Parent and Chorister Handbook

(Updated December 2021)

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OVERVIEW

As expected, singing is the major focus of the musical experience in the Cantabella Children's Chorus (CCC). It has proven to be one of the most effective ways "to touch and be touched" by music. The choristers are taught the use of their vocal instruments through exercises, posture, breathing, and tone production.

Choristers in CCC study and perform a wide variety of music, from simple unison folk songs to sophisticated art songs. Both sacred and secular repertoire are used but are not selected to intrude upon any personal beliefs. Masterpieces of choral music from all styles and periods form the foundation for musical learning. We believe, as Zoltan Kodály did, that "children should be led to musical masterpieces by means of musical masterpieces." Since the best musical experiences for children are inherent in great literature which has been tested by time, the CCC repertoire includes the music of Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Kodály, Britten, R. Vaughan Williams, Aaron Copland, among others.

CTC CURRICULUM

Cantabella Training Choir (CTC) & Kodály

CTC uses the Kodály Method as a vocal approach to teaching the skills of music literacy to young children. It evolved under the inspiration and guidance of the famous Hungarian composer and music educator, Zoltán Kodály. Kodály's Music Education Philosophy

• Is based on child-developmental research in its learning sequence and builds on the way young children progress naturally in music, from the minor third, through the notes of the pentatonic, to the full scales of the major and minor modes and beyond

• Begins with the total and concrete experience then moves to the symbolization of that experience

• Follows the same learning process as that of language

1. Aural – Oral – Kinesthetic
2. Written – Pictorial – Abstract
3. Read – Recognized

• Orders musical concepts in a logical sequence with each concept being:

1. prepared
2. made conscious
3. practiced

• Is more concerned with the functional aspect of music reading rather than just the ability to name musical terms.

Major Goals of the Kodály Concept:

• To develop music literacy, that is the skills of music reading and writing through sequential development (to be able to read, aurally perceive and sight-sing from the printed music).

• To develop interest in the singing of children's songs and the playing of singing games as a wholesome alternative for leisure time.

• To provide an atmosphere for developing self-confidence and creativity through successful musical activities (i.e. vocal performance, reading and writing of music, physical movements coordinated with singing, etc.).

The Kodály approach utilizes:

1. Rhythm symbols and syllables (ta ta ti ti ta)
2. Hand signals to show tonal relationships (John Curwen hand signs)
3. Movable "DO" (solfa-do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti)
4. The musical mother tongue (i.e. folk songs)

CHOIR LEVELS AND REQUIREMENTS

Choir Levels

The CCC offers a graduated curriculum designed to take boys and girls from their first introduction to the art of choral singing and music literacy through a full course of choral study in high school. The program consists of three major divisions:

Cantabella Training Choir (CTC) for choristers in K-5th grades. This choir is further subdivided into at least 3 levels:

- **CTC-1: K – 1st grade**
- **CTC-2: 2nd – 3rd grade**
- **CTC-3: 4th – 5th grade**

The Performing Choirs are for eligible choristers in 5th-12th grades. These choirs have three divisions:

Children's Choir (CC): 5th – 8th grade. Placement in this performing choir is based on music ability, age, maturity and theory knowledge.

Chamber Choir (CH): 7th – 12th grade. SATB* choir including boys with either treble or changed voice. Placement in this performing choir is based on music ability, age, maturity and theory knowledge. Members of CH may be invited by the director to participate in travel opportunities to attend local to international choral festivals and/or competitions.

Honors Choir (HC): 7th – 12th grade. An auditioned performing choir for qualified treble voices. HC choristers are committed to participate in travel opportunities to attend local to international choral festivals and/or competitions.

*SATB is the acronym for the voicing of soprano, alto, tenor and bass (male changed voice).

Theory Requirement

Choristers in the performing groups (CC, CH, HC) continue with the more advanced levels of solfege training but are also required to start a written music theory program. The following is an outline of CCC's minimum theory requirements:

Non-keyboard students using Alfred's "Essentials of Music Theory"

- Finish vol. 1 by the end of 6th grade if auditioning for CH and HC, the end of 7th grade if fulfilling eligibility as a trophy recipient (see below for trophy requirements)
- Finish vol. 2 by the end of 9th grade
- Finish Master Theory series, vol. 2 by the end of 11th grade Keyboard students using

either the Snell's "Fundamentals of Piano Theory" or Johnson's "Basics of Keyboard Theory"
- Finish levels prep and 1 by the end of 6th grade if auditioning for CH and HC, the end of 7th grade if fulfilling eligibility as a trophy recipient (see below for trophy requirements)
- Finish levels 2 and 3 by the end of 9th grade
- Finish levels 4 by the end of 11th grade

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

Chorister Membership

Enrollment is for the entire school year, split into two semesters. The first semester typically begins in late August, and the second semester concludes with the final party in late May. Occasionally, additional performances may be scheduled after the party date for our performing choirs (CC, CH, and HC). While we expect each singer to live up to his/her one-year commitment, if an extremely unusual circumstance prohibits a chorister from honoring that commitment, parents are required to submit a letter of resignation one month in advance and should not expect their tuition payment to be refunded.

General Attendance Policies

For the safety of our students, Cantabella offers a sign-in / sign-out system. Students sign themselves in to represent their attendance. After class, parents need to sign the student out (unless the child is 16 or older). Please come to the attendance area to pick up your child as they will not be released into the parking area.

Also, for our students' safety, as well as consideration for our staff and parent chaperones, we are asking that parents promptly pick up children after class, rehearsal, or concerts.
Due to some students being left waiting for several minutes, we are now implementing a late pick-up policy:

- Anyone picking up their child more than ten (10) minutes late after a class, rehearsal, or concert may be charged a late fee of $1.00 per minute after the 10- minute grace period.
- Please pay this fee to CCC immediately upon picking up your child.

Membership in the choir is a commitment to faithful, consistent and punctual attendance. Every absence or tardiness by any one member affects the progress of the entire choir. Therefore, attendance is recorded at every rehearsal and performance. Please notify CCC of each absence, tardiness, or early dismissal as soon as a conflict arises. This should be done by e-mail to robin@cantabella.org. If an illness or emergency occurs on the day of a rehearsal or performance, you may call the administrator's cell phone (Robin) at (925) 963-6351.

Excessive absences are grounds for dismissal, non-promotion, or losing a solo part when applicable.

Choir Attendance Policies

Only one absence (unexcused or excused) or two tardies/early dismissals are allowed per semester (August-Dec/Jan-May). Performing choirs (CC, CH, and HC) have stricter attendance requirements. Our goal is to maintain perfect attendance.

If a chorister has more than one absence or two tardies/early dismissals, he/she must:

1. Attend a scheduled make-up
2. Arrange for a semi-custom make-up (with fee)
3. Forfeit performance opportunities for the season

Students in CTC and CC are permitted to attend classes held in our neighboring site as make-up classes. Choristers may choose to attend make-up rehearsals prior to an absence occurring in order to "bank" their time for anticipated absences.

CH and HC, will be offered at least two special make-up classes each semester.

To further provide flexibility, semi-custom make-ups may be scheduled by appointment for a fee. The date and time can be negotiated.

AUDITIONS, EVALUATIONS, AND TROPHIES

Auditions and Evaluations

Since we believe that with proper teaching and persistent learning, any child (without physical handicap) who wants to sing will eventually learn to sing. Therefore, boys and girls interested in CTC are not required to audition. The only exception is if a child is entering a class in the middle of a season. Screening that prospective chorister aims to avoid possible hindrance to the progress of an ongoing class.

After successfully completing a 4-year membership in CTC, (typically 5th grade), qualified choristers will be invited to attend a summer choral workshop to prepare for promotion to CC. The summer workshop typically consists of five meetings.

After successfully completing a 3-year membership in CC (typically in 8th grade), choristers who have fulfilled the minimum theory and sight-reading requirements will need to pass an audition and attend a summer choral workshop to advance to the Chamber Choir or Honors Choir. Since choral literature used in this choir tends to be more difficult and vocally demanding, prospective choristers must demonstrate the ability to sing independently in parts without piano accompaniment, a solid foundation in solfege skills for sight-reading, and a healthy accurate vocal tone. Choristers who fail to meet the vocal audition standard will need to remain in CC until the next audition or to make up the deficiencies before advancing to the Chamber Choir or Honors Choir.

Auditions to join any of the three performing choirs directly (without joining CTC) will be scheduled only as space becomes available. The director will evaluate pitch matching, melodic and rhythmic memory, vocal quality, and sight-reading ability, in order to place the prospective chorister appropriately. You are required to send in an audition application, along with the audition fee.

While the staff continually monitors choristers' growth and development throughout the year, repertoire evaluations for the three performing choirs may periodically be scheduled and announced. These evaluations serve to accurately and constructively measure the musical development of each chorister and assess his/her readiness for a performance. They may be scheduled before, after, or during the regular rehearsal hours, or by special arrangement if necessary. The following criteria will be used for the repertoire evaluations:

- Memory of text and pitches
- Accuracy of rhythm and tuning
- Security and strength in part holding

Important note: The descriptions provided above serve only as guidelines. Mastery of all of them does not necessarily guarantee promotion, nor does promotion always reflect mastery of all the requirements. Promotion is also based on space availability, sufficient staffing, and vocal needs of each section and each choir. Physical, emotional, social maturity, and the ability to handle the demands of the next group are also of primary consideration.

CCC Trophies

All choristers in the 7th grade or above, who have maintained a three-year membership in CCC, and have fulfilled their minimum theory and solfege requirements, are eligible for their 1st CCC trophies. Trophy Recipients will be featured in one of the programmed selections during the spring concert.

All choristers in the 10th grade or above, who have maintained another three-year membership in CCC, and have fulfilled their minimum theory and solfege requirements, are eligible for their 2nd CCC trophies. They will be featured again in one of the programmed selections during the spring concert.

CALENDAR

Choral Calendar/Schedule

Each choral year consists of two semesters: August-December and January-May, culminating in a Winter Holiday Concert and a Spring Concert. CCC holidays and breaks more or less adhere to the Livermore and Pleasanton School District Calendars. A specific rehearsal and performance calendar for each season will be posted on the
"Members" section of the website at the beginning of each semester. Currently, the following groups meet on different afternoons of the week. Please check registration forms each year for specific days and times.

- CTC-1 (50 min.)
- CTC-2 (65 min.)
- CTC-3 (80 min.)
- CC (1 hr. and 45 min.)
- CH (2 hr.)
- HC (2 ½ hr.)

Choristers in all three performing choirs are also expected to attend a retreat and/or choral festival typically in the spring. This is a one-day or full weekend event including a guest master choral clinician. We believe that the retreat or festival experience is essential in reaching the goals of CCC and allows the choristers an opportunity to develop friendships both outside and within the choir.

Choristers in HC are committed to participate in travel opportunities to attend local to international choral festivals and/or competitions.

In addition, the following possible workshops are offered to our performing choir choristers in the summer as needed:

1. Summer Musicianship Workshop: for choristers who are being considered for promotion to the next level of performing choir.
2. Opera Workshop: for choristers who have been selected to participate in the Livermore Valley Opera Company's annual productions.
3. Participation in one of Cantabella's summer opera productions.

Special Rehearsals and Performances

Public performances are an important component of the CCC. All choristers participate in at least 2 major concerts each year: a Winter Concert and a Spring Concert. Choristers can only experience the fruits of their labor by participating in the finished product, the concert. This opportunity to share their works with an audience in the concert setting is extremely valuable. In preparation for these concerts, choristers are required to attend one additional joint rehearsal (typically scheduled during the week preceding the concert), and a technical rehearsal (typically scheduled the day before the concert) per season. An unexcused absence from the joint or final technical rehearsal before a performance may result in the chorister being excluded from the corresponding concert.

In addition to the above rehearsals and performances, choristers in one of our three performing choirs are required to participate in at least two-three extra performances per semester. These additional performances and corresponding rehearsals are mandatory unless otherwise noted.

UNIFORMS

The items marked with an asterisk (*) need to be ordered through Cantabella. Pricing

and ordering information will be available at the parent meetings or during the first few weeks of classes. Samples will be available for your child to try on to ensure an accurate fit. Payment needs to be made at the time that the order is placed. By placing a group order, we can all save on shipping costs.

Infractions: Forgetting to wear your t-shirt, or missing a necessary uniform accessory, may require a student to "borrow" the item from CCC for a charge of $3-$5 per item (for hygiene purposes, black socks are not returned, and you will be billed $5 a pair).

CTC Uniform Requirements

All CTC are required to purchase a Cantabella t-shirt* with assigned colors (CTC-1: red, CTC-2: green, CTC-3: royal blue). You may place your orders during the online registration.

For our winter and spring performances, CTC students are encouraged to wear semi-formal attire of choice (seasonal festive colors are welcomed).

CC/CH/HC Uniform Requirements

Informal uniforms are required for performing choir members. It consists of a Cantabella sky blue t-shirt* for CC and Cantabella black t-shirt* for CH and HC, jeans and tennis shoes. The jeans and tennis shoes can be ones that you already have but must be clean looking, plain and without holes.

CC Formal Uniforms

It is required that all members are in full uniform for every formal performance.
Girls

- Black and burgundy long dress* (the hem should not be more than 3 inches wide, just touch the top of shoes without bunching, and hang about 1″ from floor with shoes on.)
- Black tights
- Black closed-toe shoes

Boys

- Burgundy bow-tie*
- Black button-down shirt*
- Black dress pants*
- Black socks
- Black dress shoes (no black tennis shoes)
- Black belt (optional)

CH and HC Formal Uniforms

It is required that all members are in full uniform for every formal performance.

Girls

- Black and burgundy long dress* (the hem should not be more than 3 inches wide, just touch top of shoes without bunching, and hang about 1″ from floor with shoes on.)
- Brooch* (pinned on upper left)
- Black tights
- Black closed-toe shoes

Boys

- Burgundy long neck tie*
- Black button-down shirt*
- Black dress pants*
- Black socks
- Black dress shoes (no black tennis shoes)
- Black belt (optional)

*Used Items may be available.

If you have used uniform items, please consider donating them to CCC. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt.

GENERAL INFORMATION
For questions regarding tuition, please contact: Joy Tsai, Registrar, at joy@cantabella.org.

For all other information, please read this handbook, check your email and visit our website www.cantabella.org before contacting CCC at (925) 292-2663.

Robin Tomaschke, Program Administrator, at robin@cantabella.org
Joy Tsai, Registrar, at joy@cantabella.org
Marcia Ikeda, Operations Administrator at marcia@cantabella.org
Eileen Chang, Artistic Director, at eileen@cantabella.org

Occasionally, information regarding upcoming concerts, performances, rehearsals and other matters concerning CCC needs to be communicated. All choristers are encouraged to receive this information via e-mail. Announcements are also posted on the CCC Website. Please sign-up for hard copy delivery only if absolutely necessary.

Parents are welcome to observe their child's rehearsals, except during the final joint and

technical rehearsals before the concert. For the young CTC students, we ask to please wait until after the third class to observe in order to allow time for your student to settle in and adjust to the class and teacher. Please contact the program administrator or sign up at the attendance table to schedule your observation day.

To minimize distraction for the choristers and congestion in the classroom, please note the following guidelines while observing classes:

- No siblings are allowed
- Maximum of 2 parents are allowed at one time
- Complete silence is required while observing
- Observe no more than once a month

We may be reached at the rehearsal site by text message or phone at 925-292-2663.

Choral Binders

Music and choral binders belong to CCC and should be used and handled with care. They are to be returned at the end of each season and the cost of lost or damaged music will be charged to the chorister. Missing or turning in late a full binder will result in a charge of $30 or more. Choristers in CC, CH, and HC must come to every rehearsal with their choral binder, theory workbook and pencil, unless otherwise instructed. There is a $1 fine imposed for each time a student forgets his or her binder or workbook.

Exemplary behavior is expected of all choristers, whether at rehearsals or performances, on stage or off stage. Disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated, and after proper warning, will be grounds for dismissal.

Each chorister is required to fill out and return an emergency form every year. The emergency form is available from the CCC website. Please return it before or on your first day of class.

Rehearsal Sites

This year, classes will be held at these four locations:

Granada Baptist Church (GBC)
945 Concannon Blvd., Livermore

Valley Community Church (VCC)
4455 Del Valle Parkway, Pleasanton

Please observe the following general usage rules to ensure our continued good rapport with these churches:

- All siblings or friends of choristers are required to be signed in by a responsible adult before entering the building.

- Use only classrooms and waiting areas that are designated for Cantabella's use. - Children are to be properly supervised both inside and outside of the building by a responsible adult at all times.
- No jumping on the chairs, running in the church or touching of church equipment. - No food or drink (except water) inside the church
- No one is allowed on the stage, or allowed to play with any sound equipment, including the piano.
- Livermore (GBC): Play at your own risk. Adult supervision required - Pleasanton (VCC): Only preschool aged children are allowed on the playground with direct adult supervision.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The annual registration and tuition covers all rehearsals and class parties after each annual concert from August to May, as they are all part of the total choral education program. It also covers free access to professional concert photographs, which will be posted for parents to view and download after each concert.

Registration is for the full year or by semester, due in full upon registration (unless you choose installments, as described below). We do not send out invoices and it is your responsibility to register and pay each semester. The fall semester begins in August, and the spring semester begins in January.

Installment plan: you have the option to pay your tuition in two installments each semester. For this option, choose "pay 60% now and pay the balance later" upon check out. The second portion of the balance will be due in full by November 1 for fall registration, and March 1 for spring registration. **NOTE: a $20 administrative fee** will be added to your account balance for this two-installment option. The $20 fee will be applied per account (not per student or per class) each semester**. There is no installment plan for those families selecting the whole year registration option**.

Refunds: We do not pro-rate our refunded tuition. New families will receive a full refund of tuition if the chorister decides to drop within first two weeks of instruction less an administrative fee of $75 for training choirs and $100 for performing choirs. Cantabella should be notified of your intention to discontinue no later than 72 hours after the second lesson for which the chorister is enrolled. After the second class, all tuition and fees for the semester are non-refundable if a chorister drops out of the program or is removed at any time during the semester. **For current continuing students: There will be no refund once the first class begins. Tuition will be acknowledged as a charitable donation.**

Registration fees are assessed for NEW (first-time) students on a one-time basis per student. A student is considered new if (a) brand new to CCC (even if they have a sibling currently enrolled) or (b) is a returning student who has not attended CCC for one or more semesters.

Previously enrolled students (who have not missed a semester) do NOT pay the registration fee when re-registering. We do not hold places in classes for previously enrolled students without a paid registration. It is the family's responsibility to enroll continuing students in a timely

manner for placement at their preferred rehearsal site. Classes are available on a first come, first served, space-available basis.

Cantabella is offering an automatic $25 sibling discount. All siblings must be registered in the same online transaction for the discount to apply. The $25 discount is applied toward the second and third registration(s). Families with more than three students registering need to contact us for processing assistance with additional sibling discounts.
Choristers with an outstanding balance will not be allowed to perform at the final winter or spring concerts.

We do not wish to see any chorister turned away from our program because of financial difficulty. Therefore, financial aid is available if needed. Please visit http://www.cantabella.org/scholarship to obtain the Financial Aid Application Form and more information.

Cantabella offers a 10% tuition discount to Military Families (active military or parent veterans). Please contact Joy Tsai, Registrar, at joy@cantabella.org, prior to registration and present documentation as proof of eligibility.

Fundraising

Your annual tuition fees only cover part of Cantabella's ongoing expenses, which include rental of rehearsal space and concert site, staff salaries, insurance, choral music and practice recordings, staff development and teaching materials, office supplies, etc. Cantabella relies on the efforts of the board and parents to raise additional needed funds.

VOLUNTEERING

Parent Committee and Community of Volunteers

Cantabella parents become participants in the success of the choir by accepting a volunteer support position. Parents should expect to volunteer between four to eight hours per semester per child with a minimum of four hours or one job for training choir parents and eight hours or approximately two jobs for our performing choir parents. The yearly volunteer requirement may be filled within one semester for parents who take on more time-consuming positions. Parents who are unable to fulfill a volunteer role will be asked to pay a Non-Participating Parent fee of $100 per semester per family if paid during registration. Payment of the "opt-out" fee increases to $125 after registration closes for the semester.

Parent volunteers will fill out the online volunteer survey once per year on our Family Info Sheet. A survey link will be provided upon registration. Positions will be requested by the Program Administrator and are filled on a first come first served basis. The sign-up sheets will be available online, with the links provided by email in October (fall semester) and March (spring semester). After that, parents will be notified regarding job assignments or Non-Participating Parent fees.

For more information about volunteer positions, please contact: Robin Tomaschke, Program Administrator at robin@cantabella.org.