



***Central Coast Youth Chorus
Handbook
2025***

Introduction

Welcome to the Central Coast Youth Chorus (CCYC). Founded in 1994 as the Central Coast Children's Choir, CCYC is committed to bringing the highest level of artistic training to the youth of San Luis Obispo County, and dedicates itself to presenting world-class music and artistry in every performance. Our organization provides youth in our community the exceptional opportunity of experiencing the joy of singing in rehearsals and concerts, while they receive a high-quality music education.

Composed of over 60 boys and girls from ages 5-19, Central Coast Youth Chorus singers are currently divided into five groups: Music Makers, Brio, Cadence, Cadenza, and Grace Notes. The rehearsals are scheduled during after-school hours, and include musicianship training plus vocal coaching to assist in developing healthy singing habits. Repertoire is selected to fit each group's skill level, and includes established classical works, folk songs from around the world, as well as more contemporary styles, always striving to suit the singers' voices. Choristers develop self-discipline and confidence as they meet musical challenges and achieve artistic excellence under the direction of dedicated music professionals.

Over the past 30 years, CCYC has seen amazing growth in artistic quality in our youth, and has become a highly respected and valuable asset in SLO County. The CCYC collaborates with premier performing groups in the community, such as the San Luis Obispo Vocal Arts Ensemble, Cuesta Master Chorale, SLO Symphony, OperaSLO, Canzona Women's Ensemble, and Cal Poly Choirs and Orchestra. CCYC performed several world premiere pieces, including "Your Voice Within" with jazz extraordinaire Inga Swearingen, and "Barter" by Meredith Brammeier, commissioned for CCYC's 20th Anniversary. The choir performs for senior care facilities as well as local non-profits, benefiting organizations such as the SLO Children's Museum, Hospice, and C.A.S.A., and enjoys the honor of singing our National Anthem at the SLO Blues baseball games each summer. Over the years, our singers have been chosen to represent California in National and Western Division Honor Choirs in numerous cities nationwide. Our upper-level ensembles have toured and performed Nationally and Internationally including: Sing-A-Mile-High Festival, Denver, Colorado, 2011; International Children's Choir Festival, Canterbury Cathedral and London, England, 2015; and Pacific International Choral Festival, Eugene, Oregon, 2016. In 2017, CCYC participated in the community-wide SLO Responds event, an effort to raise funds for California areas ravaged by mudslides and fire.

As we celebrate 30 years, we are excited that you will be joining us as we continue to build on our tradition of musical excellence!

Welcome to the CCYC Community!

♪ CCYC Leadership and Administration

All Central Coast Youth Chorus activities and decisions are guided by a collaborative process within the CCYC Staff. CCYC decisions are overseen by the CCYC Board of Directors, comprised of CCYC parents and private sector individuals who have a strong interest or career in the artistic and educational communities.

2024-25 Staff

Artistic Director	Melody Svennungsen
Executive Director	Crista Gordon
Finance Manager	Nikki Clark
Executive Director Assistant	Faith Thurman

Grace Notes Ensemble

Director: Melody Svennungsen

Cadenza Choir

Director: Inga Swearingen

Accompanist: Josh Tarica

Cadence Choir

Director: JoAnne Stoddard

Accompanist: Sarah Jane Scott

Brio Choir

Director: Susannah Fletcher

Accompanist: John Cribb

Music Makers

Director: Hannah Kenyon

2024-25 Board of Directors

President	Stu Stoddard
Treasurer	Nikki Clark
Secretary	Trina Hirsig
Member	Susannah Fletcher
Member	Tracy Gillson
Member	Steinar Svennungsen
Member	Inga Swearingen

Mission Statement

The Central Coast Youth Chorus is devoted to creating choral excellence, instilling values of self-discipline and commitment, and building lasting friendships while inspiring the artist within each singer through the power of music.

Our Choirs

The Central Coast Youth Chorus seeks to provide an exciting and stimulating place for young singers to explore the highest level of choral artistry. At this time, we are offering the five groups listed first, with Young Men's Ensemble, Vivace and AVE suspended for now, to be continued as we grow in numbers. Recommended age & grade levels are listed below, however exceptions may occur and it is up to the Artistic Director and the choir directors involved to make final decisions on placement as needed.

Music Makers: First Experiences in Singing is offered in 8-week sessions in Fall and Spring on Tuesdays 4:00-4:50pm at First Presbyterian Church, SLO. This activity-based program is designed for boys and girls ages 3 to 6 and focuses on developing our youngest musical artists in a fun and dynamic environment. Children will learn musical principles and develop a personal understanding of music through participation in singing, movement, games, and exploration of instruments, including the voice. Parents of 3-4 year olds will be required to stay during class. Music Makers is directed by Hannah Kenyon.

Brio is a performing choir open to boys and girls ages 7 to 9 (grades 2-3) who would like to continue developing their voices, experience singing in a group, and learn musicianship in a fun environment! Brio singers learn basic disciplines of the choral art, including healthy vocalizing, beginning musicianship concepts, stage and audience etiquette, and studying and memorizing three to four age-appropriate choral pieces. Brio singers appear in our major concerts and often participate in scheduled community events. Performance in concerts is dependent on maturity and stage presence. No audition or prior experience is required. Rehearsals take place at the First Presbyterian Church, SLO on Tuesdays 4:00-5:15pm. Brio choir is directed by Susannah Fletcher.

Cadence is our upper elementary performing ensemble where treble singers, approximately ages 9 to 12 (grades 4-6), continue developing general musicianship and singing skills. Vocal coaching, healthy vocal development, and learning and memorizing age-appropriate repertoire are integral components of rehearsals. Cadence singers also concentrate on ear training and harmonizing, fundamental music theory concepts, stage presence and performance etiquette, and building ensemble teamwork. Cadence participates in major concerts and community events. A friendly vocal assessment for part assignments is needed; prior singing experience is suggested, but no audition is required. Rehearsals are from 4:00-5:30pm at the First Presbyterian Church, SLO on Tuesdays. Cadence choir is directed by JoAnne Stoddard.

Cadenza is designed to serve the vocal needs of middle- to high-school-aged treble voices, singers ages 12 to 18 (grades 7+). It is a comprehensive musical experience for upper ages, facilitated by local jazz singer/composer and music educator, Inga Swearingen. Cadenza singers

build on the same skills mentioned for Cadence singers, honing their musicianship and vocal skills, and concentrating on higher-level ear training, sight-singing, and vocal technique. These singers will deepen their understanding of the choral art and learn to evaluate, interpret, express, and connect choral music—the songs they are singing together—to everyday experience. Cadenza singers learn leadership and self-direction while practicing the various disciplines of ensemble work and group improvisation. Though an audition is not required, some singing and musical experience is recommended. Rehearsals are from 4:00-5:30pm at the First Presbyterian Church, SLO on Tuesdays.

Grace Notes is our newest small ensemble for ages 12-18 (grades 6+) under the direction of Melody Svennungsen. This is an auditioned 4 to 7-voice choir, whose members are: committed to vocal excellence [with strong voices and fine tone quality]; vocally autonomous [able to carry a part alone]; and independent learners [able to rehearse and memorize music at home aside from scheduled rehearsals]. Singers must be currently enrolled in Cadenza. Grace Notes rehearsals will be 35 minutes long from 5:35-6:10pm every other Tuesday after regularly-scheduled Cadenza rehearsals. Singers will prepare two a cappella pieces for the December concerts, as well as pieces for our Spring concerts in May. Grace Notes will be ambassadors for CCYC, becoming a self-governing and excellent ensemble with extra performance opportunities throughout the season. Grace Notes auditions can be scheduled by contacting our office at info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org.

Young Men's Ensemble is designed for ages 13-19 for both changed and unchanged voices and no audition is required. As with all of the CCYC ensembles, the emphasis is on musicianship and vocal training, along with choral studies. Healthy voice-building is stressed; regular voice checks are a part of rehearsal. YME typically joins Vivace on selected songs. In addition to performing in the CCYC seasonal concerts, they may tour or participate in choral festivals and appear at other local happenings including sporting events. This is the place for men to find their voices!
**Not currently offered for the 2024-25 season.*

Vivace is an auditioned choir for young women from ages 16 to 19—some exceptions for younger singers apply at the discretion of the Director. Singers perform repertoire from classics to 4-part a cappella and all styles in between. Vivace singers are required to have vocal independence and developed musicianship skills. Members are expected to make choir a priority, come to ALL rehearsals, and understand that they are an integral part of a team. Vivace sings in all major concerts, choral festivals, and has occasional opportunities for traveling to festivals and other musical events. Vivace often collaborates in performances with local adult groups such as OperaSLO, the SLO Symphony, SLO Vocal Arts Ensemble, and SLO Master Chorale. Vivace auditions can be scheduled by contacting our office at info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org.
**Not currently offered for the 2024-25 season.*

AVE is CCYC's Advanced Vocal Ensemble, an auditioned chamber group made up of Vivace members. The recommended age range is 16 to 19, but exceptions do occur. A year-long singer commitment is preferred in order to build a strong ensemble. AVE members are expected to make choir a priority and realize that their commitment to the smaller ensemble [team] is essential. AVE singers must value their roles in the larger framework and understand that

membership includes the following: leading as examples, mentors, and section leaders for younger singers; acting as ambassadors for CCYC; committing to participation in outside, possibly unscheduled, performances; willingness to work outside of rehearsals [responsibility for rehearsing/memorizing music independently]; attending every rehearsal possible, including Super Saturdays, extended Tuesdays, and occasional weekend meetings. Musically, members are expected to understand and be able to apply intermediate theory skills, learn difficult music, and hold their own part independently. Excellent work ethic, focus, and mature comportment is expected in rehearsal, on stage, and as audience members. Again, auditions can be scheduled by contacting our office at info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org.

**Not currently offered for the 2024-25 season.*

🎵 **The Artistic Experience**

CCYC focuses on the whole artist. “. . . *while inspiring the artist within each singer . . .*” is a phrase from the CCYC mission statement. The artistic staff of CCYC believes that every young singer has an “artist within,” and that it is our task to facilitate the artistic awakening. We have the joyful task of **teaching** the fundamentals of music and singing, **inspiring** a child’s passion for music, and **providing** opportunity for growth through practice and performance.

At the heart of CCYC instruction are the dual emphases of musicianship and vocal training through the use of choral repertoire. This experience ensures that students will obtain a good foundation in music fundamentals while receiving age-appropriate vocal coaching. Healthy vocal production is stressed while young singers learn to project with a consistent, beautiful, and resonant tone supported by strong breath management.

The music studied and performed in CCYC includes a repertoire spanning the different historical eras of music from the Renaissance to Modern, including opera, art song, Gospel and vocal jazz, and folk music from around the world. An emphasis is given to the young artists' ownership of our chosen songs by facilitating investigation into the music’s background and exploring the connection of words to music. Who composed the music and why? Who wrote the words and what human emotions and ideas are expressed? How does this song relate to my life, what can I learn from it, and how can I best communicate its essence and the composer’s intent in my personal performance?

As our singers develop musically in the context of choral singing, they learn essential life skills such as risk-taking, commitment, self-discipline, and the practice of good sportsmanship. Through singing together, students grow in self-confidence, respect for others, compassion, patience, and perseverance. In sharing their music with each other and their audiences, our young

artists experience a sense of belonging and understand the importance of bringing beauty and positivity into the world through their craft.

♪ **Commitment**

Our choir year is divided into two semesters: September - December, and January-May. Members are expected to complete the semester, but preferably to commit to the entire year. New members are accepted each semester.

♪ **Singer Expectations**

Attendance

Students are allowed two absences per semester. More than two absences per concert season can result in a singer not being allowed to perform in that season's concerts. CCYC trains students to be young professionals, so one must be prompt. Students who arrive late disrupt the entire group. Being on time is more than a courtesy, it is an *expectation*. Two tardies will be counted as one absence. *EARLY=ON TIME!* Super Saturdays are important rehearsals - we are able to combine choirs and work on movement, concert logistics, and joint music. Often a special guest or activity takes place at these rehearsals. Singers are expected to make every effort to attend all scheduled rehearsals.

When a singer must miss a rehearsal, we request that parents please call (805-464-0443) or email the CCYC office (info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org) so the absence can be properly recorded. Leaving a message does not excuse an absence, but it is a courtesy that we appreciate, as we worry about your singer's whereabouts during rehearsal.

Concert Rehearsals Are Considered Mandatory

The two Tuesday rehearsals just prior to the concert weekend are the only opportunity the singers have to rehearse lining up, entering and exiting the stage, and learning all the performance cues for the concerts.

Dismissal

If a singer is disruptive to the choir rehearsal, shows disrespect to others, or the singer's maturity level doesn't show a developmental readiness for performing, the Director has the option of asking the singer not to perform in the upcoming concert or dismissing the singer from the choir. The Artistic Directors will be available for discussion if necessary.

Rehearsal Standards

Punctuality and faithful attendance is required. In order to maintain the highest possible standards of singing, choir members are expected to:

- Arrive **ten** minutes early.
- Bring all music/musicianship book(s).
- Bring 2 sharpened pencils with erasers.
- Put music in rehearsal order *before* rehearsal begins, if applicable.
- Help clean-up at the end of rehearsal if needed (chairs, music, etc).

CCYC is only responsible for singers from 15 minutes prior to rehearsal start time through 10 minutes after its conclusion.

Standards of Behavior & Excellence

- Maintain focus
- Show respect for the directors/parents/fellow singers
- Represent CCYC in a polite and professional manner
- Sit and/or stand with correct posture while singing
- Have fun!

If your child requires additional behavioral or medical accommodations in order to participate in choir fully and follow these standards, please connect with staff (Director, Artistic Director, and/or Executive Director) prior to the season starting so that our Artistic Team can best address the needs of each singer. In these cases as well, concert participation will be at the discretion of the Director.

Rehearsal/Performance Facilities

We are guests at many beautiful facilities. Be respectful by following these guidelines:

- Singers may not run or play in the buildings or in surrounding areas.
- Stay in designated areas with parent helpers or Directors.
- **ONLY** water bottles with secured tops are permitted in rehearsal areas; other beverages may be consumed only at break and in designated areas.
- Snacks are to be eaten only in designated areas at designated times.
- Use polite voices inside and out.
- Singers must be dropped off and picked up promptly.
- All singers must wait in the courtyard for a parent/adult to pick them up after choir and complete the sign-out sheet with the designated CCYC staff member. For the safety of your singer, curbside pick-ups will not be allowed.

Care of Music

Music is very expensive and difficult to replace. Choristers must assume the responsibility of looking after it carefully and returning it in good condition. Music should be kept neatly in the music folder, and is to be returned at the semester's end.

Music should be marked clearly and legibly ***in pencil only*** with such notations as the Director instructs during rehearsal. No drawings on music are permitted. Replacement charges for music lost, damaged, or not returned is \$5.00 per piece of music. Please erase all markings prior to the music's return.

Attendance at Concerts

Singer attendance at final rehearsals and concerts is required and a condition of membership.

Call times indicate the time the singer is expected to be in place and ready to sing. If a singer is late for call time, she/he may jeopardize their privilege to sing in that performance.

Permission for absence from a concert for a reason other than illness must be requested in writing to the Director at least **six weeks** before the concert date.

Occasional weekday concerts for older singers may require absences from school. These will be kept to a minimum and will be announced in the calendar well in advance. Letters to the school explaining the reason for the absence, along with an explanation of the educational benefits of CCYC, are available from the Artistic Director.

It is recommended that singers eat a healthy meal or snack one hour before call time.

♪ Tours/Trips

Our upper-level choirs participate in tours and out-of-town choral festivals. The decision to undertake a tour or trip is made by the Board of Directors and parents. In general, only AVE may take a tour, and Vivace, Young Men's Ensemble, and Grace Notes may be invited to out-of-state and international festivals. The choirs may participate in a choral festival locally or in a nearby county. Tours and trips allow our youth to sing for different audiences, to meet singers from similar choirs, work with other directors/guest artists, and help broaden each singer's understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

Tour and trip standards and guidelines, as well as chaperone information, will be reviewed with parents and singers prior to a tour. If expenses are involved in a tour or trip, parents will receive commitment information well in advance. Though we lower the cost as much as possible through fundraising, tour expenses remain the responsibility of the choir member and his or her family. CCYC strives to include all members of the selected choir in tours, regardless of financial situations.

♪ Financial Matters

Tuition

The Board of Directors determines annual tuition. Tuition costs pay for operational expenses, including rental of rehearsal space and concert venues, staff salaries, insurance, music purchases, office supplies, and other business-related matters. Tuition is due on the first day of rehearsal, and then subsequent payments are due according to the payment plan you select. Any payment received after the due dates will be assessed a late payment fee of \$5.00. Payment in arrears can result in the singer being dismissed from the program. Please contact the Executive Director or Board Treasurer if financial difficulties present themselves. Scholarships are available – see below.

Any family with unpaid tuition from a previous semester will be asked to fulfill that obligation prior to participating in the next semester, and they may be asked to pay the semester's full tuition rather than use the payment plan.

Refunds

Should it become necessary for your singer to leave the choir before the end of a semester, please send written notification to the CCYC office (info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org). Donation of remaining tuition is always appreciated. A prorated adjustment may be arranged/considered on a case-by-case basis as well.

Financial Aid

Families are eligible to apply for scholarships within the first week of each semester. CCYC scholarships are based on need and apply to tuition only. Scholarship request forms may be obtained by calling the CCYC office or visiting our website. Since finances are a private issue, please be assured that only the Executive Director, Board Treasurer and Finance Manager will be involved in financial discussions. If financial difficulties should present themselves, please speak with the Treasurer or Finance Manager to work out a satisfactory payment plan. The Board does not wish for anyone to feel the need to drop from the program over finances.

Financial aid may be withdrawn if payment of remaining tuition and/or other fees are not kept current, or if the singer exceeds the number of permitted absences per semester. Students on scholarship are expected to have exemplary behavior and work ethic. Parents of those students receiving a scholarship are expected to exceed the minimum of 10 volunteer hours per year to at least 15 hours, or to head a committee in addition to the already expected 10 hours.

Concerts

Each family is encouraged to sell 4 tickets to each of the Winter and Spring concerts and any Benefit events. Our singers deserve a full house! We also ask that families help promote our events by posting flyers in their hometowns, discussing CCYC events on social media, and by word of mouth.

🎵 Family Involvement

The success of CCYC is **dependent on family involvement**. CCYC will provide a parent volunteer sign-up form as needs arise to allow families to select areas in which to volunteer. Each family is required to contribute 10 hours per year (7 hours if joining in January). If a singer chooses to participate in Opera, 3 additional hours will be required. Volunteering can be done by service, donation of snacks, or by cash donation, including a \$150 "in lieu of" contribution (\$100 if joining in January). Each hour is roughly equivalent to \$15.00. If there is no attempt to meet the required volunteer hours, an invoice will be issued to the family for the "in lieu of" fee of \$150 at the end of the season.

Parents/guardians are also responsible for the following:

- Assure singers arrive and are picked up at rehearsals/performances on time.

- Provide/arrange transportation to and from all rehearsals and events.
- Maintain upkeep of required uniforms, and purchase additional required items.
- Give your singer encouragement.
- Inquire about assignments/ask for newsletters and flyers.
- Listen and be involved with your singer as he/she practices at home.

It is expected that one parent/representative attend parent meetings. These meetings are scheduled as needed and are essential to provide communication and information regarding planning, events, the budget, individual choir information, etc. Please check the calendar and newsletters frequently to stay apprised of dates and times. Our Back To Choir Night occurs in September. This is our meeting of welcome and of sharing essential information. This Handbook should be reviewed prior to that meeting's attendance.

Visiting Rehearsals

Visitor seating is sometimes limited, therefore parents, grandparents or other relatives and children may come and observe all or part of a rehearsal if pre-arranged with the Director. We request that infants and very young children not attend due to the distractions they may cause the singers and directors.

Program Ads & Sponsorships

Program ads and sponsorships are essential to the success of CCYC. Please help by soliciting businesses and individuals in your field of influence. A personalized message in one of our concert programs is always appreciated by singers.

Donations/Tax Deductions

CCYC is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization. Please save all your receipts for any donations, as they may be considered tax deductible (consult your tax professional). Also, many employers have matching funds programs and we appreciate any help that you can offer in support of our non-profit organization. CCYC now also makes it possible for you to donate stock in lieu of cash; people with investments in stocks, bonds and other securities they've held for at least one year can donate those that have appreciated in value, resulting in significant income-tax savings. For more information, please contact our Finance Manager at finance.cccc@gmail.com.

Website

CCYC is fortunate to have an extensive website that provides information about our wonderful choral program at www.CentralCoastYouthChorus.org. Families can access many documents from the website, such as our registration forms, season calendars, scholarship forms, and info on advertising in our concert programs. You can also find upcoming events, choir and director information, reviews, a photo gallery, and our Board of Directors. Donations to CCYC can be made through the website as well.

Online Communication

Throughout the year, the CCYC will be sending weekly emails and newsletters, and will utilize the CCYC website for updates to the calendar and other essential information. Please notify us if

you do not have reliable access to the internet. We also regularly post information and updates to our social media pages:

www.facebook.com/CCYouthChorus

www.instagram.com/central_coast_youth_chorus

Publicity

Privacy and security are important to the CCYC. We ask on our registration form if we may use a singer's image in photograph or video in publicity efforts for our concerts or for our organization in general. This includes online publicity on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and on our website. We never include a singer's name or address with the picture and carefully protect our singers' identities. Let the Executive Director know if you have any questions regarding this policy.

Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact our CCYC office at info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org, your Choir Director, or a Board Member. Please keep us informed of anything that you think may influence your singer's behavior. This helps us to better serve our singers and families. All information will be kept in confidence.

♪ Uniforms

Just as the ensemble's sound is important, so is the ensemble's appearance. A well-groomed, neatly uniformed ensemble is essential for a truly professional and artistic experience. Good personal hygiene is a must for all singers. The formal uniform is loaned to each choir member for the choir year. The uniform must be returned in the same condition as it was received. Lost or damaged items will be billed to the singer. Uniforms should be washed and hung neatly between performances and should not be worn to other events.

Brio Girls:

Burgundy Blouse (Fall) / Royal Blue Blouse (Winter/Spring), Black Skirt
(Please supply all-black closed-toe shoes and full-length black tights.)

Cadence Girls:

Black Sparkle Blouse (Fall) / Navy Blue Blouse (Winter/Spring), Black Skirt
(Please supply all-black closed-toe shoes and full-length black tights.)

Brio/Cadence/Cadenza Boys:

White Shirt, Bow Tie, Vest
(Please supply black dress pants, black socks, black shoes.)

Cadenza/Grace Notes/Vivace/Advanced Vocal Ensemble:

Long Black Dress, Necklace provided by CCYC
(Please supply all-black closed-toe shoes and full-length black tights or black nylons.)

Young Men's Ensemble:

Shirt and tie to be assigned.

(Please supply black dress pants, black socks, black shoes.)

Hair should be clean, combed, and groomed away from the face. No large hair ties, bows or adornments. **Make-up** should not be worn by the younger choirs, and should be worn discreetly by the singers in the older choirs. Accessories, watches, or any distracting jewelry is not permitted. Stud earrings are permissible.

The Informal Uniform is as follows:

Solid black shirt or blouse, casual closed-toe shoes, nice black or dark jeans or pants.

♪ Contact Information

Address: PO Box 15757, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Phone: 805-464-0443

Email: info@CentralCoastYouthChorus.org

Website: www.CentralCoastYouthChorus.org

We thank you in advance for entrusting your singer to us; we appreciate each and every one of them!

Music can, and does, change lives!