

2008-2009



CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

2009-2010 – 5th Season

Singer and Parent
Handbook

CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

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CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

Welcome to the Conspirare Youth Choirs! Founded in 2005 and originally called 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 CYC 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. The CYC currently supports two ensembles, Conspirare Children's Choir and Conspirare Kantorei.

Since 2005, the CYC has seen an amazing level of growth and artistic quality while providing unparalleled experiences for its members. A highlight from previous seasons includes 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".

The CYC 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* in 2007, the CYC was able to perform with a 600-member chorus. Another highlight of that festival was the CYC's coaching by world-renowned music educator, Henry Leck. In June, 2007, the CYC concluded its season with an inspiring musical tour of Washington D.C. The CYC has been invited to perform for the high-profile Austin Children's Shelter Gala as well as the Governor's Holiday Party. The CYC also presented an educational workshop for the entire body of the Austin Independent School District general music and choral teachers.

More recently, a small selected group from the CYC collaborated with the Oscar-winning musical band, Swell Season, in a taping of the Austin City Limits in October, 2008. Later that season in February, 2009, the Conspirare Children's Choir was honored by an invitation to perform at the 2009 Texas Music Educators Convention, performing for an audience of over 1000 music educators. Another highlight in April, 2009, Conspirare Kantorei gave a beautiful performance at the Austin Museum of Art's Family Day.

As we enter our fifth season, we are excited that you will be a part of the dynamic artistry and excellence for which CYC has come to represent. With our enrollment doubling from our original 54 members in 2005 to our current enrollment of 104 incredible singers in 2009, we are excited you will be joining our procession of building 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

Nina Revering, CYC Artistic Director
Rick Gabrillo, CYC Associate Director
Maimy Fong, CYC Accompanist
Chris Oelkers, CYC Accompanist
Cynthia Densmore, CYC Bookkeeper

Katie Apple, Executive Assistant to the Artistic Director
Cynthia Densmore, Conspirare Bookkeeper
Melissa Eddy, Communications and Grants Manager (Interim Managing Director until 10/09)
Rick Gabrillo, Production Manager
Meri Kruger, Artist Contractor
Monica Maher, Operations Manager
Nicki Turman, House Manager

Conspirare Board of Directors

Fran Collmann, Chair	Tom Driscoll
Rev. Robert J. Karli, Vice-Chair	Ann Fields
Bernadette Tasher, Treasurer	Cynthia Keever
Robert Harlan, Secretary	Katie Curran Lavendoski
Jack Brannon	Hope Morgan
David Clark	Louise Morse
Larry Collmann	E. Stuart Phillips
Jeri DeAngelis	Hon. Bea Ann Smith
Patrick DeLaune	Mary Stephenson

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 104 members forming two auditioned ensembles, Conspirare Kantorei and the Conspirare Childrens Choir (CCC). Kantorei meets on Monday evenings from 5:30pm-7:30pm, and it is an ensemble for singers with beginning to advanced 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 particularly important to the CYC. We emphasize sight-singing skills, the International Phonetic Alphabet, incorporating Kodály solfège 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.

Above all else, we hope our singers appreciate the beauty in poetry and melody. By forming a community of other like-minded artists, we hope the CYC becomes a wonderful place for exploration and belief in the arts.

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

Safety

The CYC Staff diligently works to ensure your child's safety at all Conspirare events. We use any appropriate means at our disposal to help create safe protocols for our organization, including, but not limited to background checks, consultation with medical and public safety personnel, parent chaperones, and the availability of emergency medical kits at CYC events.

IMPORTANT TIP: One of the greatest steps towards ensuring your child's safety is clear communication between you and your child about when and where you will be picking them up after CYC events. Please discuss where your child should wait, who will be picking them up, as well as an emergency contact number in case they need to reach you.

By working together, we are glad to provide a safe environment for your child.

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.**

Tardiness or Absence from Dress Rehearsals

To ensure a professional performance and high artistic experience, all dress rehearsals for the CYC concerts are MANDATORY. Singers who are tardy or absent from dress rehearsals may be considered for removal from the performance at the discretion of the CYC directors.

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 CYC 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.

Financial Accounts/Tuition

All financial accounts and questions will be handled by the CYC bookkeeper, Cynthia Densmore. She will be available most Mondays at evening rehearsals to collect payments as well as answer any financial questions you might have regarding your child's account. Ms. Densmore can be contacted at the office 512.476.5775 or email at cycaccount@gmail.com.

The total tuition for the 2009-2010 season is \$750. Please check the calendar for the dates of the three tuition installments.

CYC Staff

Nina Revering, Artistic Director/Director of Conspirare Children's Choir

The Artistic Director collaborates with the Associate Director to create a musical vision and developmental goals for the Conspirare Youth Choirs. She is responsible for all artistic activities, including rehearsals, concerts, auditions, workshops, tours, recordings, and Kick-off. The Artistic Director works in close association with all Conspirare staff members, choristers, CYC families, and the community at large. The Artistic Director collaborates with the Associate Director to handle all administrative tasks of the CYC. The Artistic Director is the principal director of the Conspirare Children's Choir

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, Associate Director/Director of Conspirare Kantorei

The Associate Director collaborates with the Artistic Director to create a musical vision and developmental goals for the CYC. He is responsible for all artistic activities, including rehearsals, concerts, auditions, workshops, tours, recordings, and Kick-off. The Associate Director works in close association with all Conspirare staff members, choristers, CYC families, and the community at large. The Associate Director collaborates with the Artistic Director to handle all administrative tasks of the CYC. The Associate Director is the principal director of Conspirare Kantorei.

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 Choir Director of the Parish Choir of St. Louis Catholic Church. He and his wife, Evelyn, live in Round Rock, where they are raising their four-year old son, Ryan, and their newborn daughter, Lillian.

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 the Music Director at St. Louis Catholic Church.

Cynthia Densmore, CYC Bookkeeper

The CYC Bookkeeper handles all financial accounts for the CYC including tuition and tour payments. All financial questions should be directed to the CYC Bookkeeper. She can be contacted at 512.476.5775 or cycaccount@gmail.com

Cynthia Densmore has been on the Conspirare staff since 2007. She brings a wide range of accounting experience and organization in her work.

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
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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 **2009-2010
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 ____ / ____ / ____