

Ballard High School Choirs

2019-2020 Handbook

Music is not essential for life, but it is essential for a life lived well.
– *Christopher Small*



BALLARD MUSIC

September 9, 2019

Dear Students and Parents,

Welcome to the Ballard High School Choir Program! I look forward to working with all of you as we continue the strong tradition of choral music at BHS.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a guide and insight into the choral program. In it you will find CHOIR DESCRIPTIONS, an explanation of the choir GRADING SYSTEM AND OBJECTIVES, a listing of REHEARSAL PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS, the POLICY ON PERFORMANCE ABSENCES, a detailed PERFORMANCE DRESS CODE, other GENERAL INFORMATION you may find useful, and an ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM. Please read over all its contents and refer to it throughout the year.

I strongly encourage each family to become involved in the Ballard High School Performing Arts Boosters, which has been created to provide a better musical experience for every student in our program. In the process, you will have the opportunity to interact with dedicated and motivated parents and guardians who, like you, want the best possible experiences for their children.

Music is an art. It is my goal as a choral music educator to shape, foster, and bring to life the artist within you. I am committed to helping you develop skilled voices, attentive ears, and artistic minds. Students in the choral music program are challenged to grow musically and vocally to their greatest potential. They are expected to respect their director, their fellow musicians, the music they perform, and the work each of us must do to become the best choir(s) possible. Students are also expected to show responsibility for their individual contribution by giving their best effort at all rehearsals and performances.

As we all process the sometimes troubling and difficult world that we live in, know that I believe in you, I care about you, and I am committed to challenging and wrestling through many issues with you. United together I believe we can make our school and eventually our world a better place. Know that you are safe, welcome, and valued in this room. Together we will create an environment in which each of us can grow and learn in a safe place, regardless of race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, or physical or mental ability. My hope is that through this program we will come together with our unique abilities to create and add beauty to our world through the gift of art and music.

Best wishes for a wonderful year!

Sincerely,

Courtney Rowley
Director of Choirs
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(206) 252-1035

CHOIR DESCRIPTIONS

TREBLE CHOIR

Treble Choir is open to all students with upper voices (soprano and alto) in the school who enjoy music and wish to become better singers and performers. All ninth grade sopranos and altos who wish to join choir will begin their high school choir experience in this ensemble. Treble Choir learns and performs music for the treble voice in a variety of musical styles, from classical to Broadway and pop. Students will learn correct vocal technique, music theory, sight-reading, expressive singing, and how to work together to create a dynamic musical performance. Students are encouraged to take Treble Choir for as many years as they wish.

ADVANCED CHORALE

Advanced Chorale is an ensemble made up of intermediate to advanced musicians with soprano and alto voices. Students will sing and perform quality choral literature of the highest level from a large variety of genres, cultures, and styles. This group performs at numerous school concerts and festivals, as well as additional honors and invitational concerts, throughout the year. In addition to their performance schedule, students spend time developing advanced music reading and comprehension skills, as well as refining their vocal technique and their ability to sing expressively. Advanced Chorale attends fall choir camp and frequently travels on a choir tour.

CONCERT CHOIR

Concert Choir is a large performing group for all voice parts (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass). Students sing and perform quality choral literature from a variety of genres, cultures, and styles. There is an emphasis on building musicianship skills through a program of sight reading, music theory, ear training, and vocal technique. This group performs choral literature of the highest level at four to five school concerts and two to three festivals throughout the year, where they consistently receive Superior ratings. Concert Choir also attends fall choir camp, participates in numerous workshops and invitationals, and frequently travels on a choir tour.

VOCAL JAZZ

Vocal Jazz is a small mixed ensemble for advanced singers. Students will sing a variety of choral literature with an emphasis on jazz music. A high level of sight reading, music theory, ear training, and vocal technique is expected. The group participates in vocal jazz festivals throughout the northwest and performs at numerous singing gigs in and around the Seattle area. Auditions are held each spring for the following school year. Sound technician and jazz rhythm section may also be enrolled each year.

WOMEN'S CHAMBER CHOIR

Women's Chamber Choir is an extracurricular ensemble for soprano and alto voices that rehearses twice a week (after school on Tuesdays and before school on Fridays). Students perform advanced choral literature for women's voices. They participate in Solo and Ensemble and consistently receive Superior ratings. Women's Chamber Choir also participates in various smaller concerts and gigs throughout the area.

MEN'S ENSEMBLE

Men's Ensemble is an extracurricular ensemble for tenor and bass voices that rehearses twice a week (after school on Tuesdays and before school on Fridays). Students will sing a variety of music including doo-wop, contemporary rock, pop, classical, and folk music. Men's Ensemble performs for all school concerts as well as assemblies, gigs throughout the area, and at Solo and Ensemble.

*“In this world of political, economic, and personal disintegration, **music is not a luxury it is a necessity.** Not simply because it is therapeutic, nor because it is the **universal language**, but because it is the **persistent focus of our intelligence, aspiration and good will.**” – Robert Shaw*

GRADING SYSTEM AND OBJECTIVES

The depth of coverage of material in this course requires active student engagement and participation. The failure to attend class prevents active student engagement. Because active student engagement is a necessary component of this class, attendance, tardiness, and class participation will be considered as a basis for grading in this course. Each student is given 5 points for Daily Participation. Doing work for other classes or work not assigned to be done during class, sleeping, social talking, being tardy or leaving class early without an excuse are all circumstances that may result in loss of your daily participation points. Students will receive no participation points for days on which they have unexcused absences.

Student grades will be based on the following:

Daily Participation – Students earn 5 points each day and can lose points for the following reasons:

- Excessive Socializing or Talking.
 - Our primary goal in choir is to make music. It is our goal to ensure that rehearsals are run in a fun but efficient and effective manner at all times. This should be the goal of the singers as well. It is easy to become distracted in a room full of students. I will always try to keep you on task but it is your job to accept the responsibility for your actions. The single most disruptive element to a rehearsal is excessive talking. Please come to choir and SING. That is why we are here.
- Gum, Candy, Food, or Soda.
 - You cannot sing correctly if you are consuming food, drinks, or chewing gum in class. Water is fine and encouraged!
- Materials not brought to or being used in class.
 - Always have your folder and a pencil and mark your music.
- Poor Posture and Alignment.
 - This inhibits proper singing.
- Unauthorized use of cell phones or other electronic devices.
 - Studies have shown that the brain can take up to 10 minutes to reengage after responding to a cell-phone distraction. A ‘ding’ or ‘buzz’ from a phone or the illumination of a screen can distract even the best of students let alone those around them. Cell phones, while important tools for communication and even research, offer very little to the classroom setting in a music ensemble. College and professional musicians do not use cell phones during rehearsals and performances. Therefore, cell phones will not be allowed during Ballard music rehearsals. To help allay the temptation to have a phone on a music stand or to pull one out of a pocket, students will be requested to place their cell phone in the numbered cell phone holder near the front of the room when they enter class. After music rehearsal, students can pick up their phones on the way out of class.
- Disruptive Behavior.
 - Not staying in the seating chart.
 - Leaving before dismissed.
 - Rough housing.
 - Disrespectful behavior towards classmates or teachers.

- **Performance Points** – Students earn up to 100 points for participation in each required concert.
 - Attendance for the entire concert is required. We must all support each other’s portion of the concert.
 - Students may also be required to attend dress rehearsals or extra rehearsals as deemed necessary.
- **Test Scores** – Several quizzes, worth a variety of points, may be administered throughout the year to test student’s musical comprehension and growth.
 - These tests may be written or sung. Students must be prepared to sing alone in front of the director or with a small group in front of the class. Occasionally students may be asked to sing brief passages alone in front of the class, but these occasions will not be graded.

CHOIR MUSICAL OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

1. Recognize notes and note values.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of time signatures.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of key signatures.
4. Identify the keys on the keyboard.
5. Use solfege for the development of sight reading skills.
6. Sing major, minor, and chromatic scales.
7. Read treble and bass clef.
8. Perform basic rhythmic patterns using all note values and rests.
9. Demonstrate proper posture and alignment for singing.
10. Demonstrate an understanding of the “singer’s breath”.
11. Experiment with various vowel colors.
12. Sing with proper diction.
13. Develop their vocal range.
14. Demonstrate knowledge of the soft palate.

My goal is an “A” for everyone! Can you do it?



REHEARSAL PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS

1. Be in your seat with your folder and a pencil at the start of class.
2. You will be expected to participate fully every day that you are in attendance. I realize that there will be some days you will not feel like singing. However, if you are well enough to be in class, you will need to participate to the best of your ability. Singing with a cold, a sore throat, or an upset stomach may be a bit uncomfortable, but it should not hurt your voice. If, however, you are having difficulty phonating (your voice is hoarse or cutting out in certain ranges) or you feel pain when phonating, you need to speak with me before class so that I can evaluate your vocal situation and we can come up with a plan for your participation.
3. Please do not chew gum, eat, or drink anything other than water in class.
4. Listen and pay attention at all times during rehearsal. Even if only one section is rehearsing, everyone else should be following along in the music. Plan to talk very little and sing a great deal when you come to rehearsal!
5. Sing with good posture and alignment at all times. Make great alignment a habit, rather than something you save for performances.
6. Mark your music IN PENCIL during rehearsals.
7. Willingly try everything you are asked to do. I will never ask you to do something that will not help you to grow as a musician.
8. Do not write on the white board.
9. Do not play the grand piano. This is an extremely expensive instrument and we only have one!
10. Keep cell phones put away in your assigned cell phone slot. Consider this your first and only warning. Your cell phone will be confiscated for the period if it is out.
11. Conflicts with the performance schedule and other personal business should ALWAYS be discussed OUTSIDE OF CLASS and on a one-on-one basis with the director.
12. Choral music is an art that occurs in the moment. If you're not in class during rehearsals then you miss something that can't be made up or created on your own. If you need to use the bathroom in an emergency situation, wait for an appropriate interval and then leave quietly.
13. A respectful attitude toward your classmates and the director must be maintained at all times. There will be challenging times in this class, but there will be many more good times. I want you to enjoy choir and a positive atmosphere will make that possible.

“Always rehearse your performance because you will perform your rehearsal.”

POLICY ON PERFORMANCE ABSENCES

As a member of the Ballard High School Choirs, you are required to be at all dress rehearsals, performances, and festivals. Important musical factors such as balance and blend are affected by the absence of even a single performer! You accept the responsibility to be at required concerts when you join a musical group. Your grade will reflect how well you meet this responsibility.

- Look over the calendar carefully NOW. Note the performances which are required as a member of your choir.
- Decide which optional activities you might want to be involved in.
- Write appropriate dates on your family's activity calendar NOW.
- Absences from required concerts will result in loss of points with the exception of:
 - **Illness** – Students claiming illness but having attended school the day of the concert and the day following the concert will not be excused.
 - **Death in the immediate family**
 - **Planned absence** – This means that the director has been notified several weeks (if not months) in advance, and that every attempt has been made to rectify the conflict.
- Absences from required concerts due to the following reasons will not be excused:
 - **I had to work.** Students are given the performance schedule on the first day of school so that they can avoid conflicts with work schedules. Employers told far in advance of a specific date will most likely avoid it.
 - **I couldn't find a ride.** There are many other students in the choral program that will gladly help you get to and from the concert. In addition, we have a wonderful public transportation system. If you are having trouble finding a way to get here, please speak to the director.
 - **I had family obligations.** The performance schedule is given out on the first day of class so that students can clear their calendar and avoid personal conflicts.
 - **I forgot.** Students are reminded daily for at least one week prior to a concert and are given a performance schedule on the first day of school.
- If after speaking with the director it is determined that you MUST miss a performance, you will have the opportunity to do a written make-up assignment:
 - Make-up assignments are eligible for up to 80% of performance points.
 - They are due by the end of the quarter.
 - **Make-up Assignment:** Write a three-page, double-spaced paper on a musical topic of your choice. Ideas include composers, bands, singers, types of music, compositions, musical time periods, musical genres, etc. Please consult and list three scholarly sources when writing the assignment.

PERFORMANCE DRESS CODE

Tuxedos

Those wearing a tux must purchase their own white wing-tip tuxedo shirt (with studs). These should be purchased from Ted Brown Music in the University District (on the corner of NE 50th St and Roosevelt). Alterations to tuxes are arranged through Ted Brown Music and will be paid for by the student. Black dress-shoes, black socks, and a white undershirt must also be purchased and worn. Tuxedo pants, jacket, black bow-tie, and cummerbund will be provided.

Dresses/Skirts and Tops

Those wearing a dress/skirt and top must purchase their own black, low heeled, closed-toe dress shoes or character shoes. These will be worn with every dress in the choir program. Nude or skin-colored nylons or knee-highs must also be purchased and worn. Formal dresses (Treble Choir) or skirts and tops (Concert Choir, Advanced Chorale and Women's Chamber Choir) will be provided. Your dress may need to be altered. These alterations will be organized by the choir program.

Vocal Jazz Suits

Vocal Jazz men will be required to purchase a separate jazz uniform, consisting of black dress pants, a dress shirt, a tie, and your black tux jacket. This attire will be chosen at the beginning of the school year and will be kept by each member.

Vocal Jazz Dresses

Vocal Jazz women will also be required to purchase a separate dress for jazz festivals and performances. This dress will be chosen at the beginning of the school year and will be kept by each member.

As we strive for excellence in our music making, we must do our best to look as professional as we sound. Sloppy looking choirs make a poor impression upon audiences and judges. Long hair must be pulled off of the face. All jewelry must be taken off with the exception of small stud earrings. Concert attire should be clean and neatly pressed for each performance. Music department attire is to be worn ONLY at music department events. A student who loses or damages a uniform will be charged the fees necessary for replacing it.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Voice Lessons

Students in the Ballard Choir Program are encouraged to study voice privately with a voice teacher. Benefits of doing so include:

- Growth of vocal ability
- Increased musicianship
- Improved stage presence which benefit:
 - Communication skills
 - Presentation skills
 - Interpersonal skills
- Personal goal setting and achievement skills
- Increased self confidence and stronger contribution to the choir team

Students may arrange to take lessons with one of the voice instructors who teaches lessons at school during class, and can also obtain a referral for a voice teacher outside of the school day from Ms. Rowley.

Teamwork

Choir is a TEAM activity. Please remember that every singer is integral to the team. Even those students who do not study privately or choose to participate in extracurricular ensembles are important. The best singer, when singing alone, does not a choir make.

Varsity Letters

Students in the Ballard High School Choirs are eligible to earn a Varsity Choir Letter. Students do this by meeting a number of criteria that go above and beyond the day to day expectations of choir. Interested students should see the director ASAP.

Financial Assistance

If at any time during the year you experience financial hardship that inhibits paying for a required fee, please call, e-mail, or send a note. You may also talk to me before or after class. WE WILL FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT WORK!!!

Music With A Sacred Text

Ballard choirs have consistently received excellent ratings at festivals and competitions throughout the region. This is because we sing music which is considered to be of the finest quality and because we perform it at an extremely high level. Some of this music (often taken from required lists) contains sacred text. It is our intent to expose students to as many cultures and varieties of quality music as possible. It is not, however, our function or our desire to impose a series of beliefs upon a student or group of students. This statement is supported by the American Choral Directors Association as well as numerous state music education associations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I acknowledge that I have read the 2019-2020 Ballard High School Choral Music Handbook. I have also looked over the calendar and noted important calendar dates. I understand that being in the music program at Ballard is an important commitment. By signing this form, I pledge to honor that commitment and do my part to help make my choir successful.

Student Name (Printed)

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please return by Wednesday, September 18th, 2019.

Handbook is available electronically both on Schoology and at www.ballardperformingarts.org under the Choir tab and Meet the Director page.

-Life is too short for ordinary experiences.-