

Nashville Choral Institute
(NCI)
Handbook



Nashville Choral Institute (NCI) is a not-for-profit organization that features choristers in five different choirs ranging from 8 years of age to adult and are from varying racial, socio-economic and religious backgrounds. NCI is dedicated to the philosophy that through the life-long 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

The origin story of Nashville Choral Institute began as the Nashville Children's Choir in 1989 when NCC was founded by Marilyn Shadinger and Frederica Braidfoot 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. In 2026, Nashville Choral Institute was formed with five choirs named Prelude Choir, Concert Choir, Vox Nova, Nashville Youth Choir and Nashville Chorale and began rehearsing at Immanuel Baptist Church.

II. 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 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.

III. CURRICULUM

NCI 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 our hope that the experience of artistic singing will form the foundation of a life-long relationship with music for singers and their families.

IV. ENSEMBLES

PRELUDE 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.

VOX NOVA 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.

NASHVILLE CHORALE is a mixed choir of adults that continues to explore all aspects and genres of choral literature.

V. MEMBERSHIP

Choristers ages 8 and older are eligible to audition for membership in NCI. Enrollment into NCI is for the season (August-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.

VI. AUDITIONS

Open auditions for the Prelude Choir, Concert Choir, Vox Nova, Nashville Youth Choir, and Nashville Chorale are held both in the spring and fall for the following school year. Special auditions may be arranged by contacting the NCI directors. Every attempt is made to place every singer who auditions and meets the musical criteria into one of the choirs in the program. Nashville Chorale auditions will be held in the early Fall.

VII. COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL AND CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAMS

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

VIII. 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.

IX. TUITION

The registration form shows a commitment to participate for the 2026-2027 season. Families can choose to divide tuition into payments that work for them as described below or what works for their family. **Payment is required for concert participation. All payments are non-refundable.**

X. FEES AND HONORARIA

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

XI. REHEARSAL SCHEDULE AND CALENDAR

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

All choirs rehearse simultaneously each Monday afternoon at Immanuel Baptist Church located at 222 Belle Meade Blvd Nashville.

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.

Attendance:

Membership in the NCI 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 13 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 NCI. 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.

Fall Semester	
August 3	Move-in Day
August 10	NCI Directors Meeting
August 17	NCI-Nashville Children's Choir Auditions
August 24	Rehearsal #1- ½ Tuition Due
August 27	Nashville Chorale Auditions
August 31	Rehearsal #2
September 7	No Rehearsal-Labor Day
Sept. 14	Rehearsal #3
Sept. 21	Rehearsal #4
Sept. 28	Rehearsal #5
Oct. 5	Rehearsal #6
Oct. 12	No Rehearsal-Fall Break
Oct. 19	Rehearsal #7
Oct. 26	Rehearsal #8
Nov. 2	Rehearsal #9
Nov. 9	Rehearsal #10
Nov. 16	Rehearsal #11
Nov. 23	Rehearsal #12- Full Tuition Due and Photoshoot
Nov. 30	Rehearsal #13
Dec 5	Winter Concert 4:00 p.m. Belmont University-McAfee Concert Hall Call Time: 1:30 p.m.

Spring Semester	
Jan 11	Rehearsal #1
Jan 18	NO REHEARSAL MLK JR. DAY
Jan 25	Rehearsal #2
Feb 1	Rehearsal #3
Feb 8	Rehearsal #4
Feb 15	Rehearsal #5
Feb 22	Rehearsal #6
March 1	Rehearsal #7
March 8	Rehearsal #8
March 15	Rehearsal #9
March 22	No Rehearsal-Spring Break
March 29	Rehearsal #10
April 5	Rehearsal #11
April 12	Rehearsal #12-Friends Day
April 19	Rehearsal #13
April 24	Spring Concert 4:00 p.m. Immanuel Baptist Church 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:

NCI 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. NCI does not take most of the holidays that most school systems take. Please take note of the calendar in the acceptance packet. All NCI

holidays will be indicated on this calendar. Any other school holidays (teacher's meetings, etc.) are generally NOT holidays for NCI unless noted.

XII. PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

This year's concert attire for Prelude 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 NCI. 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 Vox Grata and Youth Choir will provide their own concert black tops and bottoms. No jeans.

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

XIII. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The parents of choristers are vital to the success of NCI! 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 tyler@nashvillechoralinstitute.org