



BISHOP CHATARD HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT FALL SEMESTER NEWS 2020

Hello, all BCHS Music students and families!

I hope everyone has had a restful summer break, and that you have settled successfully into another school year, especially given the “new normal” brought on by the still lingering COVID-19 pandemic. It certainly has provided an ever-evolving and fluid set of challenges and restrictions for our school, namely the performing arts.

It should be noted that your efforts in taking the utmost care and responsibility to do your part to maintain the health and safety of our community have been truly MAGNIFICENT, and I am extremely thankful! Keep praying for an end to this pandemic and those afflicted, and keep up the great work being safe!

Now that we have an idea and plan for how we are moving forward as a school given the COVID-19 obstacles, restrictions, and limitations, I want to share with you what's been happening and what's in store for our BCHS Music program and our musicians.

Please CAREFULLY (*Festina lente - Make haste, slowly!*) read on...

“Well, we’re moving on up...”

...to the north side, and up the stairs, that is. According to the current CDC COVID-19 guidelines for school musicians and music ensembles, it was determined that our music room (115), is not large enough to hold rehearsals and activities for ensembles of 8 or more musicians. Rehearsals for **Concert Band** and **Vox Troiano** have been taking place in the Varsity Gymnasium since the second, full week of school. Though it's not an ideal place to rehearse, our musicians have adapted well, and with a positive attitude, too!

Plans are still in the works for an all-in, **Sounds of Silas** rehearsal.

“Where is everybody?”

Because our hybrid school schedule has essentially halved our student body on a daily basis (alternating Blue and White days), only half of the membership of any one ensemble rehearses in person. Those who are learning virtually from home log in and rehearse with us through Google Meet.

At this time, there is no virtual or online platform that allows musicians to rehearse or perform together in real-time (simultaneously). However, students can play or sing along with the band or choir at home on their iPads. It's not perfect, but certainly do-able AND better than the alternative, which is NO rehearsing or performing together AT ALL.

The Zero Period rehearsals have been a HUGE help in building and maintaining our success. Thank you, parents and guardians for making the sacrifice to get your child here for rehearsals in the morning! Remember, only those students who are attending class in-person need to attend zero period.

With all that said, Mr. Sahm, Mr. Hansen and I have discussed and found a solution to supplement the current scenario which allows us to rehearse altogether. I will share that solution with you momentarily because...

We're having a FALL CONCERT!!!

>Insert thunderous and glorious applause here<

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, on **Wednesday, October 14th, at 7pm** in the Varsity Gymnasium, we will present a **Fall Concert** featuring the **Concert Band**, **Chorus** class, **Vox Troiano** (mixed chorale) and **Sounds of Silas** (mixed chamber choir)! Admission is free, and all are invited.

We are confident that the numbers of stationary musicians and audience members fall well under the maximum number allowed in our varsity gymnasium for this live event. We are currently working on live-streaming or recording the concert (or both) for those that are experiencing COVID-like symptoms that day, or feel they should avoid this event in lieu of their health and safety.

The concert will last 30 minutes, and the following social distancing and safety guidelines will be practiced to maintain the health and safety of our student musicians and our audience:

- 1) Individuals, or families of students with the last names beginning with the letters, A-K, please enter the gymnasium through Door #1 (north end of the school building on Crittenden Ave). Upon entering, please sit on the north side bleachers (or left-side bleachers, as you face the stage).
- 2) Individuals, or families of students with the last names beginning with the letters, L-Z, please enter the gymnasium through Door #10 (north end of the parking lot/backside of the school building). Upon entering, please sit on the south side bleachers (or right-side bleachers as you face the stage).
- 3) Face masks are to be worn at all times while inside the school building.
- 4) Please maintain social distancing by using seats in the bleachers marked with a blue "X." Families may sit together in the immediate vicinity of a bleacher seat with a blue "X."
- 5) At the conclusion of the concert, kindly exit through the door in which you entered in a timely and orderly fashion. Unfortunately, no lingering about in the gymnasium will be allowed at this time. If weather permits, you may wait outside for your student while practicing social distancing.

Adhering to these guidelines and taking personal responsibility for our safety and the safety of our neighbor ensures that we can continue to move forward with gatherings and events like the Fall Concert.

As we have already witnessed with the events we have hosted since this summer (graduation, fall sports, freshmen orientation, etc...), we know how to get this done the right way - yet another indication of the unwavering sense and strength of community that is Bishop Chatard.

Veterans' Day and Christmas Concerts

Though every date and event is subject to change in this day and age, pencil in **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11th, 7pm** for our ***Veterans' Day Concert***, and **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10th, 7pm** for our ***Christmas Concert***.

ALL-IN Monday Rehearsals for Concert Band & Vox Troiano

One of the biggest challenges with the hybrid schedule this year is the inability to have full rehearsals with our largest ensembles, namely ***Concert Band*** and ***Vox Troiano***. This is not only a challenge for us musically, but also hinders our overall camaraderie and Esprit de Corps. Only half of these ensembles rehearse during Zero Period and Seminar, on Blue and White days.

To help alleviate this challenge, we are going to hold alternating rehearsals on Monday evenings for the ***Concert Band*** and ***Vox Troiano***. These rehearsals are designed to offer a FULL rehearsal to each ensemble with both, Blue and White groups of students in attendance. The Monday rehearsals will be held in the **Varsity Gymnasium** from **7:30-8:30pm** on the following days leading up to the *Fall Concert*:

Monday, September 21st, 7:30-8:30pm - *Concert Band*

Monday, September 28th, 7:30-8:30pm - *Vox Troiano*

Monday, October 5th, 7:30-8:30pm - *Concert Band*

Monday, October 12th, 7:30-8:30pm - *Vox Troiano*

In order to better ascertain the trend in our daily, academic schedule, I will determine the Monday rehearsal schedule beyond the *Fall Concert* at the end of September. If BCHS moves to regular, full enrollment classes, we may no longer need the Monday rehearsals.

That said, I believe holding full rehearsals will offer a more, robust and rewarding musical and ensemble experience for our musicians. There may be a greater benefit to continuing alternating Monday rehearsals (extra rehearsals = extra success!) beyond the *Fall Concert*, and in that case, we may want to keep them coming. Stay tuned on that one!

Concert Apparel

At this time, I'm holding off on purchasing any formalwear for the new members in ***Concert Band***, ***Vox Troiano***, or ***Sounds of Silas***. Additionally, I am also waiting to order the pep band track suits. Though both sets of apparel are listed as required in the BCHS Music Department Handbook, I want to be prudent with the Music Department's resources, and especially the resources of our BCHS Music families.

If we continue to trend toward normalizing our school environment (full capacity at events, less restrictive social distancing guidelines, a cure/vaccine/treatment is made widely available), we will move forward with plans for ordering apparel. In the meantime, school uniforms and spirit wear may be the choice for concert apparel. Stay tuned!

Piano & Electronic Keyboard Class

The Piano & Electronic Keyboard class is not immune to the challenges brought on by the pandemic, either. But, as it is with all the rest of our servant-hearted musicians of BCHS Music, our budding pianists are soaring with flying colors with stellar attitudes despite those challenges!

If we were able to host our annual, *Back-To-School Night*, you would notice the hanging sheets of plexiglass that separates the facing, electronic piano units. Along with the sanitizing of all machines after every class, the plexiglass, the social distancing, and the masks all work brilliantly to keep our musicians safe.

Beyond the safety, another challenge is the virtual learning day. Knowing not everyone may have or own a home piano or electronic keyboard, I needed to find a solution to allow our students to continue to learn at home...

...so...piano on an iPad? Well...yes...piano on an iPad.

There are also some really nifty and groovy keyboards on *GarageBand*, but the one that's easiest to play is the iPad app simply called, *The Piano*.

This is in no way perfect or ideal. What it provides is a simple way to keep students at home moving forward, practicing the concepts, the many exercises and songs we play everyday. Once they're back in person the next day, they put it all on the "real" machines. So far, so GREAT! On days when it's not so great, though, I remind everyone, especially at home, to have a little patience with the Piano app. All in all, everyone's doing a fantastic job.



In Conclusion

Should you have any questions, comments or concerns on any of the information in this newsletter, please email me at mduray@bishopchatard.org.

These are indeed trying times. There are certainly a variety of details and complexities to the processes of building, running, and expanding a mission-minded, purpose-driven music program in a Roman Catholic high school. COVID-19 has provided a myriad of obstacles and challenges that only add to the complexities.

On the other side of that, our students and their families are also dealing with this "new normal" and the challenges and obstacles it brings to an already busy study and household routine. I am absolutely aware that new levels of patience and flexibility have been discovered by many, if not all of our families. God bless you! I am also absolutely aware when even those levels of patience and flexibility have reached their threshold. God bless us all! The only thing any of us can do is to keep doing the best we can.

Despite the obstacles and challenges, please know I am tenaciously, and persistently determined and dedicated to building the greatest destination for our Deanery musicians here at Bishop Chatard High School. Even on the most trying of days, making music with your children - our servant-hearted BCHS Music CHAMPIONS is pure joy, and reminds me why God created and sent me. I am grateful to all of you - our musicians, who share your gifts daily, and to all of you - our families, for sharing the gifts of your children with me as we encounter Truth in beauty and goodness. I am also forever grateful for your continued support for BCHS Music.

- Mr. Duray, *Director of Music* - Trojans together!