

Introduction

Welcome to the Homer Children's Choir. This handbook will provide you with information about the Choir, its structure, and our current policies. Please read it carefully. In the handbook you will find guidelines about rehearsals, performances, tuition, and practicing. If you have any questions, please contact the Harbor School of Music & Dance (HSMD).

Our mission is to provide the children and youth of Homer and the surrounding areas opportunity for artistic and personal growth through choral music performance. The Choir is composed of children in the 1st through 6th grade.

The Homer Children's Choir prepares and presents a wide cross-section of repertoire. Music is drawn from all periods of history, representing many styles - from medieval to modern; classical to folk; sacred and secular, in order to enhance the musical growth of the choristers. By nurturing the musical sensitivity of each chorister and developing self-discipline needed in the practice of this performing art, the choir provides an intense training ground for choristers. The Choir's approach to providing a comprehensive choral music education is more closely defined through the Skill, Personal, and Ensemble Development Objectives listed below.

Goals

The organizational goals of the Homer Children's Choir are to enable its members to:

- Express themselves through a high standard of choral performance and artistic communication.
- Develop individual vocal, musical, aural and analytical skills, and benefit from age-appropriate training of the maturing voice as part of a comprehensive choral music education.
- Develop an appreciation for classical and traditional music from the world's cultures;
- Develop responsibility, self-confidence, and a love for singing.
- Understand the importance of their individual contribution to the success of the group;
- Participate in an organization that is an exemplary model for a community-based arts organization.

These organizational goals are realized through specific learning objectives in three different categories:

Skill Development Objectives

- The development of *musical independence* as a chorister and performer. The development of this skill becomes evident through the musical part-work performed by the choir.
- The development of *listening/aural skills*. This skill area concerns matters of intonation, blend and related vocal techniques, as well as ensemble skills.

- The development of *music reading skills*. The emphasis is placed upon the development of a positive attitude toward reading music. The ability to pick up a piece of choral music at a suitable level of difficulty and sophistication with the ability to read and recreate this material much as one would in reading text in prose or poetry, is highly valued in this program.
- The development of *vocal technique*. The development of a sound vocal technique, which allows the student to safely and expressively use the voice to communicate musical thoughts and ideas, is the primary goal. A secondary goal, is to acquaint the student with the different vocal colors and techniques used in a variety of musical styles.
- The development of *study, preparation and performance skills* through preparing and performing literature with artistic integrity. The primary area of concern here is the use of a wide variety of repertoire, chosen because of its artistic integrity, both musically and textually. Emphasis is placed on music which offers the student the opportunity to learn that which is structurally sound and interesting, artistically stimulating, and which will reinforce the concept that there are many different styles of music, which are equally legitimate artistic expressions.
- The development of *expressive and communicative musical skills*. The development of the choristers' abilities to communicate musical, emotional, and textual ideas to an audience in an effective manner is the goal.

Personal Development Objectives

- To provide a choral experience which meets the individual singer at his/her point of challenge.
- To enhance the individual's self-image, through meaningful rehearsal and performance activities.
- To encourage a sense of responsibility and co-operative effort within the ensemble.
- To foster a life-long love and appreciation of the choral art.

Ensemble Development Objectives

- To provide an ongoing, progressive choral experience, with an uncompromising commitment to excellence.
- To provide a choral experience that will attract and challenge the musically gifted.
- To perform, to the highest artistic standard, worthy choral repertoire drawn from the masterworks of various eras and styles.
- To develop professionalism in all aspects of the choral program.
- To develop the ability to sing in other languages, and appreciate the universality of the choral art.

Homer Community Choir Schedule:

*Unless otherwise specified, all rehearsals are Tuesdays, 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Rehearsals take place at West Homer Elementary*

First Semester

August 1: Registration for Winter Semester opens
September 1: Registration for Winter Semester closes/First Tuition Installment
September 3: First Rehearsal for Winter Semester
October 1: Second Tuition Installment
November 1: Third Tuition Installment
November 24: Thanksgiving Week Rehearsal at 5:00 PM
December 1: Final Tuition Installment
December 17: Winter Concert/End of Semester

Second Semester

November 15: Registration for Spring Semester opens
December 15: Registration for Spring Semester closes
January 1: First Tuition Installment
January 7: First Rehearsal for Spring Semester
February 1: Second Tuition Installment
March 1: Third Tuition Installment
March 10: No Rehearsal, Spring Break
April 1: Final Tuition Installment
April 28: Spring Concert/End of Semester

Membership

The Choir is designed to provide a positive learning experience for children, creating both lifetime memories and learning skills. Membership in the Choir requires commitment and responsibility. Choristers need to develop a sense of commitment to their ensemble as integral team members, since no chorister “sits on the bench.” Each singer is an important contributor to the strength and success of the entire ensemble sound and performance. Members of the Choir should feel a sense of pride at being in this very special choir and a sense of achievement as they reach each new musical goal.

Enrollment in the Choir is by semester. Students can choose to participate in either or both semesters. All choristers are expected to be active members for the entire year, and to participate in all scheduled rehearsals and performances. Under special circumstances, choristers may arrange a *leave of absence* with the Music Director. Please note that tuition will not be refunded in the case of a leave of absence.

Auditions

Auditions are required for all new choristers. Please check the calendar for scheduled audition dates. Auditions are a helpful tool for the choir director when planning curriculum for the semester and are not evaluative. Returning members are not required to audition.

Tuition Policies

There is a non-refundable annual enrollment fee of \$30 per student, or \$75 per family, whichever is lesser. Annual enrollment contributes to performance and materials costs (long-sleeved tee for performance, music, and venue rental costs). Tuition is a per semester fee of \$120, payable in four monthly installments of \$30 each. Each additional student from the same household will be discounted to \$80 per semester, payable in \$20 monthly installments. Furthermore, students who enroll for both semesters will receive a one month tuition discount and will not be charged their final tuition installment

in April.

- Tuition does not include any scheduled school closures or breaks.
- Tuition total remains the same, whether there are five classes in the month or three.
- Tuition total is NOT related to the number of classes in the month.
- Tuition includes tax and Community Rec facility usage fees.

Tuition for the semester is due even if the child drops out of the program at any time during the season. Written requests for a waiver of this policy will be reviewed on a case by case basis only.

Non-payment of fees may compromise a member's place in the Choir and have an impact on any performances in which the chorister may be planning to perform. All fees must be current, since the Choir has to make a variety of financial and contractual commitments at the beginning of the year.

Tuition payments are made via automatic debit from your checking or savings account or scheduled recurring credit card payments. Payment is withdrawn/charged on the 1st of the month. Monthly totals include tax. We are not able to prorate or refund tuition for absences/vacations/missed lessons (see Absence Policy below). These are the only accepted payment methods unless you would like to pay for the whole year in advance (\$210 for first student, \$140 for additional family members). Please note: if paying for the whole year in advance, tuition paid is non-refundable.

If you have any questions about the safety and reliability of automatic payments, please visit the following website: <http://www.bizcashflow.com/consumercenter/apbenefits.htm>.

Scheduled Debit Terms: "Signed authorization is to remain in full force and effect until the HSMD has received written notification of its termination in such time and such manner as to afford HSMD a reasonable opportunity to act on it or until the term of the authorization expires. Any such notice should be given in person at the HSMD office, 3691 Ben Walters Lane, Suite 2, Homer, AK, 99603. Written notice required; refer to below.

Furthermore, if any such electronic debit(s) should be returned by my financial institution as unpaid (Non-Sufficient of Uncollected Funds), I authorize HSMD to collect a returned item fee of \$25.00 per item by electronic debit from the same account. For credit cards, I authorize HSMD to reattempt to collect on the 5th of the month if tuition payment is declined due to insufficient funds.

Resignation

Homer Children's Choir makes a semester-long commitment to its choristers in terms of programming, staffing, and other services. In return, the Choir expects each chorister to make semester-long commitment to the Choir. If some unusual circumstance impeding the chorister's fulfillment of that commitment should occur during the semester, the chorister and parent(s) or guardian(s) must arrange for a personal conference with the Music Director prior to submitting a letter of resignation. Parents should note that they are still responsible for the entire tuition fee for the semester, even if the chorister resigns.

Rehearsal Attendance

Membership in the Homer Children's Choir is a commitment of faithful, consistent, and punctual attendance. It is expected that each rehearsal takes a very high priority in each chorister's life.

Choristers are expected to attend all rehearsals. This includes special classes and dress rehearsals. Attendance will be taken at each rehearsal and if a child is absent without prior arrangements or excuse, his or her parent will be contacted by phone while the rehearsal is still in progress. This **call-back policy** is being implemented out of concern for the safety and well-being of choristers, and to make certain that every effort is being made to convey necessary rehearsal and performance information communicated at the rehearsal. No more than three rehearsal absences of any type, excused or unexcused, pre-arranged or emergency are permitted in a given semester. Three or more rehearsal absences will trigger a conference between the chorister, parent(s), and the Music Director or HSMD Administrator.

Pre-Arranged Absences

Excused absences from rehearsals include illness, scheduling conflicts with significant family, school, or religious responsibilities. To be excused from a rehearsal, the chorister's parent or guardian should submit a written request for consideration as soon as possible, but at least seven days prior to the rehearsal in question. Absences are *not* excused if the choir director is verbally informed. Requests *must* be submitted via email or in written form:

- a. to the HSMD office, 3691 Ben Walters Lane,
Homer, AK 99603.
- b. by email (harborschool.music.dance@gmail.com)
- c. via text to (907) 299-7042

Emergency or Urgent (Non-pre-arranged) Absences

For emergency or urgent absences occurring on the day of a rehearsal, parents or guardians should call the HSMD School Office at 235-6705 or text 299-7042.

Mandatory Rehearsals

All Final or "Dress" rehearsals are mandatory. If you are absent from the Final rehearsal without the prior approval of the Music Director, you will not be able to participate in the associated performance. Choristers should therefore, not arrive at that concert with an expectation of performing.

Tardiness/Early Dismissal

In the interest of child safety, a written note is necessary for late admittance to or early dismissal from a rehearsal. Parents must submit a written excuse for each Tardiness or Early Dismissal.

Sore throats, Colds, and other Illnesses

A note regarding sore throats/colds and other common illnesses is in order. These are inevitably a concern for vocalists of any age! Please operate by the following principle:

If a child/chorister is well enough to go to class/school, that child/chorister is well enough to attend rehearsals.

If a chorister has a sore throat, it is important that they attend the rehearsal, but inform the Music Director that they will be *listening* and **following the music**, marking music as appropriate, using their listening skills. Even though not actively singing, choristers still absorb a tremendous amount through listening and watching. If they appear to be infectious, they may be asked to sit off to one side, rather than in close proximity to other choristers during the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Procedures

The following procedures help us achieve discipline and professionalism in the Choir. They are enforced for the Choristers' safety, ensuring proper rehearsals, and out of respect and courtesy for each other.

Please arrive ten minutes before the designated rehearsal time. If necessary, use the bathroom and get a drink. There will be no bathroom breaks during the rehearsal. Then go directly to the rehearsal space and sign in. Parents, please note: choristers must not be left at the site more than fifteen minutes before their rehearsal begins.

- No food, gum, candy, or drinks are allowed in the School. Please eat before or after rehearsals. The school does not have cleaning staff to clean up after every rehearsal.
- A written note is necessary for late admittance to or early dismissal from a rehearsal. Give attendance notes, permission slips, etc. to the Music Director. Remember to follow the Choir's absence policy when you are ill or have a schedule conflict.
- Do not roam about the school or property at any time. Students should be in the rehearsal area or lobby only.
- Please show respect and courtesy to fellow choristers, parent volunteers, and the facilities at all times. Pay attention to the Music Director and do not talk or in any way distract other choristers. Running, yelling, and rowdy behavior are not permitted in the school or on school premises. Please remain *calm and focused* during rehearsals and performances.
- Always bring your binder, sharpened (or mechanical) pencils, and music to rehearsals.
- Come to rehearsals *mentally* and *physically* prepared to listen critically and to enjoy the expressiveness of your music making.
- Parents and interested members of the community are welcome to observe rehearsals quietly from the back of the room. Please note: space is limited. Please remind any children accompanying you they must also abide by the Choir's rules for rehearsal behavior. Disruptive guests will be asked to leave the rehearsal so as not to distract from the learning process. Also, no cameras or camcorders are allowed during rehearsals. Turn off pagers and cell-phones.
- Choristers are responsible for giving their parent(s) any handouts that are distributed at rehearsals. Please extend courtesy and respect to each other and everyone you encounter as a member of the Homer Children's Choir. Failure to observe the above rules will result in a re-evaluation of membership in the Choir. Persistent problems may result in the suspension or dismissal from the Choir.

As a Homer Children's Choir Chorister, you are expected to:

- Try your best at all times.
- Watch the conductor at *all times*.
- Actively participate! Always sing when it is your section's time to sing.
- Listen carefully to directions.

- When your section is not singing, listen to what the other singers are doing and observe them! Be quiet and attentive when you are not singing and allow others to concentrate.
- Follow the score closely, making an honest attempt to learn to read the notation.

Concert Dress

Just as the ensemble sound is important, so is the ensemble's appearance. A well-groomed, neatly uniformed ensemble is essential for a truly professional and artistic experience. *Good personal hygiene* is a requirement for all Choristers. Hair should be groomed away from the face and may be fastened with natural (matching hair color) barrettes (no bows, ribbons, scrunchies, or colored barrettes). No obvious make-up or cosmetics, jewelry, earrings (only stud earrings allowed), or accessories are permitted. A Chorister who fails to dress or groom properly for a performance will not be permitted to participate.

All choristers should be attired in black slacks or skirts and their Homer Children's Choir shirts.

Shoes: In the interest of safety (getting off and on riser formations of various kinds), healthy posture (being able to stand for extended periods of time) and effective singing posture (influencing the position of the spine), Homer Children's Choir insists of choristers using plain, flat black dress shoes for concert purposes. No bows, buckles, straps, patent leather, stacked heels, or platform shoes will be allowed.

Performance Code of Conduct and Performance Procedures

The Homer Children's Choir performs in a variety of venues. Each requires professional conduct and polished presentation. Prior to each scheduled performance, choristers receive a concert information sheet. This sheet provides detailed information about location, time, concert dress requirements, pick-up and drop off procedures, and other items. Please read each concert information sheet carefully. In addition:

1. Always eat a nutritious meal, drink lots of water, and get plenty of rest before a concert. Choristers may not bring any food, drink, candy, or gum to dress rehearsals or performances. If well-sealed water bottles are allowed, this will be specified in your Concert Information Sheet.
2. Do not bring cell-phones, or other electronics (games, personal mp3 players, etc.) to the performance venue. Any urgent messages must be sent through the Choir's Performance Coordinator. Bring as few personal items (purses, backpacks, etc.) to the performance venue as possible, and make them as small as possible. Do not bring valuables of any kind. Reading materials such as books may however be useful when having to wait in non-public backstage areas between rehearsal periods or performances.
3. Plan to arrive ten minutes before the performance call time. Parents/guardians are required to drop off choristers at the location specified in your Concert Information Sheet, and nowhere else. Chaperones will be waiting there to guide choristers to the performance space. When you reach the performance space, immediately check in with your Choir's Performance Coordinator. *If you are tardy (arrive after performance call time) without the prior written permission of the Music Director, you will not be allowed to participate in the performance.*
4. Always arrive in proper concert dress as listed in the Concert Information Sheet. *Choristers who are not in complete concert dress will not be allowed to sing.* Complete concert dress includes regulation shoes, socks, tights, hairstyles, and jewelry. All body jewelry except earrings must be removed; earrings may be small stud type only. If choristers use hair coloring, it should be noted that only natural-looking hair color will be acceptable on stage; i.e., oranges, blues, etc. are not acceptable for concert purposes.

The Performance Coordinator will make all final decisions about dress code questions.

5. Professional conduct is required at all times. Follow the directions of the Music Director and chaperones. Wait quietly in your designated area when your ensemble is not warming up or performing. *Choristers who leave their designated area without a chaperone will not be allowed to perform, and may be dismissed or suspended from the Choir.* Choristers may not use restrooms unless accompanied by a chaperone. *Excessive talking or other breeches of performance conduct will be handled by the Performance Coordinator and may result in dismissal from the performance, and/or suspension and dismissal from the Choir.*

6. Know the music. If the Music Director determines that you do not know the music at the Final Rehearsal, you will not be allowed to sing in the associated performance.

7. Know the procedures for illness or other problems that may occur during a performance, and always follow the directions of chaperones in an emergency.

8. *All choristers must be picked up by a parent or guardian after a performance.* This rule applies to all choristers, regardless of Ensemble level. Pick-up procedures will be specified in your Concert Information Sheet. Parents may designate an alternate person for release of their chorister, but must do so in a signed release form. This form must be submitted to the HSMD office prior to the event.

9. Always let a Chaperone know if you are feeling ill. If you feel ill during a performance, quietly sit down. Chaperons are always watching and will help you.

10. Remember that you represent the Homer Children's Choir at all times - not only when you think you are being formally observed!

'Choristers and Parents As Audience' Etiquette

It is important for Homer Children's Choir choristers to learn about formal concert hall etiquette as they prepare to interact with choirs in formal settings in various parts of the globe. Therefore, everyone's assistance in reinforcing these values is greatly appreciated.

- Audience response in the form of applause is a generally accepted practice in formal concert venues.
- Whistling, shouting and yelling are more than appropriate in sports venues, but are considered inappropriate in a formal concert venue.
- Encouraging smiles on the part of the audience are most helpful, whereas waving at performers is very distracting for them.
- Please avoid either eating or drinking during a performance in any indoor venues.
- Please remain seated during the entire performance, so as to give the other performers their best opportunity to concentrate and focus. Restroom breaks should be taken during intermission, or in an emergency only between performance selections or sets.
- Please remember that flash photography can be extremely distracting for the performer who is performing into bright stage lights. In such situations, the audience appears to be 'blacked out' from the stage. Therefore, please avoid such photography.
- The opportunity to learn from the performances of other young choristers or other musical

performances is an important part of the education process. Do avoid discussing the performance or the relative merit of approaches or performance techniques while in public.

Home Study

Practice at home is expected of each Chorister every day. Practice includes vocal technique exercises, as well as work on specific literature. From time to time specific learning assignments are given involving written work or memorization of text and/or music. Given that the ensemble meets only once per week, it will be important for choristers to review specific pieces of music between rehearsal dates. Completion of these assignments may be tested on an individual basis or in small groups at the discretion of the Music Director.

Care Of Printed Music

Printed music is very costly and frequently difficult to replace. Each chorister must assume the responsibility of looking after it carefully.

Please observe the following practices in caring for the music:

- Please make all markings in the music neatly (allowing the next person to use the music the opportunity to read and benefit from your markings).
- All markings are to be made in pencil only!
- Please handle the music with care - avoid folding, rolling, crunching or tearing the music.
- Do not *doodle* on the printed music!
- Keep all of your music in your Music Folder.
- Please tape torn music (with invisible tape) as soon as the tear occurs — certainly before the music is returned.

Please Note: Each chorister is responsible for the return of printed music and folders in good condition. The chorister will be billed for any lost or damaged music assigned to her or his music folder.

Rationale: It is very costly and time consuming to replace music, some of which is no longer available, or was purchased at a time when prices were considerably lower. In addition, many publishers have minimum order requirements making it impossible to order one or two copies. Some publishers charge substantially more for one or two copies than those purchased in bulk. Furthermore, there are usually postage/handling costs, which must be paid. Be aware, therefore, that the price you see on the music is not likely to be the replacement cost. If you have lost music, you will be billed according to its replacement cost. To avoid the hassle, take good care of your music—it is VERY precious!

Role of Parents

As you have probably determined, being a member of the Homer Children's Choir requires a high degree of commitment, dedication and self-discipline from both the chorister and the chorister's family.

The most important duty of a choir parent is to read all written material immediately following

rehearsal. It is also crucial that all permission forms and information sheets be completed and returned on the date requested.

Special Note:

There are many changes and challenges throughout the year to which we all rise for the good of the choir. The choristers are more than capable of achieving excellence and conducting themselves in a professional manner. They do enjoy presenting fine performances and meeting an artistic challenge with confidence! During the season, however, there may be times of discouragement or frustration, but it is important that together we (parents, staff and chaperones) teach ***persistence***.

Parents assist individual *choristers* by

- providing assurance that each member is critically important—reinforcing the special role that each member plays in the ensemble.
- encouraging the wise use of time and the anticipation of heavy school assignments.
- having a designated, visible place in your home for the music folder.
- chauffeuring choristers to, and being punctual for, all rehearsals, workshops, and performances.
- encouraging (and perhaps assisting in) choir homework assignments and private study. The study of the text (practicing saying or memorizing the words between rehearsals) is **STRONGLY** recommended. This can enhance the development of the choir and eliminate tedious hours in rehearsal. This is essential for the younger choristers whose reading skills are less developed.

Parents assist the *choir* by:

- reading all written communication.
- completing and submitting forms on the date requested.
- attending all parent meetings.
- participating in fundraising programs.
- distributing concert promotion and selling tickets, if/when applicable.
- promoting the choir to friends, relatives and colleagues.
- serving as a parent volunteer at an event or at a rehearsal.

The Homer Community Choir encourages parent volunteers. Rehearsal volunteers are necessary for assisting with student check-in and check-out, bathroom breaks, calling parents for unexcused absences, class conduct concerns and clean up. If each parent volunteers one rehearsal per semester, we should have sufficient assistance for the entire semester. Performance volunteers are equally important and encouraged. We will have sign-up opportunities prior to each performance.

Acknowledgement is hereby given to several primary sources of information for handbook content:

- Mount Royal Junior Children's Choir: Chorister

Handbook, 1992-1993.

- Indianapolis Children's Choir, Prof. Henry Leck,
Founder and Artistic Director.
- ASYC Chorister's Handbook, 2001-2002. Dr. Garry
Froese, Executive Director.