



# Buffalo Girlchoir

Strong Voices. Strong Girls.

## Choir Handbook for Singers and Parents 2019-2020

Kathleen Bassett, Director  
Jeannine Joseph, Co-Director  
Susan Schuman, Accompanist

## MISSION

*The mission of Buffalo Girlchoir is to provide exceptional music instruction to young women from all social strata culminating in transcendent performances at the highest level of artistic excellence, facilitating their development into self-assured young women.*

## CORE VALUES

- All girls can sing if given the proper instruction, time, and encouragement
- All girls deserve to feel the pride in performance that comes with hard work, attention to detail, and commitment to excellence
- All girls deserve to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance
- All girls deserve to be treated with respect while being held to a high standard of behavioral and musical excellence

**GOALS** reflect the critical components of the mission: exceptional music instruction, once in a lifetime performances, and cultural ambassadorship

### **I. Exceptional Music Instruction**

- A. Aesthetic Appreciation – Perception of what is beautiful music through study of the elements of music: melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, style, timbre, form, and expression.
- B. Artistic Education – Development of musicianship (skill & understanding) to learn how to make beautiful music.
  - 1. Healthy and skillful use of the singing voice
  - 2. Reading of rhythm and pitch
  - 3. Ability to follow the musical score
  - 4. Sensitivity to the musical feeling of compositions
  - 5. Understanding and identifying form and style
- C. Critical Thinking – Development of problem solving strategies through reflection on progress of skill development in music production

D. Performance Experience - Performances are scheduled to allow adequate preparation time yet maintain interest and morale of singers. Additionally, performances are opportunities for...

1. Demonstrating musicianship by performing the selected repertoire
2. Offering community outreach to enrich the lives of others

E. Improving Self-Worth - Experience the joy and self-esteem that comes from a commitment to excellence.

**\* \* \* Each rehearsal is a music lesson and includes instruction in \* \* \***

A. Healthy Vocal Production

1. Singing posture
2. Breath management
3. Tone - vowel shaping
4. Diction - consonant articulation
5. Ear training - intervallic relationships

B. Reading Skills

1. Rhythm
2. Melody through the use of solfege (moveable do)
3. Dynamics
4. Grand staff and vocal clef
5. Singers' text
6. Meter and time signature

C. Movement activities for full-body experience and understanding of musicianship.

D. Development of musicianship through careful work on repertoire.

E. Critical listening skills: Listening to director, other singers, or recordings of exemplary children's choirs modeling the desired singing outcome.

F. Social Skills - Opportunities for positive social interaction among singers during the choral experience.

## **II. Transcendent performances**

The ultimate goal of the repertoire is to challenge and stretch the skill development of the singers. Masterpieces of music from all styles and periods form the foundation for musical learning.

The director selects high quality music, which is:

- A balance of simple & immediately satisfying and challenging & complex.
- Appropriate for the level of singers.
- Representative of a variety of styles and cultures: folk, composed, classical masterpieces from history, jazz, gospel, and musical theater.
- Inclusive of and emphasizing female composers both past and present.

## **III. Cultural Ambassadorship**

Additional performances may be scheduled for our most advanced ensembles. These performance opportunities will meet one of the following goals:

- Provide our singers with a collaborative opportunity with other choruses or musical ensembles
- Provide our singers with a unique artistic experience
- Provide our singers with an opportunity to perform a community service

# Choir Program

It is Buffalo Girlchoir's desire that any girl who wishes to sing regardless of previous instruction have an opportunity to make music with us.

**Prelude Singers** is for singers in kindergarten and first grade and provides 45 minutes of instruction.

**Intermezzo Singers** is for singers in second and third grades and provides 75 minutes of instruction.

**Cantabile Singers** is for singers in fourth and fifth grades as well as sixth grade girls who are new to our program and provides 75 minutes of instruction.

**Arioso Singers** is for singers in sixth through ninth grades and provides 90 minutes of instruction.

- A. Registration - begins approximately one month before each session begins and continues until the ensembles are full or until 4 rehearsals have passed whichever comes first.
  - 1. Please fill out the forms as completely as possible, some of this information assists us in acquiring grant funding
  - 2. GPS (GrandParents Society) registration is optional
- B. Fees - \$50 per session. We prefer payment at registration BUT we accept fees anytime throughout the sessions as we understand the complex nature of family finances. Please let us know if there is a financial need as we have scholarships available. **No girl will be turned away due to inability to pay!**
- C. Rehearsals - Parents are always welcome at rehearsals. Please keep talking to a minimum and little ones quiet as we have much to accomplish in each rehearsal.
  - 1. A rehearsal schedule will be sent home by the second week of rehearsals. Changes to the schedule will be emailed AND placed on our website.
  - 2. Girls are encouraged to bring a spill proof water bottle to rehearsal. Please no gum, candy or food!
- D. Performances - A performance schedule will be sent home in September and January as soon as performance details

are confirmed. This schedule will include warm-up times and additional or extended rehearsal information. If an additional performance is added, information is sent home as soon as possible.

1. Attendance – In order to provide the most satisfying performance experience to all of our singers, **All singers are expected to participate in the concert at the end of each session.** Please notify the Director as soon as you are aware of any conflicts.
2. Concert Dress – For the two Girlchoir produced concerts (in January and in May), each singer is encouraged to wear something that makes her feel beautiful. For concerts where more formal attire is required, Girlchoir will provide a dress for each singer. In this case, the singer is expected to provide black stockings and black flat shoes.
3. Concert Day Reminders -
  - a. Prior to the concert, get plenty of rest and eat a nutritious meal.
  - b. Take care of your voice: excessive yelling and forced vocal sounds are harmful.
  - c. Please arrive on time for our warm up. We schedule these with busy family life in mind and try to keep pre-concert warm-ups to a minimum.
  - d. Inform a Director or Parent Helper if you are feeling ill during the warm-up. If you feel ill during the performance, leave the stage. A Parent Helper will be watching to assist ill singers.
  - e. **Every Singer is an ambassador for the choir.** The choir is invited for repeat concerts not only for the exquisite singing, but also due to the singers' exemplary behavior. Please keep this reputation intact!
4. Audio/Video Recordings – will be placed on the official Buffalo Girlchoir youtube channel following each concert.

**Parent Helper** – We will occasionally need assistance with various aspects of rehearsals. Requests will be sent via email and a google doc sign up will be used to give everyone a chance to contribute. Please consider donating your time so that the directors can focus on your daughters' musical growth!

## WOMEN'S CHOIR

Women's Choir of Buffalo provides an extension of the mission of Buffalo Girlchoir delivering exceptional instruction to high school and college singers through a mentorship model. Apprentices and Interns are partnered with an experienced professional in order to gain skills and knowledge leading to excellence in performance of treble repertoire.

Membership in Women's Choir is by audition only.

Auditions are held in September and June by appointment with the director. Once accepted into Women's Choir, re-auditions are not necessary unless a singer is changing categories within the structure.

Categories of membership:

**Apprentice:** High school singer who is involved in her school music program to the extent possible. She must be highly motivated and responsible.

**Intern:** College singer who is involved in her collegiate music program to the extent possible. Although it is not necessary to be a music major, music majors will be given preference for available spots.

**Professional:** A singer with proven experience in choral singing who is willing to nurture young women and positively impact their musical and professional development.

**Mentorship placements:** All pairings will be made by the director with input from the artistic team. If at any time the mentor or the mentee feels like the pairing isn't working she is to email the director to request a change. To protect the mentor/mentee relationship it is strongly suggested that communications take place at rehearsal in person or by email.

**Mentor expectations:** As a professional member of Women's Choir of Buffalo, you will provide a mentoring experience to younger singers as well as contribute to the high artistic quality of the group's performance. You will conduct yourself as a professional embodying exemplary musicianship, teamwork, and camaraderie. Mentors will promote positive interaction with colleagues and all mentees.

**Mentee expectations:** As a pre-professional member of Women's Choir of Buffalo, you will be responsible for familiarizing yourself with the repertoire before rehearsal, come prepared with a positive attitude and be receptive to instruction. You should be respectful of your mentor and expect to be treated with respect in return.

**Rehearsal requirements:**

- A. ALL singers regardless of category must attend all rehearsals. Professionals are only required as noted in the schedule but are always welcome to attend! Excused absences are family emergency, school music program conflict, or extreme illness. If you are under the weather or have lost your voice, you are still expected to attend rehearsal and sit in the back to ensure that you get all of the markings. Singers with more than 3 absences over the course of the year may be required to re-audition and/or interview with the director to determine her eligibility for the following season.
- B. Rehearsals will begin on time and it is expected that all singers will have arrived and have materials ready. Notes and the basics of the repertoire will be learned on your own prior to rehearsals so that the group efforts can be focused on beautiful music making.
- C. Professional conduct is required of all singers. Phone usage is not permitted during rehearsals.