Blair Children’s Chorus Handbook
Mary Biddlecombe, Artistic Director
Sarah Bronchetti, Assistant Director
Tucker Biddlecombe, Director of Choral Activities and Young Men’s Chorus Director
Julie Claverie, Program Administrator

Vanderbilt University Blair Academy Program
Mary Biddlecombe, Director
Seth Soloway, Associate Dean for Presenting and External Relations
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Blair Children’s Chorus Ensembles Chorale ........................................................................3
Concert Choir, Young Men’s Chorus

Blair Children’s Chorus Ensembles (cont’d) ......................................................................4
Choristers, Young Singers of Blair, Training Choir

Student Conduct Rules Chorale .........................................................................................5
Concert Choir, Young Men’s Chorus

Student Conduct Rules Choristers ....................................................................................6

Student Conduct Rules Young Singers of Blair ..................................................................7
and Training Choir, Pick up/drop off procedures

COVID19 Policies ..............................................................................................................8

Letter to BCC Parents ........................................................................................................9

TENTATIVE Calendar, Extra Concerts, Website .................................................................10

Registration .......................................................................................................................11

Tour/Camp Guidelines ........................................................................................................12

Chaperone Guidelines .......................................................................................................13

Chaperone Protection of Minors and Background Checks, Concert Attire, Forms .........14

Parking, Students with Disabilities, Honor Code, Vanderbilt Protection of Minors
Provision ..........................................................................................................................15
BLAIR CHILDREN’S CHORUS PROGRAM ENSEMBLES

The Blair Children’s Chorus Tradition

The Blair Children’s Chorus Program was established as part of the pre-college division of Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University, in 1988. BCC has a distinguished history of sharing the love of music with hundreds of children, developing fine musicians and offering quality concerts to the Nashville community. Blair Children’s Chorus graduates have earned scholarships in music at some of the nation’s finest universities. Whatever their long-term pursuits may be, BCC graduates find that the poise, self-confidence and discipline learned in choir equips them well for the challenges ahead. The program is classically based, with strong emphases on healthy vocal production, music reading skills and performance. The singers, grades 1-12, come from all over the area. What brings these children together is a love of music, a desire to sing and make friends with other singers, and a dedication to achieving their musical goals.

BCC Chorale
Any BCC student who has completed at least 1 semester in grades 1-12
Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Wednesdays, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor
This choir is a small ensemble made up of auditioned BCC students. For admittance, students must demonstrate beautiful singing, good attendance in their primary choir, and a requisite understanding of solfege and handsigns. This choir is in addition to their primary choir, so students in Chorale are involved in the Blair Children’s Chorus program twice/week. This group performs with the Nashville Symphony, on the BCC Fall and Spring concerts and many other opportunities around the Nashville community.

BCC Concert Choir
Girls, Grades 8-12
Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Mondays, 4:45 – 6:15 p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor
This select touring choir gives multiple concerts each year, tours each summer and attends a weekend fall camp. Concert Choir has performed numerous times with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and other area arts organizations. Recent concert tours and festivals have taken the choir to Budapest, Prague, Ireland, Costa Rica, Indiana, New Mexico and Oregon. Important Note: typically, new members admitted in fall semester only. If a student is unable to travel with the choir, they are welcome to audition to sing with Choristers.

BCC Young Men’s Chorus
Boys with changed/changing voices
Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Thursdays 6:10 – 7:20 p.m; Tucker Biddlecombe, conductor
The Young Men’s Chorus is for boys whose voices are in the process of changing or have already changed. We work on healthy vocal technique and new ways of using voices as they go through transition. Repertoire includes pieces for men’s voices and ensemble pieces to sing with the other Blair Children’s Choruses. There are several opportunities to perform each semester. Travel has taken them to several states, Carnegie Hall and an international tour to Germany. A good sense of pitch, unforced sound and a willingness to explore new ways of singing are needed for this group.
BCC Choristers
*Students in grade 5 and up*
Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Mondays, 6:45 – 7:45 p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor
This intermediate choir is made up of students in grades 5 – 12 who are learning about singing with healthy vocal technique, furthering their development as musicians through solfege, Curwin handsigns, and repertoire appropriate for intermediate learners. Students in this choir sing 2 - 4 concerts per year and attend camp each fall. They sometimes join other BCC choirs in performances in the Nashville area and have enjoyed weekend tours to several states. In 2020, members of the Choristers were invited to travel to Mobile, AL to perform for the American Choral Directors Association Southern Division conference.

BCC Young Singers of Blair
*Students in grades 3 - 5*
Rehearsals are in room 2190, Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m; Sarah Bronchetti, conductor
Singers in the YSB work on healthy, beautiful singing in unison, two parts, rounds and canons. They receive music reading instruction through Curwin handsigns and solfege while learning about musical concepts on the page. This choir typically sings with the Training Choir and explores singing harmony and descants rather than the melody. A beautiful, unforced tone is desired for admittance into the Young Singers of Blair.

BCC Training Choir
*Students in grades 1-4*
Rehearsals are in room 2192, Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
This choir focuses on the beginnings of beautiful singing in an ensemble. Singing, kinesthetic music activities and fundamentals are the heart of this group’s focus. These developing singer musicians will learn how to find the singing voice and produce it beautifully with an unforced yet energized approach. By learning the language of music, it is our hope that students increase their enjoyment of music. They begin recognizing musical concepts by looking at notated music. They sing mostly in unison while typically joining the Young Singers of Blair in part singing, rounds, canons and call and response. Students must be able to read words to be admitted into the group. This group will perform once a semester, with a focus on learning and enjoyment.
STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Concert Choir/Young Men’s Chorus/Chorale
Each Choir Member Will:

1. **Attend all rehearsals, camps, retreats, tours, and concerts.**
   a. At least twenty-four hours notice must be given for any absence to be excused. This notice must be given by a parent/guardian via email or phone. If a student is not in rehearsal and we don’t know about it, parents will receive an email.
   b. Students will not be excused from performances and/or dress rehearsals, except under extraordinary circumstances. Students who are absent for performances will be subject to suspension from the program for up to one semester.
   c. Attendance and participation for all tours is expected. This includes domestic and international touring. If a student decides not to tour with the ensemble, they should not expect to remain with the ensemble for that semester.
   d. Rehearsal attendance will be monitored. Three unexcused absences during a semester will result in a potential one semester suspension (student will not be allowed to perform, tour, etc.).
   e. Excessive excused absences may have to be addressed in a meeting with the Artistic Director, the student, and parent/guardian.

2. **Treat your directors and administrators with respect and compliance.**
   a. Noncompliance with directions from either directors or administrators will not be tolerated.
   b. Noncompliance in rehearsal or performances judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the immediate removal of the student from the program.

3. **Treat your fellow chorus members as you would wish to be treated.**
   a. Any rude or inconsiderate behavior toward your fellow chorus members will not be tolerated. Pejorative language or behavior will not be tolerated.
   b. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Artistic Director, BCC Administrator, and parent/guardian present.

4. **Come to rehearsal prepared, and on time.**
   a. Concert Choir, Young Men’s Chorus and Chorale members will be responsible to bring their music to each rehearsal. Promptness to rehearsal is expected.
   b. Students should be in their proper position by the start of physical warmups. The director will start on time. Repeated instances of tardiness may result in a meeting with the Artistic Director and parent/guardian.
STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Choristers

Each Choir Member Will:

1. **Attend all rehearsals, camps, retreats, and concerts.**
   a. Please give at least twenty-four hours notice if a student will be absent from rehearsal. This notice must be given by a parent/guardian via email or phone. If a student is not in rehearsal and we don’t know about it, parents will receive an email/phone call.
   b. Students will not be excused from performances and/or dress rehearsals, except under extraordinary circumstances. Students who are absent for performances will need to meet with their guardian and the Artistic Director and will be subject to immediate removal from the program.
   c. Rehearsal attendance will be monitored. Three unexcused absences during a semester will result in a potential suspension (student will not be allowed to perform, tour, etc.).
   d. Excessive excused absences may have to be addressed in a meeting with the Artistic Director, the student, and parent/guardian

2. **Treat your directors and administrators with respect and compliance.**
   a. Noncompliance with directions from either directors or administrators will not be tolerated, either in rehearsals or on tours.
   b. Noncompliance in rehearsal or performances judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the immediate removal of the student from the program.
   c. Noncompliance during camp or tours judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the student being sent immediately home at the expense of the parent or guardian.

3. **Treat your fellow choristers as you would wish to be treated.**
   a. Any rude or inconsiderate behavior toward your fellow chorus members will not be tolerated. Pejorative language or behavior will not be tolerated in rehearsals, camp or on tour.
   b. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Executive Director, BCC Administrator, Artistic Director, and parent/guardian present.

4. **Come to rehearsal prepared, and on time.**
   a. Chorister members will be responsible for bringing their music to each rehearsal.
   b. Students should be in their proper position by the start of physical warmups. The director will start on time. Repeated instances of tardiness may result in a meeting with the Artistic Director and parent/guardian.
STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Training Choir and Young Singers of Blair

Each Choir Member Will:

1. Come to rehearsal prepared and on time.
   a. Be in assigned seats by the time rehearsal begins.
   b. Read instructions on the board and follow them. If there are no instructions written, wait for instructions from the teacher.

2. Treat your directors and administrators with respect at all times.
   a. Purposeful noncompliance with directions from directors or administrators will not be tolerated.
   b. Any consistent mistreatment of directors or administrators will result in a disciplinary meeting with the student, parent and Artistic Director.
   c. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the student, Artistic Director, BCC Administrator, Director, and parent/guardian present.

3. Treat your fellow choristers as you would wish to be treated
   a. Please keep your hands to yourself at all times
   b. Please raise your hand to speak
   c. When other students are singing or speaking in turn, you are not.
   d. Be kind to those around you. Rude or inconsiderate behavior will not be tolerated.
   e. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Executive Director, BCC Administrator, Artistic Director, and parent/guardian present.

In return, we as a BCC staff will:

Choose engaging, varied, and appropriate repertoire; present quality performances to the community; cultivate an environment of dignity and respect; and responsibly attend to each student’s educational needs.

Pick Up/Drop Off procedures:

- Starting 10 minutes prior to rehearsal, teachers will wait outside Blair with students until class start time. The choir will go inside as a group to their rehearsal space.
- After rehearsal, students will walk outside as a group. Students should let a teacher know when they see their adult so the teacher can watch them go to their parent/car.
*COVID-19 Policies*

We celebrate the gradual return to in-person youth programs at Vanderbilt and appreciate your partnership in upholding our policies designed to keep your child safe while allowing them to continue their musical development.

Blair Academy enrollment is opening online Monday, December 6.

All students and families must read and agree to these policies before enrolling in lessons, classes, or ensembles for Spring 2022:

- Following the Provost’s direction, we have resumed in-person instruction in certain areas.
- Per Vanderbilt University policy, facemasks/coverings are required in all indoor spaces by children older than age 2, regardless of vaccination status. A limited number of disposable masks will be available, please let your instructor know if you need one.
- At this time, no parents/guardians are allowed in the Blair building. Students taking in-person courses should be dropped off at the front door where they will be met by their instructor. At the end of their lesson/class students will be escorted by the instructor to the front door for pick up. At no point in time will students be left unattended in the building.
- Do not send students to Blair if they are exhibiting signs of illness. If your student receives a positive COVID test result within 48 hours after being in the Blair building, contact their instructor or program leader immediately.
- If your student is on quarantine/isolation order from school or another activity do not send your student to Blair until the quarantine/isolation period has ended.
- Students are expected to observe standard social distancing practices of staying 3 feet apart at all times.
- In the event of a COVID-19 exposure or outbreak, affected students, faculty and staff will be contacted by phone and/or email and asked to quarantine. As conditions change, Blair Academy will communicate any policy updates via email and our website.

Vanderbilt is following public health guidelines to reduce the spread of infection; however, Vanderbilt cannot guarantee that I/my child will not become infected with COVID-19. I acknowledge that I/my child cannot be protected from all risk of illness caused by COVID-19. As a participant in the Program or parent/guardian (if participant is under age 18), I voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19 or any infectious disease. I understand that the rules and regulations of the Program and Vanderbilt are designed for the safety and protection of all participants and I hereby agree I/my child will abide by these rules and regulations. I release Vanderbilt from any claim based on the spread or contraction of COVID-19 in connection with my participation in the Program, and I agree to hold Vanderbilt harmless from any third-party claim based on that participation.

*families agree to these policies when they register for the Blair Academy and the Blair Children’s Chorus*
To BCC Parents:

In all my conversations with colleagues all over the country, never once did we discuss a global pandemic and how it might affect choral singing. But here we have been for nearly two years. We have survived. We wear our masks, we stay distanced, but we still make music together.

In our time here at Vanderbilt, we’ve learned how special and unique the Blair Children’s Chorus is. Our greatest strength is the ability to address every significant developmental level of a student’s musical growth, and we will continue to structure our program for full inclusion and maximum quality. We’ve even done this through a pandemic.

Our students have been resilient, and our families have been truly incredible and supportive. We couldn’t have made it this far without you. We’ve learned how to sing with masks on. We’ve learned how to be understood with those masks on. We’ve learned how to sing together apart and then together again, just really far away from each other! The challenges these students have faced have been absolutely unbelievable, but they just do it. I’ve said it throughout this pandemic, kids are resilient. They can do anything, and they have shown that to us in the BCC in spades.

While we are not back to 100% normal, I am grateful that we are together making music and enjoying each other’s company all the while being safe. Mrs. Claverie and I will continue to work to streamline communication with our families. Please be sure to read any communication you receive from us carefully!

As always, thank you for your continued involvement in the BCC, and the Blair Academy program.

Mary Biddlecombe
Artistic Director
Blair Children’s Chorus
TENTATIVE CALENDAR (SPRING 2022)

For the most complete and up-to-date information, including times of rehearsals and concerts, please see our website: https://blair.vanderbilt.edu/blair-academy/blair-childrens-chorus.php

JANUARY
10 CH, CC rehearsals begin
12 CR rehearsals begin
13 TC, YSB, YMC rehearsals begin
17 NO REHEARSAL (MLK holiday)

FEBRUARY
23-24 NO REHEARSALS – Southern Region ACDA Conference

MARCH
14-17 NO REHEARSALS – Spring break

APRIL

MAY
6 Dress rehearsal
8 2:00PM BCC Spring Concert

KEY: CR = Chorale; CC = Concert Choir; CH = Choristers; TC = Training Choir; YSB = Young Singers of Blair; YMC = Young Men's Chorus

EXTRA CONCERTS OR REHEARSALS

The BCC is often asked to perform outside of our traditional concerts already on our schedule. Any extra rehearsals or concerts other than what is already in this handbook will be announced as soon as it is known so that plenty of notice is given. These will also be posted immediately on the BCC website calendar.

WEBSITE

All things BCC can be found at https://blair.vanderbilt.edu/blair-academy/blair-childrens-chorus.php. Please check the site frequently for information about everything from rehearsals to forms you will need throughout the year.
REGISTRATION

Blair requires students to be registered prior to receiving instruction. You must be a registered pre-collegiate student at Vanderbilt in order to participate in the Blair Children’s Chorus or any other program at the Blair Academy. Students who are not registered at the time of the first rehearsal will be invited to sit in the back of the rehearsal hall and observe the rehearsal.

Registration each semester can be completed by clicking on this link.

Parents may choose to pay in full at registration or may defer the payment and make monthly payments, and have until November 25 in the fall semester and April 25 in the spring to complete tuition payment. If you have questions regarding registration, please contact Arianna Schickel at arianna.schickel@vanderbilt.edu or at (615) 322-7659.
Camp/Tour Guidelines for BCC Chorus Members

Typically, we have Fall Camp for our Choristers, Concert Choir and Young Men's Chorus. Also, the Concert Choir typically tours each summer. The most important purpose of our camp is to further our musical skills. The fall camp will also give us the opportunity to make new friends and to bond with your fellow chorus members. At the fall camp, we are able to concentrate on forming a fantastic chorus by taking time to focus on rehearsal disciplines, music theory and repertoire.

We care about the health and safety of our chorus members. The rules below are important to make sure all chorus members have a happy and healthy camp experience.

CAMP RULES

1. Be respectful of all tour staff, BCC leaders, chaperones, and fellow chorus members.
2. Go to bed on time.
3. Be on time for all events.
4. Stay in the room/cabin after the stated time.
5. Clean up after yourselves.
6. Turn off cell phones in rehearsal.
7. Leave your hand-held gaming devices at home.
8. **NO GUM EVER!**
9. Do not touch the musical instruments.

CONSEQUENCES:

1. 1st offence: verbal warning
2. 2nd offence: loss of recreation/free time privileges
3. 3rd offence: meeting with Mrs. Biddlecombe; parent contacted
4. 4th offence: student will be sent home at parent’s expense.

Use of alcohol /drugs is strictly prohibited.

Severe infractions of the Tour Rules will result in immediate dismissal. Parents will be expected to pick up the child within 24 hours and no refunds will be provided.

These guidelines apply to all chorus members. Chaperones are expected to follow them and help the chorus members follow them as well.

As a member of the Blair Children’s Chorus, I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the BCC camp/tour rules.

Student Name _____________________________________________

Student Signature: _________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: _________________________________

Date ________________________________

12
BCC CHAPERONE CAMP/TOUR GUIDELINES

The first duty of the chaperone is to help the members of Blair Children’s Chorus have a safe and enjoyable experience. All of the rules are all based on that basic principle. Chaperones are asked and expected to remind students of the rules and help them comply with them.

Camp/Tour Behavior
- Adult chaperones are to guide students by word and example.
- Chaperones on duty are not to use alcohol/drugs.
- One-on-one interactions in private with minor children are prohibited. Take care to have other students or chaperones present.
- A chaperone may prevent, halt, or correct misbehavior, but may not impose a sanction for misbehavior.
- It is rare that a sanction needs to be imposed, but if it becomes necessary it can be imposed only by a leader employed by the Blair School of Music: Julie Claverie, Program Administrator, Mary Biddlecombe, Artistic Director, Sarah Bronchetti, Assistant Director, Tucker Biddlecombe, Director of Choral Activities.
- Mrs. Biddlecombe is the final authority in any situation or dispute.

Medical Release/Illness
- All adult chaperones are required to complete a Blair Adult Release form before traveling with the group.
- Medical release waivers for each student and chaperone shall be carried for all camps and tours. In case of an accident or illness, the medical release waivers, medical forms and copies of insurance card need to be presented to the treating facility.
- Chaperones are expected to be familiar with the location of the nearest medical facility to tour/camp activities and tour/camp emergency procedures.

Housing
- Overnight chaperones should not retire for the evening until all students are in their rooms, settled and secure at the required lights out time.
- Adult chaperones may not be housed in the same room with a child chorus member under age 18 including their own child.
- If there is a problem in the night (homesickness or illness for example) and one of the children you are chaperoning contacts you, do your best to comfort the child. Do not take the child to your room or stay in the room with the child for longer than a few minutes. If there is a problem that cannot quickly be taken care of, the chaperone must contact Mrs. Claverie, Mrs. Biddlecombe, Ms. Bronchetti or Dr. Biddlecombe.

Communication
- Each adult chaperone should possess and carry a charged cell phone.
- The cell phone numbers of all adults on tour or camp will be given out to the parents at home.
- Chaperones are required to report any personal or participant illness or injury to Mrs. Claverie, Mrs. Biddlecombe, Ms. Bronchetti or Dr. Biddlecombe immediately.

Finally, we love having you on tour us, and will encourage your involvement whenever possible. However, there will be times when the choir’s tour itinerary may not be convenient to individual or family desires. Because of this, we ask: if you are on tour with us, consider yourself a temporary staff member of the BCC. Decisions regarding itinerary and discipline will be made within the hierarchy of the BCC administrative tree, and we ask that you respect that authority when traveling with us.
CHAPERONE PROTECTION OF MINORS AND BACKGROUND CHECK

In order to comply with Vanderbilt rules regarding the safety and protection of our students, we are required to have background checks for all adults who are with our students. If you are interested in chaperoning, please contact Julie Claverie, BCC Administrator, so we can get you cleared ASAP.

CONCERT ATTIRE 2021-2022

Concert Choir and Young Men’s Chorus
BCC PROVIDED: $25 BCC black polo shirt
STUDENT PROVIDED: khaki pants/skirt, black shoes (any kind), black or nude socks/tights

Choristers
BCC PROVIDED: $15 BCC cardinal red t-shirt
STUDENT PROVIDED: khaki pants/skirt, black shoes (any kind) and black or nude socks/tights

Young Singers of Blair
BCC PROVIDED: $15 gold BCC t-shirt with logo
STUDENT PROVIDED: black pants or skirt, and any type of shoes that do not light up

Training Choir
BCC PROVIDED: $15 black BCC t-shirt with logo
STUDENT PROVIDED: Khaki pants or skirt, and any type of shoes that do not light up

FORMS

All BCC forms can be found at the website, https://blair.vanderbilt.edu/blair-academy/blair-childrens-chorus.php
PARKING POLICIES IN BLAIR SCHOOL LOTS

After 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and anytime on weekends, free parking is available in the West Garage. You must enter through the entrance on Children’s Way, directly across the street from the Blair School.

Visitor parking is available in South Parking Garage, at the corner of Children’s Way and 24th Avenue.

Vehicles parked in Blair lots without a valid permit will be ticketed and towed.

Vehicles parked in the Fire Lane or in areas not marked for parking will be ticketed and towed.

Please note: Parking may be adversely affected by Vanderbilt home football games. Families are advised to check the schedule and make alternate plans if necessary. Parking is limited and is not guaranteed. Prime usage times (most congested) are Mondays & Tuesdays from 3-9:30 p.m.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you need disability related accommodations for this course; if you have emergency medical information to share with me; or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

HONOR CODE

All students are expected to follow the Honor Code of Vanderbilt University. The Honor System is only one of the elements provided to Vanderbilt students with which each may develop creative thinking, intellectual maturity, personal accountability, and respect for honesty, integrity, and truth. The goal of the Honor System is to have all students leave Vanderbilt not only as graduates, but also as men and women of integrity. More information can be found at: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system

VANDERBILT PROTECTION OF MINORS PROVISION

The Vanderbilt University Statement on the Protection of Minors: The care and safety of our students is of primary importance to all at Vanderbilt. All Vanderbilt University personnel adhere to Tennessee state law on mandatory child abuse reporting to either the appropriate law enforcement agency or the state hotline operated by the Department of Children’s Service. In addition to external reporting, Vanderbilt has a mandatory internal child abuse reporting procedure. If you have reason to believe abuse or inappropriate behavior has occurred concerning a minor participating in a Vanderbilt University program, please consult the program...
director, or Risk Management (615-322-5155), or report via the Vanderbilt hotline at 844-814-5935. The Tennessee Child Abuse reporting hotline number is 877-237-0004.

The 2021-2022 BCC Handbook serves as the official syllabus of the program. All BCC students and faculty are expected to abide by the policies and procedures of the Handbook.