

2011-2012



CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

2011-2012 – 7th Season

Singer and Parent
Handbook

CONSPIRARE YOUTH CHOIRS

Singer and Parent Handbook

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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 and 2010, Conspirare Kantorei gave beautiful performances at the Austin Museum of Art's Family Day. To close our 5th season, members of CYC successfully participated in a summer tour, traveling to Hawaii for the Pacific Rim Children's Choir Festival.

As we enter our exciting 7th 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 over 100 incredible singers in 2011, 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 Artistic Director

Maimy Fong, CYC Accompanist

Brooks Whitmore, CYC Accompanist

Robin Kate Turman, CYC Administrative Manager

Kristie McCune, CYC Bookkeeper

Ann Hume Wilson, Executive Director

Ann McNair, Executive Assistant to the Artistic Director

David Hammond, Director of Patron Relations

Kristie McCune, Conspirare Business Manager

Melissa Eddy, Communications and Grants Manager

Tamara Blanken, Online Services Manager

Rick Gabrillo, Production Manager

Meri Kruger, Production and Artist Contracting

Wravan Godsoe, Office Manager

Robert Harlan, Production Coordinator

Nicki Turman, House Manager

Conspirare Board of Directors

Rev. Robert J. Karli, Chair

Dave Clark, Vice-Chair

Larry Collmann, Treasurer

Mary Stephenson, Secretary

Ken Beck

Bill Bednar

Fran Collmann

Mary Anne Connolly

Patrick DeLaune

Tom Driscoll

Toya Haley

Robert Harlan

Lou Ann Lasher

Eric Leibrock

Hope Morgan

Louise Morse

E. Stuart Phillips

Rebecca Powers

Bea Ann Smith

Marion Swaybill

Catherine Wildermuth

Sheila Youngblood

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 100 members forming two auditioned ensembles, Conspirare Kantorei and the Conspirare Childrens Choir (CCC). Kantorei meets on Monday evenings from 5:00-7:00p.m., and is an ensemble for singers with beginning to advanced levels of experience and skill. The CCC meets on Monday and Thursday evenings from 6:30-8:00p.m., and 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 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.

Whenever possible, please give a 2-week advance notice of your absence request to cycattendance@gmail.com. **All absences must be recorded by submitting an absence form at <http://www.conspirare.org/CYC/singerabsenceform.htm>.**

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 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 absences

After four absences, the CYC staff will request a meeting with the singer and family. The CYC directors will also request an individual vocal check with the singer to check on the singer's musical preparation. At the discretion of the CYC directors, the singer may be dismissed from the choir.

Any singer who incurs two consecutive absences will also be asked to have a vocal check.

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.

CYC Uniforms

2011-2012 Concert Uniform Information and Guidelines

Our CYC formal uniforms have been remarkably successful, and we look forward to using them for many, many years to come. It is important that you know both the *Conspirare Kantorei* and the *Conspirare Children's Choir* will be using the exact same uniforms each year. Thus, we have developed a unique system to aid our CYC families in the costs of uniform purchasing. We hope that you will read through this packet, and make sure you and your chorister have a complete understanding of our CYC concert uniform expectations. **It is each singer and family's responsibility to be in full compliance with our uniform guidelines for each CYC performance.** Not being in compliance may be cause to dismiss a singer from a performance. This packet contains information on the following:

- CYC Uniform Sizing/Ordering Process
- Uniform Care Instructions
- Uniform Hemming Guidelines
- Concert and Travel Guidelines
- Reselling/Purchasing Used Uniforms

CYC Uniform Sizing/Ordering Process

During the summer months, the CYC staff will order a complete sizing line from Southeastern Apparel, the company that provides our uniforms. The company then sends to us *all* the ladies dresses in *all* youth and adult sizes (i.e. Youth size 8 through Ladies' size 18 Tall), as well as all the gentlemen's vests, youth sizes through adult sizes. NOTE: pants and vests are not part of the sizing line, so we rely on good measuring!

CYC will hold two Sizing Days for singers. ATTENDANCE AT ONE OR THE OTHER DAY IS REQUIRED for all new singers to the CYC, and optional to those returning singers who may possibly need a new uniform. **CYC Sizing days this year will be Tuesday, August 9 and Saturday, August 20, 2011, both days by appointment through our website.** A parent and singer can expect to spend approximately 10-20 minutes on their sizing appointment. Parents must be present for this sizing appointment. Sizing days will be held at FPC in the Women's Parlor, just past the choir room in the Sanctuary wing of the building.

After you sign up for your appointment online, you will receive confirmation and a reminder email.

Before coming to your sizing appointment, we ask that you have your hair in the Half-up/Half-down arrangement, or gelled back if you are a boy (see details below in “Concert Guidelines”). During your sizing appointment, singers will be measured, they will try on a uniform or vest, a CYC parent volunteer will assist them in any hair corrections.

Your singers’ size information will be entered and you will be asked to submit payment at that time. Uniform prices are as below:

Tux Shirt	Vest	Tie	Pants	Dress (youth size)	Dress (adult size)
\$12	\$21	\$10	\$24	\$54	\$59

We will also have on hand donated uniforms, if you are interested in purchasing one used (see below information “Donation/Resale”).

Our complete uniform order will be placed after the last sizing day, and we will receive the uniforms at the Conspirare Office. You will receive your uniform during a regular Monday night CYC rehearsal, as well as instructions.

Uniform Care Instructions

Taking special care of your uniform will help increase the life and beauty of the fabric in addition to helping the ensemble look professional and sharp. After a performance, it will be important for you to decide if your uniform needs to be washed and/or steamed or ironed for the next performance. If the uniform needs to be cleaned, please follow the guidelines below for each piece of the uniform.

Ladies, Alexandria Dress – The claret stretch velvet top and matching crepe skirt in machine washable. Wash in cold water, inside out, in the gentle cycle. Tumble dry on low heat slightly, then hang to finish drying. Steaming the dress inside out is preferred, but if you choose to iron, you should do so on low heat and inside out. The velvet should never come in direct contact with a hot iron. *NOTE – the crepe material will snag on jewelry or sharp objects.

Gentlemen, Tux Pant – The adjustable pleated **tux pant is a dry clean only** item. **Please also dry clean the shirt.** The remaining necktie and poplin vest are both machine washable, in cold water and on gentle cycle. Tumble dry on low heat slightly and then let hang to dry. Though more costly, you may find it easier to send this entire ensemble to the dry cleaner for wash and sharp ironing.

Uniform Hemming Guidelines

All CYC singers’ hemlines should have equal distance to the floor. This may need to be adjusted during the season as your child has a tendency to grow ☺

Ladies hemlines – New dresses will arrive un-hemmed, so allow time for hemming either at home or by a tailor. Dresses are to be hemmed one inch from the floor with your dress

shoe on, and turning under no more than 5 inches for a hem. Remember to allow for growth! A September hem may not be suitable for a May performance.

Gentlemen hemlines - New tux pants will come un-hemmed, so allow time for you to hem it yourself or have it done professionally with a tailor. Remember to allow for growth! A September hem may not be suitable for an April performance. Saving as much hem as possible extends the life of the pant for your chorister. The vest may be bit large, and if so, it may be tailored by creating a seam down the center of the vest, which can be broken if the boy fills out.

Concert Guidelines

The CYC Parent and Singer Handbook, in addition to this packet, contain complete information for concert dress. Every singer in the CYC is required to be in compliance with the uniform requirements or they may be dismissed from a performance. A parent volunteer will be posted at the entrance to every CYC performance to ensure this.

A well-groomed, clean, and neatly uniformed ensemble is essential for a truly professional and artistic experience. Good personal hygiene is a must for all choristers. Before putting on your uniform, bathe well and put on deodorant. Even choristers who don't regularly use deodorant will need it for a performance.

Formal performance uniform/ladies

- Concert Dress, cleaned and wrinkle-free
- Black, closed-toe dress shoes no higher than 1 inch of heel. **NO HIGH HEELS ARE ALLOWED**
- Nude/skin-colored hose – **REQUIRED**
- Hair: Half up, half down as shown below. If your singer has short hair, it must be gelled back away from the face. **NO BANGS** should be hanging over the forehead. Hair should be secured with black barrette or black ponytail. **NO DECORATIVE** clips are allowed.



- Jewelry: only stud earrings may be worn. No necklaces, bracelets, watches, rings, etc.
- Make-up: only light lip-gloss and mascara if your singer is allowed to wear make-up usually. No eyeliner or heavy make up.

Formal performance uniform/gentlemen

- Concert uniform (white shirt, vest, tie, tuxedo pant) cleaned and pressed

- **Arrive and leave concerts with your neck tie already tied and on. Shirts should be tucked in until you leave the performance venue**
- Black dress shoes. **NO BLACK TENNIS SHOES**
- Black dress socks – **REQUIRED**
- Hair gelled back and away from the face. If your singer has long hair, it must be pulled back into a ponytail

Travel Guidelines

When traveling with your uniform, it is best to store it in a durable dress bag, and not the clear plastic as from the dry cleaner. Never fold your uniform and stuff it into a suitcase or backpack. Your uniform is made to stay on a hanger and not anywhere else. Taking this extra step in caring for your uniform will extend its life and keep the material sturdy and crisp.

Your directors and CYC parent chaperones will communicate unpacking procedures, but in general, uniforms should be hung up as quickly as possible and clearly labeled (first and last name) for group travel.

Donating/Reselling/Purchasing Used Uniforms

If you choose to **donate** your uniform, your donation would be a wonderful way to help support CYC singers in financial need. We will issue a tax deductible form for any interested person. Please follow the process below if you would like to donate your uniform.

- For sanitation reasons, please dry clean your uniform. We will not accept uniforms that have not been properly cleaned or cared for.
- Release the threading of any alterations you made to the uniform, except the hem. Again, please do not undo the hem.
- Please label your uniform “donation only” on an index card and staple it to the outside of the dry cleaning bag.
- Go to the CYC website (www.conspirare.org/cyc) then Singer Login, the uniform resale and exchange, and post your information. Be sure to include the size of each item!

If you choose to **resell** your uniform, follow all the above steps, only label it “resale” on the index card.

The CYC prices for resale are as noted below:

Tux Shirt \$8.00	Vest \$16.00	Neck Tie \$8.00	Pants \$18.00	Dress (youth size) \$40.00	Dress (adult size) \$42.00
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You may connect to people who are looking for uniforms through email, using our CYC member directory.

Financial Accounts/Tuition

All financial accounts and questions will be handled by the CYC bookkeeper, Kristie McCune. 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 2011-2012 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 Directors collaborate 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 Directors collaborate 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, Artistic Director/Director of Conspirare Kantorei

The Associate Directors collaborate 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 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 Administrative Assistant to handle all administrative tasks of the CYC. The Artistic 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 five-year old son, Ryan, and their younger daughter, Lillian.

Maimy Fong and Brooks Whitmore, 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.

Brooks Whitmore is currently the Organist and Assistant Director of Music at Highland Park Baptist Church. He has been teaching piano and music in Austin since 1995 and is a new addition to the CYC.

Robin Kate Turman, CYC Administrative Manager

The CYC Administrative Manager is present at Monday rehearsals, and is in the office Mondays and Tuesdays. Any singer or parent questions or concerns should be directed to the Administrative Manager via email at conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.com. All uniforms, merchandise, advertisements, enrollment, absences, and fundraising are handled by the Administrative Manager.

Robin Kate Turman has been with the CYC since June 2009. She is an experienced performer and educator, having graduated *Magna Cum Laude* from Texas State University in 2008 with a degree in Music Education, with a vocal emphasis. After graduation, Robin taught music at P.S. 182 in the Bronx, New York with the NYC-based non-profit organization *Education Through Music*.

Currently, she teaches high school voice lessons in Round Rock ISD and is enjoying working with the Conspirare Youth Choirs, as well as planning her October wedding!

Kristie McCune, 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 kmccune@conspirare.org.

Kristie McCune is a new addition to the Conspirare staff. She brings a wide range of accounting and non-profit experience and organization in her work.

Contact Information

Conspirare Youth Choirs 512.476.5775 and conspirareyouthchoirs@gmail.com

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
Austin, Texas 78752
Tel 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 **2011-2012 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 ____ / ____ / ____