



Policy Handbook

Revised July 2024

Mission

The Birmingham Girls Choir is a multi-cultural, non-profit organization that instills excellence in young girls through the study and performance of high-quality treble choral music. BGC seeks to enrich the lives of girls from all religious, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Our nurturing professional staff is dedicated to helping girls develop the skills necessary to enjoy a lifetime of healthy, confident singing. Our goal is to provide a superior performance experience through the study of high-quality treble choral literature, fostering a commitment to musical and personal excellence through a progressively graded program that meets the individual needs and abilities of the singers

Goals

- ♪ To develop female singers with a strong level of musicianship through instruction in vocal technique, music notation, vocal pedagogy, and expressiveness within the choral art.
- ♪ To promote a sense of community of girls from all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds through the universal language of music
- ♪ To foster a commitment to musical and personal excellence through a progressively graded program that instills responsibility and accountability within a group
- ♪ To enhance the cultural environment of the communities around Birmingham through a girl's performing medium

Program Description

The Birmingham Girls Choir is a choral music program for girls consisting of four separate choirs: *Dolce*, *Prelude*, *Intermezzo*, and *Una Vocé*. The choirs perform a variety of styles of choral music including classical, folk, jazz, world, and pop. Weekly rehearsals reinforce music reading skills, vocal technique and development of the female larynx, stage presence, and rehearsal etiquette. BGC seeks to find the appropriate choir for each girl, depending on level of ability, not necessarily age.

Dolce (dohl-chay)

Dolce is a pre-choir musicianship class that is structured as a group ensemble, but without the formal performance. This class is fun and engaging and full of games and activities that allow youngsters to learn songs, meet new friends, establish basic aural ability, and how to function and succeed within a group environment. Girls will learn how to use their singing voice, keep a steady beat, match pitch, and basic solfege. Instructors use Kodaly methods to teach the young singers the basics of musicianship and prepare them for the choral environment. *Dolce* will present a non-formal concert for parents at the end of each semester.

Prelude

Prelude is our introductory choir. The girls learn basic music notation, concert etiquette, and how to perform in a choir. Rehearsals each week focus on attention, engagement, and focus. Girls will gain independence and skill as a beginner choral musician as they learn to read a choral score and the basics of music notation and aural skills. *Prelude* will perform on BGC concerts and community events throughout the year.

Intermezzo

Singers in the *Intermezzo* choir have a basic understanding of looking at a choral score and the self-discipline and commitment required to become a valuable member of a performing ensemble. Though many have prior singing experience, none is required. Skills learned include music theory, concert etiquette, basic aural development and ability to hear melody and harmony, sight-reading, and care and correct use of the female voice. They strive to grow in musical maturity and professionalism through the master of high-quality choral literature. The *Intermezzo* choir performs at all annual concerts and additional community performances throughout the year, including an EPC performance in the Spring semester. This choir travels and sings throughout the community.

Una Vocé

Una Vocé is a choir geared towards meeting the needs of advanced singers who have mastered basic music reading skills and who have established aural abilities. Girls in this choir learn advanced music theory, vocal pedagogy, and the intricate details of the female larynx and vocal mechanism. The higher level of commitment provides an environment where ambitious girls can challenge themselves to become accomplished musicians through the mastery and performance of difficult, varied works. This group performs at all concerts and numerous community concerts throughout the year, including performances at satellite rehearsal churches, if requested. *Una Vocé* performs recitals and concerts for fundraising and allows singers to develop solo and advanced ensemble singing skills. Singers receive more individualized instruction and materials to practice outside of rehearsals. College audition preparation is given when needed.

Non-Discriminatory Statement: BGC admits students of all races, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally afforded to students of the organization. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, scholarship programs, or other organization events and services.

Attendance Policy

Singing in a choir is a responsibility that is shared by each individual. Every singer is an invaluable asset to the ensemble and weekly rehearsal attendance is crucial for success in the organization. Regular attendance provides a multitude of benefits for each singer such as camaraderie with fellow singers and teachers, consistent and sequential development of

musical skills and knowledge, and preparation for upcoming performances. A tremendous amount of music is taught weekly and requires the entire choir to make progress. Rehearsals should take a high priority in each singer's life and BGC expects significant commitment to punctual and regular attendance. At each rehearsal location, choir members should remain in designated areas and behave with respect and courtesy at all times. Any policies or protocols suggested by the church will be respected and followed by BGC members. BGC families must be responsible guests on each campus and failure to do so will result in dismissal from the choir.

Attendance is taken at each rehearsal. If a chorister must miss a rehearsal, parents are asked to submit the "Planned Absence Form" to allow directors to plan accordingly. This form can be found on the website under "Parents" tab. We ask that a chorister miss no more than 2 rehearsals per semester.

Singers are expected to be punctual to each rehearsal. If late arrival or early departure is needed, parents should notify the director at least 24 hours in advance. Excessive tardiness will not be allowed. We do understand emergencies and unforeseen situations, but tardiness or early departure should not become excessive.

BGC Weekly Rehearsal attire

****Choristers should wear any BGC shirt with modestly fitting jeans, shorts, skirts, or pants and to ALL rehearsals.**** If a singer arrives to a rehearsal without their BGC shirt, there will be shirts on site to purchase for \$15. Any family can purchase extra shirts from our BGC store at any time.

At BGC, our goal is to grow girls into a life of the "three Cs"- Considerate, Composed, and Committed. In this light, we ask that our girls always represent our choirs in a manner of excellence and maturity. Girls should always dress modestly and conservatively in order to keep our BGC rehearsals and events professional and in display of excellence. Also, we aim to keep our singers safe and accounted for, so our staff and parents can quickly recognize every singer as we grow in number!

BGC Dress Rehearsal and Performances

There is a mandatory dress rehearsal and concert every semester (excluding *Dolce*). Details are given at the beginning of the semester. If a chorister must miss a dress rehearsal or concert, parents are asked to notify the director at least 4 weeks in advance so allowances can be made for the choir's performance.

Concert Attire

Parents are responsible for ordering concert attire for *Prelude*, *Intermezzo*, and *Una Vocé* choristers. Orders should be placed immediately at the beginning of the season to ensure

arrival for performances. Instructions will be provided to parents at the opening parent meeting.

For community events, choristers will wear BGC shirts that are provided at the beginning of the season. Directors will inform singers and parents of all performance attire needs prior each event. Singers should always look professional and modest in all respects. Extra shirts or BGC clothing items can be purchased each year.

Additional requirements regarding concert dress:

- ♪ No perfume, body spray, or heavily scented product
- ♪ No visible tattoos or body piercings. Tongue piercings must be removed
- ♪ Only natural hair colors will be allowed
- ♪ No additional jewelry or ornamental hair accessories. Only small headbands in black or matching hair color will be allowed
- ♪ Only close-toed black shoes
- ♪ Small stud or post earrings only
- ♪ Hair must be neat, away from face, and styled modestly

Tuition

Tuition can be paid on a monthly basis via auto-pay with credit card or debit card or parents can pay by check at the beginning of the season the full price (which saves the card service fees). Checks payable to: *Birmingham Girls Choir*

<i>Dolce</i>	\$40 / month 5-month or 10-month commitment (Aug-Dec, Jan-May)
<i>Prelude</i>	\$50 / month 10-month commitment (August – May)
<i>Intermezzo</i>	\$60 / month 10-month commitment (August – May)
<i>Una Vocé</i>	\$80 / month 10-month commitment (August – May)

- *All fees and tuition are non-refundable and the 10-month commitment must be honored.
- *There is a \$50 registration fee at the beginning of each season which provides a BGC t-shirt and polo and all rehearsal items.
- *There is a sibling discount of 10% for each singer
- *Referral discount: \$25 / semester (please see Executive Director for details)
- *Late fees will be included for any account more than 30 days late.
- *Withdrawal policy: If a chorister withdraws, there is no tuition refund.
- *Scholarships are available for third or half tuition. Applications can be obtained from Executive Director. Applications will be reviewed and voted on by Board of Directors in August or September.

GENERAL POLICIES

- ♪ BGC staff or any parent monitor should never be alone with a chorister at any BGC activity. Always remain in groups and follow a “team approach” in all events.
- ♪ All parents and choristers must abide by the BGC Handbook. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from choir.
- ♪ All BGC staff are required to have a background check prior to working with our choristers. This will be facilitated by Executive Director.
- ♪ Instructors should notify parents of any discipline issues that arise in rehearsals each week. All instances must be reported to Executive Director immediately.
- ♪ BGC is responsible for all choristers and event locations. Staff should clearly communicate BGC policies and expectations to parents and choristers. Any chorister or parent who does not abide by our BGC policies will be dismissed from the choir with no refund.
- ♪ All rehearsal spaces should be left clean, orderly and in the condition in which they were found.