

# Birmingham Children's Choir



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## Handbook

*Revised 7/18/07*

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## Table of Contents

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Mission Statement . . . . .	3	Rehearsal Shirts . . . . .	5
Goals . . . . .	3	Performances . . . . .	6
Program Description . . . . .	3	Performance Attire . . . . .	6
Auditions . . . . .	3	Tuition . . . . .	6
Membership . . . . .	3	Scholarships . . . . .	7
Communications . . . . .	4	Fundraisers . . . . .	7
Parent Meetings . . . . .	4	Photographs . . . . .	7
Committee Participation . . . . .	5	Items for Sale . . . . .	8
Rehearsal and Performance Policy . . . . .	5	Touring . . . . .	8
Rehearsals . . . . .	5		

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## Staff

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Amanda Rabb Klimko  
*Artistic Director, Concert Choir Conductor*

Cherith Parrish  
*Training Choir Conductor*

Wendy Shaw  
*Accompanist*

Dr. Julie A. Skadsem  
*Founding Director*

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## Advisory Board

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Dr. Timothy Banks, Director of Choral Studies  
*Samford University*

Dr. Mary Ann Culotta, Arts Education Director  
*Jefferson County School System*

Andy Graffeo, President  
*Graffeo Tax Advisors*

Dr. Jemmie Hawkins, Program Specialist, General /Vocal Choral Music  
*Birmingham City Schools, Grades 1-12*

John D. Jones, Executive Director  
*Opera Birmingham*

Michael Keel, Senior Vice President  
*McWane, Inc.*

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## Governing Board

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### **Charitable Contributions and Grants**

Julie Danley, Elementary Teacher  
Creative Montessori Schools, Inc.  
1720 Carovel Circle, Vestavia Hills, AL 35216

### **Communications**

Melinda Williams, Partner  
Strategic Solution, LLC  
234 Raymond Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209

### **Financial**

Scott Thompson, AIA CSI  
Fuller & Thompson, Architects, Inc.  
2801 10th Court So., Birmingham, AL 35205

### **Membership**

Carrie Thomas, VP of Merchandising  
Gloves International  
443 Paige Drive, Hoover, AL 35226

### **Recruitment and Publicity**

Pam Walston, Pre-School Teacher  
Creative Montessori Schools, Inc.  
2050 Long Meadow, Hoover, AL 35216

### **Uniforms**

Melissa O'Brien  
9455 Ambrose Lane, Kimberly, AL 35091

## Mission Statement

The Birmingham Children's Choir is a multi-cultural, non-profit organization that celebrates diversity through the study and community-wide performances of choral music. Our nurturing and professional staff is dedicated to helping children develop the skills necessary to enjoy a lifetime of choral singing.

## 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 through a progressively graded program that meets the individual needs of children.
- Promote a sense of community and understanding of children from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds through the universal language of music.
- Enhance the cultural environment of the community around Birmingham through a children's performing medium.

## Program Description

The Birmingham Children's Choir (BCC) is a choral music program for girls in grades 1-9. Singers are divided into two choirs: Training Choir (grades 1-3) and Concert Choir (grades 4-9). The choirs study and perform a variety of secular and sacred choral literature including classical, folk, contemporary, world, gospel and jazz styles. Weekly solfege classes reinforce music reading skills, vocal techniques, stage presence and rehearsal etiquette.

Both choirs rehearse on Tuesday afternoons from August through mid-May at Edgewood Presbyterian Church, 850 Oxmoor Road, Homewood, AL 35209.

## Auditions

Auditions are held by appointment in July and August and again in early January. New singers are encouraged to participate in one rehearsal before auditioning to be sure they are interested in joining the BCC program. The minimum requirement for membership in the Training Choir (grades 1-3) is the ability to match pitch. We evaluate this in a group setting and no individual audition is required. New singers in grades 4-9 are required to audition with the Concert Choir Director. The audition consists of vocalizing, singing a familiar tune, imitating short musical phrases, and sight-reading.

## Membership

Our concert season runs from August through mid-May. Singers are expected to make a full season commitment to the BBC. Parents of singers who are admitted into the BCC program are expected to carefully read the *BCC Handbook* and then sign the *Membership Agreement*, *Code of Conduct* and *Medical Release Form*. Parents must complete and submit these forms at the Parent Meeting. Singers not abiding by the policies and expectations laid out in the *Membership Agreement*, *Code of Conduct* and *Handbook* are subject to dismissal from the BCC program. The BCC must enforce a Code of Conduct for all members. The expectations are as follows:

### ***Singer Expectations***

- Wear rehearsal shirt to each rehearsal.
- Take care of the music folder assigned to you and treat its contents properly.
- Exhibit appropriate behavior in rehearsals and concerts.
- Keep your performance attire clean and in good condition.
- Be sure the length of your performance attire is correct so that all singers' uniforms are the same length.
- Wear black shoes with either black socks or black hose with performance attire.
- Miss no more than three rehearsals each semester.
- Attend all required performances.

### ***Parent Expectations***

- Sign children in and out of rehearsal each week.
- Keep performance attire clean and in good condition.
- Attend scheduled parent meetings.
- Pay tuition by scheduled deadline (no refunds).
- Provide written excuses for missed rehearsals.
- Provide written notice of intent to miss a required performance at least 4 weeks in advance.

### ***Grounds for Dismissal***

- Consistent and excessive absences from rehearsals
- Disruptive behavior during rehearsals
- Unexcused absence from a concert
- Unpaid tuition balance with no financial arrangements made

## **Communications**

Notices of BCC activities will be sent by email frequently throughout the year. We use our website to post scheduled performances and events. Please be sure to check it frequently. The website address is **[www.birminghamchildrenschoir.org](http://www.birminghamchildrenschoir.org)**. Singers are also given notes to take home to parents before performances and meetings. A roster of all BCC members will be distributed at the beginning of each season.

## **Parent Meetings**

Two required parent meetings will be scheduled, one in August and one in January. These meetings will review the Handbook and Policies of the BCC as well as discuss performances for the season. Fundraising, performance schedule and general choir business will be discussed at these meetings.

## **Committee Participation**

Parents will be asked to choose a committee on which they will serve by the last rehearsal in August. The following committees are available: Communications, Membership, Music and Materials, Recruitment & Publicity, Fundraising, and Hospitality. These committees are chaired by BCC Governing Board members and generally meet a once per semester.

## Rehearsal and Performance Policy

BCC singers are required to be at all rehearsals on time. We allow three rehearsal excused absences per semester. All singers must be signed in and out by a parent at the front table or they will be counted absent. Required performances will be listed on the Code of Conduct at the beginning of each season. If a singer misses more than three rehearsals or a required performance, a letter will be sent to the parents asking them to come before the Governing Board. Singers who miss more than the allotted number of absences are subject to dismissal from the BCC program.

### Rehearsals

Choir rehearsal is Tuesday afternoon at Edgewood Presbyterian Church. Rehearsals begin promptly at 5:30pm. Singers are expected to be seated in the rehearsal room when rehearsal begins at 5:30pm.

Training Choir (grades 1-3)	Rehearsal 5:30 - 6:30pm
Concert Choir (grades 4-9)	Rehearsal 5:30 - 7:00

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### ***I M P O R T A N T !***

- **Parents must sign their singers in and out of rehearsal each week for safety and liability reasons.**
  - **Rehearsals begin promptly at 5:30pm. Singers are expected to be seated in the rehearsal room when rehearsal begins at 5:30pm.**
  - **Parents are reminded that staff is not available to supervise singers until 5:15 pm.**
  - **Please do not drop off singers before 5:15 pm.**
  - **Singers are allowed to bring a bottle of water with their name on it to rehearsals.**
  - **Parents are welcome to wait at the church during rehearsal or drop off singers and pick them up at the designated time.**
  - **All singers must be picked up before staff can leave the building, please be prompt.**
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### Rehearsal Shirts

The rehearsal shirt policy is designed to create a uniform look among the singers in the event that publicity personnel or other guests visit a rehearsal. It also instills a sense of belonging and discipline within the choirs. Singers are required to wear rehearsal shirts to every rehearsal. One short sleeve and one long sleeve rehearsal shirt is included with tuition. Shirts may be replaced or exchanged for larger sizes at no cost as the singer grows. Shirts that have been damaged or stained will not be replaced; however, parents may purchase a new shirt to replace the old one. Parents may also purchase an extra shirt, if needed.

## Performances

As with any team, a great performance requires the participation of all its players. BCC performances are no different. We function as a team, and each singer is an integral part of the team through the music part they sing. As such, it is imperative that singers arrive prepared, and on time to each performance. To be excused from a performance, singers must notify their Choir Director in writing of anticipated performance conflicts at least four (4) weeks before the scheduled performance date.

The Training and Concert Choirs perform a Winter and Spring Concert each year. In addition, choirs perform throughout the community during the year. These performances have included events such as Children's Hospital, Bravo, Light up at the Summit, Barons Game National Anthem, retirement communities, etc. The Concert Choir performs more often and participates in a national or regional tour every other year.

## Performance Attire

The BCC has a specific uniform for all performances. Each choir has a Formal Uniform as well as a Casual Uniform. The cost of the uniform is included in the tuition.

- The Training Choir uniform is a mandarin collar shirt, black tuxedo pants with a black cummerbund, black shoes and black socks.
- The Concert Choir uniform is a burgundy shirt, black palazzo pants, black shoes and black socks.
- The Casual uniform for both choirs is the rehearsal t-shirt worn with the singer's own denim jeans or shorts.
- Specific information about uniforms for each performance attire will be communicated via email before each performance.
- No jewelry should be worn for performances. Singers should not wear perfumes or colognes for performances, as it may cause an allergic reaction for another singer. Hair should be pulled back away from the face.

Formal uniforms will be provided by BCC and will remain the property of BCC. Each singer will be fitted each season with a uniform. If a singer outgrows their uniform during the season, a new one will be provided, once the previously assigned uniform has been turned in. Singers should clean and care for their uniforms properly throughout the year. At the end of the season, following the last performance, singers should bring regular clothing to change into before leaving the performance, so their uniforms can be turned in for the year. Singers who fail to turn in their uniforms at the end of the season will be charged a *\$60 uniform replacement fee*. BCC will have all uniforms cleaned before the following season begins.

## Tuition

Tuition is \$285 per year for the Training Choir and \$330 per year for the Concert Choirs. **Tuition is non-refundable for any reason.** Parents may choose to pay tuition in full on the first rehearsal or take advantage of our three-month installment plan. The three-month installment plan allows families to pay one-third of the tuition on the first rehearsal, the first Tuesday in September and the first Tuesday in October. All tuition is due by the first Tuesday in October. 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. Late fees will be assessed to tuition balances that are unpaid as follows:

**Late fee policy**

- Accounts 30 days late will be assessed a \$10 late fee.
- Accounts 60 days late will be assessed a \$20 late fee.
- Accounts 90 days late, the singer will be dismissed from the BCC program.

**Returned checks policy**

- Returned checks will be assessed a charge of \$10 in addition to bank fees.

Tuition invoices for past due balances will be prepared and mailed two weeks prior to the payment due date. Alternative payment plans prepared in writing and notarized are also acceptable for families who wish to use this method. Parents of children from Edgewood Presbyterian Church will receive a 50% discount on tuition as per the BCC covenant with EPC. Edgewood parents are asked to notify the BCC Membership Officer to adjust their tuition balance.

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**Please note we do not refund tuition to singers who drop out of or are dismissed from the program.**

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**Scholarships**

Scholarship application forms are available for families with financial need. While no full scholarships are offered, one-third or one-half scholarships are typical. All scholarship requests must be submitted in writing and received by the Treasurer not later than the August Parent Meeting. Each application will be reviewed by the BCC Governing 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.

**Fundraisers**

BCC parents are asked to participate in one fundraiser per year to supplement the BCC annual budget. The time and type of fundraiser will be discussed at the first parent meeting in the fall.

Families may participate in other fundraising opportunities to supplement their singer's individual tour expenses. These fundraisers will be determined by the Fundraising Committee and information will be sent home with singers. The money raised by these fundraisers will be held by the Treasurer, and parents will receive periodic updates on the amount of money their singer has to apply to choir trips.

**Photographs**

Choir photographs are taken each year and may be used for publicity purposes. Parents will be given the opportunity to purchase choir photographs. Photographs, both formal and candid, may appear in BCC brochures, BCC 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. A Photo Release form is a part of the Membership Agreement. Parents not comfortable with their child's photo being used for publicity purposes should contact Ms. Klimko.

## Items for Sale

Several BCC items may be available for purchase throughout the year with price lists published at the time. Such items may include:

- BCC T-Shirts (youth and adult sizes)
- Concert CDs
- BCC Note Cards or Thank-You Notes

## Touring

Our goal for the Concert Choir members is to provide opportunities for the members to grow in musicianship and performance skills through a variety of performance settings. These opportunities include both local and out-of-town performances. A major tour is scheduled for the group every other year. Organizing such tours requires the commitment and cooperation of everyone involved, including parents, singers, BCC staff and Board members.

Additionally, due to the costs involved with out-of-town tours, fundraising opportunities may be available to help defer some of the costs. Singers choosing not to participate in fundraising events are responsible for the full cost of their tour fare.

The following information presents BCC guidelines for funding out-of-town tours and the use of fundraising money.

- **Deposits** – At least 25% must be paid from personal funds. This is to ensure more of a commitment on the singer's part. If you have already raised enough money to pay for your entire trip, this is not required. You have already shown the commitment by raising the money and we will honor that commitment. Deposits are non-refundable.
- **Use of money raised through fundraising** – Singers have the option to use the money in their fundraising account to cover any touring expenses where they are performing as a representative of the BCC. This includes transportation, meals, lodging, registration fees, materials, and practice tapes. Families cannot use the fundraising funds to cover the expenses of other family members unless it is a parent accompanying the group as a chaperon and then only after the singer's costs are covered. Additionally, singers cannot use fundraising funds when participating in events and representing other organizations. An example is members that attend the Young Voices Festival as part of their school groups.
- **Additional fundraising funds** – Fundraising funds not used to cover the previously mentioned expenses will be held in the singer's fundraising account. Due to tax regulations as a 501c3 non-profit organization, we are not at liberty to use this money to cover other non-tour related expenses, such as tuition and lost materials. Any funds remaining in an account after a singer leaves the BCC will be rolled into the BCC General Tour Account fund.