

*Nashville Children's Choir (NCC)*  
**Handbook**  
*2024-2025*



Nashville Children's Choir (NCC) is a not-for-profit organization, in residence and in cooperation with Belmont University, with a current enrollment of over 100 choristers in four choirs. Choir members range in age from eight to eighteen and are from varying racial, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. NCC is dedicated to the philosophy that through the learning and performance of excellent choral literature, the lives of the choir members, as well as the lives of their families and the community, will be enriched both artistically and personally.



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## **I. BACKGROUND**

Nashville Children's Choir was founded by Marilyn Shadinger and Frederica Braidfoot in 1989, in cooperation with Belmont University. Madeline Bridges joined Mrs. Shadinger as co-director in the fall of 1990. Upon Mrs. Shadinger's retirement in 2007, Madeline Bridges assumed sole directorship. Elaine Bailey and Josh Wright shared directorship following the retirement of Madeline Bridges in 2019, and in 2022 Tyler Merideth assumed sole directorship. Since 1989, the choir expanded from a single choir of twenty-five singers to four choirs enrolling approximately 200 singers: Preparatory Choir, Concert Choir, Touring Choir, and Nashville Youth Choir. After the pandemic of 2020, the program reformed into three choirs: Foundations Choir, Touring Choir, and Nashville Youth Choir enrolling approximately 100 singers. In 2023, the program returned to the original four choirs.

## **II. RELATIONSHIP WITH BELMONT UNIVERSITY**

The College of Music and Performing Arts of Belmont University provides weekly meeting space for choirs. NCC functions as an ensemble of the university and could not exist without the support and encouragement of Belmont University's College of Visual and Performing Arts.

NCC is a part of the pre-college music program, Belmont Academy. This organization provides private instruction in piano, string, woodwind and brass instruments, Suzuki string instruction, as well as choral instruction for children from grade 3 through high school thru NCC.

NCC provides observation opportunities for Belmont music students, serves as a demonstration choir when needed for Belmont music education workshops, provides internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate music students, and performs with university choral organizations.

## **III. GOALS**

- To foster the personal and social growth of choristers with goals of promoting agency, teamwork, accomplishment, and pride.
- To attain the highest possible level of excellence in performance.
- To make choir membership available to children and youth of all racial, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- To contribute to the cultural life of Nashville and the nation, and enhance the quality of singing in area schools and churches by providing additional quality choral experiences.

#### **IV. CURRICULUM**

NCC is a special learning environment designed to provide a rich and rewarding musical experience for each member by engaging their vocal instruments through exercise, posture, breath, and tone production. Choristers study and perform a variety of music from simple unison folk songs to more challenging choral literature spanning from Renaissance, Broadway, folk and patriotic music to commissioned works from living composers. Concepts such as melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, form, style and performance practice along with musical skills (singing, music reading, etc.) are taught systematically throughout the rehearsals. It is hoped that the experience of artistic singing will form the foundation of a life-long relationship with music for singers and their families.

#### **V. ENSEMBLES**

**PREPARATORY CHOIR** is an entry-level choir for the young singer, including students who have the ability to match pitch and have a desire to learn more about singing.

**CONCERT CHOIR** is a choir for older elementary singers ready to explore basic concepts of music literacy and singing in harmony.

**TOURING CHOIR** is an intermediate-level choir for pre-high school students who demonstrate intermediate vocal and note-reading ability.

**NASHVILLE YOUTH CHOIR** is a mixed choir of grades 9-12 and changed male voices. This choir builds on the foundation of the younger choirs and performs four-part literature including a cappella compositions.

#### **VI. MEMBERSHIP**

Children and youth, ages 8-18, are eligible to audition for membership in NCC. Enrollment into NCC is for the season (September-May) and each member is expected to remain active and committed to the program for the entire year. Children who enter in younger choirs are encouraged to stay in the program for multiple years so that they may progress in musical skills that will allow them to move up to the next choir.

#### **VII. AUDITIONS**

Open auditions for the Preparatory Choir, Concert Choir, Touring Choir and Youth Choir are held both in the spring and fall for the following school year. Special auditions may be arranged by contacting the NCC directors. Every attempt is made to place every singer who auditions and meets the musical criteria into one of the choirs in the program.

## VIII. COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL AND CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAMS

The success of NCC is dependent on the support of music teachers and church choir directors of the choristers. NCC singers are encouraged to remain in their school and church choirs and are to be leaders in these ensembles.

## IX. DEPARTMENT

It is expected that all choir members display a positive and encouraging attitude. Common courtesy, appropriate behavior and good manners to each other, directors, and other adults are expected at all times (rehearsals, performances, retreats, trips, and other choir activities). Inappropriate behavior will be reported to parents immediately and may result in probation or dismissal from the group.

## X. TUITION

The initial deposit and registration form shows a commitment to participate for the 2024-2025 season. Families can choose to divide tuition into payments that work for them as described below or what works for their family. **Payment in full is required for concert participation. All payments are non-refundable.**

| Ensemble  | Tuition                                     |
|---|---|
| Preparatory Choir<br>Concert Choir<br>Nashville Youth Choir | \$450                                       |
| Touring Choir   | \$550 (Covers Day Camp and January Jubilee) |

Families with more than one singer enrolled in the NCC program will pay full tuition for the child in the **most senior/advanced choir** and half tuition for each additional child. A limited amount of financial assistance is available. Need-based scholarships are granted at the discretion of the choir directors. A scholarship application may be requested when the initial payment is submitted. Under special circumstances, Nashville Youth Choir has allowed a chorister to join at the start of the second semester; in these cases, the tuition is \$250 and is due in full at or before the first rehearsal. Please direct any questions to [ncc@belmont.edu](mailto:ncc@belmont.edu).

Tuition fees do not cover all of the operational expenses of the NCC. Donations are always accepted and welcomed.

## PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR NASHVILLE CHILDREN’S CHOIR

1. Log into PayPal
2. Go to Send and Request and select “Send”
3. Type in NCC’s email address: [ncc@belmont.edu](mailto:ncc@belmont.edu)
4. Select the amount you wish to send
5. **List chorister’s name in “Add a note” Field**
6. Select “Send Payment Now”

OR

Bring a check made out to “Nashville Children’s Choir” to hand to a director.

**BE SURE TO INCLUDE THE NAME OF YOUR CHORISTER IN THE “FOR” LINE OF THE CHECK.**

## XI. FUNDRAISING

NCC occasionally holds fundraisers to help offset expenses of the choir not covered by tuition. Full participation of each family will ensure the success of the activities.

## XII. FEES AND HONORARIA

All fees and honoraria earned as a result of a performance contracted by NCC become property of NCC.

## XIII. REHEARSAL SCHEDULE AND CALENDAR

| Monday Afternoon Rehearsal Schedule |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| All Four Choirs                     | 4:30-6:00 p.m. |

All choirs rehearse simultaneously each Monday afternoon in the lower level of the Massey Performing Arts Center and the Basement of the Hitch Building on the Belmont University campus unless otherwise noted in choir communication. A roster of choristers will be issued to facilitate transportation arrangements. Expect the following additional events and rehearsals:

- An extra dress rehearsal on the day of each major concert (Winter and Spring). Occasionally, additional rehearsals are necessary during the year. These will be communicated to families through semester calendars and email reminders.
- In addition, the **TOURING CHOIR** has a retreat in August, and a Friday evening and Saturday retreat early in January named “January Jubilee.”

**Attendance:**

Membership in the NCC program is a commitment to faithful, consistent, and punctual attendance. It is expected that rehearsals take a very high priority in each chorister's life. Each semester includes approximately 14 Monday afternoon rehearsals. Missing one rehearsal in a semester is comparable to missing more than a week of school in a semester. Every rehearsal is critically important to the individual and to the choir. Much can be learned by being present in rehearsal, even if the choir member cannot actively participate due to non-contagious conditions. Parents are expected to notify the director in advance if a choir member will be absent from rehearsal. More than two absences in a semester greatly hampers a choir member's contribution to NCC. Patterns of lack of attendance (missing more than 2 rehearsals per semester), lack of punctuality (numerous tardies to rehearsals), and habitually leaving early from rehearsals do not demonstrate commitment to the choir and will result in probation and possible dismissal from the choir.

**Dress Rehearsals and Performances are Mandatory.** An absence, for any reason, from a dress rehearsal may result in the singer not singing the corresponding performance. An absence from a performance needs to be cleared with the ensemble director well in advance and may result in dismissal from the choir.

**2024-2025 NCC SEASON  
Fall Semester**

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| May 6        | Spring Audition  |
| August 16-17 | Touring Choir Day Camp at Brentwood UMC  |
| August 19    | Fall Audition  |
| August 20    | <b>Registration and \$150 Down Payment Due</b>   |
| August 21    | Sounds Game  |
| August 26    | Rehearsal #1   |
| Sept 2       | No rehearsal-Labor Day   |
| Sept. 9      | Rehearsal #2   |
| Sept. 16     | Rehearsal #3   |
| Sept. 23     | Rehearsal #4   |
| Sept. 30     | Rehearsal #5   |
| Oct. 7       | Rehearsal #6   |
| Oct. 14      | Rehearsal #7 @ Off-Campus  |
| Oct. 21      | Rehearsal #8   |
| Oct. 28      | Rehearsal #9   |
| Nov. 4       | Rehearsal #10  |
| Nov. 11      | Rehearsal #11  |
| Nov. 18      | Rehearsal #12  |
| Nov. 25      | <b>Rehearsal #13 Tuition in full is due</b>  |
| Dec. 2       | Rehearsal #14  |
| Dec 7        | Winter Concert 4:00 p.m.<br>Belmont University-McAfee Concert Hall<br>Call Time: 2:00 p.m. |



## Spring Semester

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Jan TBD      | Touring Choir “January Jubilee” Retreat at Brentwood UMC<br>(Friday Evening and Saturday Morning) |
| Jan 13th TBD | Rehearsal #1  |
| Jan 27th     | Rehearsal #2  |
| Feb 3        | Rehearsal #3  |
| Feb 10       | Rehearsal #4  |
| Feb 17       | Rehearsal #5  |
| Feb 24       | Rehearsal #6  |
| March 3      | Rehearsal #7  |
| March 10     | Rehearsal #8 @ Off-Campus   |
| March 17     | Rehearsal #9  |
| March 24     | Rehearsal #10   |
| March 31     | Rehearsal #11   |
| April 7      | Rehearsal #12   |
| April 14     | Rehearsal #13   |
| April 21     | Rehearsal #14 @ Off-Campus  |
| April 26th   | Spring Concert 4:00 p.m.<br>Belmont University-McAfee Concert Hall<br>Call Time: 2:00 p.m.        |

### **Rehearsal Procedures:**

Choristers should arrive at least five minutes before rehearsal, mark attendance on the roster, go directly to the assigned seat, and begin studying music or complete early arrival activity as planned by the director.

### **Snow/Holiday Policy:**

NCC generally follows the Metro-Davidson County snow day policy. Exceptions are made when most roads are clear. A staff member will notify choristers and families through email regarding rehearsals on days when weather is questionable. NCC does not take most of the holidays that most school systems take. Please take note of the calendar in the acceptance packet. All NCC holidays will be indicated on this calendar. Any other school holidays (teacher's meetings, etc.) are generally NOT holidays for NCC unless noted.

### **XIV. PERFORMANCE ATTIRE**

This year's concert attire for Preparatory Choir and Concert Choir will be a combination of black bottoms (slacks or skirt) with black dress shoes and dress socks provided by the chorister AND the purchase of a specific white top from a specific vendor provided by NCC. The skirts and dresses worn need to fall below the knee, heels must be lower than 2 inches, belts must also be black, no sneakers or athletic socks. Choristers participating in the Touring Choir and Youth Choir will provide their own concert black tops and bottoms. No jeans.

In order to keep costs low, NCC will then purchase accessories specific to each of the four choirs. These accessories are to be returned at the conclusion of each concert.

### **XV. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The parents of choristers are vital to the success of NCC! Parents are encouraged to assist choristers in punctuality, rehearsal attendance, and performance responsibilities. The organization will need volunteers in the areas of music librarian, helping with refreshments, publicity, fund-raising, transportation, nurse and as chaperones for tours. If you are interested in assisting in any way, please contact [ncc@belmont.edu](mailto:ncc@belmont.edu) to get connected!

## **XVI. STAFF**

### **Tyler Merideth**

NCC PROGRAM DIRECTOR

NASHVILLE YOUTH CHOIR DIRECTOR

Oversees every aspect of the organization and conducts rehearsals and performances of NYC.

### **James Wells**

NCC ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

TOURING CHOIR DIRECTOR

Provides vision and direction for NCC and conducts rehearsals and performances of TC.

### **Samantha Altmann**

TOURING CHOIR ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR

Assists in rehearsals and performances of TC and maintains NCC's social media presence.

### **Mary Bond**

CONCERT CHOIR DIRECTOR

Conducts rehearsals and performances of CC.

### **Danielle Taylor**

PREPARATORY CHOIR DIRECTOR

Conducts rehearsals and performances of PC.

### **Amy Frederick**

NASHVILLE YOUTH CHOIR COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Assists in rehearsals and performances of NYC.

### **TBD**

TOURING CHOIR COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Assists in rehearsals and performances of TC.

### **Sarah Williams**

CONCERT CHOIR COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Assists in rehearsals and performances of CC.

### **Will Berger**

PREPARATORY CHOIR COLLABORATIVE PIANIST

Assists in rehearsals and performances of PC.