



North Hills High School Music Department

Fall 2022 Symphonic Choir & Chorale Classes

www.nhchoiranddrama.net

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

Welcome to choir at North Hills High School! Last year, we began rebuilding and slowly adding in activities and events to the calendar that went away due to Covid restrictions. This year should be as close to pre-pandemic as possible.

I'm Mr. Cloonan, and I'm starting my 21st 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

During the academic day, there are 2 ensembles that meet each day in 4 different class periods. Chorale (our treble ensemble of soprano & alto voices) meets periods 5 and 8 and Symphonic Choir (mixed ensemble of SATB) is periods 6 and 9. 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. Outside of the school day, the North Hills Singers is our auditioned ensemble that performs out in the community at athletic events and for community groups (mostly at the holidays). Finally, the Madrigal Choir is a specialized group open to anyone in a choir class that meets for a brief period of 2 weeks in November to prepare and perform at our Renaissance-themed Madrigal Dinner fundraiser. More on that later!

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 3 after school rehearsals 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 3 days after school, and most especially the concert night.

Monday, December 12, 2022	2:15-3:15PM	Symphonic Choir (B119)
Tuesday, December 13, 2022	2:15-3:15PM	Chorale (B119)

CONCERT WEEK:

Monday, December 19, 2022	2:15-3:00PM	ALL Choir Members – Riser Logistics (HS Auditorium)
Tuesday, December 20, 2022	2:15-4:00PM	ALL Choir Members – Concert Run-thru (HS Aud)
Wednesday, December 21, 2022	7:00PM	Winter Concert in HS Aud (Report at 6pm for YB photos)

Extra-Curricular Ensembles

As mentioned earlier, we have opportunities for singing outside of the regular school day classes. Those interested in auditioning for our chamber choir, the North Hills Singers, should plan to attend the auditions on Wednesday, September 14 after school. There will be individual and group singing that takes place during this time. Singers generally rehearse on Mondays after school from 2:00-3:30 (exceptions when needed to accommodate the drama calendar). Typically the group performs at some community events particularly around the holidays.

Our Madrigal Dinner will return in person this year after 2 years away! This event is holiday themed and is supposed to be a reenactment of the big Renaissance festivals that took place hundreds of years ago. The Choral Parents organize the meal, and performers dress up in costumes and share a skit filled with bad jokes that takes place throughout the meal. The evening ends with a mini-concert of holiday carols as well as announcing winners of our raffle baskets. Most years, the event brings in around \$1,500 for our program. The time commitment for doing this is approximately a week and a half of after school rehearsals and the day of the actual event. We keep it low-key and have scripts in various places so that no one has to worry about memorizing a bunch of lines in a very short time period. More details as we get closer to the event!

PMEA

There is an opportunity to sing with students from other schools in the festival system through the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA). Auditions have returned to in-person, and we will go over the requirements in class for those interested. The senior high festivals are open to students in grades 10-12, and freshman are able to apply to sing in the junior high festival that will be held April 14-15, 2023 at South Fayette. The high school festivals are as follows:

Auditions: Monday, November 21 at Penn-Trafford (music and practice files in Google Classroom & choir website)

District Chorus Festival: January 12-13 at Thomas Jefferson (audition for Regions at this festival)

Region Chorus Festival: February 23-24 at Gateway (audition for All-State at this festival)

All State Chorus Festival: April 19-22 at Kalahari in the Poconos

Music Department Performance Tour to NYC 2023!

We are awaiting confirmation on several details, but tentatively our music department tour will take place April 28-May 1, 2023. We are planning a visit to New York City that includes tours of the Statue of Liberty and 9/11 Memorial, walking the Brooklyn Bridge, seeing Times Square and a Broadway show, and potentially a few more fun activities (like a dinner cruise on the Hudson River). We will end our tour by spending the day at Messiah University in Mechanicsburg doing clinics with their music faculty. This tour is open to all students in the choir, band, and orchestra classes as well as those in marching band. We did a version of this tour in 2019 and had a great time sightseeing and performing for each other.

Costs haven't yet been determined, but it will be hopefully around \$750-800 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!** The Choral Parents Association officers have met and are already planning fundraisers and activities for the year. We will have a meeting for choral families on **Thursday, September 15 at 7:00PM in the HS Auditorium** 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 – 2fihf6x

Period 6 Symphonic Choir – 25wqmlg

Period 8 Chorale – meytus5

Period 9 Symphonic Choir – tkcexnb

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 2022-23 Dates

Wednesday, September 14 – North Hills Singers auditions, 2:00-4:00PM

Thursday, September 15 – Choral Parents/Families Kick-off Night, 7:00PM, HS Auditorium

Saturday, November 19 – Madrigal Dinner, 6:30PM, Location TBD

Monday, November 21 – PMEA District Chorus Auditions at Penn-Trafford HS, after school

Tuesday, December 6 – North Hills Singers performance for NHSD Retirees' Luncheon at Shannopin Country Club

Friday, December 9 – North Hills Singers performance at NH Cares Community of Music (Block Northway), evening TBA

Wednesday, December 21 – Winter Holiday Concert, HS Auditorium, 7:00PM

Friday, March 3 – Cabaret Night, HS Cafeteria, 7:00PM

Friday-Monday, April 28-May 1 – Music Department Tour to NYC & Messiah University

Thursday, May 18 – Spring Concert & Senior Recognition, HS Auditorium

May, TBD – Senior Choir Banquet, HS Cafeteria

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 *