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Student/Parent Handbook

2017-2018

Ms. Michelle Austin, Director of Choral Activities

Room 7235

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To the Choral Members and Parents,

Welcome to the Alpharetta High School Chorus! I am honored to be the choral director here at AHS and look forward to another incredible year.

The purpose of this choral handbook is to provide students and parents with important information concerning the choral program at Alpharetta High School, and to answer any questions or concerns you may have. However, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at any point during the year if you seek additional information.

I am excited that you have chosen to participate in the choral program at Alpharetta and I look forward to working with each of you. Go Raiders!

Michelle Austin

Director of Choral Activities

Alpharetta High School

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**Course Descriptions:**

**Concert Choir**

This class, open to both men and women in grades 9-12, provides an introduction to the basics of choral music performance. Students will perform a variety of repertoire, and will also learn the basics of sight-reading, theory, ear training, and vocal health. Students will perform in various concerts throughout the year, and will go to Large Group Performance Evaluation in the spring. There is no prerequisite to be a member.

**Select Women’s Ensemble**

AUDITION ONLY. This class, open to women only in grades 9-12, provides a more advanced approach to choral music performance. Students will perform a variety of repertoire, will learn about more advanced topics in vocal health, sight-reading, theory, and ear training. Students will perform at various concerts throughout the year, and will go to Large Group Performance Evaluation in the spring.

**Chorale**

AUDITION ONLY. Open to both men and women in grades 9-12, this is the most advanced ensemble at Alpharetta High School. Members are expected to possess the highest levels of self-discipline, musicianship, and commitment. Students will perform a variety of advanced repertoire, will learn about more advanced topics in vocal health, sight-reading, theory, and ear training. Students will perform at various concerts and events throughout the year, and will go to Large Group Performance Evaluation in the spring.

Additional performing opportunities:

**Literary Meet**

AUDITION ONLY. Open to both men and women in grades 9-12. Students selected must meet the requirements as stated by GHSA, and will represent Alpharetta High School in their selected category. Additional information about auditions will be given during the school year.

Girls’ Solo, Boys’ Solo, Girls’ Trio, Boys’ Quartet

**Momentum and Hype**

AUDITION ONLY. These ensembles, open to men and women in grades 9-12, provides students the opportunity to perform more contemporary music. Rehearsals will be held during the 2x week Anchor Time block at the end of the school day. (Students who cannot sign up for the a cappella AT both semesters will not be considered for an audition.) An additional rehearsal for each group will be decided once the groups are announced. Students who commit to this ensemble will need to be available for several afterschool performances on- and off-campus.

**Materials and Expenses**

Each student will be responsible for bringing a pencil to class. Failure to bring one to rehearsal will result in the lowering of that student’s grade for the day.

All music and textbooks will be provided by the Alpharetta Choral Department. Lost or damaged materials will result in a replacement fee. The fee will depend on the value of the item. All fees must be paid off by the semester in which the materials were damaged or lost. Failing to pay off fees from lost or damaged items will result in the holding of all student records.

Each student is asked to pay **$70**. This fee includes the chorus uniform (rental and alterations), a chorus t-shirt, allows the program to bring in clinicians and guest judges, and helps the chorus program to purchase consumable items throughout the year.

There will be many additional opportunities during the year for performance and musical enrichment. The Camp Glisson retreat, All-State Chorus, District Honor Choir, festivals, and workshops are all examples of additional expenses each chorus student may have. While most of these are optional, there may be an opportunity during the year that will require participation from the entire choir. If any unforeseen costs arise, the director will give ample notice prior to the event.

Students will have the opportunity to raise money to meet individual expenses through fundraisers and concession sales (the cheesecake sale in August being the most popular). No student will be denied membership in any choral activity because of an inability to meet financial obligations. If you foresee any problem, please consult the director for alternatives.

**Performance Attire**

All students will be required to have a choral uniform. Part of your yearly fee will cover the purchase and student’s use of the outfit and alterations. Uniform cleaning (cold/cold wash, hang to dry for women; dry cleaning for men) are the responsibility of the individual student.

*Men* – Tuxedos will be provided by the choral department for a rental fee. Black dress shoes, black socks, white wing-tipped tuxedo shirt or plain white button-down, and black bow-tie are the responsibility of each student to purchase.

*Women* – All women will wear the same black performance dress, which will be rented through the choral department. Black close-toed shoes are the responsibility of each student to purchase. (Ladies – Although high heels look nice, they are not comfortable to stand in for extended periods of time. Pick a shoe that you can stick with all year.)

Make-up: I ask that all women wear make-up for performances. It does not have to be heavy, but some mascara, blush and lipstick/lip gloss makes a huge difference. When you are on stage, the lights will wash you out if you do not have make-up on.

Hair: Please pull your hair back. It does not have to be in a bun or ponytail, but make sure your hair is out of your face.

Jewelry: I ask that you do not wear extraneous jewelry. A basic ring is fine; rubber or yarn bracelets, flashy jewelry, chunky watches, etc. should not be worn.

General Etiquette: NO PERFUME OR BODY SPRAY. Please make sure that your outfit is fresh and clean.

**REMEMBER: The audience will see you before they ever hear you sing. Look as good as you sound!**

Any student that appears to a concert in improper attire will not be allowed to perform and will earn a grade of zero.

**Classroom Expectations**

When you enter the room, get your choral folder from the cabinet or your backpack. Place all other books and purses out of the way in the assigned area. Make sure you have a pencil!

Once the bell rings, there is a two minute grace period that gives students the time to use the restroom and socialize. A timer will be set by your choir’s representative. Once the two minute timer goes off, it is expected that all students already be in their chairs prepared for rehearsal. **Any student who is not seated in their chair with their music in order will be counted as tardy.** Because you get those extra two minutes to take care of personal business, no student will be allowed to interrupt rehearsal and ask to leave the room for any reason, unless in the case of an emergency.

Please do not bring any food or beverages – besides water – onto the risers.

Illness: If you are unable to sing because of illness, please follow the guidelines for the “Rehearsal Observation Log”.

Officers and section leaders will be asked to aid the director in various capacities and should be given due respect by all chorus members.

Chorus members are expected to behave as mature adults at all times and should treat each other with mutual respect. Students gathered for choral functions at any time are governed by Alpharetta High School rules.

**Discipline**

Students are expected to adhere to the Fulton County Code of Conduct, AHS Student Handbook, and the above class rules.

First offense – Verbal warning from the director.

Second offense – Points taken from daily participation grade.

Third offense – Parent/Guardian notification, detention with the director, and automatic participation grade of 0 for the day.

Fourth offense – Removal from class to administrator’s office, parent/guardian notification, public detention or suspension, and automatic participation grade of 0 for the day.

Note: Any student who displays violent or dangerous behavior will immediately progress to the fourth offense.

Any student who is required to serve detention with the director will have the option of morning (7:30-8:10 AM) or afternoon (3:45-4:25 PM) detention. The student will be given a task related to the choral department. If the student is tardy, they will be required to serve detention on a different day. Cell phones and other electronic devices will not be permitted during detention.

**Evaluation**

Students will be assessed on four basic criteria: performance, participation, knowledge, and progress.

(40%) Performance: *There is no choir without performances. To miss a performance is the same as missing a final exam in any regular class.* Throughout the year, students will perform in various concerts, programs, and festivals. These performances allow the student to showcase all of their hard work to their peers, family, and friends. **All performances and dress rehearsals are mandatory**. Students who miss a dress rehearsal or performance for any reason will be required to do additional work. Please see “Absences and Make-Up Work” for further information.

(35%) Participation: Each student will begin the day with a 100 participation grade. If a student is not in their seat at the start of class, breaks one of the basic rules (e.g. fails to bring a pencil or music to class, food or gum, disruptive during class), then points will be taken off of their daily grade. The grade is determined by evaluating each student’s effort, behavior, attentiveness, and cooperation.

(15%) Final Exam

(10%) Formative Assessments: During the course of the year, students will learn about concepts in music theory, ear training, music history, and vocal health. Assessments will be given throughout the course to assess how much they have learned and retained.

The choral department uses the same grading scale as AHS.

**Absences and Make-up Work**

Attendance in class by every student is essential to the success of the group. Following an absence, it is the **student’s responsibility** to contact the director to arrange for make-up work. The contact must be made within one (1) school day of returning. Students are given the same number of days to complete make-up work as the absence. For instance, if a student is absent two days, he/she has two days to complete the assignment. Assignments made prior to the absence, including tests/quizzes scheduled for the day of return, are due upon the student’s return. All listening journal assignments (on Tuesdays) can be found on Ms. Austin’s google site.

Absence from a performance or extra rehearsal:

If a concert is missed because of severe illness, a doctor’s note must be brought in within **three (3) days** of the missed performance. If a concert is missed because of an emergency situation (death in the family, or other situation approved as an “emergency” by the director), an excuse note must be given to the director upon the **first day** of the student’s return. The excuse note must include a phone number where a parent/guardian can be reached. Severe illness and emergency situations will be considered an excused absence, so long as a note is given. If a student has to be absent from a rehearsal or performance, they must let the director know beforehand, otherwise the absence will be considered unexcused (except in unavoidable circumstances).

**Employment is not a valid excuse for absence from a rehearsal or performance.**

All students are expected to be at all performances for their group. Distinction for grading: School concerts and festivals, which are the culmination of the work we do in class, will be considered curricular. Community performances where we provide "entertainment" (PTSA, National Anthem, etc.) will be considered extra-curricular, and "extra-credit" for grading. Students are still expected to come, still expected to provide a written excuse if they cannot perform, but will not receive a grade penalty for failure to participate.

If a student is absent from a concert, before- or after-school rehearsal, or other performance obligation, the student will then be required to complete one of the make-up assignments below.

All make-up assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font. Papers will be graded on content and grammar accuracy, not on completion. Make sure that you are properly citing all sources used. **Wikipedia is NOT a reliable source.** Papers that are plagiarized will receive an automatic zero. For each performance missed, pick one topic to write about. You will have two weeks from the date assigned to complete each assignment. *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* are both great resources.

1. Write a four-page paper on the importance of every member to the ensemble. Questions to consider: How does my absence affect the ensemble? Why is it important for me to be at every rehearsal/performance? Aside from academics, what can a student learn by being a part of chorus?
2. Complete **four** of the following lessons and trainers on [www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net). You must do at least ONE trainer per lesson (the assignment will include three different lessons and three different trainers).
   1. Lessons: After completing a lesson, you must type one page of notes (per lesson). You can select one of the following lessons:
      1. Major Scale
      2. Minor Scale
      3. Key Signatures
      4. Key Signature Calculation
      5. Generic Intervals
      6. Specific Intervals
      7. Writing Intervals
      8. Introduction to Chords
      9. Phrases and Cadences
   2. Trainers: You MUST do at least 100 examples and print the score page or screen-on. You can select one of the following trainers:
      1. Note Identification
      2. Key Identification
      3. Interval Identification
      4. Chord Identification
      5. Interval Ear Trainer
3. Write a four-page paper detailing important matters of vocal health. Describe the vocal mechanism and discuss how to remain in good vocal health. Discuss the “Do’s” and “Do Not’s” of singing and taking care of your voice. You must include a bibliography. Below is a list of websites/books that you can use, but feel free to use additional sources. If you are unsure of whether a website/book is reliable, ask Ms. Austin.

http://www.texasvoicecenter.com/advice.html

http://www.singers-uk.org/vocal\_health.htm

http://www.radford.edu/~dcastong/ARTARCH/vocal.html

<http://www.vocalist.org.uk/vocal_health.html>

*Solutions for Singers: Tools for Performers and Teachers* (Oxford University Press, 2004)

1. Write a four-page paper on a professional choral ensemble of your choice. This should be a detailed biography of their life and importance to the music world. Be sure to discuss where they are located, how they got started in the music business, what they are doing now, and what they are most famous for. Also be sure to include a brief biography of the conductor. Some options:
   1. Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Phoenix Chorale, Polyphony, Monteverdi Choir, King’s Singers, Choir of King’s College, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Stile Antico, The Tallis Scholars, The Sixteen, Chanticleer.
2. Choose a career in music (including, but not limited to: music performance, music education, music therapy, music business and administration) to research and write a four-page paper. Include necessary aptitudes and talents to be successful in the field, training, job outlook, job location, employment opportunities, salary, and job responsibilities. Please use these two websites as a resource, but you are not limited to these two. All sources should be properly cited.

http://www.menc.org/information/infoserv/careersinmusic.htm

http://www.berklee.edu/careers/default.html