

North Hills High School Music Department



Information Handbook for Students & Parents 2016-17 School Year

Courses:

Symphonic Choir
Women's Choir

Periods:

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

Room:

Choir Room B119

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 warm-up routine is stretching, breathing, and 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. ***Attendance is taken*** during warm-ups. If you are in an incorrect seat or are wandering around the room, you may be marked absent, which your parents will see as a notification and with think you are cutting class.
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 PowerSchool. 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 folder, participating in all activities, marking vocal scores properly, focusing attention on listening activities, displaying a positive attitude, staying on task, demonstrating good singing posture, 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, stay on task, 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 use 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 (and will 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 vice versa. 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!

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.

Symphonic Choir 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.*

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 2016-17 school year:

- Fall Concert with the Band: Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 7:00PM, Middle School Auditorium
- Winter Holiday Concert: Wednesday, December 21, 2016, 7:00PM, High School Auditorium
- Spring Concert & Senior Recognition: Thursday, May 11, 2017, 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 10, 2016, 6:30PM, St. Athanasius Church Hall
- Cabaret Night – Friday, March 3, 2017, HS Cafeteria

Additionally, the after school ensembles (NH Singers, Dreamcatchers, ARROW) will be featured at:

- Arts Alive – Friday, May 5, 2017, 5:00-9:00, High School

Ensembles

North Hills Singers: auditioned ensemble (spring of previous year) from the Symphonic Choir. Rehearses Monday and Tuesday after school as well as a few Saturdays. Extensive performances during holiday season.

DreamCatchers: auditioned ensemble for women of the Symphonic Choir and Women's Choir members. Rehearses most Thursdays after school. Performances TBD as the group is new, but will likely be featured on high school concerts and possibly at Cabaret Night and Arts Alive.

ARROW: men's ensemble open to any of the Symphonic Choir men. No auditions, just commitment to Wednesday after school rehearsals. Will be featured on high school concerts and possibly at Cabaret Night and Arts Alive.

Madrigal Choir: open to all choir members in grades 9-12. Rehearsals are for 2 weeks every day after Thanksgiving in preparation for the annual Choral Parents Association Madrigal Dinner fundraiser. Opportunities are also available for speaking/acting roles in the Madrigal Dinner in addition to the singing that the choir does.



Festivals

PMEA Honors Choir: Mr. Cloonan is co-hosting Honors Choir with Upper St. Clair, and the festival will take place on October 28-29, 2016 at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Upper St. Clair. There are separate Men's and Women's choirs that rehearse with their own guest conductors and then the 2 groups combined for the concert on Saturday afternoon. Participation is by application and teacher recommendation. If interested, submit your application to Mr. Cloonan by Friday, September 9.

PMEA District Chorus: PMEA District 1 Chorus will take place at Montour High School on Wednesday-Friday, January 11-13, 2017. Auditions will be held on Monday, November 21, 2016 at North Allegheny SHS. 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 February 22-24, 2017 at Gateway 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

Sweet Harmony: For girls in grades 6-9. Held at West Allegheny High School on Friday, November 8, 2016. Students selected to participate are excused from school this day and must arrange to be picked up at school around 5:00PM.

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 Friday, November 18, 2016 at East Allegheny High School.

Cedar Point & Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame

The 2017 Music Department performance tour will take place on May 19-21, 2017. All of our high school's performing ensembles will travel to Sandusky, Ohio, where they will compete in the Music in the Parks festival at Cedar Point. As part of the weekend, we will also tour the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, with hopes that our Rock Orchestra will also be able to perform there. We're looking at around \$250 for the cost of this trip. More details will be communicated as they become available.

Choral Parents Association

Parents of all singers in grades 9-12 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, Ms. Cathy Mann (cam62059@verizon.net) 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
- 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 2016

24	Wed	2:15-3:00	Drama Club Info Meeting
26	Fri	end of day	Signed Agreements due (25 points); Officer applications due (online)
27	Sat	9:00-12:00	Drama Club Audition Workshop

September 2016

1	Thur	2:15-4:00	DreamCatchers Women's Ensemble Auditions
6	Tue	2:15-3:15	NH Singers Rehearsals begin (Every Monday and Tuesday after)
7-8	Wed-Thur	2:15-4:00	Fall Play Auditions
9	Fri	end of day	PMEA Honors Choir applications due to Mr. Cloonan
10	Sat	6:00PM	<i>Senior Ensemble performs National Anthem at SoccerFest</i>
14	Wed	2:15-3:15	ARROW Men's Ensemble begins (Wednesdays)
15	Thu	2:15-3:15	DreamCatchers Rehearsals begin (Thursdays)
28	Wed	2:15-3:15	Full Symphonic Choir Rehearsal, Room B119
29	Thu	2:15-3:15	Full Women's Choir Rehearsal, Room B119

October 2016

12	Wed	2:15-3:15	Combined Choirs, B119 (move chairs to side of room)
17	Mon	2:15-4:00	Fall Concert Rehearsal, Middle School Auditorium
19	Wed	6:00PM	Report for 7:00PM Fall Concert, Middle School Auditorium
28-29	Fri-Sat	all day	PMEA Honors Choir at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Upper St. Clair

November 2016

4	Fri	all day	Sweet Harmony Festival at West Allegheny High School
12-13	Sat-Sun	9-12, 1-4	Fall Play Tech/Dress Rehearsals
17-19	Th-F-Sa	7:30PM	Fall Play, HS Auditorium
18	Fri	all day	Mucho Macho Music Festival at East Allegheny High School
21	Mon	2:15-2:45	First Madrigal Dinner Meeting
23	Mon	3:00-9:00	PMEA District Chorus Auditions at North Allegheny Senior High School
28	Mon	9:00-12:00	<i>NH Singers Rehearsal (Thanksgiving Break, but we'll need it!)</i>
29	Tue	3:00-4:00	Madrigal Dinner Rehearsals Begin

December 2016

1	Thur	1:00PM	<i>NH Singers perform at North Hills Presbyterian Church in West View</i>
3	Sat	9:00-12:00	Madrigal Dinner Rehearsal
3	Sat	1:00PM	<i>NH Singers perform at Faith Lutheran in Laurel Gardens</i>
4	Sun	TBD	Book Fair at Waterworks Barnes & Noble (Arrow or Dreamcatchers?)
6	Tue	1:00PM	<i>NH Singers perform for NHSD Retirees Luncheon, Shannopin Country Club</i>
10	Sat	5:00	Report for 6:30PM MADRIGAL DINNER at St. Athanasius Hall
13	Tue	2:15-3:15	Women's Choir, Room B119
14	Wed	2:15-3:15	Symphonic Choir, Room B119
15	Thur	all day	<i>NH Singers Tour Day – Arden Court, WV Methodist, Berkeley Hills</i>
19	Mon	2:15-3:00	Combined Rehearsal – Logistics & Combined Songs on Stage
20	Tue	2:15-4:15	Combined Rehearsal – Run Concert on Stage
21	Wed	6:00PM	Report for 7:00PM Winter Concert, HS Auditorium
22	Thu	2:15-3:00	Spring Musical Audition Info Meeting

Calendar-at-a-Glance, continued

January 2017

3	Tue	2:15-4:00	Spring Musical audition prep rehearsal
4-5	Wed-Thu	2:15-4:00	"Cinderella" Auditions
11-13	Wed-Fri	all day	PMEA District Chorus festival at Montour High School
13	Fri	End of First Semester	
25	Wed	all day	Winter Musical Preview Day
26-28	Thu-Sat	7:00PM	Winter Musical

February 2017

4	Sat	9:00-11:00	Cabaret Night auditions
16	Thu	evening	NH Singers at Fox Chapel Chamber Choir Invitational
22-24	Wed-Fri	all day	PMEA Region Chorus festival at Gateway High School
25	Sat	10:00-12:00	Cabaret Night rehearsals by appointment

March 2017

2	Thu	2:15-4:00	Cabaret Night Run-Through
3	Fri		2:15 Set up; 6:00 Report 7:00 CABARET NIGHT in Cafeteria A
18-19	Sat-Sun	9-12, 1-4	Musical Tech/Dress Rehearsals
23-25	Thu-Sat	7:30PM	Spring Musical
30-4/1	Thu-Sat	7:30PM	Spring Musical

April 2017

19-22	Wed-Sat	all day	PMEA All State Conference in Erie, PA
22-27	Mon-Thu	3:00-5:00	Drama Club Gala Rehearsals
28	Fri	7:00PM	Drama Club Gala

May 2017

3	Wed	2:15-3:15	Symphonic Choir, B119
4	Thu	2:15-3:15	Women's Choir, B119
5	Fri	5:00-9:00	Arts Alive: Performances by NH Singers, Dreamcatchers, ARROW
8	Mon	2:15-3:00	Combined Choirs – Logistics & Combined Songs on Stage
9	Tue	2:15-4:00	Combined Choirs – Run Concert on Stage
11	Thu	7:00PM	HS SPRING CHORAL CONCERT & SENIOR RECOGNITION
15	Mon	2:15-3:00	Tour Symphonic Rehearsal
17	Wed	2:15-3:00	Tour Women Rehearsal
18	Thu	2:15-3:30	Tour Choirs (run adjudication & pass out t-shirts)
19-21	Fri-Sun		Music Department Performance Tour to Cedar Point/RNR Hall of Fame
22	Mon	2:15-3:15	Last NH Singers (listen to judges' recordings)
23	Tue	2:15-4:00	Auditions for 2017-18 North Hills Singers
24-25	Wed-Thu	2:15-3:15	New NH Singers Rehearsal for Graduation
26	Fri	6:00PM	New NH Singers report to Martorelli for 7:00 Graduation

