



RMHS CHOIR

2020-2021 HANDBOOK

WHO ARE WE?

Choir Descriptions

Mixed Choir is a full-year curricular choral group that meets during the school day (D block). It is a foundational ensemble of mixed voices (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) that performs a wide variety of choral music, including classical, world music, American folk songs, spirituals, musical theater, popular music, and works by contemporary composers. Particular emphasis is placed on improving students' music literacy, sight-singing ability, vocal production, and ensemble skills. Prior experience singing in a choir is beneficial, but not necessary. Mixed Choir performs at major concerts and school events, including Winter Songfest, ArtsFest, and Spring into Song.

Select Choir is a full-year curricular choral group that meets during the school day (D block). As the name implies, Select Choir is an auditioned ensemble of accomplished choral musicians that performs advanced SATB divisi music. Members also perform musical theater and popular music as part of two small ensembles: Fermata Nowhere and the Crescendudes. As a member, you will be expected to demonstrate a strong work ethic and independence. Select Choir performs frequently during the school year, including major concerts, school events, caroling, fundraisers, and festivals.

RMHS Singers is an extracurricular choral group that meets after school on Wednesday evenings. It is open to all students, regardless of singing ability or prior experience. It is an ensemble of mixed voices (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) that performs music in a wide variety of styles, from Renaissance to American folk to Broadway. You may choose to participate for first semester, second semester, or both. RMHS Singers performs at Winter Songfest and Spring Into Song.

Harmonium is the new extracurricular a cappella group at RMHS. It meets after school on Thursday afternoons. It is an auditioned ensemble of 11 voices (soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and percussion) that performs a cappella arrangements of popular music from all eras. Due to the nature of the group, members must have strong music reading skills, a confident, engaging stage presence, and excellent intonation (pitch accuracy). Harmonium performs at major concerts and community events throughout the year. To be eligible, you must be a member of Mixed Choir, Select Choir, or RMHS Singers.

WHY SING?

Enduring Understandings

All human beings carry with them an incredible musical instrument: their singing voice. It takes up no space, it requires no parts, and it costs nothing to maintain. Even if you don't become a professional musician, you will use your singing voice throughout your life—"Happy Birthday" at parties, the National Anthem at sporting events, hymns at religious services, folk songs around the camp fire,

lullabies to children... the list goes on and on. Human beings have been using their voices to sing since the beginning of civilization. In fact, it is believed that our ancestors sang before they developed spoken language. There is no human culture, no matter how remote or isolated, that does not sing. Thus, music is an essential element of the historical and cultural record of humankind.

Choir Objectives

- To sing notated choral music at first sight using solfege syllables
- To sing as a blended choral ensemble with precise intonation, unified vowels, and balance
- To sing musically with understanding, interpretation, and expression
- To perform music from varied time periods and cultures with fidelity and accuracy
- To foster vulnerability and authenticity in ourselves and others
- To build community through intentional engagement, collaborative problem solving, and resolutely leaning into compassion and empathy

WHAT WILL WE BE LEARNING?

Core Concepts and Standards

Music Literacy

- Identify and use note names, rhythmic values, and music symbols
- Understand key signatures and time signatures
- Follow a choral score with four or more parts

Aural Skills/Sight-Singing

- Sing major, natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor scales
- Correctly use Kodaly hand signals as a physical placement for vocal pitch
- Read music in the keys of C, F, and G (moveable DO) and meters of 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, and 6/8
- Sight-sing stepwise motion and major triads within an octave range
- Aurally identify the major and perfect intervals within an octave range
- Count sing a variety of common rhythms, including sixteenth notes

Vocal Production

- Exhibit proper body alignment while standing and sitting
- Breathe using the diaphragm (sing “on the breath”)
- Develop a forward, clear tone within the appropriate range
- Demonstrate uniform vowel formation using appropriate mouth shapes for specific vowels
- Practice accurate diction for clarity and understanding
- Sing in multiple world languages using the international phonetic alphabet

Musicianship and Ensemble Skills

- Sing expressively, projecting emotion with the voice and face
- Maintain balance and blending within a section
- Sing independently as one of four or more voice parts
- Consistently look at and follow the conductor’s gestures
- Use choral tools such as written breath marks, catch breaths, and stagger breathing

Performance Practice

- Develop an awareness of body energy and inward focus
- Practice ensemble decorum while in the performance venue
- Demonstrate appropriate concert etiquette as an audience member



Grading

Mixed Choir and Select Choir members will receive a letter grade based on the following four areas:

- Concerts: 100 points per evening concert
- Rehearsals: 50 points per quarter for meeting daily rehearsal expectations
- Part Checks: 25 points for individual part checks uploaded to Google Classroom
- Assignments: 5 to 15 points each for concert reflections and other occasional assignments

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS?

Rehearsals

- Be seated with your music and a pencil when rehearsal begins
- Maintain your music and folder with care—*these items belong to the school and must be returned at the end of the year*
- Store your cell phone where it will not distract you during rehearsal
- Demonstrate an open mind toward varied rehearsal strategies and repertoire
- **Refrain from speaking when Ms. Wentlent is working**

For information on the expectations for remote learning, see Ms. Wentlent's [online landing page](#).

Note: The extracurricular groups (RMHS Singers and Harmonium) have limited rehearsal time, which makes attendance extremely important. Members must be firm in their commitment and accountable to fellow choir members. If you cannot attend a rehearsal, notify Ms. Wentlent at least one hour prior to the rehearsal. If you miss three or more rehearsals, you may be asked to leave the group.

Performances

Please see the attached calendar for important dates and required performances. The most up-to-date version of this calendar may always be found on the choir website: rmhschoirs.weebly.com. September, October, November, and December dates are fairly set, while spring dates are tentative due to the pandemic. We will operate one season at a time!

Concert Attire

Each choir has a specific uniform or dress code, as follows:

- Mixed Choir: Corelli concert gown or tuxedo—*purchases/rentals currently on hold until regular in-person performances are permitted*
- Select Choir: Jayden concert dress or black dress shirt and pants—*purchases/rentals currently on hold until regular in-person performances are permitted*
- RMHS Singers:
 - Dress clothes in red, pink, white, gray, or black
 - Black stockings or socks (no white socks) and black dress shoes
- Harmonium: *To be determined based on group membership*

HOW SHOULD I GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU?

Communication



Remind

RMHS Choir Family



Email

anna.wentlent@reading.k12.ma.us



Website

rmhschoirs.weebly.com



Instagram

@RMHS_Choirs

Remind

If you haven't already, join the RMHS Choir Family Remind by texting @wentlent to 81010. This will be my primary way of communicating with students throughout the year! There are also separate Remind groups for Select Choir and the Choral Officers.

Website

The website (rmhschoirs.weebly.com) is the home for all choir information: up-to-date calendars, student practice tracks, demo recordings, parent forms, concert information, etc. When in doubt, check the website. Students in the curricular groups (Mixed Choir and Select Choir) will also be added to Google Classrooms once the school year officially begins. Students will go there to find information on daily rehearsals during the school day, graded assignments, and more while the school is engaged in remote or hybrid learning.

Student Officers

Position	Name	Phone Number	Contact Them About...
President	Tessa Goldlust		Anything at all ☺
Vice-President	Elizabeth Lattanzi		Concert attire, choral apparel and merch
Secretary	Smritha Srinivasan		Calendar, folders and music for Select, Singers, and Harmonium
Asst. Secretary	Maggie Girouard		Folders and music for Mixed Choir
Treasurer	Dionysios Georgopoulos		Fundraisers, VOICE reimbursements
Publicist	Bridget Parks		Social events, taking pictures and videos, Instagram
Fermata Nowhere Director/Rep	Eva Bonsey		Fermata Nowhere questions about music, rehearsals, etc.
Crescendudes Director/Rep	Jack Mendez		Crescendudes questions
Mixed Choir Rep	Julia Mullen		Mixed Choir questions
RMHS Singers Rep	Gracyn Rafuse		Singers questions
Floating Choir Rep	Tallulah Patalano		Anything else!

We have fantastic choral officers this year. Their leadership, energy, and creativity will help make this year a success, despite the challenges of operating in a pandemic. Students, if you have any questions or concerns as the year gets started, please feel free to reach out to any one of them. Parents, please continue to come to me!

Anna Wentlent
RMHS Choral Director
PK-12 Fine and Performing Arts Department Head
Reading Public Schools