

GIRLS CHOIR OF WILMINGTON HANDBOOK

Introduction

The Girls' Choir of Wilmington (GCW), formed in 1997, is a community-based choir of girls ages 9 -18. The aim of our program is to bring children from the Lower Cape Fear area together to develop musical skills, gain an understanding of singing as a personal means of musical expression, and perform locally and regionally. The choir continues to grow and develop and has toured in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Tennessee, Washington DC - including a prestigious performance at The National Cathedral. This Handbook is intended to provide you with basic information about our program.

Goals

- ~ Provide a superior performing experience through the study of high quality choral literature
- ~ Develop a strong level of musicianship through instruction in vocal technique, music reading, and expressive sensitivity
- ~ Foster a commitment to musical and personal excellence
- ~ Promote a sense of community and understanding of children from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds through the universal language of music

Program Description

The Choir performs a variety of secular and sacred choral literature including classical, folk, contemporary, world, gospel and jazz styles. Weekly rehearsals reinforce music reading skills, vocal techniques, stage presence and rehearsal etiquette. All choir members develop musicianship, self-discipline, teamwork, enthusiasm and artistic sensitivity.

Leadership

Sandra Errante (Conductor) founded the Girls Choir of Wilmington. Sandy previously directed the Wilmington Boys Choir for nine years. She is a teacher at Wilmington Academy of Arts & Science and a Kindermusik instructor. Her education includes degrees from University of Richmond and a Masters in counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Steven Errante (Accompanist) is the Conductor of the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra. He is a faculty member of the University of North Carolina in Wilmington Department of Music. In addition he is an arranger and composer. His education includes degrees from University of Michigan and The Juilliard School.

The Girls' Choir of Wilmington is a nonprofit organization registered in Raleigh, NC. The Artistic Director and the Board of Directors manage the choir. The Artistic Director selects the musical repertoire and schedules performances. The Board of Directors coordinate administrative functions including finances, marketing and public relations, concert and tour management, volunteers and fund raising. The Board provides business direction, approves the general rules and policies, and makes key decisions regarding the overall management and direction of the organization. All voting Board members serve in a volunteer capacity.

Auditions

Auditions are held late August and sometimes in early January. These dates are posted on the GCW website www.girlschoirofwilmington.org

Membership in GCW is intended to be a positive learning experience that each singer will carry with her throughout her lifetime. Our young singers will share wonderful music and social times together. Our hope is that all members will take great pride in the GCW program.

The GCW Season has two semesters from August through December and January through May. Singers are expected to make a full semester commitment. Parents of singers who are admitted into the program are expected to carefully read and abide by the GCW Handbook, GCW Concert Etiquette, The Choristers Code and Medical Release Form. Singers not abiding by the policies and expectations laid out in the Handbook, Concert Etiquette and Choristers Code are subject to dismissal from the GCW program.

Rehearsals and Attendance

Because each singer holds a valuable place in the choir, rehearsal is mandatory. Attendance and punctuality in each weekly rehearsal is vital to the success of each singer and choir. Regular attendance provides a multitude of benefits for each singer such as camaraderie with fellow singers, consistent, sequential accomplishment of musical skills and literature and preparation for wonderful performances. A tremendous amount of music is taught each week, therefore it is very difficult for singers to catch up on what was missed due to an absence. This impacts not only the absent singer, but the entire choir in its accomplishments in learning music and beautifying their sound. Rehearsals are expected to take a high priority in each child's life. GCW expects a significant commitment to consistent and punctual attendance at rehearsals. Thank you, in advance, for your support and cooperation in maintaining our high standards. A maximum of three absences will be tolerated per semester, (extenuating circumstances will be considered). In order to be excused, email GCW: girlschoirofwilmington@gmail.com prior to the rehearsal.

Attendance Check In/Out

These two actions are imperative to the safety and function of the choir. Attendance is kept by the check in procedure so if you don't check-in, you're marked absent. Check-in simply involves stopping to say hello to the 'Attendance Monitor'.

The Attendance Monitor will be at the door for Check-out. Wait quietly until your parent/guardian comes for you. The Attendance Monitor must be able to see your parent before you leave. If a choir member is driving, we would still like for you to say good bye to the Attendance Monitor.

Member Expectations

- Treat the directors, parent volunteers, fellow members and the facilities with respect at all times
- Take care of the music folder assigned to you and treat its contents properly
- Exhibit appropriate behavior in all rehearsals and concerts
- Miss no more than 3 rehearsals per semester

Grounds for Dismissal

- More than 3 approved absences per semester without prior notification
- Disruptive behavior during rehearsals
- Unexcused absence from a required concert

Rehearsal Times

Rehearsals are on Thursday afternoons at the First Baptist Activity Center, at specific times listed on the Calendar page of the GCW website. *Members are expected to be seated in the rehearsal room when rehearsal begins.*

Performances

As with any team, a great performance requires the participation of all its players. We function as a team, and each member is an integral part of the team through the music part they sing. As such, it is imperative that members arrive prepared, and on time to each performance. To be excused from a performance, members must notify GCW by email of anticipated performance conflicts at least two weeks before the scheduled performance date.

GCW performs a Christmas and Spring Concert each year. During the year there are also other performances that benefit local charities, community events, retirement homes etc. These occasions are vital, as they provide opportunities for community outreach, social justice education for the girls and exposure for the GCW program.

Tuition

\$375.00 per year (see Payment Options 6x\$62.50)

\$400.00 on average for tour (see Payment Options)

Payment Options

Tuition and tour is non-refundable for any reason. Tuition may be paid in full on the first rehearsal or paid in three-monthly installments. The three-month installment plan allows families to pay one-third of the tuition on the first rehearsal, one-third on the first Thursday in October/February, and the final installment on the first Thursday in November/March. Checks are preferred, but if you would like to pay cash, please place it in a sealed envelope with the singer's name and amount on the outside. Credit Cards are also accepted with 3% merchant fee. Please write singer's name on bottom of your check.

Outstanding Balance Policy

Any outstanding balance from the previous season must be paid in full in order for a member to be able to participate in an upcoming season.

Scholarships

Scholarship application forms are available for families with financial need. While no full scholarships are offered, partial scholarships may be offered based on funds. All scholarship requests must be submitted in writing with a W2 and received by the Board not later than the first rehearsal in September.

Each application will be reviewed by the GCW Board and applicants will be informed of the Board's decision. Potential scholarship recipients are asked to attend rehearsals during the application review process so they will not miss valuable rehearsal time.

Parental Volunteer Opportunities

GCW cannot function without the help of parent volunteers. Volunteer Assistance is needed in the following areas: Governing Board Participation, Concert Assistance, Fundraiser Assistance, Monitors, monthly combined choir snacks and other areas that present themselves during the year. Please make us aware of your willingness to participate in the life of the GCW.

Parent Expectations

- All members must be picked up promptly following their rehearsals. Parents park in parking spot.
- Keep formal concert dress and rehearsal shirts clean and in good condition.
- Attend the required parent meetings. (1 per semester)
- Pay tuition and tour fees by scheduled deadline (no refunds).
- Provide written notice of intent to miss a required performance at least 2 weeks in advance.

Communications

Notices of GCW activities will be sent by e-mail: girlschoirorfilmington@gmail.com

We use our website to post scheduled performances and events. Please be sure to check it frequently. The website address is www.girlschoirorfilmington.org

Fundraising

The GCW depends on the donations and generosity of others. In order to keep tuition as low as possible, we seek out any source of funding available. Participation in fundraisers is not required, but it is encouraged and helps keep tuition down. Normal fundraising profits go directly into the GCW account to help pay for tours and other events and musicians.

One of the best ways to support the choir is to become a “**FRIEND of the Girls Choir of Wilmington.**” **We can provide tax deductible receipts for donations to the GCW.** Names are printed in Programs.

Levels of donation are as follows:

- Up to \$99 Silver Level Donor
- \$100 to \$249 Gold Level Donor
- \$250 to \$499 Platinum Level Donor
- \$500 to \$999 Choral Guild Member Donor
- \$1,000 and up Founder’s Club Member Donor

A second way to help support the Girl Choir is to **sponsor a singer**. The annual cost of tuition is not high, yet, it is difficult for some families. Your willingness to help is greatly appreciated and will give a young lady the opportunity of a life-time. Because of the value of such a gift, donors are placed in the Choral Guild Member level of donation.

A third way to support the choir is with **concert underwriting**. If your company or organization would like to underwrite an entire concert, the corporate logo and heading will be listed on all publicity, in the concert program and any other promotions the choir sponsors. Concert sponsorship for the 2015-2016 season is \$1,000 per event.

A fourth way to support the choir is through the purchase of **advertising in concert programs**. If your company or organization would like to purchase an ad for any season concerts, please ask for an advertising specs sheet from the girl choir.

Photographs

Choir photographs are taken each year and may be used for publicity purposes. Photographs, both formal and candid, may appear in GCW brochures, on GCW social media, GCW website, performance programs, as well as newspapers, magazines, press releases, etc. Where appropriate, first names only will be used to protect the identities of our singers. Parents not comfortable with their child's photo being used for publicity purposes should contact a Board member in writing.

The Chorister's Code

This Code of good behavior is designed for everyone's benefit and, therefore, each member of the GCW is asked to abide by its rules as follows:

I agree to:

Be attentive in rehearsals and concerts; when not singing, sit quietly, listening and participating appropriately. Adhere to 'GCW Concert Etiquette'.

Respect and listen to all in positions of authority, and do what is asked, when it is asked.

Be kind and helpful to other members of the Choir especially those younger than myself.

Conduct myself in a manner that will contribute to a sense of community among fellow choir members, therefore I know there is to be no bullying, physical or verbal; insulting language, swearing, name-calling or shouting.

Not use tobacco, alcohol, or non-prescription controlled substances during Choir activities, to include the Tour.

Dress appropriately and follow the dress code as specified for Choir and Tour events. If asked by a member of the GCW Board to change into appropriate clothing or modify my appearance (consistent with the image of GCW), I will comply. I understand that an infraction of these dress code or behavior rules may result in my immediate dismissal, return home at my expense from the Tour (to include fees for a chaperone, if necessary) and forfeiture of all Choir and Tour fees.

Signed: _____ Print Member Name: _____ Date _____

Signed: _____ Print Parent/Guardian Name: _____