

The Department's Educational Philosophy

Education in the Arts plays a major role in three general areas of education. Students gain knowledge of events and historical movements that shaped society. The arts help to develop critical and creative thinking skills. The arts can provide the means for communicating thoughts, emotions, and ideas that cannot otherwise be expressed.

Guiding Principles

For those students interested in developing skills in voice, instrumental, and drama performance, the Performing Arts Department offers courses and activities of considerable variety. Performance material is selected to: meet the varied needs and skill levels of the students, provide cultural enrichment for the students, help students develop aesthetic, make provision for technical growth of the students, provide for school and community service, and create interdisciplinary relationships.

LA CAPELLA: COURSE #870

Course Frequency: Two and a half times per week

Credits Offered: 2.5 Credits

Prerequisites: None

Background to the Curriculum

Using the National Standard for Music Education, the State Frameworks, and knowledge of specific choral techniques, the director identified concepts and skills necessary for a thorough musical education at the high school level. Each year, the conductor then develops materials and selects repertoire to facilitate the teaching of these skills and concepts. This curriculum is extensively tied to the National Standards for Music Education.

Core Topics/Questions/Concepts/Skills

The La Capella curriculum helps to ensure that students who take the course are encouraged to grow both personally and musically. The class involves a wonderfully diverse set of higher order and critical thinking activities. The two main activities involved in La Capella classes are singing (performing) and reading music; however, other activities in the class involve listening, analyzing, interpreting, and creating. Throughout the class, students remain highly active, and the director expects a high level of participation.

In addition to the musical learning, the director helps to provide opportunities for personal growth through performances – both solo and in ensemble – social events, field trips, and festivals. The director encourages La Capella members to develop skills in teamwork and organization, and pride and individual responsibility.

Course-End Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1] Music Literacy Skills

- Explain and identify meter in musical examples
- Read rhythms in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 4/8, 3/8, 6/8, 9/8, and 12/8
- Accurately perform the following scales using solfege syllables:
 - ~ major scales
 - ~ natural, harmonic and melodic minor scales
 - ~ chromatic scale
 - ~ major scale in thirds
 - ~ all scales in four-part rounds
- Explain and identify major and minor key signatures in musical examples
- Sight-sing medium level melodies in all major and melodic minor keys and a variety of meters

2] Aural Skills

- Vocally perform all diatonic intervals in major (major second, major third, perfect fourth...)
- Identify and perform tonic triads and arpeggios in all major and melodic minor keys
- Determine tonality and key quality of all pieces in the yearly repertoire
- Audiate musical motives

3] Choral Skills

- Perform with appropriate diction
- Perform with appropriate enunciation
- Perform with appropriate intonation
- Perform with appropriate dynamics
- Perform with appropriate phrasing
- Perform with appropriate blend

- Perform with appropriate balance between parts
- Accurately follow conductor

4] Musical Expression

- Develop an individual and/or class interpretation of each piece in the yearly repertoire
- Use a variety of choral skills to express interpretations of pieces
- Justify use of specific choral skills in various selections or sections of music

5] Vocal Skills (Students are expected to continually work to develop their vocal skills. It often takes several years of training to gain a complete understanding of vocal techniques.)

- Demonstrate a working knowledge of breath support using the abdominal and intercostal muscle apparatus
- Work to increase lung capacity
- Work to release tension in throat, jaw, and lips while phonating
- Explain vocal fold abduction
- Explain the mask as it applies to the singing voice
- Work to increase range and agility in all vocal tessitoras
- Demonstrate a knowledge of vocal health maintenance

6] Repertoire Skills

- Identify titles and composers of all selections in the yearly repertoire
- Identify styles of all selections in the yearly repertoire
- Identify time period in relation to history of each selection in yearly repertoire
- Securely perform selections in a variety of styles and languages.

7] Ensemble/Class Skills

- Critique performances of La Capella and other choirs using knowledge of the above skills

Assessment

The conductor of the La Capella constantly assesses the students based on the curriculum above. These assessments occur a minimum of four times per marking period. Assessments may occur in several of the following ways:

- Students perform at a number of concerts per year.
- Students sight sing musical examples alone or with others.
- Students perform repertoire in small or large groups.
- Students complete brief written exam.
- Conductor uses questioning to assess student understanding of a concept or skill.

Additionally, the conductor assesses students on their effort, attendance, and behavior in class. The conductor will determine a grade for each term based on the combination of the afore mentioned assessments

Materials and Resources

The La Capella Director chooses an ever-changing assortment of repertoire based on the needs of the ensemble. Pieces include classical works, musical theater selections, jazz standards, multicultural folk songs, early music, contemporary songs, and spirituals. The director also develops sight-singing and rhythm-reading materials and “mini music history workbooks” as needed.