



**Singer & Family Handbook
2025-2026**

Mailing Address

883 Linden Road
Eighty Four, PA 15330
724-949-0048
www.shcchoir.org

Rehearsal Site

Wright's United Methodist
788 Venetia Road
Venetia, PA 15367

WELCOME FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to the South Hills Children's Choir (SHCC)! I am excited that you are joining us for our seventh season of singing, learning, creating, and performing. It is a great privilege to teach vocal technique, choir etiquette, and an appreciation for a variety of different musical genres to such bright and talented kids from the South Hills of Pittsburgh, a culturally alive city.

Leading students through the process of choral music and vocal development is something that brings me great joy. I am a choir nerd at heart. I truly love choral singing, and my passion is to share this with young singers. My choir friends are indeed lifelong friends. Some of them are even my personal advisors for SHCC! Choir is that kind of special: singing together leaves an indelible mark.

In addition to singing for local favorites, the Penguins, or venturing to Carnegie Hall or Washington D.C. or Southwark Cathedral in the United Kingdom, our singers find joy singing right here in our community. We perform each semester at local assisted living facilities, at community events, and even for philanthropic organizations. Singing touches hearts and encourages souls; there's that indelible mark again.

I look forward to a great year with your singer AND your family as we grow together, learn to appreciate choral literature, and just enjoy one another. Expect to see, hear, and experience new things. Expect to be stretched. Expect to develop vocally. Expect to be challenged. And expect to be moved. Singing together is just that amazing! This year's group of singers is wonderfully talented, intelligent, and full of vibrant potential.

Use this handbook to help you become a more constructive member of SHCC. Keep it nearby, as it contains much information – from absence policy to uniform procurement.

Thank you for being a part of the musical montage of SHCC. Get ready for a magnificent year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennie Nolan". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the name.

Jennie Nolan
Founder and Artistic Director

MISSION STATEMENT

South Hills Children's Choir is a non-profit community choir for young people which provides quality music education and artistic excellence through a variety of choral training, experiences, and performances. We seek to enrich the lives of our many unique and diverse singers. Our program fosters the personal and social growth of each member and promotes a sense of discipline and accomplishment through musical excellence. Rehearsals focus on beautiful singing, along with high quality and authentic repertoire which form the foundation for a life-long relationship with music. SHCC is a place to make friends, learn healthy vocal technique, gain a deeper appreciation of all musical arts, improve cognition, lift the spirit, learn empathy, and share the gift of song with those in need. Everyone can sing. Sing with us!

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION (The Legalese)

This corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law) or (b) by a corporation contributions to which are deductible under section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law).

Upon the dissolution of this corporation, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code) or shall be distributed to the Federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

OUR HISTORY AND CURRENT PROGRAM

We began SHCC in 2013 with the motivation to impart something beautiful in our community. A long time ago, in a children's choir far, far away – our Artistic Director was privileged to direct the San Diego Children's Choir. It was a joyful experience as we sang in many different locales, sharing wonderful music. The friendships created there were significant; the depth of choral singing was ear-opening. I was inspired! Eventually, the South Hills Children's Choir was born into the community that I have served and loved for the past 21 years.

We now have three different choral groups, offering a more fully rounded musical education.

Canticle, *our training choir for ages 8 -10*, meets Thursday nights from 5:00-6:00 p.m. This is the preparatory chorus for SHCC. It is a non-audition group where young singers will learn beginning solfege, unison singing with rounds and canons, and beginning vocal technique. Each week, singers participate in active, hands-on, Kodály-based lessons. This choir performs 3-4 times a year, particularly in our Winter and Spring Concerts, joining the two older choirs on occasional selections.

Concordia, *our intermediate choir for ages 11-13*, meets Thursday nights from 5:00-6:30 p.m. A singer must pass a brief audition to be a part of Concordia. At this level, singers participate in more advanced choral literature, two-part singing, descants, and other intermediate level songs. Instruction is in intermediate solfege, theory, and musicianship. This choir has the opportunity to perform 5-6 times a year, including our Winter and Spring Concerts.

Cadenza, *our advanced choir for ages 14-18*, meets Thursday nights from 6:15-8:15 p.m. These singers are ready for advanced music and technique, performing four-parts or more, working together as a unified, nuanced group. Advanced music theory, solfege, and Bel Canto vocal technique are taught. With opportunities to tour and sing for special occasions in the community, this group is mature, poised, and musically eloquent. Some previous music experience is strongly encouraged. Singers must also pass an audition to advance to this level, singing a solo without accompaniment, following vocal warm ups, completing listening exercises and brief sight singing testing.

CURRICULUM

High quality music from all styles and periods forms our educational foundation and serves as the basis for our curriculum. We believe that “children should be led to musical masterpieces by means of musical masterpieces” (Zoltán Kodály). Since the best musical experiences for developing singers is inherent in Great Works, our repertoire will include those of Kodály, Mozart, Bach, Handel, Haydn, Schubert, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Copland, Bartok, Faurè, and many others. In addition, SHCC members study and perform a variety of traditional folk, popular, gospel, spiritual, patriotic, and contemporary literature. The music chosen is commonly from the widest variety and performed in an array of settings. The repertoire is selected to educate the SHCC members and is not intended to impose or intrude upon anyone’s personal beliefs. Therefore, it is essential that all singers are willing to sing all of the repertoire.

Instruction in proper use of the vocal instrument consists of vocalises, posture and breathing exercises, and tone production activities. The essence of our musical training is singing-based. The human voice is ideal for teaching audiation (hearing music in one’s head), experiencing musical concepts, and developing musical intuition. Scientist Boris Kleber states, “To produce vocalizations including speech and song, the control of all muscles along the vocal tract (e.g. for respiration, vocal fold motion, resonance changes, and articulation) requires the concerted effort of a vast network of brain regions.” Along with strengthening the brain, singing skill and musical understanding are essential components to the creative process and fundamental concepts of music education.

MEMBERSHIP

The SHCC is to be a positive learning experience for all of its singers – one that they will carry with them throughout their life. These young people will be sharing wonderful times together both musically and socially. SHCC members are expected to understand and demonstrate commitment and responsibility. We encourage all youth to find gratification in their membership in this distinguished choral program. Every member is to remain active and committed to the program for the entire season of his/her enrollment, which begins in September and concludes with the Spring Concert in May.

AUDITIONS

Auditions for the SHCC are held in June and August for children entering grades four through twelve. Canticle singers need not audition, however, if new families are unsure of which choir level to join, an audition is highly recommended. Scheduling will be handled through our website. Special auditions may be arranged by contacting the SHCC office by phone or email.

Returning singers must participate in yearly reassessments, singing for their current directors to determine progress and potential advancement.

COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL MUSIC PROGRAMS

The success of the SHCC is dependent in large part on the support of music teachers throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. SHCC singers should be leaders in their school music ensembles. Every SHCC singer should strive to be an active participant in his or her school choir if one is available.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

TUITION AND FEES

The SHCC requires each member to pay fees annually based upon his/her choir assignment. A non-refundable registration fee of \$25 is required at the time of registration. This fee does not apply to tuition.

Tuition is \$500 (Canticle), \$550 (Concordia), and \$600 (Cadenza) per year if paid in full by October 1 (see chart below). This is a discount of up to \$70 over those paying by installment. Tuition includes a choir t-shirt and two tickets to each of the Winter and Spring concerts.

Tuition may be paid in installments **by check only** (see chart below). If paying in installments, a complete set of pre-dated payment checks must be submitted together by October 1 in order for students to participate in the choir. For your safety, checks will be kept in a secure location until deposited per the following schedule:

# of Checks	Date of Check	Canticle Initial/Subsequent	Concordia Initial/Subsequent	Cadenza Initial/Subsequent
One	October 1	\$500	\$550	\$600
Two	October 1 and January 1	\$260/\$260	\$285/\$285	\$310/\$310
Seven	1st of the month, October - April	\$125 (1) / \$62.50 (6)	\$137.50 (1) / \$68.75 (6)	\$150 (1) / \$75 (6)

Some financial assistance may be available upon request.

Additional discounts available:

- Pre-Registration before June 15: 10% off following year tuition
- Additional Sibling Discount: \$50
- Bring a Friend Enrollment: \$40

PAYMENT POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Fees for the season are due in full, even if a child drops out of the program or is removed at any time during the season. You are required to sign and return a Financial Contract with your Registration Form in order for your child to participate in the SHCC for the season.

You will receive a statement of account in September that shows your known fees for the year. Additional fees (uniform, tour, etc.) will be billed as they are incurred, though we strive to keep these at a minimum and choir costs affordable.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

Currently, tuition may be paid by check **only**. All tuition checks (including all pre-dated installment checks) are due by October 1.

Other donations and purchases may be completed via cash, check (made out to "South Hills Children's Choir"), or via Paypal (adding a 2.5% Paypal fee). Any checks returned by the bank to the SHCC will be subject to a \$40.00 fee per item.

REHEARSALS PROCEDURES

These procedures are enforced for the singers' safety, to ensure orderly rehearsals, and out of respect and courtesy for each other.

- Arrive 10 minutes before designated rehearsal time and go directly the attendance table to sign in before reporting to the rehearsal area. Do not arrive late.
- After signing in, go directly to your place.
- Late arrivals must always sign-in immediately upon arrival. Any child arriving more than 30 minutes late to two separate rehearsals will receive one unexcused absence. A written note is necessary for early dismissal from a rehearsal.
- Singers do not leave the room after signing in unless there is an emergency or special permission has been granted. Please use the restroom and get drinks before you sign in.
- Always bring your music folder, music word sheets, and two sharpened pencils to rehearsal.
- Leave attendance notes, payments, permission slips, etc., at attendance table.
- Do not roam about the building at any time. Students should only be in the rehearsal area, the foyer, or the upstairs bathroom. Running, yelling, and rowdy behavior are not permitted in the building or on the grounds at any time.
- Cell phone use is not permitted at all during rehearsal times. Please keep the volume off and phones out of sight, or these will spend quality time with the Attendance Table moms.
- Do not bring food or drink into the rehearsal area. Eat a nutritious meal before you arrive at rehearsal. You may, however, bring bottled water.
- If, for any reason, a child cannot actively participate in a rehearsal, the singer should bring a written note and observe quietly and attentively. Non-participating siblings must be supervised at all times.
- Singers are responsible for taking home any handouts that are distributed at rehearsals. These notices are important sources of information and should be requested by the parents from the singer. The SHCC will attempt to communicate through e-mail as much as possible.
- Parents and interested members of the community are always welcome and are encouraged to observe rehearsals as space allows. A parent should always accompany minor siblings.

- At all times show respect for each other, parent volunteers, directors, staff, and the facilities. Pay attention to the director at all times. Do not behave in a manner which is disruptive to the rehearsal or distracting to fellow singers and staff or which prohibits a positive and successful rehearsal.
- SHCC is not liable for any accident, injury, or altercation that may occur.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Disruptive behavior will result in the following consequences:

1. First offense - verbal warning
2. Second offense - a verbal warning, specifying that it is your second warning and removal from rehearsal is imminent.
3. Third offense- parents will be requested to sit in rehearsal with their singer.
4. Fourth offense - removal from rehearsal. Following the rehearsal, there will be a brief meeting with the director and the singer. Parents will be contacted to pursue further action.

Removal from a second rehearsal will result in a meeting with the singer, parents, director, and an SHCC staff or board member.

Removal from a third or subsequent rehearsal will result in a leave of absence from the program, the length to be determined on an individual basis. It may also result in removal from the program.

Any singer caught with drugs, drug paraphernalia, or any type of weapon (including pocket knives) will be immediately suspended from the program.

REHEARSAL PROCEDURES

ABSENCES FROM REHEARSAL

Membership in the SHCC is a commitment to faithful, consistent, and punctual attendance. It is expected that all rehearsals take a high priority in each singer's life.

A choir member is allowed three excused absences per semester. In order to be *excused*, the SHCC office must be notified before the missed rehearsal via email, phone, or written note. Parents must also submit a written excuse for each tardiness or early dismissal (this can be done via e-mail). **More than three excused absences will require attendance at a make-up rehearsal at the discretion of the director.**

Failure to notify the office **before an absence occurs** will result in an unexcused absence. Excessive and unexcused absences will forfeit the singer's place in the upcoming concert and may result in dismissal from the SHCC program.

All written excuses should include the child's name, name of his/her choir, reason for absence, tardiness, or dismissal, and a parent signature. Notice as far in advance as possible is appreciated. If a singer is tardy 30 minutes or more to two separate rehearsals, the singer may be required to attend a make-up rehearsal to be scheduled by the director.

The final dress rehearsal before a concert is mandatory. If a singer is absent from this final rehearsal, he or she **may not be allowed to perform**. Sound checks, staging, and other final details are handled at these rehearsals, and, thus, it is important that the director knows how many singers to expect.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FROM REHEARSAL

If no contact has been made with the SHCC prior to an absence, it will be considered unexcused. **All unexcused absences must be made up.** If a singer is unable to demonstrate commitment to the SHCC through good attendance and punctuality, the singer may not be allowed to perform. Should an excessive number of excused or unexcused absences occur, removal from the program will be considered.

SPRING BREAK GUIDELINES

SHCC does not take a spring break but respects that many of our singers do. With the large number of school districts represented, please inform the choir via e-mail or phone message if your choir member will be taking a spring break and when, which is considered an excused absence.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, check the choir website (shcchoir.org) or WPXI closings by 5 p.m. on the rehearsal night for cancelations. The SHCC will do its best to find a make-up time for these missed rehearsals. If you feel that weather is not safe for you to travel, but the choir is still meeting, please leave a message with the Choir office: text 724 949-0048 or email office@shcchoir.org.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Any singer absent because of a major religious holiday shall not have the absence counted against him/her. These absences should be pre-arranged.

PERFORMANCE PROCEDURES

Performances require the very best conduct, appearance, and musicianship. Information concerning specific concerts will be distributed on performance detail sheets prior to these events. Singers should conduct themselves at all times in a calm, polite, and professional manner. They must be respectful of the SHCC staff and appointed chaperones at all times.

PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required at all scheduled performances. If a school performance conflict occurs, this must be reported in writing two weeks prior to the performance.

- Singers should always eat a nutritious meal and get plenty of rest before a performance. Be sure the singer has used the restroom prior to arrival at the performance site.
- Singers should arrive ten minutes before the performance call time and immediately check in.
- Tardiness to a performance may exclude a singer from participation at that performance.
- All performers must arrive wearing proper concert dress attire as noted in the performance detail sheet. Failure to wear proper concert dress will result in non-

participation in the performance. Singers should remain in their complete uniform until they have left the performance site.

- All singers must know the music. Each musician must have a confident command of the performance repertoire. Failure to demonstrate this at the final rehearsal may result in release from the corresponding concert commitment.
- If a singer feels ill during a performance, he/she should quietly sit down on the riser and rest for the remainder of the song. Then, if feeling better, the singer may get up and sing again, or if not, quietly leave the stage. Chaperones are always watching and will help if necessary. Once a singer leaves the stage he/she may not return.

EXCUSED ABSENCES FROM PERFORMANCES

Acceptable reasons for an excused absence from a MANDATORY PERFORMANCE:

*Illness

*Death in the Family

*School Music Performance

All absences from mandatory performances must be pre-approved by the director two weeks prior to the performance. Any exception to the above reasons must be in writing to the director two weeks prior to the performance.

TICKETS

Our ticket revenue helps offset the costs involved with the performance. These costs include hall/space rental for concerts and dress rehearsals, equipment rental, moving costs, and expenses for additional musicians.

Each chorister will receive 2 free tickets which will be held at the will call table and can be picked up the night of the concert. Additionally, families can reserve tickets for a donation of any amount at shcchoir.org or purchase the night of the performance.

FORMAL AND CASUAL UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS

Cadenza Girls' Formal Uniform

Cadenza Girls will wear Green floor-length concert dresses to be purchased through the SHCC for \$65 (add \$10 for size 18 and above). Plain black flats (with no embellishments) are to be worn on the feet. Hair is to be kept neat and out of the face.

Concordia Girls' Formal Uniform

Concordia Girls will wear Black knee-length concert dresses with green sashes to be purchased through the SHCC for \$56.50 (add \$10 for size 18 and above). Nude nylons and plain black flats (with no embellishments) are to be worn on the feet. Hair is to be kept neat and out of the face. Jewelry is to be kept to a minimum.

Canticle Girls' Formal Uniform

Canticle Girls will wear a Target black skirt & Lands' End white shirt to be purchased from the SHCC for \$27. Please keep the shirt and skirt only for choir performances so it is free from stains and wear. Black opaque tights and plain black flats (with no embellishments) are to be worn on the feet. Tartan headbands will be worn in the hair which may be checked out at the beginning of the seasons from the SHCC and returned at the Spring Concert. Lost headbands will require a \$15 replacement fee.

Cadenza, Concordia, and Canticle Boys' Formal Uniform

Boys will wear clean, pressed white dress shirt. Please keep the shirt only for choir performances so it is free from stains and wear. Each level requires a different tie:

*Cadenza Boys— forest green tie (purchased thru SHCC)	\$12.00
Tuxedo pants (purchased through SHCC)	\$26.00
Black dress shoes	
*Concordia Boys— Tartan plaid tie (purchased thru SHCC)	\$12.00
Black dress slacks, black belt, black dress shoes	
*Canticle Boys— <i>tartan plaid</i> bow tie (purchased thru SHCC)	\$12.00
Black dress slacks, black belt, black dress shoes	

No cords or cargo pants. Plain, black dress shoes are to be worn.

Casual Uniforms

The SHCC provides a "Music Alone Shall Live" choir t-shirt for some performances such as local sports events. Along with this t-shirt choristers should wear full-length blue jeans that are clean, and not torn, worn, or faded. Wear white ked-like shoes for girls and sneakers for boys. In addition, Cadenza singers will purchase an SHCC polo for \$12 to be worn at special touring events.

General Notes

A call sheet will be sent out for each performance specifying which uniform to wear. All choristers must have the above uniform for each performance unless otherwise noted. If not in proper concert attire, a chorister will not be allowed to perform. No exceptions.

As the ensemble's sound is important, so is a choir's appearance. A well-groomed, neatly uniformed ensemble is essential for a quality, artistic experience. Good personal hygiene is a must for all singers. Shirts must be tucked into pants. Clean, well-groomed singers make happy performers. Keep hairstyles away from the face, fastening it with natural (matching hair color) barrettes (no bows, ribbons, colored barrettes). Please no excessive make-up, hairstyles, or jewelry during performances. Avoid perfumes for the sake of all choristers. One ring per hand and only stud earrings will be allowed (no more than two per ear). Keep accessories limited.

MUSIC

The SHCC Music Library is a great asset. Care should be taken to keep the music in good condition. Individual folders are issued to each singer at the beginning of the season. It is the singer's responsibility to take good care of these and to keep from losing them. All folders and music are the property of the SHCC and must be turned at the Final Run-Through before the Fall and Spring Concert. New folders will be issued each semester. If music or folders are lost, irreparably damaged, or not returned, an additional fee will be charged to cover replacement costs. The fee will be \$3 per piece of music, \$15 for books, or \$40 for a folder and music. Take care to remove all personal items from your folder at the end of the season.

HANDLING AND CARE OF MUSIC

Music must be brought to all rehearsals unless you are notified otherwise.

- Never fold or roll music.
- Never write on music without the permission of the director. Any markings should be done lightly, in pencil, and only at the direction of the music director. A sharpened pencil should be brought to each rehearsal.
- Do not deface any piece of music. Blank pages or portions of the music are NOT for drawing pictures, writing personal notes, etc. Photocopied music is done with permission and should be treated the same as an octavo.
- If for any reason a piece of music is in need of repair, please do so properly with clear tape OR bring it to the attention of your director.
- Please maintain your folder, keeping it clean and in good condition.

VOLUNTEERS

As a non-profit organization, the SHCC depends on volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are numerous and diverse, from office assistance to special projects. The staff of the SHCC, which welcomes all interested parents to help keep the choir going and growing, coordinate all volunteer efforts.

ABUSE PREVENTION

The South Hills Children's Choir takes seriously the health and well being of its choristers. To ensure that rehearsals and performances are safe environments for your children, the staff and volunteers are bound to safe behavior as described in the "SHCC Child Abuse Prevention Policy" document. This document is available by request.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the event of a crisis, which can include severe weather, pandemic resurgence, fire, or other life-threatening occurrences, the Choir Director, Choir Assistant or other SHCC board member will notify families of event/rehearsal cancellations.

LEADERSHIP

Jennie Nolan is the founder and current director of the South Hills Children's Choir. She received a Bachelor of Music degree in Choral Music from Biola University and is Kodaly-certified. She is currently completing graduate studies in Choral Conducting at Messiah College. She formerly directed the San Diego Children's Choir and has led various church choirs in addition to teaching band, classroom music, writing, and English.

Jennie has sung with the Pittsburgh Camerata, Bach Choir, and other local choral groups. She directs music activities at View Crest Church, teaches music to 3rd through 6th graders at Blackburn Study Center, and educates her own girls at home. She loves to run, bake, travel, and sing for and with her husband.

SHCC ARTISTIC STAFF

Jennie Nolan, *Founder and Artistic Director*

Meghan Hilker, *Concordia Director*

Laura Roberts, *Accompanist*

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SHCC ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Heather Black, *Administrator & Board Secretary*

Shaun Nolan, *Treasurer/Website*

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SHCC BOARD

Jennie Nolan, *Founder and Artistic Director*

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Contact the board with questions or comments at

board@shcchoir.org



I (we), the parent(s) of _____ have
(print name of your child(dren))
read the handbook of the South Hills Children's Choir and agree to
comply by the standards therein.

(parent's signature)

(date)