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| **Course Title: A Cappella Men – 2014-15** |

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| **Course Description:**   1. A choral group made up of ninth through twelfth grade men. Membership is by assignment of the vocal music teacher. 2. We believe that music is a way in which God reveals Himself to us, and a vehicle with which we praise Him. Through singing texts from the Bible and other religious sources we are confronted with God’s truths. Though these are not the only texts we sing, they make up the majority of the repertoire and through which we most clearly see God’s revelation. As image bearers of God we strive to develop the gift of creativity to its maximum potential. When we recreate music we experience a part of our nature that reveals to us something of God’s creative being. In the making of music we are brought closer to our Creator because He is the source of all that is created. Choir provides us with a unique opportunity to use the gift of voice that God has given us, as well as developing the skills necessary to do so to the best of our ability. |

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| **Essential Learning Objectives:** |

Members continue to develop their knowledge and skills in several areas:

1. Sight reading – Students will learn the Solfege sight reading system -“Moveable ‘Do’” - which we use for sight-reading the music we learn and at Choir Festival.
2. Music Theory – No prior knowledge is required. Students will work on developing their knowledge of music theory and reviewing/learning music terminology in order to learn the language of music, the things necessary for becoming more intelligent musicians. As stated before, no previous knowledge is required, but it is helpful. After a theory survey is completed at the beginning of the year, the class will be divided into two or three groups based on the results of the survey. Then, periodically we study theory in class. Those with no prior background will be taught some beginning music theory while others with more theory knowledge will go further in their study. This knowledge of the “language of music” is essential for the choir members to be able to read music and to see things in the music that are discussed in class.
3. Voice production – Students will begin to develop a working knowledge of what quality vowels are, how to produce them, and how they contribute to developing good choral tone. Emphasis is placed on learning vowel formation, breathing to support the sound, consonant articulation, expanding the singer’s range, working through issues unique to the male voice, etc.
4. Interpretation – Attention is paid to things such as phrasing, syllabic stress, chord tuning, meaning of the text -especially if it’s in a foreign language.
5. We will utilize the MSVMA rubric from choir festival as the guide for developing important concepts for choral singing.
6. Students will continue developing an appreciation for quality choral literature and articulate the reasons why we work hard for excellence as God’s creatures.

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| **Course Outline:** |

All members will continue to develop their skills in voice production while learning and performing music that represents a variety of styles and levels of difficulty.

There are three evening concerts, plus District Choir Festival (during the school day). Dates, times and places are listed in the Syllabus and are on the Moodle site under “Choir Calendar”. Attendance is required.

Music memorizing mostly takes place outside of class.

Each member must complete one concert report per semester. Each member of the choir must complete a Concert Report in each semester (two for the year). To do this you must attend a concert by some area choir (high school age or older) and evaluate their performance on the Concert Report Form. Mrs. Sytsma will post a list of concert dates for area high schools, colleges, and community choirs at two times during the year – around Thanksgiving and then again after Spring Break. If you choose to go to a concert not on the list, ask first to see if it will fulfill the requirement. Get a Concert Report Form (they are on the folder cabinet in the front of the room and on the Moodle site) before the concert so you will know what to be listening and looking for.

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| **Online Learning Experience & Resources:** |

Students are required to use the GRCHS Choirs Moodle site. The site includes the following:

1. Handbook/Syllabus is available for reviewing. Students and parents should consult this resource if there are questions about dates and locations, or policies.
2. Writing assignments that must be completed each semester and turned in will mostly be done online.
3. Concert Report Form and list of concerts
4. Memorization schedule is posted weeks before each concert so that the music is memorized in an organized way.
5. Copies of the music we are learning, You Tube sites, recordings of accompaniments, part recordings are available to aide in the learning and memorizing process.

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| **Course Resources:** |

1. Music to be performed is supplied by the school.
2. The uniform for A Cappella Men includes a vest and tie supplied by the school. You will need to supply: White long sleeved shirt with a collar; Black pants (not jeans), black socks, black shoes.

We want you to look good when you perform, as well as the before and after times. Remember, people form opinions about us, our school, and the One we represent by how we act and look. Since we believe God deserves our best, including our behavior, speech, and appearance.

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| **Course Assessments:** |

Grading a performance group like choir is difficult because there are no daily assignments, quizzes, or tests at the end of a chapter. Grading will be based on the following:

1. Participation/cooperation in rehearsals.
2. Attendance at performances is expected from everyone and will be a major factor in the assessment process.
3. Written tests on the theory we study in class. Don’t worry about the theory, we work on it in class, and reviews and non-graded quizzes will be given. Extra help is offered during Office Hours.
4. Singing tests to check memorization. Don’t freak out about the voice check stuff - you sing your part of one or two of the pieces we are working on (or have just performed if it’s after a concert). I don’t grade the first attempts and we offer help for those who struggle.
5. Completion of a Concert Report.

If you behave in class, do what’s asked of you (sing, show up for concerts, do halfway decently on the theory and voice tests, and complete a concert report) you will get some kind of “A” or at the very least a “B+”.

*Things that will negatively effect the grade would include: unexcused absences; tardiness for class; repeatedly not having a folder or pencil in rehearsal; chewing gum; talking; disrespect for other choir members or the teacher; disrespect for school supplied materials or property, disruptive behavior in rehearsals and/or at performances.*

Outside-of-school things that are Extra Credit include: auditioning for the MSVMA Honors Choir; membership in a singing group outside of school (if it’s a church choir or praise team they must rehearse and sing regularly); participating in Solo & Ensemble Festival.

**Performance Attendance Policy**

Performances, though not the only objective of choir, are a major part of what we do. They are a means for us to display the skills we are developing, and to sing the music we have been practicing. Since a successful performance depends upon everyone's participation, attendance at performances is a requirement of the course. In groups like choir there must be a sense that we are in this together, we cannot have people who feel they are somehow more important than the group, or that the group doesn’t need them. To borrow a line from Mr. Spock in Star Trek II, "The needs of the many out-weigh the needs of the one". All of the dates for which you are responsible are a part of this Syllabus and will be on the choir’s Moodle site under “Choir Calendar”. Please make sure they get on your home, personal, and parent calendars (electronic and paper) so that conflicts/hassles at concert time can be avoided. Those are “no win” situations, and usually result in arguments and hard feelings.

I know that on occasion things arise over which you have no control: a last minute emergency like sickness, accident, death in the family, family vacation that is planned before school starts or has to be at a certain time of the year. These would all be considered excused absences with the understanding that the absence will need to be made up. Think of our concerts like the tests in the other classes you take. If you are absent on the day of the test you are not exempted from taking it, you still have to take the test when you get back. In choir, the excused absence is usually made up by doing an extra concert report. Other arrangements may be possible after discussions with Mrs. Sytsma.

In the case of pre-planned vacations/trips let me know now (or as soon as you know) so we can work things out well in advance whenever possible. In the case of illness or other last minute emergency please have a parent/guardian/host parent call me before the performance if possible and let me know the student will not be there. If a call beforehand is not possible please contact me by the next day. My school number is 574 6335, my email is: csytsma@grcs.org. Your grade will be lowered one grade (A to B) until you make up the excused absence, at which time the original grade will be restored.

If you miss a concert due to some non-emergency - things over which you have control like, “I had to work”, or “I forgot about it”, or “I didn’t have a ride” - it will be an unexcused absence and will result in the lowering of the grade two full grades (A to C). Part of that can be made up similarly to the excused absences.

**Other Opportunities**

For those who desire to go above and beyond our school choir experience there is the opportunity to audition for the Michigan School Vocal Music Association Honors Choir program. Auditions for the Region A Honors Choir are being done Online this year so there is no travel involved for the auditions. See Mr. Van Wingerden soon for details (there is a sheet that describes the program completely), the applications are due in mid September, very soon after school starts.

Another opportunity is for private voice lessons. You don’t have to consider yourself a soloist to benefit from taking voice lessons. Mr. Van Wingerden has a list of some teachers in the area for those interested in pursuing this option.

Any student may participate in the MSVMA District Solo & Ensemble Festival – February 7, 2015 at GVSU. This could be as a soloist or as a member of a small ensemble. Talk to Mrs. Sytsma if you are interested in this. Registration is in mid-December.

**Cell phone or other personal communication device** –

Leave it in your backpack turned **off**. Please inform me at the beginning of class (by bringing a note from a parent) if there is some family situation that requires you to have it on your person (on “vibrate”) so you can respond to a parental message. If we talk about a change of date for one of our events, or the addition of a date, and you need to put that into your “calendar” wait until class is over. If I see you using a phone or hear it go off I will: first time take it but give it back at the end of the hour; second time and every time after that I’ll take it and give it to Mrs. Vander Wilp.

***Tardy*** – Since we meet first thing in the morning four days a week I will expect that you will be in your seat with your folder by the time the bell rings. On Fridays I will give you one minute extra to be in your seat because there are only five minutes for passing. Before you get to your seat please leave your backpack by the wall just beyond the folder cabinet and get rid of gum if you have been chewing some. Monday thru Thursday right after the bell and Fridays the bell plus one minute I will start attendance. At the time of attendance “if you ain’t there (in your seat), you ain’t here” (absent or tardy). Translation - tardy will be defined as not in your seat, with your folder when attendance taking is started. We need to be as judicious as possible with our time so I want to get started in a timely fashion without having to tell people to get to their seats every day, and/or having numerous people who need to get their folders when we are ready to start singing. It has been my experience that students know exactly when a period ends, I’m asking that you also show an equal awareness of when it begins.

**Communication from me to students**

will come primarily through announcements in class and your school Gmail account. It will save us a lot of time in rehearsal if I don’t have to tell you everything that needs telling so make sure you check your Gmail account regularly. I will try to inform you of when there is something for you to know, see, or listen to - please make sure you take care of business. Pretty much everything related to our class will be posted on the “GRCHS Choirs” Moodle site: this syllabus; the calendar with maps and times of performances; PDFs of the music we are learning so you have music to look at home; “You Tube” sights or other recordings of as many of our songs as I can find that you can use when memorizing your music; part recordings to help you learn the notes; memorization schedules. Most of you know how to access this site but we will review the process in class. Please make sure your parents know how to access it too. Our password is “room153”. Look at the Moodle site before asking me a question. If you can’t find an answer there then ask me.

**Communication from me to parents**

will come primarily through email – the school Gmail account, and phone calls. I will try to inform parents of when there is something for them to know, see, or listen to. Pretty much everything related to our class will be posted on the “GRCHS Choirs” Moodle site: Our password is “room153”. Please have parents look here for the answers to their questions. If an answer can’t be found the call or email me. School phone: 574-6335; email: [csytsma@grcs.org](mailto:csytsma@grcs.org)

***Countless, unseen details are often the difference between mediocrity and magnificence.***

A few thoughts about the history of choral music here at GRCHS….…

As we look forward to this year and the things we will accomplish, it is also important to look back at what has taken place so that we could be here today. It is amazing to think of the literally thousands of students (some of whom may have been your parents, grandparents, and maybe even grandparents) since the school began who have been a part of the choral program of Grand Rapids Christian High. Students who labored and toiled to make glorious music - OK, some maybe not so glorious music came along the way too. Students who, when they started out, might not have fully understood the value of music in their lives, but who grew to that awareness. Students who have worked hard to establish that tradition and then to keep it alive. You have joined those ranks by choosing to make choral music a part of your life, and in addition developing a gift that God has given you. I promise you, if you work hard and take it seriously, you will never regret it. It is a gift you can, and hopefully will, use the rest of your life

Since the beginning of the school, the choirs of Grand Rapids Christian High have done some amazing things, always remembering that the ultimate goal is to praise our Creator. There have been many noteworthy accomplishments including many outstanding performances of high quality choral music in school concerts, for local organization functions, church services, festivals, and music conferences. Some highlights from just the last eight years: Since 2005 we have had at least two choirs, and as many as four, in the same year qualify for State Choir Festival by receiving either Superior or Excellent ratings at District Choir Festivals; in 2006, 2010, and 2012 Chamber Chorale and received a perfect score at State Choir Festival; many times our groups have been only one point away from a perfect score or scored a Superior rating – not an easy thing to do at State Choir Festival. In May of 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012 Chamber was selected through an audition process to perform as one of two outstanding choirs from the entire state at the Michigan Youth Arts Festival; in the 2008-09 school year the Chamber Chorale was selected, again through a rigorous audition process, to sing at the Michigan School Vocal Music Association Choral Hour, a part of the Michigan Music Conference held each January in Grand Rapids. The list could go on but I hope you get the sense that the tradition of excellent choral music to the glory of God is very strong at Grand Rapids Christian High School. But you are the part of the 2014-15 choirs, what will you accomplish in the coming year? I know that you have the potential to be as good as the groups that have preceded you. The question is, will you have to desire and work ethic to accomplish all you can? I’m looking forward to seeing how much we can accomplish this year! I hope you are too.

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| **Initials & Date of Last Update:** |
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**First Assignment**

Your first assignment is to write something (a paragraph or two) about yourself as a way of introducing yourself to the rest of us. Remember, these paragraphs will be compiled, printed, and handed out to everyone in this choir. Please stick to reality – no fiction. I would hope I wouldn’t have to say this next thing since we are who we are and in the place we are, but just for the record: nothing off color, no use of inappropriate language, etc. Keep in mind, the booklets may also be read by moms and dads. In order for this to be meaningful you must tell us more than, "My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I am in \_\_\_ grade, I have a dog named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, two sisters and live at \_\_\_." If you’re having trouble thinking of something to write here are some suggestions: it could be about what you did this summer (maybe there was a life changing experience), who is in your family, your interests and hobbies, what you are looking forward to in Choir (or in school) this year, career choice as of now, favorite subjects, sports/extra curr. things in which you participate, etc. I realize that this can be kind of scary because when we open up and tell something about ourselves we become a little vulnerable. One overriding principle must be that we respect each other and never, never do or say something that would deliberately hurt or embarrass a fellow choir member or in any way make fun of them for who they are. We must always remember that we are all made in the image of God, and yet a diverse group of people. But we are in this together, and we cannot build trust in, and commitment to, each other if we don’t genuinely support each other. What happens in choir – stays in choir.

Your paragraphs are due next **Tuesday, August 26** (yes, one week from now).

***Here are the guidelines for what you will turn in:***

* **It must be typed**; single spaced on regular white printer paper;
* size 12 font in a readable font (like Times New Roman) and nothing bolded;
* printed on a good quality printer (if you don’t have a printer at home you can use one of the schools or email me your paragraph and I will print it here. rvanwingerden@grcs.org
* Include your name and grade.

**Due Tuesday, August 26** (YES, ONE WEEK HENCE).

Grand Rapids Christian High School

**A Cappella Men**

Syllabus

2014-15

For the common things of every day  
   God gave man speech in a common way.

For the deeper things men think & feel  
      God gave the poet words to reveal.

But, for the heights and depths that know

no reach God gave man MUSIC,

the soul's own speech.