

## **Children's Chorus of Sussex County Handbook**

### **Welcome**

We are so happy to have you as an important part of the Children's Chorus of Sussex County and we are anxious to share a long and mutually rewarding relationship. A copy of this handbook is available to each family so that all members will have a handy reference for CCSC rules and guidelines. Please read it carefully. We hope you that will refer to it often and that it will answer most of your questions. If you discover that there are any topics that are unclear or which have not been included, please let us know. In spite of the high level of talent of our choristers, the success of our organization also depends on a commitment to the procedures outlined in this booklet.

We look forward to working together and we wish you a wonderful year!

### **Introduction**

The Children's Chorus of Sussex County (CCSC) was founded in 1990 by Deborah Mello as a gift to the community. Choristers study and perform a wide variety of choral music and frequently collaborate with school and community choirs, instrumental groups and soloists. Originally a single ensemble of 25, CCSC has boasted as many as 100 young people, divided between four choir levels. CCSC shares its artistry through local concerts and service programs and performs in cities around the United States and the world.

### **Mission Statement**

The Children's Chorus of Sussex County provides a unique opportunity for young people to embrace their love of singing, foster a commitment to excellence, and deepen their sense of community through the choral art.

### **Directors & Accompanists**

You will find complete bios about our Directors and Accompanists on our website at [www.ccscsings.org](http://www.ccscsings.org).

### **Membership**

Children from kindergarten and first grade are cordially invited to join our Musikgarten program and those from second grade through high school are eligible to audition for Bella Voce, the Young Men's Ensemble or the Concert Choir. Membership is for an entire season, from September to June, and everyone is expected to make an active commitment to the directors and his/her fellow choristers. Current members receive information about re-enrollment or auditions for the next level in June. Prospective choristers are recruited throughout the year. We welcome inquiries about joining CCSC at any time, either by e-mail through our website ([www.ccscsings.org](http://www.ccscsings.org)) or by phone at 973.670.4556.

### **Commitment to School Choral Groups**

A great deal of our success depends on and reflects the talent of elementary, middle and high school choral directors throughout our area. We expect that the members of CCSC will assume active leadership roles in their school music programs.

### **Rehearsals and Attendance**

Musikgarten meets once a week on Wednesday afternoons from 4:30 to 5:20 p.m. Bella Voce rehearses on Wednesday afternoons from 4:30 until 6:00 p.m. The Young Men's Ensemble gathers Sunday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., and Concert Choir meets twice weekly, Wednesday and Sunday evenings from 7:00 until 8:30 p.m. Our success depends on reliable and punctual attendance. If possible, please arrive five minutes prior to the start of rehearsal so that you can be in your seat and be ready to begin on time. If you are late, please make a point of taking your place with as little disruption as possible.

### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

Your membership in CCSC requires a commitment. Our calendar and rehearsal schedules are published at the beginning of each season. Once you join, you are expected to adhere to the schedule. Should you be ill or otherwise unable to attend a rehearsal, you are required to notify your director in advance by calling 973.670.4556 or his/her cell phone. Even if you can't sing due to a cold or cough, you are encouraged to come and audit the rehearsal. Missing rehearsal because of conflicting activities other than your school music programs is not acceptable. Poor attendance can lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the choir.

You are responsible for bringing your music, a sharpened pencil, and a bottle of water (optional) to each rehearsal and you must take home any handouts that are distributed to you. Uniforms are not required for regular or 'dress' rehearsals. Attendance at dress rehearsals and pre-performance rehearsals is mandatory and your participation in the concert depends on it. Pre-performance rehearsals are closed to the audience, including families. Only designated chaperones will be allowed in the rehearsal area prior to a concert.

Should a rehearsal be cancelled due to inclement weather, we will notify you via email. In the event the weather is worse at your home than it might be in Newton, please use your judgment about traveling. As important as it is to have complete attendance for a worthwhile rehearsal, your safety is most important. If you are unable to drive, please leave a message at 973.670.4556.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures**

Parents should consider escorting their children into the rehearsal space and returning promptly for pick up. Please do not allow your child to cross Route 206 (Main Street) without an escort. Parking is available behind the church as well as on Church Street.

### **Curriculum**

#### ***Musikgarten***

Musikgarten offers a sequential curriculum for musical development that is educational, purposeful, and FUN! It encompasses early childhood music and movement. Parents are invited and encouraged to join in the final ten minutes of each class, and with the help of the packet and materials provided, to reinforce the musical activities of the unit at home.

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble, & Concert Choir***

Our ensembles sing a varied and age-appropriate repertoire, which ranges from simple folk songs to challenging masterpieces of classical and jazz genres. We perform with accompaniment as well as a cappella; in English as well as in a variety of foreign languages.

On a number of occasions, our choirs have performed contemporary works in collaboration with the composers.

The process of learning the music includes becoming familiar with the concepts of melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics and style as well as sight reading. Rehearsals begin with good posture and warm-up exercises.

### **Folders and Music**

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

Folders are ordered by CCSC and purchased by each chorister in September. Music is provided by CCSC and must be returned, in good condition, at the end of the season. It is your responsibility to take good care of your music and to bring your folder to every rehearsal and performance. Music must never be rolled or folded and any marks made on it must be done lightly, in pencil.

### **Performances**

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

The choirs perform locally in a combined concert twice a year. The first is in December and the final concert takes place each season in June. Participation in these performances is mandatory. All three choirs experience a variety of other opportunities to sing within the local community. In addition, the older choristers are offered the chance to travel further from home as invitations become available. The Concert Choir normally travels abroad every few years. While not mandatory, participation in these additional concerts and tours is highly encouraged. Travel expenses can be covered in part or in full through fundraising. Any anticipated absence must be discussed with the appropriate choir director.

### **Concert Etiquette**

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

Please reward your child's hard work and dedication to choral music by giving him/her the gift of your silence and attention during performances. Remember to refrain from talking, whispering and rustling papers during concerts. In addition to distracting choristers and the audience, it interferes with the capture of a quality recording of the performance. The acoustics of our performance spaces magnify even the slightest noise or cough. For this reason, we also encourage you to take advantage when free babysitting is provided during concerts.

Part of your child's music education includes proper behavior on stage. Please do not try to attract the attention of your child by waving from the audience. They will have been instructed to maintain proper posture and behavior on stage and these actions will only confuse and distract them.

### **Wardrobe**

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

A professional image is of the utmost importance to us and uniform concert dress is required for all CCSC performances. Most items are ordered through CCSC and can be paid for through fundraising. In addition to the uniform, a neat, well-groomed appearance is mandatory. This includes shirts being tucked in, hair combed and away from the face, small earrings and bracelets, and only subtle make-up.

New choristers will be measured for uniforms at the start of the year in September. On occasion, a used uniform at a reduced price may be available in a particular size and choristers will be notified. Vests and skirts for the youngest choir can be rented from CCSC but boys must provide their own slacks.

The formal uniforms for each choir are detailed below:

***Bella Voce***

Girls – Royal blue concert dress, pearls, black tights, black Capezio 550 Jr. Footlight shoes.

Boys - White tuxedo shirt with black button covers, royal blue vest and bow tie, and black dress slacks, socks, and dress shoes

***Young Men's Ensemble***

Black tuxedo shirt with black button covers, royal blue vest and bow tie, black dress slacks, socks, and dress shoes. Additional red tie and cummerbund set for December performances.

***Concert Choir***

Girls - Black concert dress, pearls, black hosiery (knee highs or stockings), black Capezio 550 Jr. Footlight shoes.

Boys – Black tuxedo shirt with black button covers, black dress slacks, socks, and dress shoes .

The informal concert uniform consists of the CCSC shirt for that choir (ordered through the choir) and khaki slacks or shorts as specified by the director for that performance. Jeans are worn occasionally.

***Bella Voce*** – Royal blue CCSC Golf Shirt

***Young Men's Ensemble*** ~ Royal blue CCSC Golf Shirt

***Concert Choir*** – Light blue CCSC Golf Shirt

**Fundraising**

***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

A variety of fundraising opportunities is offered each year and participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Tuition is exempt from fundraising. A fundraising account is kept for each chorister and balances are reported several times a year. You will be notified if a fundraiser is designed for the benefit of the organization as a whole. Every year, there are a few choristers who pay for almost all of their expenses through their fundraising efforts. Should you resign from CCSC, the money in your fundraising account is contributed to the organization's general fund.

**Tuition and Expenses**

Tuition is to be paid in full at the start of the season in September. We depend on your timely payment so that we can pay our own bills promptly. Most of the expenses we incur for music, folders, and other supplies come at the beginning of the new season. Checks can be mailed to CCSC 435 Ridge Road, Newton, NJ 07860. If you prefer, you can place your check in a white envelope with your name and the word 'Tuition' and deposit it in the

designated box when you come to rehearsal. At the beginning of the year, we will have someone on hand who can take your payment via credit card, if you prefer.

Tuition cannot be paid through the proceeds in your fundraising account.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phones must be turned off when choristers arrive for rehearsal and must stay off until dismissal. Choristers are welcome to check for messages that might have come from parents after the end of rehearsal and before leaving the building. We also require that audience members' (parents and others) phones and tablets be powered off during concerts. We expect strict adherence to this policy.

### **Communication**

We begin each season with a parent meeting, during which time we introduce the choir directors and upcoming schedule, review basic 'housekeeping' information and answer any questions your family may have. Folders will be handed out which will include basic information, a calendar, and important forms to complete and sign. We post information about the program on our website, [www.ccscsings.org](http://www.ccscsings.org), and we encourage you to check it frequently. We send out information via email every month or two, as needed. It is imperative, and each family's responsibility, to be sure CCSC has the correct email address(es). Periodically, other information will be handed out at rehearsal. It is the responsibility of the chorister to share that with his/her parents! Our CCSC phone number is 973.670.4556 and we can be reached via e-mail at [info@ccscsings.org](mailto:info@ccscsings.org). Please feel free to contact us at any time about any concern. We will do the same!

Board meetings are held monthly, usually on the fourth Sunday, at 5:45 p.m. at Christ Church. Interested parents are welcome to attend. Meetings are listed on the website but sometimes the dates change after it is published due to scheduling conflicts. It is a good idea to check the schedule with one of the choir directors or board members in advance.

### **Parent Organization**

The success of CCSC depends on parent participation. We have an active group of volunteers and hope you will join in our efforts and let us know your specific area of expertise. Opportunities include concert management, post-concert receptions, event planning, publicity, photography, organizing fundraisers, website design, measuring for uniforms and administrative work. Your child(ren) will benefit by your participation and your own experience will be enhanced by the opportunity to meet other parents.

### **Chaperones**

#### ***Bella Voce, Young Men's Ensemble & Concert Choir***

From time to time, parents will have the chance to volunteer as chaperones. Responsibilities range from quieting the younger ensemble at a local performance to accompanying the group to a charitable event to enforcing curfews on a tour abroad. As enjoyable as this role can be, it is an important job, one that is not always easy, and one which we expect to be taken very seriously. CCSC, as well as the other parents, count on chaperones to implement the organization's guidelines and to respond appropriately to any situation that arises during the course of a performance or a trip. Should you choose to volunteer your talents as a chaperone, you will be provided with a list of general expectations for that particular outing. Please review these prior to confirming your availability and feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with Mrs. Mello.

**Resignation**

It is our hope that we maintain a long and fruitful relationship with each of our choristers. It is our understanding that when you begin in September, you are making a commitment for the entire season, as we are. Any deviation from this relationship and any affect it might have on tuition owed or already paid must be discussed with Mrs. Mello.

**Thank you!**

We are excited to have you as part of our organization. We wish you a wonderful experience and look forward to a busy year which we are certain you will find stimulating, challenging, but most of all, fun.