



Hilliard Darby High School Choir Handbook 2026 - 2027

Welcome to the Hilliard Darby Choirs! We're so glad you're here.

This handbook includes our objectives, classroom policies, and the choir events calendar for the year. Please review this handbook with your family; sign, and submit the handbook agreement and volunteer form to Canvas for a grade by Friday, August 28th!

Founded in 1996 by Dr. Michael Martin, the Hilliard Darby Choirs have built an international reputation for choral excellence. By participating in the Darby Choirs, you join a long tradition of dedicated students and families whose hard work has shaped this program. Your continued commitment to this *community* and to *growth* are what will continue to drive us forward.

You matter to this choir community. What you bring to the community matters, just as what it gives back to you matters too. We look forward to a wonderful year!

Mr. Jace Nguyen serves as the Director of Choirs at Hilliard Darby High School. A native of Gahanna, Ohio, he graduated summa cum laude from Capital University with a degree in Vocal Music Education.

In Gahanna, Jace Nguyen did just about everything – AP courses, sports, drumline, choir, theater, TV production. In each discipline, what stuck with him the most was the deep importance of community. It is Mr. Nguyen's commitment as an educator to help his students build and sustain a community driven by curiosity, creativity, and compassion.

Mr. Nguyen is active in several facets of music, including Columbus' professional choral scene and community theaters; he also released a full-length solo album while a student at Capital. His ensembles have earned over 30 superior ratings at OMEA adjudicated events and have traveled to perform across the country.

Outside of music, he and his wife are avid runners, disc golfers, and dog parents to an Australian shepherd puppy, Peanut.

Mrs. Hannah Sterman-Wilson is the Assistant Director of Choral Activities at Hilliard Darby High School. She graduated summa cum laude from The Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Music Education and minor in theatre Theatre. She later earned her Master of Music Education degree from the internationally renowned University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

When she was six years old, Mrs. Sterman knew she wanted to become a choir teacher like her mom. She loved attending musical rehearsals and show choir festivals, where she saw firsthand the power of the arts to bring people together. She has carried that vision into her own teaching career, working to foster meaningful connections among singers, directors, and audience members, in addition to creating connections with the music.

Mrs. Sterman's choirs have toured throughout Ohio and earned superior ratings at the Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) Contest. They have participated in collegiate workshops, collaborative concerts, performed at OMEA Conventions, and worked with numerous notable conductors. Their national and international tours have taken them to California, New York City, Ireland, and Italy.

Under Mrs. Sterman's direction, Treble Chorus was named a 2026 national finalist by the American Prize in Choral Performance - High School Division. The American Prize is a nonprofit organization that evaluates and recognizes top ensembles and artists throughout the country. A performance by Treble Chorus was also featured at an Ohio Choral Directors Association Conference.

As a singer, Mrs. Sterman made her professional musical theatre debut at age eight, and she has performed alongside renowned artists including Andrea Bocelli and John Legend. Most recently, she was a featured soloist with the New Albany Symphony Orchestra. She previously served as a section leader and assistant conductor for the New Albany Symphony Chorus and has choreographed performances around the community.

Outside of music, Mrs. Sterman enjoys spending time with her family, whether playing on the playground with her daughter or soaking up baby snuggles with her son. When time allows, she also loves to read and is an avid anime fan. Mrs. Sterman and her husband have taken martial arts classes together for more than 15 years and formally served as League of Legends coaches and esports advisors for Hilliard City Schools.

2026-2027 Performance Dates: *Dates may change with advance notice.*

1st Quarter

*August 29, Choir Retreat (**Symphonic** Only).....9am-4pm
September 11th, Choir Tailgate and Anthem.....5:30pm
October 13th, Darby Choirs Concert.....6pm // 5pm call
*October 19th, St. Mary's Time (**Symphonic** Only).....Time TBD

2nd Quarter

*November 5th, Inaugural HCSD **Tenor-Bass** Day.....9am-1pm, School Day
*December 6th, Hilliard Tree Lighting (**Polyphonix** Only).....Time TBD
December 9th, Darby Choirs Cans and Carols.....6pm concert

3rd Quarter

January 20th, Darby-Heritage Combined Choir Concert.....6pm
March 3rd, Preview Concert/Rehearsal.....Details TBD
March 5th and 6th, OMEA District Contest.....Time TBD
Directors will request Saturday Performance times, plan to Carpool
March 15th, Fan Pledge.....6pm

4th Quarter

April 23rd/24th, OMEA State Contest.....Time TBD
Out of Region at East Central Region
May 12, Final Concert and Robing Ceremony..... 6:00 concert // 7:30 Robing
Robing is required for all current and new members of Symphonic Choir

Additional Dates

September 10th, Cookie-Dough fundraiser kickoff.....in-class
October 6th, Heritage Choirs Fall Concert..... 6:00pm, Darby PAC
December 14th, Heritage Choirs Winter Concert..... 6:00pm, Darby PAC
March 11th, Heritage Choirs Spring Concert..... 6:00pm, Darby PAC
May 19, Heritage Choirs Final Concert..... 6:00pm, Darby PAC

Hilliard Darby High School Choirs Grading Policy

Grades are determined based on the following three categories:

- Rehearsal Technique and Effort (30%)
- Assignments (30%)
- Concert Performance (40%)

Rehearsal Technique and Effort (30%): Arrive on time with music, a pencil, and a positive attitude for **all in-school rehearsals**. Earn two points each day for each day in the quarter.

Unexcused absences and/or failure to meet classroom expectations as described in the handbook will result in the loss of daily points.

If you have an *excused* absence from school or class, directors may assign work to make-up your points.

Assignments (30%) include memory-tests, score-checks (markings, articulations, dynamics, solfège), and written or performance assignments as assigned by the directors.

Summative performative assessments including voice checks and concert pass-offs are included in this category.

Concert Performance (40%): Be on time and fully present. Every voice matters. Please note that additional required rehearsals and events count here. All events are factored into this category.

If you are late to a concert or rehearsal call time:

Excused with notice (before the end of the school day) → no penalty

Unexcused → Loss of up to 25% of your performance grade

If you miss a concert:

Unexcused, with no prior notice → Loss of up to 100% of your performance grade

Unexcused, with prior notice → Loss of up to 75% of your performance grade

Excused, with prior notice → Concert Make-up Assignment due within 1 week of concert time.

Hilliard Darby Choirs Handbook and Policies

Daily Classroom Expectations

1) Be on Time and Be Present

Choir is a phone-free environment. Please keep phones, iPads, and smartwatches off and tucked away (backpack, folder slot, or on the piano). Misuse will affect your participation grade and may result in school policy referrals. Continued misuse can result in removal from the choir.

Late Policy: You are considered late to class if you are not in your assigned riser spot with your music, choir folder, and a pencil by the time the director or student conductor begins rehearsal — always after the bell.

Restroom Policy: We understand emergencies happen. Use your judgment, and we trust you to handle it responsibly. If it becomes a repeated distraction from rehearsal, a director may follow up with you individually.

2) Have Your Stuff

Music, choir folder, and a pencil.

Choir Folder: You are responsible for the choir folders that you are provided.

Fees, Music, and Materials Replacement: Students are entrusted with valuable shared resources, including concert attire, performance folders, and original sheet music scores. Please treat all distributed music and property with care. Mark music diligently, but responsibly.

Replacement Costs: If a score, folder, or uniform piece issued to you is lost, defaced, or intentionally destroyed, you are responsible for the cost to replace it. Fines for lost or damaged materials will be added to your student account.

3) Be Kind

Language: Before you speak, always ask — is it wise? Is it kind? Is it true? Is it necessary? Choir is a vulnerable space. Our instruments are internal and personal. All instruments are different, and all belong. Work to defend a space where every singer feels safe to take risks in this room.

Leadership: Section leaders and officers are a voice for the student body. Be kind to your peers, listen to them, and advocate for all of your teammates. Filter questions and concerns through your directors.

Clean Air Policy: We sing in close quarters. Please be mindful of personal hygiene and scents (perfume, cologne, etc.) to keep the space comfortable for everyone. If a director speaks with you privately about this, please know we are looking out for both you and the ensemble. We will always be kind, even when we need to be direct. If you have a concern about a peer, please bring it to the director rather than confronting them directly.

4) Do Your Best Work

Set goals, make an attempt, then reflect. The more times we progress through this cycle as an ensemble, the more we grow. As a member of this ensemble, it is expected that your words, actions, and effort help to move us through this cycle.

No chewing gum is allowed in the choir room. Food is never allowed on the choral risers during rehearsals.

Non-singing days for illness: If you are present but too unwell to sing during class, you may still earn your daily participation points by completing the "I Can't Sing Today" form. Instead of sitting out idly, you will use this time to actively engage with the rehearsal by observing your section, reflecting on class performance, and evaluating vocal techniques and musical choices.

Concert Expectations

Concert Etiquette Expectations: Professional demeanor is expected at all times. The performance begins the moment you enter the stage. Talking on the risers before, during, or after a song is not permitted, and waving to family or friends is not appropriate.

Failure to Meet Expectations: If you are present for a performance but fail to meet these professional expectations, you will face a deduction of up to 75% of your concert grade. Because concerts carry a significant 40% weight, this reflects the serious impact of individual actions on the ensemble's collective integrity.

A Note for Our Audience (Parents & Guests): Parents, our students appreciate your support at concerts, and we appreciate your support of the program as well! Please refrain from using flash photography during a performance, avoid entering or exiting the venue except between pieces (when you hear applause), refrain from catcalls and extreme shouting, and silence all cell phones before the performance.

Event Attendance Policy

All listed choir events, including additional rehearsals, are required. In the case of any absence, including excused schoolday absences, please contact your directors via email or canvas message.

Directors may excuse specific absences (such as illness, family emergencies, weddings, or funerals) on a case-by-case basis. To request an excused absence, a parent or guardian must email the directors using the email address on file in Home Access Center. Please communicate early; non-emergency absence requests require at least one month's notice.

Concert/Additional Rehearsal, Excused Absence: If you miss a concert or additional rehearsal and your absence is excused, you must perform the repertoire for your directors to regain your performance points. Please consult with your directors for details. The make-up assignment must be completed within a week of the scheduled concert time.

Additional Events & Unscheduled Dates Policy: Occasionally, additional events or rehearsals may be added to the calendar as the year progresses. We understand that schedules shift, and we strive to be reasonable. For any newly scheduled dates, the exact same attendance and absence request policies apply — including the requirement for director approval and parent/guardian email notification. However, timelines for notice and make-up work will be appropriately adjusted given the situation.

Music and Athletics Policy

The Darby Vocal Music department strives to encourage all students to seek opportunities to contribute to the Darby community beyond the arts. In all group activities, your attendance impacts your whole team/ensemble.

When scheduling conflicts arise, early and direct communication with all parties is essential. Student athletes should check for potential conflicts at the start of their athletic season — without proper notice, athletic conflicts are not excused.

In the case of an absence, it is imperative that you communicate early (via email/canvas). Flagging known conflicts should happen at the beginning of an athletic season, if at all possible. Should a conflict arise between a sporting and music event, please reference the following guidelines:

- **Game vs. Rehearsal:** Attend the game and inform the director of the conflict in advance.
 - **Concert vs. Practice:** Attend the concert and inform your coach of the conflict in advance.
 - **Game vs. Concert:** Attempt to attend both; we can often be flexible with call times/warm-up expectations to encourage participation. If you cannot attend both, consider the stakes of each event and choose. Inform your coach and director of the conflict and your choice as far in advance as possible.
 - **Rehearsal vs. Practice:** Handle as you would a Game vs. Rehearsal conflict — attend practice and inform the director in advance.
-

General Operations & Extracurriculars

Choir is widely viewed by colleges and future employers as a premier team activity. It builds exceptional leadership, empathy, public accountability, collaboration, and critical listening skills, making it a valuable addition to your schedule and your resume. It is one of the few academic opportunities where you can show continued commitment to a team on your academic transcript.

To keep this program exceptional and ensure it remains a worthwhile experience for everyone, here are a few additional policies and notes of which to be mindful:

- **Social Media Posts** involving the Darby Choirs or name-and-likeness of the Darby choirs must be approved by one of the Directors of Choirs. This includes all student-run Darby Choir accounts. While our answer will typically be a "yes," it is imperative that we are presenting a professional sound and appearance in order to continue pursuing professional opportunities.
 - **Academic Standing:** As representatives of the Hilliard Darby choirs, students are expected to maintain positive academic standing. Students who are not in good academic standing with the school may not be allowed to participate in choir trips or performances, including but not limited to convention performances, contests, trips, and extracurricular performances — regardless of trip payment status.
 - **Course Weighting & Eligibility:** Choir is an academic course that counts fully toward your GPA, academic standing, and eligibility for extracurricular activities.
 - **Symphonic Choir Expectations:** Symphonic Choir is an honors-level course. Due to the advanced nature of the curriculum and performance standard, the co-curricular requirements of this course may include additional out-of-school rehearsals, sectionals, and performances necessary to meet the honors course guidelines.
 - **Scheduling Multiple Choirs:** Registration for multiple choirs is permitted and encouraged for upperclassmen and students with room in their schedules. Additional choirs can count toward athletic eligibility, as well!
 - **Events Involving Travel:** All members of the choral program may have performance opportunities off of the Hilliard Darby campus, especially Symphonic and Polyphonix. Several of these opportunities will require that you provide transportation on your own. In the event that this presents a hardship, please reach out to your directors, and we can assist in connecting you with students or families that may be able to assist. If off-campus travel is something that you are not able to do or not comfortable doing, please let one of the directors know, and we can help re-place you into a choir that will have less travel commitments.
 - **Choir Auditions:** As an academic class, the choir placement process must begin when the scheduling process begins. Please note that initial placements are based on your December progress checks and in-class rehearsal technique— immense growth happens during the second semester and for many singers, placements may change. No class placements are considered finalized until 4th quarter choir auditions take place. Scheduling details will be provided when applicable.
-

Uniform Guidelines and Fees

Unless you are returning to the same choir, all choir members are required to purchase part of their choir uniform. Please see details below:

Payment Due Friday, September 18th via online payment platform (coming soon).

If payment creates a hardship, please do not hesitate to talk to the directors PRIOR to this date

First Year Choir Members (Concert Choir and Chorale) \$100.00

Uniforms for Chorale/Concert Choir are purchased through the Darby Music Boosters. If purchasing a new uniform, measurements will take place in class. Uniforms are yours to keep.

- **Dress and Black Flats**
 - Includes dress and black flats.
- **Formal Top, Black Bottoms and Black Flats**
- **Formal Tuxedo**
 - Includes tux coat, shirt, pants, bowtie, and cummerbund.
 - Does NOT include alterations, black socks, or black shoes.

Symphonic Choir

All Symphonic Members: Retreat Fee (Retreat Breakfast/Lunch and Clinicians) – **\$20.00**
(*reduced from \$70 due to anticipated fundraisers*).

The robe cleaning/upkeep fee is covered by the school, but fees for damaged robes may apply. Robes must be returned to the school the night of the concert or the next school day.

- **Tenors/Basses:** The following Symphonic uniform pieces are NOT provided by the department: White Dress Shirt (no wing-tips), Black Tie, Black Dress Pants, Black Shoes, and Black Socks. You may reuse some parts of your Concert Choir attire.
- **Sopranos/Altos:** \$30.00 for black flats only if you do not have previous choir flats.

Polyphonix

Polyphonix has unique uniform requirements. Please stay tuned for details.

Other Uniform Policies

- Hair must be clear from your face
 - Clean Air Policy – no perfume/cologne
 - Limit jewelry – stud earrings only
 - Wrists should be clear of any bracelets
 - No cell phones/Apple watches on your person
-

Hilliard Darby Choirs Agreement Form

Please read and sign below & submit on Canvas by August 28th, 2026.

I understand and agree to the following:

- I have read the **Choir Syllabus/Handbook** in Canvas and agree to its contents.
- I acknowledge that I have seen the required performance dates and understand that attendance is required as a co-curricular activity.
- I agree to the policies listed in the uniform guidelines:
 - I will submit payment for my choir-provided uniform by Friday, September 18th.
 - I will purchase the items for which I am responsible (ex. black shoes for tuxedo-wearers and Symphonic tenor-bass clothing).
 - (Symphonic members) I assume full responsibility for the condition of the choir robe, stole, and garment bag, as well as its replacement fee of \$275 if damaged or lost.
- I understand that choir is a team activity and conduct that disrupts the learning environment may result in dismissal from choir and/or performances.
- I understand that choir may include field trips involving bus or self-transportation.
- I understand that I/my child may be included in photos/recordings during the year.
- I understand that medical forms must be on file in the main office per school policy.

Student Name (Please Print): _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian (Signature): _____ **Date:** _____

We always appreciate **parent/guardian support** of our program and students! Please print your name, email, and phone number below if you are interested in helping, and circle events in which you'd like to participate.

- Symphonic Retreat (organize food/set up and take down)
- Der Dutchman Concert (Symphonic Only)
- Office Help During School Day (this includes copying and uniform help)
- Fundraising (We will need help in October, December, and March!)
- Chaperoning Choir Trips and Contests
- Choir Awards Ceremony
- Various Social Events (Choir Tailgate, December Concert, January Concert)
- Choir Cookie Day (provide cookies/food for your student's choir throughout the year)
- Hilliard Music Boosters (meetings are once a month, with additional help as needed)

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____