



CHOIR HANDBOOK

OVERVIEW

Chœur des enfants de Montréal performs a diverse and spirited repertoire encompassing music from the Renaissance to the present day. Their work focuses on classical music, but also includes folk, gospel and contemporary music. The choir celebrates the work of Canadian composers and the rich musical traditions of Québec.

The diversity of the music reflects the multi-cultural nature of Canada and Montréal. Unlike any other youth choir in Montréal, the choir repertoire includes children's operas, commissioned musical theatre compositions and cantatas. The children learn to sing in many languages. Over the years, the choir has performed songs in French, English, Welsh, Gaelic, German, Latin, Serbian, Maori, Hebrew and Spanish.

The choir was created in 2001 by a group of parents whose children had sung with Iwan Edwards in the F.A.C.E. Treble Choir and who wanted to make this outstanding musical education available to all children in Montreal. It has grown from 25 to over 40 choristers who come from more than 20 different primary and secondary schools and various cultural and economic backgrounds, united by their passion for singing.

Thanks to Iwan Edwards' extraordinary ability to train and encourage these young singers, the group has become a high quality children's choir which has received increasing attention and positive reviews for its performances. Divided into two, three or sometimes four harmonies, the children have developed a large repertoire.

In December of 2005, they were featured performers in the Christmas Concert of the *Orchestre symphonique de Montréal*. Invited back in December 2006, they performed in two Christmas concerts, once under the direction of Jacques Lacombe and once under the direction of Kent Nagano. During the 2006-07 season, in addition to their three CEM concerts, they performed at a benefit concert for the victims of Dawson College, sang with the St. Lawrence Choir in their Christmas and end-of-year concerts and did a pre-concert recital for the National Arts Centre of Ottawa Orchestra when they performed in Montreal. In December 2007, they performed twice at the *Chantons Noël* concert with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal.

In terms of musical theatre, the Choir performed two pieces in the spring of 2005: *100% Chance of Rain* by Walter Horsley and *Unsung Heroes* by Paula Rosen, a Canadian composer. This was followed in the spring of 2006 by *Brunidbár*, a children's opera written by Hans Krása. In the spring of 2007, the choir presented *Rooster Rag* by Michel Hurd and in the fall of 2007, *The Gathering of the Birds* was staged.

OUR DIRECTOR, IWAN EDWARDS, C.M.

Widely known and respected as one of Canada's finest choral conductors, Iwan Edwards is recognized for his accomplishments as an educator, adjudicator, and coach nurturing the next generation of professional singers. His life-long dedication to the development of Canadian music and singers is a hallmark of his musical programming. The director of the *Chœur de l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal* for 21 years and founder of the 90-voice St. Lawrence Choir, he has been involved in many choirs for young people, including the F.A.C.E. (Fine Arts Core Education) Treble Choir which he directed for 20 years.

Maestro Edwards is the recipient of several prestigious awards in recognition of his extensive achievements and contributions to music in Canada, including his appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada in 1995. In 2002, he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

Iwan Edwards retired as the director of the *Chœur de l'Orchestre symphonique de Montréal* and of St. Lawrence Choir in June 2007. He will devote his time, among other activities, to Concerto Della Donna, an exciting chamber choir of young women and to Chœur des enfants de Montréal.

CHOICE OF 3 GROUPS TO SING IN

There are three choirs under the umbrella of Chœur des enfants de Montréal:

- **Senior Choir**
 - For children aged 9 through 17.
 - Rehearsals are Mondays and Thursdays, from 4:15 to 6:00 p.m.
 - The Senior Choir performs in at least 4-6 concerts per year.

- **Chamber Choir**
 - Part of the Senior Choir, the Chamber Choir was created for the older and more experienced choristers who have the desire and time to pursue a more challenging repertoire.
 - Maximum size is 17 voices:
 - 5 Soprano I
 - 4 Soprano II
 - 4 Alto I
 - 4 Alto II
 - Rehearsals are on Thursdays from 6:10 to 6:55 p.m. following the Senior Choir rehearsal.
 - There may be additional rehearsals depending on the concert schedule.
 - The Chamber Choir performs special works inside the concerts organized by the Senior Choir. It is also called on, from time to time, to take part in special events such as the memorial service at Dawson College for Anastasia De Sousa.

- **Junior Choir**
 - For children aged 6 through 9, often their first introduction to singing.
 - Rehearsals are on Wednesdays from 4:15 to 5:30 p.m.
 - Music will be chosen specifically for the Junior Choir, recognizing their age and experience.
 - The Junior Choir will perform with the Senior Choir but will have its own repertoire and will sing fewer songs.

WHEN ARE THE AUDITIONS?

Auditions for new choristers are in September, January and June (for the coming fall).

At the audition for the Senior Choir, each child is asked to sing a song of his/her choice and is given some vocal exercises to determine his/her vocal range. Children for the Junior Choir are accepted based on their desire to sing.

To arrange an audition time, please contact the choir by phone at 514-989-8925 or by email at [**info@choeurdesenfantsdemontreal.com**](mailto:info@choeurdesenfantsdemontreal.com).

WHEN ARE THE REHEARSALS?

Rehearsals are held at the NDG Community Centre, 3757 Prud'homme (on the main floor) between September and June as follows:

- Senior Choir – Mondays and Thursdays, 4:15-6:00 p.m.
- Chamber Choir – Thursdays, 6:10-6:55 p.m.
- Junior Choir – Wednesdays, 4:15-5:30 p.m.

There may be additional rehearsals in the week or two leading up to a concert, usually including evening and Saturday or Sunday rehearsals (morning and afternoon).

LEARNING THE MUSIC

Your chorister, particularly if new to the choir, may need your help in learning the music. On stage, the choir never has the scores and no one likes to be lost in front of an audience. (Even if your chorister says that he or she knows the music, you should check to see if this is actually true.) Some children become discouraged because it is hard if you have never had to memorize music (and words in many languages), and experienced choir families have strategies that may help. Another strategy is for choristers to get together outside of rehearsals to practice together. Don't be shy to ask the parents responsible at rehearsals or any board member for hints and advice.

ATTENDANCE AT ALL REHEARSALS IS MANDATORY - WHY?

Singing in the choir is like being part of a sports team – the team can't function if the goalie takes Mondays off and the players on defence take Thursdays off.

Attendance at all rehearsals is mandatory so that the choir can progress. If children don't attend on a regular basis, the entire choir suffers. Children who attend regularly find themselves getting bored because songs have to be repeated over and over for children who missed the rehearsal. And children who miss rehearsals find themselves always playing catch-up and never really mastering the music.

If children are unable to attend on a regular basis, they may not be able to remain in the choir and/or may be required to audition in order to participate in the next concert.

WHAT DO THE ANNUAL FEES COVER?

Annual fees go towards the costs of:

- a mandatory weekend retreat for the Senior Choir held at a music camp each fall
- all rehearsals
- rental of all scores and rights payments
- hall rentals for rehearsals and for performances
- salaries of the choir director (Iwan Edwards), a part-time administrator (Andrea Cooper) and musicians (when applicable)

Payments must be included on the day of registration (see the registration form for more information).

WHY DO I HAVE TO SELL TICKETS TO THE CHOIR'S CONCERTS?

Choir fees only cover about 20% of the choir's operating costs, which include the salaries of the choir director and a part-time choir administrator, the weekend retreat, rental of the NDG Community Centre and concert venues, sheet music, musicians, printing of programs and tickets, etc.

The bulk of the remaining operating costs are covered by grants, donations and ticket sales. We also receive fees when performing with other choirs, and generate revenue through the sale of advertising in concert programmes and of CD's.

While the choir will be invited to sing as part of other concerts throughout the year (for which a performance fee is received), the choir itself will be presenting three concerts per season where we are responsible for generating revenues to cover all the costs.

Normally you will be given 20 adult and 10 student/senior tickets to sell for each of these three concerts (approximately one month prior to the concert). If you cannot sell all of your tickets, please consider making a donation to the choir.

This activity is coordinated by parent volunteers.

ADVERTISING SALES IN CONCERT PROGRAMMES

Another source of revenue for the choir comes from the sale of advertisements in the three concert programmes.

Businesses can purchase full-page, half-page, quarter-page or business card size ads.

Full page back cover (7.5" high x 3" wide)

Full page (inside)

Half page (3.75" high x 6" wide)

Quarter page (3.75" high x 3" wide)

Business card (1.75" high x 3" wide)

Advertising is a good source of revenue for the choir and it's a way for a local business to support the community.

The deadline for finalizing the sales and providing the artwork is 2 weeks prior to the concert (this provides enough time for the graphic design and printing of the program).

This activity is coordinated by parent volunteers.

CONCERT DRESS CODE / COSTUMES

To reflect the professionalism of the choir, a dress code **must** be followed for concerts. Parents are responsible for providing the outfit. If you are missing a part of the outfit, please contact the parent in charge of concert dress. We have several spare skirts, blouses/shirts and pants.

- Plain white cotton shirt or blouse with long sleeves
- Plain black pants (boys) or ankle-length skirt (girls) – no flounces, buttons, pleats or silky shiny fabric please!
- Black stockings or socks
- Black dress shoes – low heels
- No glitzy hair ornaments or dangly earrings

If the children are performing musical theatre works, the Choir will provide the needed costumes. This is coordinated by parent volunteers.

PERFORMANCE PROTOCOL

As experienced actors can testify, performance protocol applies before, during and after concerts, because players remain "in the limelight" in the eyes of their audience, even after a performance is officially over!

Before Concert Performances

- Arrive on time at the designated concert venue.
- Get organized and dressed QUICKLY and QUIETLY.
- Keep your personal effects in order and in one place.

During Concert Performances

- Know when to stand, sit, clap and bow during concerts.
- Use correct posture at all times.
- Refrain from TALKING or WHISPERING with other choristers during the performance or while sitting as "spectators" in the audience or elsewhere on the stage during a concert.

After Concert Performances

- Maintain the concert "dress code" at all times. This includes leaving shirts tucked in after concerts, when still on the premises of the performance, outside the dressing room.
- Clean up any papers, drinking cups, food wrappers etc. and replace furniture or other items used in the dressing area. This is particularly important to uphold the Choir's reputation and to ensure that it will be considered for future repeat engagements.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure that your child attends rehearsals regularly and arrives on time.
- Ensure that your child learns his/her music each week.
- Ensure that your child has the appropriate concert dress.
- Sell tickets and promote concerts.
- Help out by volunteering in at least one activity: chaperoning at an event, telephoning choir members with information, fundraising activities, etc.

POT-LUCK SUPPERS

A family pot-luck supper is held at least twice a year (once in the fall, once in the spring) at the NDG Community Centre. Normally, it is scheduled after a Saturday or Sunday rehearsal which is planned for an upcoming concert.

These dinners are a great opportunity to meet the other parents and find out important choir information, so we encourage everyone to attend. Drinks, plates, glasses, napkins and cutlery are provided – parents are asked to bring main courses, salads and desserts.

We try to give at least 3 weeks' advance notice of a pot-luck supper. This activity is coordinated by parent volunteers.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Only the choir director, Iwan Edwards, and the part-time administrator, Andrea Cooper, receive payment for their services. Everything else is done by parent volunteers, including the Board of Directors made up of choir parents.

The choir always needs people to help in the following areas:

- Ticket Sales
- Fundraising – through private and corporate donations
- Auditions – providing/collecting information to/from potential choristers
- Costumes/Concert Dress
- Rehearsal Monitors
 - We like to have one parent who agrees to stay for a few minutes at the end of the Monday rehearsal and another who does the same after the Thursday rehearsal until all choristers have left. These parents do not have to attend the rehearsal, just stay for a few minutes at the end (2-3 volunteers would be good). Older students will be asked to chaperone the Junior Choir on Wednesdays.
- Chaperones
 - For concert rehearsals (1-2 people required)
 - Backstage at concerts (2-3 people required)
 - Fall Music Retreat (3 people required)
- Recruitment of new choristers
- Advertising Sales in programmes
- Pot-luck suppers
- Telephone chain
- Writing press releases, proof-reading, photography
- Help with the Website

If you are interested in taking on any of the above, please speak to the parent in charge at the rehearsal, to any of the people who are currently involved or to one of the volunteer Board members.