



**Milwaukee**  
**Children's Choir**  
*Building Noteworthy Character*

# Chorister Handbook

2021-2022

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The Milwaukee Children's Choir is a private, non-profit community organization serving Greater Milwaukee since 1994. The entire contents of this handbook is for Milwaukee Children's Choir use only.

Acknowledgment: Milwaukee Children's Choir thanks its friends to the south, the Anima Singers, the Indianapolis Children's Choir, the Chattanooga Children's Choir, and ACDA for some of the text and concepts used in this Handbook.

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## Welcome

Hello and thank you for joining the Milwaukee Children's Choir! Milwaukee Children's Choir was founded in 1994 and since then has been providing exceptional choral music experiences, performing for capacity audiences across southeast Wisconsin, the nation, and internationally. The MCC staff and Board of Directors sincerely believe every child has a voice with which to make beautiful music.

In the following pages are values and principles that guide our experiences at MCC. This handbook contains the information you should know as you enroll your child in the Choir program. These values and principles form the culture that makes up the people of MCC and how we relate to each other. All decisions made by the MCC staff and Board of Directors are made with the best interests of the chorister and the organization in mind.

We are excited for our new season together and looking forward to making music with you. Thank you in advance for your commitment to great music, to personal growth, and to Milwaukee Children's Choir.

## Mission

*Milwaukee Children's Choir provides exceptional choral music education and performance experiences that foster creativity, personal expression, and social growth.*

## Communication Plan

Clear communication is critical to the success of any organization. The MCC staff has adopted the following communication plan to ensure that parents are kept up to date and the appropriate information is shared in a meaningful, efficient, and consistent manner. Should you have any questions, always start with your chorister's Rehearsal Assistant (RA). They have tons of information at their fingertips. If they do not know the answer, they likely know where to find it. If you need additional assistance, email [membership@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org](mailto:membership@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org).

| Type of Info  | Method   | Audience                         | Frequency |
|---|--|----------------------------------|-----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weekly updates</li> <li>- Upcoming events</li> <li>- Signup info for activities and collaborative performances</li> <li>- General news and information from the office</li> <li>- Notes from director regarding at-home practice</li> <li>- Calendar changes or additions (more than three weeks out)</li> </ul> | Weekly email newsletter                              | Current MCC member-families      | Weekly    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additions or Changes (one to three weeks out)</li> </ul>   | Special email (only containing specific information) | All affected MCC member-families | Immediate |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| - Additions or changes (less than one week out)   | Remind App notification & special email              | All affected MCC member-families             | Immediate   |
| - Big announcement such as MCC being nominated for an award or receiving an invitation to perform | Special email (only containing specific information) | All MCC families, patrons, alumni and donors | Staff determined (not to conflict with scheduled communication) |
| - Development & Fundraising Information   | Quarter Notes email                                  | All MCC families, patrons, alumni and donors | First month of each quarter                                     |

## Becoming a Chorister

Auditions are required for all choristers entering grades 4-12 who are new to MCC. The placement audition allows choir directors to understand where each chorister is in regard to that student's musical knowledge and performance. *Please note that an audition may not be required for a high schooler who is referred by a choir teacher.*

COVID-19 Update: Due to COVID-19, our audition process has changed. Please see our website for the most up-to-date information. Thank you.

## Choir Structure & Repertoire

MCC offers a non-performing ensemble for choristers in grades 3K-5K and four performing ensembles for choristers in grades 1-12.

### **Music Explorers** Grades 3K-5K / Ages 3-5 (no audition required)

Music Explorers is a non-performance based program that encourages kids and parents to experience music together. Music Explorers meets weekly, 30 minute sessions which are filled with various musical games and activities designed to create musical memories and foster a love for music that can last a lifetime.

### **Introductory Choir** Grades 1-3 / Ages 6-9 (no audition required)

Introductory Choir builds basic music skills by creating a fun and rewarding choral experience. Choristers develop a love for singing while cultivating aural skills, learning vocal techniques, and performance etiquette. Introductory Choir rehearses weekly for one hour, performs in MCC's annual concerts and may have other opportunities to perform in the community throughout the year.

### **Preparatory Choir** Grades 3-6 / Ages 8-12

Preparatory Choir continues to build fundamental music skills by challenging young choristers with pieces written for two and three parts in a rewarding choral experience. Choristers focus on improving aural skills, developing advanced vocal technique, and exhibiting appropriate performance etiquette. Preparatory Choir rehearses weekly for 90 minutes, performs in MCC's annual concerts and at additional concerts and collaborative performance opportunities.

### **Lyric Chorale** Grades 6-9/ Ages 11-15

Lyric Chorale is the premiere treble ensemble for advanced singers; studying advanced music theory and developing a unified ensemble sound through challenging music sung in different languages and styles. Lyric Chorale rehearses once a week for two hours and performs regularly during the academic year, including collaborative performances with Milwaukee Ballet, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Philharmonic, Bel Canto Chorus and many others. In addition to weekly rehearsals, Lyric Chorale has a summer retreat and meets for day-long retreats on various Saturdays or Sundays throughout the season. This choir also tours annually with Milwaukee Youth Chorale.

### **Milwaukee Youth Chorale** Grades 9-12 / Ages 14-18

Milwaukee Youth Chorale, an advanced SATB ensemble; sings challenging repertoire in different languages and genres, performs with professional orchestras and professional choirs in southeastern Wisconsin. Milwaukee Youth Chorale rehearses once a week for two hours and performs regularly during the academic year, including collaborative performances with Milwaukee Ballet, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Philharmonic, Bel Canto Chorus and many others. In addition to weekly rehearsals, Milwaukee Youth Chorale has a summer retreat and meets for day-long retreats on various Saturdays or Sundays throughout the season. This choir also tours annually with Lyric Chorale.

## Code of Conduct

1. MCC members respect others by treating all people with honor and dignity regardless of age, race, gender, ethnic background, religion, or sexual orientation.
2. MCC members respect the property of others including the property of other choristers, MCC property (music, music folders, instruments, etc.) rehearsal sites, and performance sites by taking care when using the property of others to prevent damage or misuse.
3. MCC members and member families take ownership and responsibility for their actions, understanding that they are publicly representing Milwaukee Children's Choir.

## Expectations of Parents

1. Set a good example for your chorister regarding their commitment to MCC.
2. Support your chorister at home. Encourage your chorister to practice the music in between rehearsals.
3. Arrange for transportation of your chorister to rehearsals, performances, and other events.
4. Drop off your chorister at the assigned drop off location. (For rehearsals at MYAC this means parking and walking your chorister to the rehearsal room.)
5. Read communications from MCC, ask questions, stay informed, and communicate with your chorister's RA.
6. Understand, respect, and abide by the MCC attendance policy. Report absences promptly via online *Report an Absence* form when your chorister will be absent.
7. Volunteer for approximately 10 hours of service each season. There are many volunteer opportunities throughout the season, including helping at concerts, helping in the office, helping with recruiting, etc. (The \$75 volunteer deposit will be returned to the family after the 10 hours are completed.)
8. Assist your chorister with fundraisers.

9. Speak positively of MCC in the community and on social media. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and subscribe to our channel on YouTube.

## Expectations of Choristers

1. Arrive at rehearsals, dress rehearsals, performances, etc. early/before call time or rehearsals, and be prepared to sing your best. Always bring music, pencil, covered water bottle, unless otherwise directed.
2. Listen to and follow directions from MCC staff and volunteer staff.
3. Practice repertoire between rehearsals, working on their parts outside of rehearsal and listening to the practice music files (if provided) on their choir's web page on the Milwaukee Children's Choir website.
4. Encourage other choristers.
5. Do not bring candy, snacks, gum or other beverages to rehearsals, unless otherwise directed.
6. Attend rehearsal even if on vocal rest.
7. Leave cell phones and other electronics put away during rehearsals and performances.
8. Keep their uniforms clean and in good repair, and remember to wear them on concert days.
9. Understand that you are the face of MCC to the public and take responsibility for your words and actions as they represent MCC.

## Care of Music

1. All assigned music is the responsibility of the choir member and must be returned at the end of each semester/season. If music or folders are lost, irreparably damaged or not returned, an additional fee will be charged to cover replacement costs. Printed music is a major MCC expense. Please help keep it in fine condition for generations of MCC members.
2. Choir members are to treat their music and music folder with care and respect. Please do not fold, roll, or punch holes in music; do not attach stickers or other decorations.
3. Markings on your music should be musical indications given by the conductor. Use ONLY a sharpened #2 pencils. (Do NOT use pen, highlighters or colored pencils. Please do not make other marks or drawings in your music.)
4. Bring your music to all rehearsals unless you are notified otherwise.
5. Music is always to be kept and carried in folders. Single copies of music are NOT to be brought separately to rehearsal; bring the entire folder.
6. If for any reason a piece of music is in need of repair, please talk to the rehearsal assistant.
7. Report lost music to the rehearsal assistant immediately. Lost or damaged music will result in a fine of \$5.00 per damaged or lost musical score.

## Uniform & Hair Policy

The look of the ensemble is very important to the overall production. In professional collaboration opportunities, the sound, look, and behavior of MCC choristers will weigh on the decision to invite MCC to collaborate in future opportunities.

All Uniforms will be ordered through the office. Choristers will have the opportunity at the first few rehearsals of the season to try on uniforms to select the appropriate size. Please verify the fit as soon as your chorister receives the uniform. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE FIRST CONCERT!** Pants and dresses should be properly hemmed to touch the top of the shoe.

- Chorister uniforms must be kept clean and wrinkle-free.
- Make-up should be muted colors and natural tones.
- Earrings should be small studs and not shiny or reflective.
- Hair must be pulled back away from the face and behind the ears.
- Please label the uniform with the chorister's first and last name.

## Attendance and Reporting an Absence

Choristers are expected to be present and on-time/early at all rehearsals and performances. Each chorister is a team member and holds a valuable role on the team.

### Retreats, Dress Rehearsals and Concerts

Retreats, Dress Rehearsals and Concerts are considered mandatory. If a chorister must be absent from a dress rehearsal or retreat, special arrangements must be made in advance with the director. If a chorister is absent from a dress rehearsal, the chorister should not arrive at the concert expecting to perform unless prior arrangements have been made with the director.

### Attendance Expectations -

Faithful attendance is critical to the success of the premiere performing chorales, and attendance is expected at each rehearsal. As a guideline, choristers in Introductory and Preparatory Choirs may miss up to 3 rehearsals per semester. (Retreats count as 2 rehearsals.) In the event a chorister misses more than three rehearsals, any of the following may occur, at the sole discretion of the director:

- Director may have conversation with chorister and parent(s) to determine appropriate level of commitment
- Director may request chorister to sing through concert repertoire to prove chorister is fully prepared
- Director may schedule additional time with the director for chorister to become performance ready
- Director may exclude chorister from performance
- Director may ask chorister to withdraw from MCC

### Additional Attendance Exceptions

- **EVENTS ADDED DURING THE SEASON** – There will be changes during the season. MCC will receive invitations to perform at events or collaborate with other groups throughout the season. Families have two weeks from the initial notification of the change or addition to notify the director and RA that the chorister will not be able to attend.
- **SCHOOL EVENTS** - Milwaukee Children's Choir values its role in the community and MCC choristers should be leaders in their school choirs. As a result, MCC will grant special exceptions to absences for **mandatory** school performances.
- **SNOW DAYS** – The winters in Milwaukee can be unpredictable. It is very unusual to cancel rehearsal due to weather. If rehearsal needs to be cancelled, MCC will (a) send an email notifying families of the cancellation, (b) post a cancellation notice on the MCC Facebook page, (c) post an update on the website. As a parent, if you feel the roads are unsafe to drive, you should not attempt to do so.

### **Reporting an Absence**

In the event that a chorister must be absent from a rehearsal, dress rehearsal, or performance, there is a Google Form that can be accessed from the website. Click on the *Members* tab, then *Report an Absence*. Please note that absences from mandatory events (retreats, dress rehearsals, and performances) need director approval. Please submit your request in writing to the director of the chorister's choir no later than two weeks prior to the absences along with filling out the Report and Absence.

### **Tardiness or Early Dismissal**

All singers are expected to arrive 10 minutes prior to the beginning of rehearsal to allow time to check in, say "hello" to friends, and be in their seat and ready to sing 5 minutes before rehearsal begins. All singers are expected to stay for the full rehearsal. Early dismissals are not allowed unless with director's permission. Three tardies are equivalent to one absence. Singers arriving 20 minutes or more late to rehearsal will be considered absent from rehearsal.

### **Closed Rehearsals**

Dress rehearsals are always closed to the audience, including families, as are many weekly rehearsals. Only designated chaperones will be allowed in the rehearsal area prior to a performance. This allows the singers to concentrate on the music, the director, and any necessary final instructions.

## **Pick-up and Drop-off Policies**

Please be on time when bringing your singer to and picking your singer up from rehearsals. Plan to arrive at rehearsal about 10 minutes early so there is time to check in and be ready to sing PRIOR to the rehearsal start time. First through 6th grade children should be walked to and from rehearsal halls and warm-up rooms at concert venues. Occasionally, we change this plan at different venues, but any changes will be communicated.

Transportation to and from rehearsals is the individual responsibility of the parents, as are car pools, etc. MCC does publish a choir roster to assist families in setting up carpools. This roster is to be used for MCC purposes only.

Choir members are not supervised outside of rehearsal times. Members should not arrive more than 15 minutes prior to a call time and should be picked up promptly at the stated pick up time.

Singers in all choirs except MYC are not permitted to wait outside or in parking lots for their ride.

## **Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (MYAC) Policies**

The Milwaukee Youth Arts Center Board of Directors is proactive on security in the facility. The Board strives to make MYAC the warmest and safest place possible, so we can meet and study our art. The MYAC security initiative includes a system that allows all individuals entering the facility to be clearly recognized.

- **Drop-off / Pick-up** - Parents of 1st through 6th graders are expected to park and walk their chorister to the rehearsal room. Parents may stay at MYAC in the commons area during rehearsal or may leave the building. Parents are expected to park and walk to the rehearsal room to pick up their chorister after rehearsal.

- **Identification** - All participants and parents must wear a program badge (handed out at the beginning of the season) that should be clearly visible when entering the facility. If you do not have a badge, you will need to identify yourself to the front desk staff and give you an MCC logo sticker.
- **Supervision** – MCC provides supervision of choristers in the rehearsal room from 15 minutes before the rehearsal until the rehearsal ends. MCC does not provide extended supervision for choristers or supervision for non-member siblings on your behalf. Parents and non-chorister siblings are welcome to stay in the commons area of MYAC during rehearsal, but the parent is solely responsible for all supervision.
- Be respectful of other people's rehearsals. The Milwaukee Youth Arts Center is a community facility, which is shared with many other groups and people. It's critically important that we respect everyone's needs for a quiet setting.
- **WIFI** – MYAC offers free WIFI in the building.
- Traffic in the parking lot should flow in a counter-clockwise direction for safety. When entering the lot, turn right only.
- **Parking** – Please allow extra time for traffic and parking. MYAC can be very busy on some nights and parking spots can be difficult to find. Please **DO NOT** park in the parking lot or in the angled parking on Galena Street between Golda Meir and MYAC. There is a parking lot on the southwest corner of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Galena, the entrance is on Galena. Please pay close attention to all posted parking signs.
- Between 3 pm and 10 pm, there is **NO LEFT TURN** out of the parking lot. We ask that as you leave the parking lot that you make a right turn and go around the block before heading north.
- **Do NOT move furniture & Do NOT use the Upper Commons**

## Tuition & Emily Crocker Scholarship Fund

Tuition only covers a portion of the total operating costs of Milwaukee Children's Choir. MCC relies on other funding sources such as grants from UPAF and other agencies as well as corporate and private donations. Please consider supporting MCC in your charitable giving.

Tuition rates are set by the MCC Board of Directors and reviewed annually. Tuition is due before the start of the season or at the time of registration for choristers registering after the season starts. There are various payment plans offered for an additional fee to make tuition more convenient or manageable for families.

Milwaukee Children's Choir is a community organization and, therefore, offers tuition assistance through the Emily Crocker Scholarship Fund. This is named after the founder of MCC and it is requested that all recipients of financial aid write an age appropriate thank you note to Ms. Crocker during the season. Awards are based on demonstrated need and approved by the MCC Board of Directors.

A returned check fee of \$35 will be assessed for a check that is returned by the bank for insufficient funds.

A late payment fee of \$25 may be assessed for payments that are submitted more than 30 days after the due date, unless other arrangements are made with MCC Staff. Please contact the office if you are struggling to make payments. MCC Staff can work out a payment arrangement with you.

## Withdrawal, Termination & Refund Policy

There are three situations in which the chorister's parent/guardian may be eligible to receive a prorated refund upon withdrawing from the Choir. Please note, even in the three situations described below, the MCC will not refund the \$30 nonrefundable enrollment fee (if applicable) and the non refundable \$50 portion of tuition. All requests for refund are reviewed and approved by the MCC Board of Directors.

1. The chorister's parent/guardian provides the completed Membership Withdrawal form to the office by August 15 or by the 14th day after enrollment of the chorister in MCC.
2. The chorister's parent/guardian provides MCC written documentation of a health condition that prevents the student's continued participation in MCC. Written documentation must be signed by a licensed healthcare professional.
3. The chorister and his/her parent/guardian move outside of the Greater Milwaukee area as defined by Milwaukee, Racine, Waukesha, Ozaukee, and Washington counties.

In all three situations listed above, if the prorated amount of tuition calculated results in additional amounts due, the additional amount will be due and payable in full at the time of termination.

If the student must take a Leave of Absence, and the leave of absence does not fall into one of the three situations above, the amount of tuition is still due in full to the Choir in accordance with the payment plan established on the tuition agreement. If, in the rare circumstance, the Choir must terminate enrollment of a student for any one or more of the reasons provided in the Choir Handbook, the chorister's parent/guardian will not be eligible to receive a refund of any tuition or fees paid, and any remaining balance of tuition and fees will be due and payable in full at the time of termination.

Failure to pay any required balance due may result in the account on file being charged and/or collection efforts pursued.

## Performance Tours

Milwaukee Children's Choir provides a complete choral experience, which includes a performance tour at the end of the season. A performance tour can provide a life-changing experience and create lasting memories. A performance tour allows for a significant amount of personal and musical growth and maturity in a short amount of time. It allows the chorister to experience and learn from other cultures and provide an opportunity for choristers to perform in front of a wide variety of audiences.

Tour information is typically shared over the summer or as soon as the season starts. The tour cost is broken up into multiple payments throughout the season to make the financial burden more manageable.

**Fundraisers and Tour Accounts** – To make performance tours more accessible to a greater number of choristers, MCC offers multiple fundraiser opportunities throughout the year. MCC Staff tracks participation in each fundraiser and the net proceeds from each fundraiser are divided among the choristers that met the participation threshold for each fundraiser. This process is in accordance with tax laws. After all the fundraisers for the season are completed, a statement with the total amount raised, as well as the final amount due for tour will be emailed out to chorister's parents. Tour Account funds can only be used for the performance tour for choristers in Preparatory Choir, Lyric Chorale, or Milwaukee

Youth Chorale and may be carried over from one year to the next in the event that a planned choir tour is cancelled and doesn't occur.

## Questions

Congratulations. You made it through the Chorister Handbook. This is not meant to be an exhaustive reference of all information. If you have any questions, start with your RA. They have a lot of information and years of experience. If they don't know the answer, they can find it. If you need additional assistance, email [membership@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org](mailto:membership@milwaukeechildrenschoir.org).