Rutgers Children’s Choir

Handbook for Singers & Parents

2015-2016
Dr. Rhonda S. Hackworth
Artistic Director
Conductor, Chorale and Chamber Singers

Rebekah A. Sterlacci
Associate Director
Conductor, Scarlet Singers

Christina Toulios
Conductor, Choristers
Lead Teacher, Little Knights

Susan Davies
RCC Accompanist

Carl Phillips
SS Accompanist

Haley Scott
Little Knights Teacher

Lee Mamolen, Stephanie Mangioglu, Lee Ostrow
Choral Interns

Kay Madison
Piano intern

Mason Gross Extension Division
81 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-932-8618
Email: extension@masongross.rutgers.edu
http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension

Chris Kenniff, Director
Phone: 848-932-5241
Email: ckkenniff@masongross.rutgers.edu
Welcome to Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers!

Our Mission Statement
Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers provides an opportunity for children from Central New Jersey to develop a love of singing choral music, to sing a variety of age appropriate treble music, and to participate in meaningful musical experiences with peers who share similar interests.

In order to maintain our high standards of excellence and to allow RCC & SS to run smoothly and effectively, it is essential for all singers and parents to study the handbook and to follow the policies accordingly.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
In order for each singer to develop personally and artistically, to build skills, and to maintain the highest levels of performance, singers are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances.

A performance schedule is published early in the year. If additional community concerts are added to the schedule, singers should make every effort to participate in these events. When additional rehearsals are scheduled in advance, it is expected that every effort will be made to have each singer in attendance.

Attendance is MANDATORY at:
• weekly rehearsals
• extra rehearsals & performances publicized at least 6 months in advance
• dress rehearsals
• performances

AN UNEXCUSED ABSENCE FROM A DRESS REHEARSAL WILL PREVENT YOU FROM PARTICIPATING IN THAT PERFORMANCE. If you are ill on the day of a performance, you must e-mail the Extension Division office at extension@masongross.rutgers.edu or call 732-932-8618.

Each singer is allowed two absences from rehearsal in the Fall, and two absences from rehearsal in the Spring for whatever reason; severe illness, study during Exam Week, etc. These do not include any dress rehearsals. THIS IS YOUR LIMIT; CHOOSE YOUR ABSENCES CAREFULLY.

If you must be absent from choir, please email the conducting staff at rccandss@gmail.com. Your absences will be recorded and kept on file. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO LET US KNOW OF YOUR ABSENCE. IF YOU DO NOT E-MAIL AHEAD WITH YOUR ABSENCE, THAT ABSENCE WILL BE COUNTED AS UNEXCUSED.
Singers who have more than the acceptable number of absences will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of the music through vocal testing with a conductor. The conductor will determine whether the singer is adequately prepared for performance.

Each singer/family has made the choice to be a member of RCC & SS. It is understood that there will probably be other activities that will come up in which the singer may wish to participate. However, because of your commitment to the Choir, we expect that RCC & SS events will take priority. Before auditioning or signing up for other activities, worthy though they may be, check your RCC & SS Calendar first. If you mark RCC & SS events on your calendar now, it will save conflicts later in the year.

**REHEARSAL POLICY**

Rehearsals are held in Mortensen Hall on the Douglass campus of Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

Each singer is assigned a number. This number will appear on the singer’s music and folder. Each singer is responsible for bringing his/her folder, music and pencil to and from rehearsals. Bring a water bottle (see Health section). You must have these items with you each week. In order to keep the folder in good condition, you are urged to carry it in a backpack or bag to protect it from the elements.

When you arrive, make sure that you check in at the sign-in table. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before rehearsal is scheduled to begin. Being late every once in a while is understandable; chronic tardiness will result in a conference with conductors.

The music to be rehearsed will be listed on the board. Have your music in order before the rehearsal begins. If you are chewing gum when you arrive, make sure to put it in the trash before rehearsal begins.

Try to use the rest room before rehearsal begins, so as not to disrupt rehearsal. If there is an emergency, pick up the bathroom pass at the door. Ask an adult to escort you to the rest room.

Respect and support are crucial components of each rehearsal and performance. During rehearsals, talking is only permitted to ask questions (with a raised hand) or to make musical comments. The less you talk, the more we rehearse. The more we rehearse, the better we sound!

Use of cell phones, including text messaging, is NOT permitted during rehearsal.

Please be respectful of the rehearsal space at all times. You will be held responsible for any damages incurred.

At the end of rehearsal, singers are expected to put music and any distributed materials in their folder and leave the rehearsal area exactly as they found it. Singers will report to their sign-out station, sign out, and exit the room quickly. Parents must be present to sign out their child, and all children must sign out with the proper staff member. The sign out is for safety – we want to make sure every child leaves with the correct person.
There is another rehearsal immediately following RCC & SS; therefore, we need to exit quickly. It is very important for students to be picked up on time following each rehearsal.

**Behavior Policy**

Acceptance and continued membership in RCC & SS is partially based a singer’s attitude and behavior. The standards here are just as high as the musical standards.

A strong choral program relies on the combined efforts and mutual cooperation of its members. During rehearsals and performances, singers are expected to show a positive attitude, focus, energy and commitment to musical excellence. Disruptive or disrespectful behavior prevents other choir members from fully enjoying and benefitting from their choir experience. Singers are expected to respect and listen to the conductors, refrain from unnecessary talking or other disruptive behavior, and prepare for rehearsals as requested.

At all times when you are a representative of RCC & SS, we expect you to display the highest standard of conduct and behavior.

Alcohol, drugs, tobacco products and weapons are not permitted. Smoking is not allowed.

If the Artistic Director feels that there is a problem, whether it is related to weekly musical preparations or to behavior, it will be discussed first with the singer. If there is no improvement, the Artistic Director will contact the parents.

Choir members on trips have a special responsibility because they represent RCC & SS and Rutgers to other communities. Conduct deemed harmful to the reputation of RCC & SS or the University will not be tolerated. Choir members will respect and listen to the conductors and chaperones, use good judgment, participate in all trip activities, and conduct themselves in a mature fashion. Choir members will also comply with all applicable rules or codes of conduct require by host sites. Use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, profanity, or engaging in any kind of illegal activity may result in choir members being immediately sent home at their own expense.

**Disciplinary Action.** At the discretion of any RCC & SS conductor, choir members may be removed from a rehearsal/performance for violating any part of the Behavior Policy. At the discretion of the Artistic Director, choir members may be barred from further participation in RCC & SS upon repeated violation of the Behavior Policy. Choir members barred from further participation in RCC & SS due to violation of policies will forfeit any right to reimbursement of tuition.

**Health**

Singing involves the whole body, so it is important that each singer stay rested and healthy.

Proper hydration is one of the most important measures a singer can take to assure good vocal health. Each singer should bring a water bottle with a lid to rehearsal, so that the vocal folds stay lubricated.
As a musician whose instrument is his/her voice, you need to be aware of vocal abuse. Abuse or overuse of the voice can cause very delicate tissues to swell which results in hoarseness, loss of speaking/singing voice, or even permanent vocal damage. Try to avoid the following:
- Screaming, yelling, shouting
- Speaking loudly for long periods of time (e.g. in the cafeteria or on the bus)
- Prolonged speaking/singing in cold air
- Harsh throat clearing or coughing
- Speaking too low for long periods of time

If you have a sore throat and find it difficult to sing, but are otherwise healthy and not contagious, you should come to rehearsal and participate by listening and observing. Be sure to inform the conductor at the start of rehearsal.

Your voice is your instrument and cannot be replaced if damaged. Keep yours healthy and beautiful!

**CARE OF MUSIC**

Music is expensive. Each singer is responsible for the care of his/her own music. At the start of the season, you will receive a folder containing numbered music and a mechanical pencil. Markings in your music, as given by the conductors, must be made neatly (in pencil only). Music returned at the end of the year must be in excellent condition. If music is lost, irreparably damaged or not returned, a fee will be charged to the family ($15.00 for Choristers, $20.00 for Chorale).

**UNIFORMS**

When performing, members of the RCC & SS will wear specific uniforms (see Concert Appearance below). Be sure to have these items now so that you are prepared for concert time.

Students will need to purchase an RCC & SS polo shirt. Shirts will be available for purchase at the beginning of the semester for $20.00.

**CONCERT APPEARANCE AND ETIQUETTE**

Each singer’s groomed appearance is important to the professional look of the Chorus.

**Girls:** RCC & SS polo tucked into solid black knee-length skirt or solid black ankle length dress pants, solid black tights (with skirt) or socks (with pants), black shoes (no sneakers, flip-flops, or other casual shoes)

**Boys:** RCC & SS polo tucked into black dress pants, black socks, black shoes (no sneakers, flip-flops, or other casual shoes)

**Please:** no black jeans, cargo pants, or other casual styles. Please make sure pants are ankle length (e.g. no capri’s). Wear only solid black belts (no flashy or glittery buckles). Girls, if you wear a skirt,
you must wear solid black tights (no nude legs). Everything below the waist must be solid black. *No exceptions.*

While conductors truly love every one of you for who you are, RCC & SS concerts are not the time to show individual “flair”! Choirs should look uniform.

**Hair**

Girls: it should be worn off the face. NO hair should be hanging down in the face. For shorter hair, pull it away from the face as much as possible. Headbands should be black. Barrettes should be black or match your hair color. No big bows.

Boys: a neat cut; combed and in place.

**Jewelry/Make Up**

Girls: simple stud earrings and a tasteful ring or watch is permitted. NO dangling earrings, necklaces, bracelets or anklets. If make up is used, it should be tasteful.

Boys: a tasteful watch is permitted. NO other jewelry.

**Perfume/Cologne/After shave**

Avoid during performances. Many people are allergic, and we stand very close together on the risers.

**Concert Etiquette**

The Behavior Policy is in effect at all times. If the Choir is seated in a concert venue and another choir/ensemble or musician is performing,

Each singer is expected to:

- Sit silently, in your own seat
- Be attentive
- Read program notes
- Applaud when appropriate

The following is NOT permitted:

- Whispering/talking/giggling
- Communicating with hand/face or note writing
- Going in and out of concert venue
- Propping feet up on chairs/pews
- Cell phone and/or text messaging

**PERFORMANCES**

In addition to our own public concerts in December and May, RCC & SS may perform throughout the year for various community functions. We participate in musically educational activities such as children’s choral festivals, Rutgers events, and collaborations with other professional music ensembles.

**Annual Concerts:** We have a concert in December and a concert in May each year. These concerts are free to the public and are held in Nicholas Music Center on the Douglass Campus of Rutgers University.

On concert day, only singers and RCC & SS staff are allowed backstage. Parents should drop off children at the side door at their call time. House doors will remain closed until 30 minutes prior to the concert, but the lobby will be open 1 hour prior to concert time. No audience members will
be allowed to enter the house from backstage. Please respect our preparation for the concert by keeping the backstage area clear.

RCC & SS audiences are allowed to take non-flash photographs and record video. Tripods should be left at home, as they are a violation of the fire code. Please turn all flash mechanisms to the “off” position before the concert begins. The flash is distracting. It is also dangerous – a flash in children’s eyes can cause disorientation, leading to potential injury.

**Concerts with Other Choirs:** One of the lessons we strive to teach in RCC & SS is that no matter where you are from, or who you are, you can communicate with others through the common language of music. What a terrific way to teach children that they have a lot in common with people from other parts of the world. In the past we have hosted the New Jersey Youth Chorus and Rutgers University Choir. The future is open to more collaboration.

**Additional Performances:** In the past, we have been asked to perform at the State Theatre’s production of the Nutcracker, Rutgers Day, with the Rutgers Symphony Orchestra, and several other community events.

**Emergency Notification**

In the event of inclement weather, a message will be posted on the Extension Division’s web site: [http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension](http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension). For any other type of emergency, an email will be sent.

**Tuition Policy**

In order to participate in RCC & SS, every singer must register and pay the full year’s tuition to the Mason Gross Extension Division. Returning students should register as soon as possible if you wish to retain your spot. Newly auditioned singers should register as soon as possible following the audition. If you register early, the staff can make the best plans for what to sing and how much music to order. Please bring any questions regarding payment to the attention of Extension Division staff.

**Parental Involvement**

RCC & SS involves not just the singers and the conductors, but all the families of the singers. Not only does the family attend the concerts and applaud the performers, they must be there at all times supporting the singers in their musical endeavors. The Artistic Director has high expectations for both singers and parents.

The parents are expected to:

- Ensure that each singer has reliable transportation to and from weekly rehearsals.
- Read all memos from the Artistic Director and respond as needed in a timely fashion. These will be distributed at rehearsals and emailed to families. Some documents will also be available on the web site: [http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension](http://www.masongross.rutgers.edu/extension)
- Assist singers by helping them remember choir policies, announcements, etc. Also, assist them with the memorization of music.
- Return forms and payments on time
Comply with Nicholas Music Center policies outlined under the **Performances** section above.

In addition, parents may be asked to participate in volunteer activities during the year. This may include chaperoning a performance or assisting with sign-in and sign-out during rehearsals.

**AUDITIONS**

Auditions will be held prior to each semester, depending on choir size. Singers do not need to re-audition once they are in the group. If you have friends who might be interested in joining us, please invite them to audition!

The 5th grade year is considered a transition year between Choristers and Chorale. Rising 5th graders who audition for the first time will be placed according to the conductors’ discretion. Rising 5th graders who are already members of Choristers will have the opportunity to complete a progress evaluation at the end of the 4th grade year. The Directors consider the following when deciding if students are ready to progress to Chorale:

- Vocal quality
- Vocal skill
- Intonation (singing in tune)
- Ability to sing known material (correct notes, rhythms, diction, pronunciation)
- Blend with others
- Part-singing
- Sight-reading

The Directors will also consider:

- Attitude, interest
- Focus and concentration
- Interaction with peers

If a rising 5th grader is assigned to continue with Choristers for more musical skill building, the decision will be made with his/her best musical development at the time.

**SINGER/PARENT AGREEMENT AND AUTHORIZATION/RELEASE FORM**

Once the parent and singer have read this handbook, they are required to return the attached agreement. Additionally, parents are required to complete the Medical Treatment Authorization/Transport Proxy Authorization and Photo/Video Release Form and return it to the Extension Division Office.
Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers
SINGER/PARENT AGREEMENT
2015-2016

______ I have read the information contained in the RCC & SS Handbook and have reviewed it with my child. We understand the requirements contained herein.

By signing below, we agree to abide by all policies set forth in the RCC & SS Handbook

__________________________________________
Signature of singer

__________________________________________
Print singer’s name

__________________________________________
Signature of parent/guardian

__________________________________________
Print parent/guardian name
Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers

MEDICAL TREATMENT AUTHORIZATION/ TRANSPORT PROXY AUTHORIZATION AND PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE FORM

This form must be completed and signed by a parent/guardian before the child can participate in the Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers program.

My child, _______________________________________________________, plans to participate in the Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers (“Program”). I hereby provide the following information, authorization, photo/video release, and transport proxy information:

Allergy/Medical Condition Information:
Are there any medical conditions of which the Program should be aware?

Medical Treatment Authorization:
In case of an emergency, I authorize the Program seek appropriate medical attention for my child at the nearest medical facility.

Photo/Audio/Video Release:
My child plans to participate in Rutgers Children’s Choir and Scarlet Singers. I understand that audio recordings, photos, and or video recordings of Program participants, including my child, may be published. I hereby give my consent for my child to be audio recorded, photographed, or video recorded in connection with his/her participation in the Program.

I further agree that all such audio recordings, photos, or video recordings shall be the exclusive property of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and, subject to the limitations expressed below, I release and give Rutgers all rights of ownership and all rights to copy, publish, and use such audio recordings, photos, or video recordings. I acknowledge and agree that Rutgers may use any and all of the media for educational and promotional purposes, included but not limited to publication in brochures and other promotional materials and on the University’s websites. I understand that Rutgers will not identify my child by name or allow any third party to use the photos or video recordings for commercial purposes without obtaining my written permission in advance.

Transport Proxy:
I plan to bring my child to and from each rehearsal. The following people are also authorized to pick up my child from RCC & SS rehearsals:

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

I understand that my child will only be released to the people listed above. If other arrangements are made, I will contact my child’s conductor in advance.

I HEREBY EXECUTE THIS MEDICAL TREATMENT AUTHORIZATION, PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE, AND TRANSPORT PROXY.

______________________________________________________  __________________________
Signature                                                                                         date