

2008-2009



CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

2008-2009 – 4th Season

Singer and Parent Handbook

CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

Singer and Parent Handbook

© Conspirare Youth Choirs
1033 La Posada Drive • Suite 130 • Austin, Texas • 78752
Phone 512.476.5775 • www.conspirare.org/cc
conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.com

WW CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

Welcome to the Conspirare Youth Choirs! Founded in 2005 as the Conspirare Children's Choir, the Conspirare Youth Choirs (CYC) are dedicated to bringing the highest level of artistic training to the youth of the greater Austin area. The CCC was created as an extension of the Austin-based Conspirare, a professional ensemble of adult choral singers. Conspirare (from Latin, meaning "to breathe together") is led by Artistic Director, Craig Hella Johnson.

Since 1991, Conspirare has dedicated itself to presenting world-class music and artistry in every performance. In addition, Conspirare continues to seek the building of community by forming a circle between audience and performer. This circle is driven by a belief that music changes our lives for the better.

Since 2005, the CYC has seen an amazing level of growth and artistic quality while providing unparalleled experiences for its members. A highlight from its first season (when the CYC was originally known as the CCC) was working in tandem with both the Conspirare adult chorus and the Austin Symphony in a stellar performance of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. At the completion of the 2006 season, the Austin American Statesman awarded the CCC the distinguished honor of "Outstanding Debut of a Musical Ensemble".

In its second season, the CCC was featured in a film by Daniel Boshkov which was featured in art galleries in Austin and Atlanta. Through its participation in the NEA-sponsored *American Masterpieces Festival*, the CCC was able to perform with a 600-member chorus. Another highlight of that festival was the CCC's coaching by world-renowned music educator, Henry Leck. In June, 2007, the CCC concluded its season with an inspiring musical tour of Washington D.C.

The third season was a year of tremendous growth, connection to the community, and ensemble building. With its largest enrollment yet of 65 singers, the CCC was invited to perform for the high-profile Austin Children's Shelter Gala as well as the Governor's Holiday Party. The CCC then presented an educational workshop for the entire body of the Austin Independent School District general music and choral teachers. At the end of the 2007-2008 season, plans were made to create two ensembles to help meet the needs of our growing community of young artists. The organization formerly known as the Conspirare Children's Choir would become the Conspirare Youth Choirs, comprised of two individual ensembles, Kantorei and the Conspirare Children's Choir.

As we enter our fourth season, we are excited you will be joining us as we continue to build our foundation of musical excellence!

Welcome to the CYC Community!

CYC Leadership and Administration

All Conspirare Youth Choir activities and decisions are guided by a collaborative process within the Conspirare staff. All Conspirare decisions regarding the CYC are overseen by the Conspirare Board of Directors, comprised of corporate and private sector individuals who have a strong interest or career in the artistic and educational communities.

Conspirare Staff

Craig Hella Johnson, Artistic Director
Erich Vollmer, Executive Director

Nina Revering, CYC Musical Director
Rick Gabrillo, CYC Administrator and Assistant Director
Dana Patterson, CYC Assistant Director
Maimy Fong, CYC Accompanist
Chris Oelkers, CYC Accompanist

Katie Apple, Executive Assistant to the Artistic Director
Will Culbertson, Production Manager
Cynthia Densmore, Bookkeeper
Meri Kruger, Artist Contractor
Chuck Lutke, Development & Communications Manager
Monica Maher, Operations Manager
Nicki Turman, House Manager

Conspirare Board of Directors

Fran Collmann, Chairman
Joe Cain, Vice-Chairman
Robert Harlan, Treasurer

Hon. Bea Ann Smith
Patty Speier
Mary Stephenson
Bernadette Tasher
Dottie Welton

retary

The Choirs

The Conspirare Youth Choirs seek to provide an exciting and stimulating place for young adults to explore the highest level of choral artistry. We foster concepts of dedication, diligence, and teamwork while having a joyous time with the journey.

Each season, singers from different socio-economic backgrounds throughout the greater Austin area learn to connect the joy of poetry to their hearts, minds and spirits, and express this joy through excellent singing.

The CYC is currently comprised of approximately 70 members forming two auditioned ensembles, Kantorei and the Conspirare Childrens Choir (CCC). Kantorei meets on Monday evenings from 6-8pm, and it is an ensemble for singers with beginning to intermediate levels of experience and skill. The CCC meets on Monday and Thursday evenings from 7pm-8:30pm, and it is an ensemble for singers with intermediate to advanced levels of experience and skill.

There will occasionally be additional rehearsals as we prepare for our upcoming performances. Please be sure to consult the yearly calendar for those specific rehearsal and performance dates, times, and locations (updated calendars can be found at www.conspirare.org/cyc). All rehearsals and performances are mandatory. Consult the “Absence/Tardy Policy” in this handbook for an explanation of excused and unexcused absences and how they affect your child’s membership status in the CYC.

The Artistic Experience

The CYC utilize a curriculum which focuses on the whole artist. The music that we study and perform includes a broad depth of repertoire spanning the different historical eras of music from Renaissance to modern-day as well as different styles from Gospel and Jazz to oratorio and art song literature. An emphasis is given to the connection of words to music and how they express human emotion and ideas.

Training the young singer to use a healthy vocal production is at the heart of CYC instruction. Learning to produce a consistent core sound, filled with resonance, projection, and beautiful tone will be emphasized. The young singer will also learn to develop a strong sense of breath management to support their singing voice. For all singers, but particularly the boys, the changing voice will be addressed.

Training literate musicians is of particular importance to the CYC. We emphasize sight-singing skills, incorporating Kodaly solfege syllables, rhythm syllables, and Curwin handsigns. We want our young singers to be able to pick up a piece of music, understand all of the symbols on the page, and translate the notation into accurate vocal production. We use a combination of music literacy workbooks and exercises to develop these skills.

Conspirare Singing Mentors

The CYC distinguishes itself by its connection to the adult chorus of Conspirare. Throughout the season, professional singers from the adult chorus will sing with the children during CYC rehearsals. This will allow the choristers to hear examples of excellent singing and observe models of good musicianship. The CYC will also learn about the life of professional musicians and listen to their solo performances. Singers are encouraged to ask questions of our Singing Mentors. Whenever possible, members from the Conspirare adult chorus will also perform with the CYC during concerts and other performances.

CYC Finances

The CYC annual expenses include venue fees, staff salaries, financial assistance for CYC families in need, guest artist fees, sheet music and resource materials, production of recordings, uniforms, promotional materials, concert production, Kick-off, and tours.

Income to fund the CYC comes from many sources. These sources include: singer tuition, grants, donations (corporate, foundation, and individual), sale of CYC merchandise and recordings, box office receipts, tuition fees, and our annual fundraisers (poinsettias, ads, and Family Dinner Night).

A critical source of funding is derived from the hard work of CYC families in their participation in fundraisers. However, some parents choose to make a donation in lieu of participating in the CYC fundraisers. More specific information regarding the quota and optional donation amounts will be distributed before the annual fundraisers begin.

Financial Assistance Programs

It is our intention that the CYC remains open to all families, regardless of their financial situation. To that end, the CYC offers two programs for families in need: **Tuition Assistance** and the **Shining Star Program**.

Tuition Assistance is partial tuition assistance based on need, and it will be offered as long as funds remain available. After the regular audition process, additional documentation will be required to apply for Tuition Assistance. Please contact the CYC at conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.org or 512.476.5775 for further information.

The **Shining Star Program** was an initiative begun in 2006 to help support singers who are financially unable to participate in the CYC. The Shining Star Program provides one year's tuition costs, supplies, and transportation for all CYC events. After the regular audition process, additional documentation will be required to apply for the Shining Star Program. Please contact the CYC at conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.org or 512.476.5775 for further information.

Parental Involvement

One of the great strengths of the CYC is its dedicated contingent of chorister and parent volunteers. Since its inception, CYC parents have donated hundreds of hours of time and talent to the choir. Volunteers are needed at rehearsals and concerts, during fundraisers, and at special events. Volunteer opportunities will be offered through our weekly email newsletters. If you are interested in volunteering, you can send your intentions via email.

Parents can also assist choristers by doing the following:

- Ensuring that your child is present and on-time to all rehearsal and concert call times
- Helping your child practice responsibility by having all CCC materials prepared in a timely manner before the rehearsal so that they do not arrive without the necessary materials
- Reading the weekly e-mails and memos that will be distributed at each rehearsal
- Returning forms and tuition payments on time
- Assisting your child with any rehearsal homework
- Promoting concerts and selling poinsettias/advertisements for our annual fundraisers

Absence/Tardy Policy

The quest for artistic excellence requires a high level of commitment; therefore, the CYC maintains high expectations for attendance.

Attendance at all CYC rehearsals, performances, and other events are considered MANDATORY unless specifically indicated by the CYC.

Excused Absences

While the CYC's artistic commitment to artistic excellence is extensive, the CYC does allow for excused absences in certain situations. Whenever possible, please give a 2-week advance notice of your excused absence request to conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.com.

Excused absences include:

- Illness/Medical Procedures
- School music and religious music performances
- Personal religious days of obligation
- Sports **games** (not practices)
- Family emergencies

Unexcused Absences

All other absences from CYC events are considered *unexcused*, and a CYC singer is allowed **three** unexcused absences per year. Advanced notice of unexcused absences is still greatly appreciated.

Please note that absence requests due to practices for sports and other organizations with which you might be involved are typically considered unexcused.

Tardiness to rehearsals

Rehearsals will always begin and end at the stated times. Choristers are expected to be in their seat, ready to rehearse **5 minutes prior to the rehearsal starting time**. Choristers are marked tardy if they arrive more than 10 minutes late and/or if they leave more than 10 minutes early. **Three tardies or leaving early three times will count as one unexcused absence.**

Excessive unexcused absences

After three unexcused absences, the chorister will receive a phone call/letter from the CYC. After the fourth unexcused absence, the chorister may be dismissed from the CYC.

Appropriate Choices in Behavior

CYC is a professional performing organization. A chorister's choices in behavior during CYC events should reflect this professionalism and encourage musical growth and artistic excellence for all singers.

At the beginning of the year, singers will be given guidelines on respectful and professional etiquette. If a chorister has difficulty making appropriate choices in performance etiquette, the singer and their family will first be contacted to help improve the chorister's choices in behavior. Should a chorister continue to make inappropriate choices in performance etiquette, they may be dismissed from the CYC.

Choir Folder and CYC Shoulder Bags

Every singer in the CYC will be provided with a choir folder containing this season's music and a CYC shoulder bag in which to keep their materials. While these items are provided at no additional cost, the choir folder and sheet music will have a replacement fee if lost or damaged. The choir folder will need to be returned in good condition to the CYC at the completion of the season.

Uniform

Every singer in the CCC is required to have the performing attire which will be used at all performances and/or according to the director's discretion. Please consult the "Uniform Information" sheet which will be sent to you prior to the fall Parent Meeting in the July mail out.

Tuition

The total tuition for the 2007-2008 season is \$750. Please check the calendar for the dates of the three tuition installments.

CYC Staff

Nina Revering, Music Director

The Music Director provides the artistic vision for the Conspirare Youth Choirs. She is responsible for all artistic activities, including rehearsals, concerts, auditions, workshops, tours, recordings, and Kick-off. The Music Director works in close association with all Conspirare staff members, choristers, CYC families, and the community at large.

Nina Revering's choral experience began at an early age. While growing up in Brazil, she performed in the Coro Infantil do Teatro Municipal under the direction of Elsa Lakschevitz. After moving to Canada, she joined the Toronto Children's Chorus, directed by Jean Ashworth Bartle, and performed with notable directors, Andrew Davis and Sir David Willcocks. Ms. Revering's training includes six years of study in Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music in baroque recorder and piano. She holds diplomas and degrees from the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Youth Performing Arts School, and Boston University's School for the Arts.

Ms. Revering taught music in Eanes schools from 1996-2003. She founded and directed the Bridge Point Elementary Children's Choir in 1998.

Rick Gabrillo, Administrator and Assistant Director

The Administrator handles the administrative tasks that help the ensemble to function. Building a communication network with the singers and families through e-mails, handouts, and meetings is a primary function of the Administrator. He also aids in planning and executing fundraisers, rehearsals and concerts, recordings, and tours.

Rick Gabrillo was born and raised in Richardson, Texas. After attending the New England Conservatory of Music and Boston University School for the Arts, he completed his degrees at the University of Texas at Austin. His undergraduate degree is in choral music education, and his master's degree is in choral conducting.

He was the choir director at Clint Small Middle School from 1999-2005. In addition to his work with Conspirare, he is also the Music Teacher and the director of the newly-formed Boys' Choir of St. Mary's Cathedral in downtown Austin. He and his wife, Evelyn, live in Round Rock, where they are raising their three-year old son, Ryan, and their newborn daughter, Lillian.

Dana Patterson, Assistant Director

The Assistant Director helps with rehearsal and concert logistics. In addition, the Assistant Director aids with musical direction by leading sectionals, occasionally leading full rehearsals, and conducting in concerts.

As a music educator Dana has taught at both the elementary and high school levels. Additional credits include professional core member of The Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh under Robert Page, director of The Bach Chorale Youth Chorus and assistant to the artistic director of The Bach Chorale, Lafayette, Indiana, and member of the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir.

Originally raised on a Southern Indiana farm, she studied music education, conducting, piano and voice at the Indiana University School of Music, Bloomington, Indiana. She has since studied at Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey, and Duquesne University, Pittsburgh. She and her husband, Kevin, have a daughter, Janelle.

Maimy Fong and Chris Oelkers, CYC Accompanists
--

The Accompanists are present at all rehearsals and performances. They assist by providing piano or organ accompaniment.

Maimy Fong has been a long-standing figure in the Austin classical arts scene as an accompanist, chamber musician, and musical coach. She has been a CYC Accompanist since its inception.

Chris Oelkers is active as a recitalist, and has given many performances throughout the US, Canada and Europe. He currently serves as organist and Associate Music Director at St. Louis Catholic Church, a position he has held since August of 2005.

Contact Information

Conspirare Youth Choirs 512.476.5775

Messages may be left for any member of the Conspirare staff.

Conspirare website – www.conspirare.org/cyc

Please visit our primary website for all Conspirare and CYC information.

NOTE: Throughout the year, the CYC will be sending weekly e-mail outs and newsletters. We will also be utilizing the Conspirare website as an important place for downloads, updates to the calendar, and other essential information. Please notify us if you do not have a reliable connection to a computer with internet access.

Conspirare Office

1033 La Posada Drive
Suite 130
Austin, Texas 78752
512.476.5775
Fax 512.484.1676
conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.com

The Conspirare office is generally open 9:30am to 5pm during the business week. Please call ahead to ensure that an office member is present before you visit.

Acknowledgement Form

My CYC chorister _____ (print singer's name)
and I _____ (print parent's name) have read the
2008-2009 CYC Singer and Parent Handbook.

- We agree to abide by the expectations as outlined in this document.
- We understand that failure to abide by these guidelines may result in the singer's dismissal from the CYC.
- We agree that the quest for artistic excellence requires a high level of commitment, passion, effort, and self-discipline.

Signature of Chorister _____

Signature of Parent _____

Date of signature ____ / ____ / ____