THE CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

CHILDREN'S CHORUSES

2026-2027 Handbook

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Important Resources

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Children's Choruses Website
www.cocc.cochorus.com
PW: chanson27!

Severance Music Center Ticket Office
11001 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 231-1111

Severance Music Center
11001 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-231-7300

The Children's Choruses staff and directors reserve the right to change the policies and procedures of this handbook at any time without prior notice. If any changes are made, the Children's Choruses Manager shall post the updated policies and procedures on the Children's Choruses website and immediately notify COCC/COCPC members and families about the changes via email.

Table of Contents

I. Attendance Policy 2
II. Behavior Expectations 5
III. Communication & Rehearsal Information 6
IV. Concert Attire 6
V. Inclement Weather 7
VI. Membership & Tuition 7
VII. Music 7
VII. Online Resources 8
IX. Rehearsal Preparation 8
X. Rehearsal & Performance Expectations 8
XI. Tickets 10
XII. Parking 10

2026-27 Rehearsal & Performance Policies

I. Attendance Policy

The purpose of this attendance policy is to ensure that each member of the chorus is present for enough rehearsals to be prepared for performance in keeping with the artistic standards of the Children's Choruses' mission. Failure to comply with these policies will result in dismissal from the Chorus at the discretion of the Director. Every musician makes a difference and is of equal importance to the artistry of the choruses. Prompt attendance at all activities is vital to the philosophy of this chorus; thus, any absence or lateness will be taken seriously.

Plan Ahead

Professional and personal responsibility is critical to musical excellence. Each member and family must look ahead at their year's schedule(s) and consider whether it allows them to meet the Children's Choruses time requirements. By accepting membership in the Children's Chorus (COCC) or Preparatory Chorus (COCPC), each student agrees to adhere to these attendance policies and to the full COCC/COCPC schedule of rehearsals and performances.

Attendance is required at all scheduled rehearsals and is mandatory from warm-up to dismissal. Please read below for specific attendance policies:

Absences

An absence is defined as missing an entire rehearsal or any two instances of arriving late or leaving early from a rehearsal. The number of absences is calculated per semester. Typically, the fall semester runs from August to December, and the spring semester runs from January to May. **Attendance at all concerts is mandatory. Missing a concert may result in dismissal from the chorus.**

You are expected to attend all scheduled rehearsals and to be in your assigned seat prior to warm-up. Please plan on arriving 10 minutes prior to the scheduled rehearsal start time. Late arrivals are disruptive to the rehearsal process and may contribute to your number of accrued absences. If you are not in your seat, you will be marked late when warm-up begins.

There are three types of absences:

1. **Excused:** Members are allowed two excused absences per concert cycle. Examples include:
    - School performances
    - Religious holidays
    - Funerals
    - Family emergency: must be explained to be considered excused.
    - Family weddings
    - Extreme illness: If you are seriously ill or contagious, please refrain from attending rehearsal. For minor illnesses (i.e., if you are well enough to attend school) chorus members should attend rehearsal and take notes, even if they are unable to sing.

2. **Unexcused:** Members who earn one unexcused absence will be placed on probationary status. Examples include:

    - Too much homework
    - Studying for an exam
    - Any last-minute absence that does not fall under the category of an excused absence.

3. **Last-minute:** Last-minute absences on the day of a service must be communicated via BAND. You may text the Chorus Manager using BAND. Your message should include a brief description of the reason your singer will be late or absent. Depending on the nature of the absence, this may be counted as an excused or unexcused absence at the Director's discretion.

Absence Requests

If the nature of an excused absence allows you to inform the chorus office ahead of time, you must submit an absence request form through the following procedure:

- Absence request forms may be found on the website in the MEMBERS section under FORMS. Absence request forms also include a space to request early dismissal from or late arrival to a COCC/COCPC service.
- Forms must be submitted via the google doc form at least 2 weeks prior to the requested absence date. The Chorus Manager will contact you to inform you if your absence request was denied.

Failure to follow the above absence request procedure will automatically incur an unexcused absence and will result in probationary status (see “Probationary status” below).

Testing Sessions – COCC/PC

After a chorus member has had two excused absences, they will be asked to attend or record a testing session. During a testing session, singers will be asked to sing an excerpt from any music that was rehearsed in their absence, which can include the most difficult passage. A singer may be asked to test in one of two ways:

1. Call Google Voicemail and record the testing session excerpt.
    a. The Chorus Manager will email you detailed instructions which will include the deadline to submit the voicemail and what music to prepare and record.
    b. The voicemail message will mention the passage to record and give you a starting pitch.
        i. COCC Google Voicemail: (216) 282-7887
        ii. COCPC Google Voicemail: (216) 282-4564

OR

2. Arrive early at the following rehearsal for an in-person testing session with the chorus director.
    a. The Chorus Manager will email you with detailed instructions which will include the date, time, and location of the session and what music to prepare.
    b. In-person testing sessions typically occur 10-30 minutes before the start of the regular chorus rehearsal.

The method of the testing session will be determined by the Chorus Director. If there are unique circumstances that prevent you from arriving early for your testing session, you must communicate that information to the Chorus Manager via email.

If the results of the testing session are unsatisfactory, the chorus member will be placed (or remain) on probation. The chorister will be notified and asked to either resubmit their testing session via the google voice mailbox or arrive for an in-person testing session with the director covering the same material. A second unsatisfactory performance may result in dismissal from the chorus.

Probationary Status

If a member is placed on probation, a parent or guardian will be notified of the member’s status and the probation must be cleared the following week in a testing session (see “Testing Sessions" above). A member may be placed on probationary status for any of the following reasons:

- One unexcused absence
- More than two excused absences within one semester
- One unsatisfactory testing/makeup session
- Non-adherence to the Behavior Expectations described in Section II

Under extraordinary circumstances, the Director may make an exception to the above policies on a case-by-case basis.

School Music Programs

We highly encourage our singers to participate and be leaders within their respective school programs and ensembles. Our chorus programs serve as a *supplement* to music in schools and we believe there is no substitute for daily or near daily rehearsal that comes with school music programs. Please take the time to review your school schedule and communicate any conflicts to the Chorus Manager as soon as possible. We ask that you follow these guidelines when making decisions about potential schedule conflicts:

- School music program performances take precedence over Children's Choruses rehearsals.
- Children's Choruses performances take precedence over school music program rehearsals or other school-related activities.

If a conflict exists between a school music program performance and a Children's Choruses performance, every effort should be made to find a possible compromise between the two services (arriving late to a warmup, leaving a rehearsal early, etc.). If such a compromise is not possible, **the student should prioritize the school performance.**

We do not require participation in school program for membership in the Children's Choruses, but this is a requirement for our high school ensemble, The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus (COYC). COYC requires that every musician participate in at least one school music ensemble for school credit. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. Singers entering grades 9-12, as well as 8th grade students with *changing* voices, are welcome to audition for COYC.

II. Behavior Expectations

Being a member of any of The Cleveland Orchestra choral ensembles should be a positive and enriching experience for everyone. Choristers are therefore expected to treat all directors, staff, and other chorus members with respect. All members of the Children's Choruses are expected to:

1. Choose comments and actions that are positive, kind and constructive.
2. Choose learning behaviors that show the best possible effort.
3. Choose to be an active listener at all rehearsals and performances.
4. Choose to occupy their own learning space in a manner which shows dignity and respect, and free of distractions that interfere with teaching and learning.

If a chorister does not adhere to the expectations described above, the Director will first have a private conversation with the student to discuss the exhibited behavior and identify solutions for improvement. Should the behavior not improve, the following steps may be taken:

- The Chorus Manager will contact the member's parent/guardian on behalf of the Director to discuss the chorister's behavior.
- The Director will meet with the chorister's parents/guardians, and then the chorister may be placed on probationary status.
- The chorister may be removed from the Chorus.

Depending on the severity of the infraction, the Chorus Directors and Staff reserve the right to immediately act upon any of the steps listed above.

III. Communication & Rehearsal Information

If you wish to contact the Chorus Office, please address all Children's Chorus questions or concerns to Angel Tyler, Children's Choruses Manager at atyler@clevelandorchestra.com or **(216) 456-8408**. The Chorus Office communicates ALL rehearsal information such as scheduling and rehearsal changes via email; please make sure to check your email regularly.

Band App

Chorus members and their families are encouraged to sign up for the BAND app to receive day-of reminders about rehearsal times and locations, updated release times in the event of an early end to rehearsal (most often during orchestra or conductor rehearsals), and other regular reminders pertaining to the chorus schedule. All emergency updates (such as last-minutes rehearsal cancellations or changes) will also be communicated via email. Please use BAND to report last-minute absences. You should complete the absence request form for all other absences that are not last-minute. We recommend downloading the free app and turning on notifications to ensure you will receive our emergency messages. You can visit your respective chorister corner for links and QR codes to join your respective group's BAND page.

IV. Concert Attire

The following attire requirements must be met for all performances. Parents are responsible for ensuring that all elements of their chorister's concert uniform are in order prior to a performance.

Option 1

- Style 2109BK – Unisex Black Dress Shirt
- Style 502FAA – Black Full Skirt Floor Length (to be hemmed to 11" from the floor in dress shoes)
- Black dress shoes (flat with no heels, jewels, or distracting embellishments)
- Black opaque tights or hose (not patterned)

Option 2

- Style 2109BK – Unisex Black Dress Shirt
- Style 6502 - Adjustable Waist with Buckle Tuxedo Pant with Double Pleated Front
- Black dress shoes (flat with no heels, jewels, or distracting embellishments)
- Black dress socks

In addition to the above attire pieces, all members of the Preparatory Chorus will wear a black vest, and all members of the Children's Chorus will wear a black COCC blazer. These items are provided by the Musical Arts Association and must be returned to the Chorus Office at the final concert of the season.

All choristers should abide by the following:

- Sneakers, sandals or open-toe shoes are not permitted.
- The only permissible jewelry is stud earrings and non-electric wristwatches.
- Perfumes or colognes are not permitted.

- All hair should be off the face and shoulders. Singers with long hair and/or bangs should prioritize keeping their hair away from their face. Obtrusive hair pieces or headbands are not permitted.
    - Suggested styles: Half-updo, half-pony, braided crown, simple pulled back ponytail, etc.
    - If you have questions about the hair policy such as whether your bangs needed to be pinned back or styles that work according to our policy, please contact the Chorus Manager.

Failure to adhere to attire guidelines will result in removal from the concert.

V. Inclement Weather

It is extremely rare for a performance to be cancelled due to inclement weather. In the unlikely event that a performance is cancelled, all of the above messaging systems will be implemented (email and BAND). If you leave a message for the Chorus Manager in the middle of a weather emergency, they will likely not have the opportunity to return your call. Please assume that your message has been received even if you do not receive a response.

If a service is NOT cancelled, and you feel it is unsafe to travel to the service location, then you should not do so. Chorus members commute from all over northeast Ohio, and the weather in one area may be more severe than another; you must decide what is in your best interest. If you must miss rehearsal due to weather, you may be required to test in-person or call the google voice number to leave a message with your testing session prior to the next rehearsal.

VI. Membership & Tuition

The Cleveland Orchestra Children's Chorus is open to students in grades 6-8 through application and audition. The Cleveland Orchestra Preparatory Chorus is open to students in grades 4-6 through registration. All singers must have unchanged treble voices to participate in either chorus.

Our Youth and Children's Choruses are tuition-free. Financial assistance is available to those who request it for the purchase of concert attire (see "Concert Attire" from Section IV).

VII. Music

You will receive your music on the first day of rehearsal. We expect singers to be mindful of the condition of their music. Please take care of your music: do not fold corners, throw away loose covers or write miscellaneous notes in the scores. Choristers are encouraged to make notes in their music to assist them in remembering musical instructions. However, under no circumstances should choristers mark their scores with anything other than a No. 2 pencil. Pencils are always provided at rehearsals.

A black folder is provided free of charge; please use this folder to protect your music. This folder may also be used for performances.

If illness or an emergency causes you to miss a concert, please return your music in person to the Chorus Manager. Music may also be returned by mail to 11001 Euclid Ave, Cleveland, OH 44106, or dropped off to the Severance Music Center Security Office during business hours (please be sure to let security know the music is for the chorus office).

VII. Online Resources

COCC Website

The Cleveland Orchestra Children's Choruses website (**cocc.cochorus.com**) is maintained by the Chorus Manager and contains a wealth of information and helpful resources. All pages of the website are accessible to the public, except those in the MEMBERS section. These pages are password protected and can only be accessed by chorus members, parents or guardians, directors, and staff. Chorus members should check the website regularly for the chorus rehearsal and performance schedules, updates, announcements, study materials, messages from the Director, text translations, and other materials.

Google Calendar

All Children's Chorus and Preparatory Chorus services are documented on two separate public Google Calendars which can be found under the "Schedules" in the Members Section. Chorus members and families may sync these calendars with their own Google calendars. Syncing the Google calendar is not necessary for general viewing but will allow you to access the listed dates without logging onto the website again.

IX. Rehearsal Preparation

As a member of the Children's Choruses, you are expected to be prepared for each rehearsal. Study materials will be available on the Children's Choruses website in the MEMBERS section. Study materials may include audio tracks of separate vocal parts, audio tracks of foreign language pronunciation, and notes from the Director. It is your responsibility to bring all the music to every rehearsal. Extra copies of the music are not always available.

X. Rehearsal & Performance Expectations

Rehearsal Decorum

Please be respectful of the people around you and adhere to the following rehearsal guidelines:

- Turn off and/or silence all cell phones, tablets and any other electronic devices and put them in a place where they will not distract you! The Chorus Manager and/or the Directors reserve the right to confiscate a cell phone if it is out during rehearsal. The cell phone may be picked up at the conclusion of the rehearsal.
- Do not wear perfume, cologne, aftershave, scented deodorant or scented hair products to rehearsals or performances. Many of your fellow choristers are sensitive or allergic to such aromas. Take care with personal hygiene.
- Always have a pencil with you during rehearsals. If you forget to bring a pencil, you can pick one up from the Chorus Manager at the check-in table.

- Allow enough time to find your place on the seating chart and your chair before the start of a rehearsal. Be in your seat before rehearsal resumes following a break.
- Do not bring food or drink into any rehearsal space before, during or after rehearsals.
- Do not bring homework or books to rehearsal unless you have been notified in advance that there will be downtime.
- Visitors are allowed in rehearsal only with the permission of the Director. Visitor attendance must be cleared in advance through the Chorus Manager.

The Director may give the Chorus a break at the mid-point of rehearsals. Please remain in your seat until this break. Use the restroom before rehearsal starts. In the event of an emergency that forces you to leave the rehearsal before a scheduled break, please be as quiet and unobtrusive as possible while exiting and returning to the room.

Stage Rehearsal Decorum

In addition to all the guidelines outlined above, please note the following for rehearsals held on stage at Severance Music Center:

- Only music and folders are allowed on stage. Please leave other items (coats and personal belongings) in the warm-up space.
- If you arrive late for an on-stage orchestra rehearsal, you must check in with the Chorus Manager, and they will determine if you are allowed to go on stage or must wait in the Hall until the break.
- Talking is NOT permitted once tuning begins.
- Dress rehearsals do not require concert attire, unless specifically noted.
- Guest attendance at Chorus-only stage rehearsals is allowed only with the permission of the Director. All orchestra rehearsals are closed to the public.
- In the event that you cannot sing during a stage rehearsal, please inform the Director and the Chorus Manager. You will be asked to sit in the front section of the Hall and take notes.

Concert Deportment

Avoid doing anything that might detract from the audience's perception of a concert or your fellow chorus members' performance. On-stage conversation is not only distracting and unprofessional; it is extremely rude to the conductor, chorus members, and orchestra members. Talking is NOT permitted once the concertmaster enters the stage.

- While entering and exiting the stage, carry your folder in your upstage hand (the hand not facing the house/audience).
- Stand and sit as quietly as possible and in unison.
- If for any reason you miss the filing-on process, you must sit out that portion of the concert.
- Please do not applaud after a concert.
- Remember: DO NOT TAKE CELL PHONES onto the stage. Electronic wristwatches (which may have alarms) are also not permitted to be worn during a performance.

XI. Tickets

Complimentary or discounted tickets are not available for Holiday concerts at Severance Music Center in which the Children's Chorus participates. Holiday concerts frequently sell out in advance. Families planning to attend are encouraged to purchase tickets to these concerts early in the season. On occasion, discounted tickets may be offered for other concerts during the week. In these instances, discounts will not be applicable to tickets that have already been purchased. To purchase tickets for concerts held at Severance, please call the Severance ticket office at (216) 231-1111, or visit clevelandorchestra.com

XII. Parking

Parking at our primary rehearsal venues is free of charge. When the Choruses are performing at Severance Music Center, dated parking vouchers will be issued to each chorus member for free entry into the garage.