

Birmingham  
Girls  
Choir

**Policy Handbook**

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# ***Mission***

The Birmingham Girls Choir is a multi-cultural, non-profit organization that instills excellence in young girls through the study and performance of choral music. BGC seeks to enrich the lives of girls from all religious, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Our nurturing and professional staff is dedicated to helping children develop the skills necessary to enjoy a lifetime of choral singing. At BGC, our staff ensures for our singers a superior performing experience through the study of high quality choral literature.

## ***Goals***

- ♪ To develop singers with a strong level of musicianship through instruction in vocal technique, music notation, 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 meets the individual needs of children.
- ♪ To enhance the cultural environment of the community around Birmingham through a girl's performing medium.

## ***Program Description***

The Birmingham Girls Choir is a choral music program for girls consisting of three separate choirs: *Prelude*, *Intermezzo*, and *Una Vocé*. The choirs study and perform a variety of styles of choral music including classical, folk, jazz, world, and pop. Weekly rehearsals reinforce music reading skills, vocal technique, stage presence, and rehearsal etiquette.

### ***Prelude***

*Prelude* is our introductory choir. The girls in *Prelude* learn basic music notation, concert etiquette, and how to properly use their singing voice. These girls meet weekly to learn musical skills, games, and how to sing in a group. They perform at both annual concerts and several community events throughout the season.

### ***Intermezzo***

Singers in the *Intermezzo* choir come to us with a basic understanding of the commitment and self-discipline 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, sight reading, and care and correct use of the voice. They strive to grow in musical maturity and professionalism through the mastery of high-quality choral literature. The *Intermezzo* choir performs at all annual concerts, additional community performances throughout the year, and they perform for an EPC service in the Spring semester. This choir travels and competes regionally.

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## **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 vocal technique. The higher level of commitment provides an environment where driven girls can challenge themselves to become accomplished musicians through the mastery and performance of difficult, varied works. This group performs at all annual concerts and numerous community concerts throughout the year, as well as singing for a service at EPC in the Fall Semester. Una Vocé performs recitals and concerts for fundraising and allows singers to develop solo and ensemble singing skills. Singers receive individualized instruction to assist with college preparatory requirements.

## ***Auditions***

For the Prelude choir, the audition process is informal and is simply a measure of the singer's ability to match pitch and vocalize throughout their vocal range. These singers will meet the staff, vocalize with the director and parents will discuss expectations of the group.

For Intermezzo and Una Vocé choirs, the audition will be more formal and consist of pitch matching, aural skill determination, sight reading, and singing a melody along to a piano accompaniment. Prospective singers do not need to prepare a selection for the audition but are welcome to sing one if already prepared.

## ***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.

### **BGC Weekly Rehearsal Schedule**

BGC rehearsals are held at Edgewood Presbyterian Church in Homewood, AL. Choir members should remain in designated areas and behave with respect and courtesy at all times. Any policies or protocols suggested by EPC will be respected and followed by BGC members and staff. This includes any guidelines for COVID or safety concerns of the EPC staff.

- ♪ **Prelude**      5:30 - 6:15 pm
  - ♪ **Intermezzo**   5:30 - 7:00 pm
  - ♪ **Una Vocé**     5:30 - 7:00 pm
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The following attendance policy applies to all singers:

- ♪ **Fall Semester:** 2 absences maximum (excludes dress rehearsals)
- ♪ **Spring Semester:** 3 absences maximum (excludes dress rehearsals)

Attendance is taken at each rehearsal. If a chorister must miss a rehearsal, parents are asked to submit a written *Planned Absence Form* to allow directors to plan accordingly. This form can be found on the website under the "Parents" tab.

Singers are expected to be punctual to each rehearsal. If a chorister must arrive late or be dismissed early from any rehearsal, parents should notify the director at least 24 hours in advance. Excessive tardiness will result in a parent conference with the director. We understand emergencies and unforeseen situations arise, but tardiness should not become excessive.

### **BGC Dress Rehearsal and Performances**

There is a mandatory dress rehearsal and concert each semester. All choristers participate and will be given details from their director. Each singer is an integral part of the choir and is necessary for the group to perform at its highest level. 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 group.

In addition to our formal concerts, BGC performs throughout the community during each season. Though we try to provide these dates at the beginning of each semester, it is impossible to know all such performance opportunities. Therefore, choristers are asked to participate in at least 75% of our community events so that BGC can have respectful representation at all outreach activities.

## ***Concert Attire***

Parents are responsible for ordering concert attire for their chorister. Orders should be placed immediately at the beginning of the season to ensure arrival for pictures that will be held in October. Instructions for ordering attire will be provided to parents at the opening parent meeting in August or in January for new members.

For community events, choristers will usually wear BGC t-shirts or polos that are provided at the beginning of the season. Directors will inform singers and parents of the details (ex, jeans or shorts or khakis, etc) prior each event. Singers should always look professional and modest in all respects. If a singer or parent wishes to purchase extra BGC shirts, orders can be placed with the Executive Director.

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### Additional requirements regarding concert dress:

- ♪ No perfume, body spray, or any other scented product
- ♪ Hair must be neat, away from face, and styled modestly
- ♪ Only natural hair colors will be allowed
- ♪ No additional jewelry or ornamental hair accessories
- ♪ No visible tattoos or piercings. Tongue piercings must be removed.
- ♪ Only close-toed black dress shoes.
- ♪ Stud or post earrings only

*Non-Discriminatory Statement: BGC admits students of all races, colors, national and ethnic origins 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 organizational events and services.*

## Tuition

<b>Prelude</b>	<b>\$300 / year</b>
<b>Intermezzo</b>	<b>\$450 / year</b>
<b>Una Vocé</b>	<b>\$600 / year</b>
<b>Registration fee / year: \$50 - all singers</b>	
<i>Payment plans are by year or by semester**</i>	
<i>All fees and tuition are non-refundable</i>	

\*Registration fee will include a BGC t-shirt and various rehearsal items. Payments can be made online or by check.

*Checks payable to:  
Birmingham Girls Choir*

**\*\*Additional fee of \$30 for semester payment plan**

**\*Sibling discount: 10% for each singer**

**\*Referral discount: \$25 / semester**

**\*Members of Edgewood Presbyterian Church will receive a 50% discount on tuition as per the BGC covenant with EPC**

### Payment Plans:

\*Once a chorister is registered (after auditions), a membership form will be sent to each incoming parent. Payments can be made online or in person to the Executive Director.

**Yearly:** All full-tuition payments must be received on or before the first rehearsal of the season. Once a chorister is registered (after auditions), a membership form will be sent to each incoming parent. Payments can be made online or in person to the Executive Director.

**By Semester:** Half of tuition payment must be received on or before the first rehearsal of each semester. There is an additional \$30 fee for this payment plan.

*\*Late fee policy:* Accounts 30 days late will be assessed a \$30 late fee. Accounts 90 days late will result in dismissal from the BGC choir.

*\*Returned check policy:* Returned checks will be assessed a \$10 charge plus bank fees.

*\*Withdrawal policy:* If a chorister withdraws, there is no tuition refund.

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## **Scholarships:**

Scholarship application forms are available for families with financial need. Any family who wishes to apply for a scholarship needs to request an application from the Executive Director. BGC offers half-tuition and third-tuition scholarships on a limited basis. All scholarship requests must be submitted in writing and received by the Executive Director no later than the first rehearsal in August. These requests will be reviewed by the BGC Governing Board for approval and applicants will be informed of the Board's decision immediately thereafter. Potential scholarship recipients will be allowed to attend rehearsals during the application review process so that valuable learning time is not missed.

## ***Parent Volunteer Opportunities***

BGC families contribute volunteer hours to the organization through a commitment to serve in various capacities. BGC depends on parent volunteers to run smoothly and effectively for our choristers. Parents have a vast array of abilities that BGC needs to make our organization successful. Please consider serving in the following capacities, as well as additional positions that arise throughout the season:

♪ *Governing Board Participation:* BGC is a non-profit organization that is run by a Governing Board. These officers meet monthly to discuss and decide upon various aspects of our organization. Parents may be asked to serve as an officer on the Board. This is a one-year term, but can be extended.

♪ *Volunteer on Duty:* This is a parent who is stationed at the entrance of EPC and handles arrival and departure of choristers. This parent should arrive 15 minutes early to EPC and plan on remaining at the front desk the entirety of the Tuesday rehearsal. The Executive Director will inform the VOD as to any administrative needs of the week, such as reminders, paperwork to give parents, or announcements. There will be a sign-up sheet for this volunteer position and parents should find a replacement volunteer if a situation arises that they cannot fulfill the duty.

♪ *Photography:* Any parent who has expertise in photography is an invaluable resource to BGC. As a community-based organization, social media and presence is crucial to portray our choristers in a professional, positive light. Please inform the Executive Director if you are willing to help in this capacity.

♪ *Event Chaperones:* BGC participates in numerous performances and events throughout the season in and around the Birmingham area. Parent chaperones are needed for all these events and sign-up sheets will be available for any parents who can assist in these events.

♪ *Concert Assistance:* Parent volunteers are needed to help our concerts run smoothly and professionally. From taking up tickets to handing out programs, several volunteers will be needed for each concert.

♪ *Fundraiser Events:* Each season, BGC will participate in various fundraiser activities to help fund the organization. Parent volunteers will be needed to serve in these events and assist in making them successful.

♪ *Reception Hosts:* Parents will be needed to organize and host receptions following BGC concerts. This involves food prep, setup, serving, and cleanup.

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# ***Communication***

The majority of communication from BGC staff will occur via email or group texts. The website contains updated information on performances and events, so parents should frequently check the calendar on the website. BGC staff will use the Remind app for communication and announcements on a weekly basis. Additionally, flyers and reminders will often be sent home with the choristers for parents to remain informed.

## ***Parent Expectations***

BGC cannot function properly without the support and community of parents. We value our singers immensely and understand the contribution that each family makes to the choral education of their child. These expectations are to ensure that BGC remains fair, professional, and safe for all our choristers and staff. Parents are expected to:

- ♪ Sign their child in and out at the front desk for every rehearsal
- ♪ Do not drop off their child prior 5:15 or pick them up after 7:15 (6:30 for Prelude)
- ♪ Keep formal performance attire and BGC shirts clean and professional
- ♪ Provide written communication for missed rehearsals (Planned Absence form)
- ♪ Attend parent meetings at the beginning of each semester
- ♪ Volunteer for various duties throughout the season
- ♪ Pay tuition by scheduled deadline
- ♪ Promote BGC in a positive manner in our surrounding community
- ♪ Respect and maintain the EPC campus and abide by any suggested policies
- ♪ Narcotic substances and alcohol use will not be tolerated. Any form of use is strictly prohibited during any BGC event.

## ***Chorister Expectations***

The following requirements govern singer conduct in BGC rehearsals and events:

- ♪ No cell phones (these will be collected by BGC staff if needed)
  - ♪ No headphones or air pods
  - ♪ Narcotic substances and alcohol use will not be tolerated. Any form of use is strictly prohibited during any BGC event.
  - ♪ Treat others with respect and dignity
  - ♪ No bullying or excessive teasing
  - ♪ Be on time for all rehearsals and performances.
  - ♪ Act and speak respectfully and treat the BGC staff with respect at all times
  - ♪ Dress appropriately for rehearsals, concerts and tours
  - ♪ Attend rehearsals and performances and events consistently. If a chorister must be absent from a concert, written communication must be sent to the director at least 4 weeks in advance.
  - ♪ Choristers must behave professionally and respectfully at all times as a representative of the BGC organization.
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