everyone combined. READ THE SCHEDULE CAREFULLY, as attendance will be taken at each rehearsal.

Concerts

Public performances are a part of the district music curriculum, and are required. Concerts serve as our formal assessment of the weeks of work and preparation.

North Hills School District follows a strict attendance policy for concerts. We only require a few evenings throughout the year. **Take the time to write them on your calendars when you go home tonight.** These dates are also published on the district's calendar, and are available online at nhsd.net as well as the choral/drama website. "I didn't know about it" is not considered a valid excuse for missing a concert; neither is "I couldn't get a ride." There are over 160 members of the choral program between all 4 class periods. *Someone* who is also a part of the choir lives near you. If it becomes apparent that transportation is going to be an issue, talk to someone to arrange a ride. As the saying goes: "lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part."

If there is a legitimate conflict with a concert date (and very little is considered legitimate), it should be brought to Mr. Cloonan's attention as soon as possible **IN WRITING** (either a note brought in or an e-mail sent by a parent), **and submitted BEFORE the day of the concert.** Remember that concerts make up 25% of your grade. If you become ill on the day of the concert, it is your parent/guardian's responsibility to notify Mr. Cloonan (voice mail ext. 3047, email: cloonans@nhsd.net). Failure to submit an excuse will result in your grade being lowered by at least one full letter grade (do the math – you lose 25%, that means the highest grade you can get is a 75%, which is a "C"). We all must work together and help to make the best concerts possible – even one person missing from the choir hurts everyone, so don't think that your voice doesn't matter!

A side note from Mr. Cloonan: one of my least favorite excuses when talking to students or parents is, "I'm only one person, no one will miss me." Just imagine if 25 people all thought that same thing and missed a performance. Think of all of the hard work you put in, and then suddenly a group of 85 strong voices becomes 60. You DO make a difference, your voice matters, and you WILL be missed. So, please, for everyone's benefit, BE AT THE CONCERTS!

Concert Dress Code

The North Hills Choral Department follows a strict dress code policy for public performances. We strive to look as polished and presentable as possible, reflecting the hard work put in before each performance. A student found to be in violation of the dress code may be sent home to change clothes or given something to wear (that may or may not fit well!) before the concert. If the student refuses, they will not be permitted to participate in the concert and their grade will be lowered accordingly.

You will be assigned a choir robe with a number. These robes will be kept in the robe room and the Uniform Coordinator will be responsible for keeping track of numbers. Robes will be worn for at least the first half of each concert. Standard black and white dress concert attire should be worn under the robe for uniformity as well as quick changes for the second half of the concert.

Girls: white button-down blouse, longer (to the knee, no mini) black skirt, black stockings, and black low or flat heels (no sandals or high heels).

Boys: white button-down collared shirt with tie, black pants, black socks and black dress shoes.

Members of the North Hills Singers have black and red uniforms that are worn at every performance.

**If purchasing any of these items is a financial hardship for your family, please let Mr. Cloonan know. No one will be penalized for not physically being able to get the items – we can help.*

Stage Presence

One of the themes stressed over the past few years on the hilltop has been “Expect Respect.” We in the music department have a great opportunity to show how we respect each other at our concert through our stage presence and concert behavior. Here are a few guidelines to follow when you are on stage performing:

1. Arms and hands at sides, shoulders back, feet slightly apart!
2. **STAND UP STRAIGHT** – do not lean on one leg/hip.
Do not cross arms in front of your body – keep arms at your sides.
3. **NEVER** talk on stage between songs or during a song!!
4. **LOOK** at the director at all times when you are singing.
5. **NO** chewing gum or candy.
6. Put a pleasant expression on your face – put meaning into the words.
7. **NEVER** acknowledge your own or another person’s mistake. Just keep singing.
8. If you feel ill while on stage, sit down in place.

Concert Dates

While it is important that we share in the music making process together, and that is what brings many of us to join choir in the first place, that is only part of what we do. All of the hard work put in during class and rehearsals is so that we can share what we do with others. For that reason, public performances are written into the curriculum of each music ensemble class and are considered formal assessments as part of the course grade. The following required concerts will take place during the 2015-16 school year:

- Fall Concert (Symphonic Choir only): Tuesday, October 13, 2015, 7:00PM, Middle School Auditorium
- Choral Festival (Women’s Choir only): Sunday, November 8, 2015, 3:00PM, 1st Presby Church of Edgewood
- Winter Holiday Concert: Tuesday, December 22, 2015, 7:00PM, High School Auditorium
- Combined Choral Concert – “Let’s Go to the Movies”: Wednesday, March 9, 2016, MS Auditorium
- Spring Concert & Senior Recognition: Friday, May 20, 2016, 7:00PM, High School Auditorium

The following events take place each year and are open to any high school choir member who wishes to participate:

- Madrigal Dinner – Saturday, December 5, 2015, 6:30PM, St. Athanasius Church Hall
- Cabaret Night – Friday, February 12, 2016, HS Cafeteria
- Arts Alive Madrigal Choir – Friday, May 6, 2016

Festivals

PMEA Honors Choir: The 2015 Honors Choir festival will take place on Friday-Saturday, October 30-31, 2015 at Seton Hill University. Honors Choir is open to all singers in grades 9-12. PMEA District 1 is trying something new this year and not holding auditions, but an application process where schools submit quartets of students to participate in the men's and the women's honor choirs. Each choir has its own guest conductor, and the 2 choirs share a concert and also 2 combined pieces. If you are interested in participating, please get an application from Mr. Cloonan and return it ASAP so that the paperwork can be submitted by the September 18th deadline.

PMEA District Chorus: PMEA District 1 Chorus will take place at Penn Hills High School on Wednesday-Friday, February 3-5, 2016. Auditions will be held on Monday, November 23, 2015 at Belle Vernon Area HS. District Chorus is open to students in grades 10-12. At District Chorus, participants audition for Region Chorus. If selected, this festival will take place March 16-18, 2016 at Western Beaver HS. At regions, you audition for All-States.

Opportunities for Freshmen: The following choral festivals are available for our ninth grade singers. Each of the festivals is based on teacher recommendation. If you are given a letter, please seriously consider participating. For Mucho Macho & Sweet Harmony, we can have anywhere between 6 and 10 students represented depending on how many other schools are participating. District Chorus typically has 3-5 members selected from each of the 50 participating schools.

Mucho Macho Music: For boys in grades 6-9. A day to come together with 100 other boys to build confidence during the voice change and learn from a guest conductor and also from college guys. Held on Tuesday, November 3, 2015 at McKeesport Area High School.

Sweet Harmony: Mucho Macho's sister festival for young women in grades 6-9. Held at Upper St. Clair High School on Friday, November 13, 2015. Students selected to participate are excused from school this day and must arrange to be picked up at school around 5:00PM.

PMEA Jr. High District Chorus: This year's host for the grades 7-9 festival is Trinity Middle School. Applications are due in December/January for the April festival. We typically have around 4 or 5 from the high school and about the same from the middle school participate. If selected, you'll receive a packet of music to learn ahead of time before the festival. You will then join with the 150+ singers from all over Southwest PA to work with the guest conductor and then perform a public concert. The 2016 festival takes place on Friday-Saturday, April 8-9. Those participating will be excused from school on Friday. Note that this is the first weekend of *Cinderella*, so if you decide to work on the tech crew, you may not be able to participate in both since there may be a Saturday matinee during the second day of the festival.

Busch Gardens 2016

The 2016 Music Department performance tour will take place on April 28-May 1, 2016. All of our high school's performing ensembles will travel to Williamsburg, Virginia, where they will compete in the Music in the Parks festival at Busch Gardens. We are still working out the details of the itinerary and costs, but the estimate is \$650 per person, which will include 3 nights in a hotel, admission to the park, a couple of meals, admission into Colonial Williamsburg, and most likely some time at Virginia Beach. More details will be communicated as they become available, and there will be a parent meeting that will outline costs, payment deadlines, forms, and fundraisers most likely in late September or early October. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend this trip – the first time the entire music department has traveled together in recent memory!

Choral Parents Association

Parents of all singers in grades 7-12 are invited to join to support the trips and special events hosted by the choral program. We generally meet once per month, with additional meetings as we get closer to the two big fundraising events: the Madrigal Dinner and Cabaret Night. If your parents are interested in being a part of this group, have them send an e-mail to Choral Parents Association president, Mrs. Sandy Knobloch (ksknobeloch@msn.com) so that they may be added to the e-mail list for notification of meetings. The more parents involved in the group, the better our organization will be and the easier the work will be for the big projects!

Communication

With so much going on between all of the ensembles, festivals, performances, and rehearsals, communication will be key to our success. Open and honest communication between student, director, and parent will help to assure that everyone knows what is going on, what is expected, and that we avoid frustration, anxiety, and hurt feelings.

What to expect from Mr. Cloonan: I will do my best to always let you know as far in advance as I can dates, times, and locations of rehearsals and performances. Especially with the NH Singers, things come up quickly and require flexibility on everyone's part.

I say this at the beginning of every semester in every class every year: *I will never accept "I didn't know" as an excuse for missing something.* And here's why...there are EIGHT different ways for you to find out what is happening in our choral program:

1. You will receive a printed monthly calendar
2. That calendar will be posted on the bulletin board in the Choir Room
3. A weekly schedule of rehearsals is written on the board in the front of the room
4. Announcements will be made in class if not daily, at least every other day reminding everyone
5. A PDF of the calendar is posted on the choir website at www.northhillschoralmusic.org.
6. Every time a major announcement is made, it is posted on the website, which is connected to our Twitter and Facebook accounts, so it goes to all 3 places at once.
7. Social media alerts in the form of any combination of Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook are sent out regularly
8. When big combined rehearsals or special events take place Remind app texts are sent out as well

If you don't know what is going on, you can't say it's my fault for not letting you know!

What Mr. Cloonan expects from you: First and most importantly, BE HONEST. Sometimes you forget to say something to your parent, or a boss, or a coach. That is human. I'm a pretty understanding person, unless you purposely cover up the mistake by lying about it. As soon as you realize or know about a conflict for a legitimate reason, let me know! We can work together to find a solution.

Secondly, TALK TO YOUR PARENTS. I can't tell you the number of times I've talked with a parent who said "they never gave me that paper," or "I just found out yesterday about this." Avoid the unnecessary fight at home or with me by being proactive and organized.

And lastly, BE RESPONSIBLE. Take some ownership of and pride in your commitments and responsibilities. The group suffers when you fail to communicate. Look at your schedules, plan your appointments and other activities around when you know you need to be with the choir. As mentioned in an earlier section, every voice counts!



COMMUNICATION METHODS

There are several ways to find out about what is happening with the North Hills Choirs:

- NH Choirs on Facebook: www.facebook.com/northhillschoirs
- NH Choirs on Twitter: www.twitter.com/NorthHillsChoir or @NorthHillsChoir
- NH Choirs on Instagram: @northhillschoirs
- Log on to your ProgressBook account and see the events posted on your calendar
- Email or Call/Voice Mail Mr. Cloonan: cloonans@nhsd.net or 412-318-1400, x3047.
- North Hills Choral & Drama website: www.northhillschoralmusic.org (which includes the Twitter feed)
- NH Choirs YouTube Channel: www.youtube.com/northhillschoirs

 **Remind App Directions:** Search by *class code name*—

Women's Choir: @nhwomens, Symphonic Choir: @nhhssymph, and NH Singers: @nhsingers

To receive messages via text, text @*class code name* to 81010. You can opt out of messages at any time by replying, 'unsubscribe @*class code name*'. Trouble using 81010? Try texting @*class code name* to (302) 321-6356 instead. Or to receive messages via email, send an email to *class code name*@mail.remind.com. To unsubscribe, reply with 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

Calendar-at-a-Glance

August 2015

24	Wed	2:15-3:15	First NH Singers Rehearsal
28	Fri	end of day	Signed Agreements due (25 points); Officer applications due (online)

September 2015

3	Thu	2:15-3:15	HS Drama Club Info Meeting
9-10	Wed-Thur	2:15-4:00	Fall Play Auditions
11	Fri	end of day	PMEA Honors Choir applications due to Mr. Cloonan
12	Sat	6:00PM	Senior Ensemble performs National Anthem at SoccerFest
16	Wed	2:00-6:30	NH Singers rehearsal, dinner, and perform for Open House
17	Thu	7:00PM	NH Singers perform for School Board, LGI
26	Sat	9:00-2:00	NH Singers Fall Retreat
30	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir Rehearsal, Room B119

October 2015

1	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir Rehearsal, Room B119
2	Fri	2:15-3:15	Honors Choir festival prep begins on Fridays for those selected
8	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir Rehearsal, Room B119
10	Sat	9:00-11:00	Alumni Faure Rehearsal (open to all Symphonic members as well)
12	Mon	6:00-8:00	Faure Dress Rehearsal on MS Stage (no school this day)
13	Tue	7:00PM	Symphonic Choir & NH Singers Fall Concert, MS Auditorium
16	Fri	Time TBD	Exchange Day with Westminster College Chamber Choir
19-23	Mon-Fri	3:00-?	Winter Musical auditions at MS
28	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir Rehearsal, Room B119
30-31	Fri-Sat	all day	PMEA Honors Choir at Seton Hill University

November 2015

3	Tue	9AM-3:30PM	Mucho Macho Music Festival, McKeesport HS; Drama Club Bake Sale
5	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir Rehearsal, B119
7-8	Sat-Sun	9-12, 1-4	Fall Play Tech/Dress Rehearsals
8	Sun	3:00PM	Women's Choral Festival, First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood
12-14	Th-F-Sa	7:30PM	Fall Play, "Radium Girls"
13	Fri	9AM-3:30PM	Sweet Harmony Festival, Upper St. Clair High School
18	Wed	2:15-3:00	First Madrigal Dinner Meeting
19	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir Rehearsal, B119
21	Sat	9:00-11:00	NH Singers Rehearsal, 11:00-12:00 PMEA District Chorus prep
		12:00-2:00	Madrigal Dinner rehearsal
23	Mon	3:00-9:00	PMEA District Chorus Auditions at Belle Vernon Area High School

December 2015

3	Thur	1:00PM	NH Singers perform at North Hills Presbyterian Church in West View
5	Sat	all day	1:00 NH Singers @ Faith Lutheran, 5:00 Report for 6:30 MADRIGAL DINNER
7	Mon	7:30PM	NH Singers perform for Christian Mothers, St. Cyril's in Bellevue
8	Tue	1:00PM	NH Singers perform for NHSD Retirees Luncheon, Shannopin Country Club
9	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir, Room B119
10	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir, Room B119
16	Wed	2:15-4:00	Symphonic & Women in Auditorium – Logistics & Polish Rehearsal
17	Thur	all day	NH Singers Tour Day – Arden Court, WV Methodist, Berkeley Hills
21	Mon	2:15-4:00	Symphonic & Women in Auditorium – Yearbook Photos & Run Concert
22	Tue	7:00PM	HS Choirs Winter Concert, Auditorium

Calendar-at-a-Glance, continued

January 2016

7	Thu	2:15-3:15	"Cinderella" vocal audition prep rehearsal
12	Tue	3:00-3:30	"Cinderella" vocal audition prep rehearsal (after NH Singers rehearsal)
13-14	Wed-Thu	2:15-4:00	"Cinderella" Auditions
27	Wed	all day	Winter Musical Preview Day
28-30	Thu-Sat	7:00PM	Winter Musical

February 2016

3-5	Wed-Fri	all day	PMEA District Chorus at Penn Hills High School
6	Sat	9:00-11:00	Cabaret Night auditions
8-12	Mon-Fri	after school	Cabaret Night rehearsals
12	Fri	7:00PM	Cabaret Night, Cafeteria
24	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir, Room B119
25	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir, Room B119

March 2016

7	Mon	2:15-3:15	Symphonic & Women @ MS Auditorium
9	Wed	7:00PM	COMBINED CHORAL CONCERT: "Let's Go to the Movies!"
16-18	Wed-Fri	all day	PMEA Region Chorus at Western Beaver High School
30-4/2	Wed-Sat	all day	PMEA All State Conference at Hershey, PA

April 2016

2-3	Sat-Sun	9-12, 1-4	Musical Tech/Dress Rehearsals
7-9	Thu-Sat	7:30PM	Spring Musical: "Cinderella"
14-16	Thu-Sat	7:30PM	Spring Musical: "Cinderella"
20	Wed	2:15-3:15	Tour Women's Choir, Room B119
21	Thu	2:15-3:15	Tour Symphonic Choir, Room B119
23	Sat	9:00-11:00	NH Singers Rehearsal (if needed)
25	Mon	7:00PM	Final Trip Parent Meeting, Auditorium
26	Tue	2:15-3:15	Tour Women's Choir, Room B119
27	Wed	2:15-3:15	Tour Symphonic Choir, Room B119
		6:00-8:00PM	Luggage Drop-Off, MS LGI Room
28-5/1	Thu-Sun	leave @ 3PM	MUSIC DEPARTMENT TOUR TO WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

May 2016

2-5	Mon-Thu	3:15-4:00	Madrigal Choir Rehearsals for Arts Alive (after NH Singers)
4	Wed	2:15-3:00	Drama Club Gala Meeting
6	Fri	5:00-9:00	Arts Alive: Performances by Madrigal Choir & NH Singers
7	Sat	9:00-11:00	Gala Practice, Room B119/Auditorium
11	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir, Room B119
12	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir, Room B119
9	Fri	7:00PM	DRAMA CLUB GALA
18	Wed	2:15-4:00	Symphonic & Women in Auditorium – Logistics & Polish Rehearsal
19	Thu	2:15-3:30	Symphonic & Women in Auditorium – Run of Concert
20	Fri	7:00PM	HS SPRING CHORAL CONCERT & SENIOR RECOGNITION
23	Mon	2:15-4:00	Auditions for 2016-17 North Hills Singers
25	Wed	2:15-3:15	New NH Singers Rehearsal for Graduation
27	Fri	5:30PM	New NH Singers report to Martorelli for 7:00 Graduation

