Stillwater Christian School
Handbook for Middle School and High School Choirs
Micah Hunter, Director

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. Psalm 27:4

Cantate Domino canticum novum!

OBJECTIVE

Our objective is to glorify God in our preparation, study, and performance of His wondrous gift of Music.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

Classroom procedures can be summarized in one sentence: Respect everyone and everything. This is a general rule which applies regarding any foreseeable classroom issue. Specifically, this rule is exemplified in the following daily procedures.

1. *Students are expected to come into the classroom prepared and in an orderly fashion, and will be in their seats with all necessary materials (music, folder, pencil, etc.) by the sounding of the second bell. Students are free to visit quietly from their seats until class begins.*
2. *Class officially begins when the director first addresses the choir by speaking, raising his hand, or sitting at the piano. At this point, all talking should stop. Talking is permitted between pieces, but never while I am engaged in teaching the class as a whole or in sections. Talking is certainly never permitted during the course of a song. Music is art that exists in time, and to interrupt that flow of time with something not belonging to the music indicates a severe lack of artistic understanding.*
3. *Students are not allowed out of their seats/riser positions unless the director grants permission. If you need a drink or a bathroom break, just ask. I'd be happy to let you go at an appropriate time. Asking is simply a sign of respect – a statement that you understand your presence is important and that you are committed to seeing our choir succeed.*

In general, just remember to respect everyone and everything, and we will have a fun and productive time together.

CORE VALUES

1. What we do is of eternal and cosmic significance.
2. Excellence ought to be normal.
3. Excellence is starved by pride, but fed by humility.
4. Love makes us more real.
5. Every voice can and ought to honor God.

GRADING

Grading will follow the scale outlined in the SCS student handbook:

100-93 = A
92-90 = A-
89-87 = B+
86-83 = B
82-80 = B-
79-77 = C+
76-73 = C
72-70 = C-
69-67 = D+
66-63 = D
62-60 = D-
<60 = F

There are three categories in which you will be graded, and they are weighted as follows:

Practice Assignments & Written Work: 10%
Rehearsal (Attendance, Participation, & Conduct): 45%
Performance (Attendance, Participation, & Conduct): 45%

In General: Percentages will be calculated with respect to the total number of points available through written assignments, singing tests, sight-reading tests, and rehearsal and performance attendance and conduct. Extra credit is available on a case by case basis, and can be used to raise a student's point total to a maximum of the equivalent of one full letter grade at the time of its calculation.

COURSE OF STUDY

Literature will represent various style periods of western music history. Occasionally, music of a non-western tradition may be studied. In addition to our concert preparations, a large part of our time and energy will be spent developing music literacy, specifically regarding music theory, aural skills (ear training and sight reading), and music history. These areas of music study will be addressed and assessed primarily in class, though written and practice assignments may be given. It is also important for any developing musician to *listen* to different styles and genres of music and performance. For this reason, and in accordance with the National Standards for Music Education, students will listen to and respond to great choral music throughout the year.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance requirements are the same as those outlined in the SCS Student Handbook. If a conflict arises between choir and another activity or event, (including school sports, club sports, church activities, family events, ect.) speak to the adults in charge of both of the conflicting activities as soon as possible. A decision will then be made regarding

the specific attendance requirement. In general, attendance of a performance or game supersedes attendance of a rehearsal or practice. Attendance of performances is required and can not be excused save for exceptional circumstances. YOU ARE IMPORTANT! You cannot be replaced in a rehearsal or performance. Whatever our choir becomes *with* you, it *cannot* be *without* you. YOU ARE IMPORTANT! Whatever you think about your voice or your importance to us, YOU ARE IMPORTANT!

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

Keeping track of and maintaining concert attire is the responsibility of the student, not the director.

FORMAL CONCERT ATTIRE

Middle School gentlemen are responsible for providing their own *black* slacks, *black* socks, *black* dress shoes, *white* dress shirt, and *black* necktie. Do not wait until the day of the concert to make sure these are available.

Middle School ladies are responsible for providing their own *black* skirt or slacks, *white* dress shirt or blouse, and *black* close-toed dress shoes. High heels are discouraged given the necessity of risers in concert situations.

High School gentlemen will rent tuxedos from the high school office for the year. They must still provide their own *black* socks and *black* dress shoes. Choir ribbons are also worn at major concerts.

High School ladies' dresses must be rented or purchased from the high school office. Choir ribbons are also worn at major concerts.

IN-SCHOOL PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

We have found that it is necessary to define dress code expectations for school days with IN-SCHOOL performances. In-school performances include the Veterans Day Assembly, Christmas Assembly, and sometimes assemblies attached to our annual guest artist residencies. In the past, we have defined the dress code for these days as "chapel dress," but since that is no longer a defined expectation in our student handbook, we have chosen to formally define it for our music students. This will be part of both the band and choir handbooks in future years.

Dress Expectations for In-School Performances:

MEN:

Men should wear a fully-buttoned, collared dress shirt with an appropriate tie of their choice. Shirt should be tucked into black, navy-blue, or khaki-colored dress slacks with a belt. Dark socks should be worn with dress shoes.

WOMEN:

Women should wear dress clothes appropriate to school dress code. This may include slacks and blouse, skirt and blouse, dress, etc. No high-heels, please.

Each student is responsible for maintaining his/her own concert attire throughout the school year.

TRAVELING

No trip this year.

MUSIC & FOLDERS

Music and folders are provided at the school's expense. You have the same responsibility regarding these items as you have regarding textbooks in other classes, (except that I *expect* you to mark your music with musical markings in pencil). Take care of them and do not lose them *or mistreat them.* **Do not write on your folders or folder labels. Do not roll up, crinkle, fold, draw pictures on, or otherwise deface your music.** I have taken great care to see that each student begins the year with all necessary music in their folder. At the end of the school year, or at any point during the school year at which I choose to inspect folders, any student whose folder does not contain the music with which they began the year may be billed for that music. Students who fail to turn in their folders at all or on time at the end of the year may be billed for the replacement cost of that folder and all of the music in it. If incurred, this bill will be considered equal in importance to a textbook fine, meaning that transcripts and report cards will be held until the bill is paid. If your music needs repair over the course of the year, please feel free to tape or staple binding as is appropriate.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Disciplinary action should not be necessary, but will probably take one of the forms listed in the SCS Student Handbook as necessary. Most poor behavior will result in a warning before any action is taken. Save violence and threatening or foul language, there is only one exception. We will not tolerate ridicule of a person's voice. The human voice is a very personal thing, and making fun of someone for their voice is extraordinarily insulting. I reserve the right to remove from class (temporarily or permanently at my discretion) anyone who teases or mocks a fellow singer's voice. Remember that I am not *obligated* to provide warnings before administering disciplinary action; this is a courtesy. You are young adults, and I expect you to act accordingly.

HELPFUL HINT #1: Choir is not a democracy. At best it is a benevolent dictatorship.
HELPFUL HINT #2: Mr. Hunter is not perfect, but he loves you and you can trust him.
HELPFUL HINT #3: Fear is alright to have, but not to follow.
HELPFUL HINT #4: Fall in love with *your* voice.
HELPFUL HINT #5: Your imagination has the power to transform reality; *Transform reality with your singing!*
HELPFUL HINT #6: There is very little about the choral art that cannot be learned from listening.
HELPFUL HINT #7: "The demands that any culture places on its art are inversely proportional to the comforts that life at that time affords." – *Jacques Barzun.* We live in the most "comfortable" culture in world history. Our expectations of art are therefore extremely low. Let's change that.
HELPFUL HINT #8: Every long note must grow in energy every moment.
HELPFUL HINT #9: Every vowel has a shape and a placement where it resonates the best.
HELPFUL HINT #10: Breath, Alignment, and Space are the physical fundamentals of our art.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE
2026-2027

(subject to change *with as much advance notice as possible!*)

Veterans Day Assembly (HS & MS)	Nov. 11, 2026
Fine Arts Faculty Recital (Please attend and support us!)	Nov. 16, 2026
Christmas Concert (MS & HS)	Dec. 15, 2026
Christmas Assembly (TBA)	Dec. 16, 2026
Stillwater Music Festival (HS)	April 9-10, 2027
PTO Auction (TBA)	April 16, 2027????
Spring Choir Concert (MS & HS)	May 13 2027
Graduation (HS)	June 4, 2027

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Remember that YOUR SUCCESS is of great and profound concern to me as a teacher. If you ever need help with this choir thing, tell me! I would love to help you succeed! There is no problem I don't want to hear about, no concern I won't care about, no joy I will not share with you if you will share with me. I want to teach *you!* Music is just the tool I use to do it.

Let's have yet another "best year ever!"

I agree to abide by the SCS Choir Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year.

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Student Name

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Student Signature

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Parent Name

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Parent Signature