



North Hills High School Music Department

Fall 2021 Symphonic Choir & Chorale Classes

www.nhchoiranddrama.net

Instructor: Mr. Cloonan (cloonans@staff.nhsd.net) • Room: B119 • Periods 5 & 8 (Chorale), 6 & 9 (Symphonic Choir)

Hi!

Welcome to what will hopefully be a more “normal” year of singing together! I’m excited to begin building back our program after a very trying last year and a half where making music together in person was not possible in a safe manner. Thank you to those of you who have stuck it out and are ready to move ahead...

Who is your teacher?

I’m Mr. Cloonan, and I’m starting my 20th year working at North Hills. Over the years I’ve taught general music K-6, middle and high school choir, and currently have high school choir, music theory, music technology, and work with the drama club. Outside of NH, I’ve been minister of music at the First Presbyterian Church of Edgewood since 2003, and I sing with a semi-professional chamber choir called Voces Solis that performs a few concerts each year. I also serve as Communications Chair for the American Choral Directors Association of PA. Oh yeah, and I’m pretty pumped about being Irish ([just wait til March](#)) and have a mild obsession with Reese’s peanut butter cups. 🍫

The High School Choral Program

We’re treating this year as a “reset” for the program, starting with classes meeting during new periods. Chorale now meets periods 5 and 8 and Symphonic Choir is periods 6 and 9. This change was made to accommodate students who may be in multiple ensembles such as orchestra (after the periods switched when 6th grade moved to the MS) to be able to fit their chosen electives in. The 2 different choirs meet in 2 sections/periods each day and come together to perform as individual choirs and as a full combined group at our concerts.

Daily Class Structure

As much as possible, a daily routine will be established. Every class will begin with warm-up exercises that are focused on muscles, breathing, and singing. Much like playing a sport, you must learn to use the muscles needed in the game by stretching, doing exercises, and practicing proper technique to get better so you can win the game. Our “games” are our public performances/concerts, and a “win” is us singing the songs we have prepared with the best technique and musical expression possible.

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

1. You will take a music folder from the cabinet 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 any conversations, stand up and face the front of the room, and begin silent stretching along with whoever is leading warm-ups. 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 we will not be acting like the “team” we need to be. Also, 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 or written up for a class cut.
4. The hall pass may be used **after warm-ups are completed, one at a time**. If you need to see the nurse, come to Mr. Cloonan directly, as the nurse’s office will not allow you in without a note from your teacher. Please do not abuse the hall pass or the privilege will be taken away from you
5. Keep homework put away unless you are specifically told you may work quietly (for example, if Mr. Cloonan is going to spend 20 minutes working with the sopranos only on a section and you sing alto, you may be given permission to quietly work until the group rehearses together again). 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.

6. When class is over, make sure that your music is put neatly back in your folder and that you return your folder to the cabinet. Mr. Cloonan's job is not to be your personal butler... take pride in your classroom. "Always leave a place better than how you've found it."

Grading

The largest part of being in an ensemble is actively participating. As this is an elective course, you are choosing to be here and to make the best music together. Here is the breakdown:

50% of your grade is **daily participation**. Everyone starts with a 100% - you get 5 points per day literally just for showing up and doing what is asked of you! The only way you lose those points is by not following rules: having gum/food/candy, not having your music/folder/iPad, choosing not to sing when asked, playing on devices instead of paying attention, showing any amount of disrespect.

25% of your grade is **"assignments."** These may be listening assignments with a question to answer in Google Classroom, it could be a memorization check on parts, a small group vocal singing test (of material we've gone over to make sure you know parts), or a sight-reading exercise to submit. Assignments will always be announced ahead of time to allow for adequate preparation and to minimize anxiety.

25% of your grade is **concerts & rehearsals**. Due to the fact that the classes meet as smaller sections each day, we don't get to hear what the full Chorale or Symphonic Choir sounds like unless we have a combined rehearsal. There will be one after school rehearsal in November for each choir and 3 in December to prepare for the Holiday Concert. Please mark these dates down and make appointments around them. They are part of your grade and required. Please make arrangements for transportation with friends/family for these 4 days after school, and most especially the concert night.

Tuesday, November 16, 2021	2:15-3:15PM	Chorale (in Choir Room B119)
Wednesday, November 17, 2021	2:15-3:15PM	Symphonic Choir (B119)
Tuesday, December 14, 2021	2:15-3:15PM	Chorale (B119)
Wednesday, December 15, 2021	2:15-3:15PM	Symphonic Choir (B119)
CONCERT WEEK:		
Monday, December 20, 2021	2:15-3:00PM	ALL Choir Members – Riser Logistics (HS Auditorium)
Tuesday, December 21, 2021	2:15-4:00PM	ALL Choir Members – Concert Run-thru (HS Aud)
Wednesday, December 22, 2021	7:00PM	Winter Concert in HS Aud (Report at 6pm for YB photos)

Extra-Curricular Ensembles

Over the past 10+ years, there have been several different choral groups that have met outside of the regular school day. The North Hills Singers was the most active group, meeting twice weekly and performing extensively in the community. Other performing ensembles have included a Treble Ensemble, Arrow, Dreamcatchers, and Madrigal. None of those groups met during the 2020-21 school year, so we will slowly build back based on student interest and availability. There is an assignment in your Google Classroom with a quick survey to see what interest there might be in having any of these groups for 2021-22. Note that due to safety concerns (especially with senior citizens), community performances will not happen outside of our regular concerts. The ensemble would be featured with a few songs of their own at the concert.

PMEA

There is an opportunity to sing with students from other schools in the festival system through the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA). In November, an audition must be prepared and recorded through a site called Submittable. All materials will be posted on the choir and drama website (nhchoiranddrama.net) as well as in your Google Classroom. Students in grades 10-12 may audition to participate in District Chorus, which takes place February 10-12, 2022 at East Liberty Presbyterian Church. At the district festival, students audition using the music they have prepared for the Region Chorus festival, held at Mars Area High School on March 24-26 (which is during our spring musical so be aware of that conflict!), and from Regions you can audition to participate in the All-State Chorus festival April 6-9, 2022 in the Poconos.

Music Department Performance Tour to DISNEY 2022!

Pending school board approval, our music department performance tours are beginning again, and this year is set to be a Disney year! We have been accepted along with the marching band and orchestra to participate in Disney Performing Arts On Stage. The dates of the tour are Sunday, April 10 through Friday, April 15, 2022, with students missing 3 days of classes right before Spring Break. The itinerary will be finalized once we know when and where each group is performing. In 2018, we spent an afternoon at Typhoon Lagoon waterpark followed by shopping at Disney Springs, a day at Magic Kingdom where we watched the marching band parade down Main Street toward the castle, a day split between Hollywood Studios and Animal Kingdom with the choir performing at Disney Springs in between the parks, lunch watching the orchestra perform at the House of Blues before a full day at Epcot.

Costs haven't yet been determined, but it will be around \$1,000 per student. In years past, the Choral Parents Association has coordinated multiple fundraisers to help offset individual contributions toward the group's financial goal. **We need help from parents to make that happen this year since our CPA officer positions are vacant.** If a parent would like to be involved in helping with these efforts, please contact cloonans@nhsd.net ASAP for more information. We'd ideally like to have a meeting for choral families some time in September to provide an overview of the tour and fundraising opportunities.

Communication

Communication is the key to success for any organization or group. I promise that as your teacher, I will always share expectations, deadlines, and important dates to you with as much advance notice as possible. Ways that you can access that information are as follows:

Google Classroom – join your class period with the codes below:

Period 5 Chorale – pqo6zh5

Period 6 Symphonic Choir – 6w6yhbq

Period 8 Chorale – uubvfzp

Period 9 Symphonic Choir – bbvx2zx

Remind texts – join our class using the Remind App, or by sending a text to 81010 with these class codes:

Symphonic Choir – @nhhssympho

Chorale – @nh-chorale

The choir & drama website: nhchoiranddrama.net

Social Media

Facebook: North Hills Choirs

Twitter: @northhillschoir

Instagram: @northhillschoirs

YouTube: NorthHillsChoirs

Email:

Mr. Cloonan – cloonans@staff.nhsd.net

Choral Parents – nhchoralparents@gmail.com

Important 2021-22 Dates

Wednesday, December 22 – Winter Holiday Concert, HS Auditorium

Thursday-Saturday, February 10-12, 2022 – PMEA District Chorus at East Liberty Presbyterian Church

Friday, February 18, 2022 – Cabaret Night

Sunday-Friday, April 10-15, 2022 – Music Department Tour to Orlando, Florida

Thursday, May 19, 2022 – Spring Concert & Senior Recognition, HS Auditorium

To Be Scheduled:

Disney Tour Parent & Families Meeting

Fundraising dates and tour payment deadlines

Senior Choir Banquet

Student-Parent-Teacher Agreement

Please go into our Google Classroom and complete the first assignment WITH YOUR FAMILIES so that we have everyone's proper contact info for communication this year. Thanks, and I can't wait to start singing with you! -- Mr. Cloonan *