

Choral Program Handbook

2026-2027



WELCOME!

Welcome, choristers and families—both returning and new!

Welcome to the Choral Music Program at Confederation Centre of the Arts! You are joining a program with a long history of excellence in the art of choral singing. I hope that you will find great joy, meaningful connection, and musical fulfillment through participation in the Centre's ensembles and classes.

Our aim is that the learning and growth you experience as a musician and a member of this community will fuel a lifelong love of singing and music-making.

Please read this handbook carefully and thoroughly to help ensure the smooth operation of the Choral Program, continue building our musical community, and foster the highest quality musical experience for all participants.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me or other members of the Arts Academy leadership as listed in the directory at the front of this handbook. Thank you for being here and I'm looking forward to making beautiful music together!

Warm regards,



Nick MacDonald (he/him) | (il/lui)

Director of Choral Music | Directeur de Musique Chorale

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Land Acknowledgement

The Centre acknowledges that the land on which it operates is the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality, and culture of the Mi'kmaq people— who have lived here for over 15,000 years.

Arts Academy

The Confederation Centre of the Arts is entering an exciting new chapter. We are pleased to announce that all of our arts education programming is being rebranded under a new name: ***The Arts Academy***.

We are thrilled to grow alongside our students and families as we work toward becoming a nationally recognized arts education organization. We also look forward to welcoming you into our new, purpose-built spaces for arts programming by the end of 2026 in the newly renovated wing of the Centre.

Thank you for being part of this exciting evolution.



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About The Choral Program

The Choral Music Program offers several community ensembles serving a broad range of age and skill level: The Youth Chorus (Junior, Intermediate, and Senior) for ages 8-18, and the Confederation Singers for ages 18+.

Each choral group rehearses weekly, September through May, and presents a series of annual concerts along with additional performance opportunities and creative collaborations at Confederation Centre venues and beyond. The three divisions of the Youth Chorus regularly perform both separately and combined.

Vision, Mission, & Goals

Our vision is for all participants to feel empowered to sing, connect, and grow as individuals and as part of a supportive and inclusive musical community. Our mission is to build capable, creative, and compassionate choral musicians whose skills carry over to enrich many other aspects of their lives.

Our goal is to grow in the following areas:

- **Excellent Musicianship**
- **Diverse Repertoire**
- **Welcoming Community**

Why Choir?

Choral music possesses a truly magical ability to connect and inspire people. Along with teaching valuable and fulfilling musical skills that keep our minds sharp and our hearts open, the art of group singing offers countless benefits to our overall health and well being. It helps us tell our stories and listen deeply to others'. It helps us express our emotions and regulate our nervous systems. And it brings us together in the sheer joy of music making!



Membership

Previous musical experience is considered an asset but is not required. The only prerequisites are the ability to match pitch and an interest in collective singing!

Individual 10- to 15-minute voice checks take place before the start of each season for both new and returning choristers to assess skills, determine voice part placement, and help meet the needs of each singer as part of the ensemble.

Interested singers are encouraged to reach out with questions, book an introductory meeting with the Choral Director, or observe a rehearsal to see if singing at the Centre will be a good fit for them!

Once registered, watch your email for a welcome package with more information and next steps, including voice check booking. Youth will be placed in the Junior, Intermediate, or Senior divisions based upon voice check results.

Voice Checks

The voice check is a 10-15 minute individual vocal assessment with the Choral Director for all new and returning youth and adult choristers. The purpose is to evaluate vocal technique and musicianship skills, determine voice part assignment and ensemble placement (if applicable), and connect one-on-one with the Director to help meet the needs of each chorister.

Voice checks are offered at no charge, and parents/guardians of youth are welcome to be in the room during the appointment. No specific musical materials or preparation are required, but singers are welcome to come prepared to perform a short (1-2 min) song or passage in any style that they feel comfortable singing unaccompanied.



Ensembles

Junior Youth Chorus

Age: 8-10

Skill level: Beginner/Novice

Thursdays

5:00pm to 6:00pm

In the Junior Youth Chorus singers are introduced to the fundamentals of choral singing, exploring the foundations of healthy vocal technique, essential musical concepts, and basic group collaboration in a welcoming, supportive environment. Through the process of learning and performing songs in a variety of styles along with engaging warm-ups and activities, choristers focus on developing excellent and expressive singing skills in unison as well as rounds and partner songs. No previous vocal or choral experience is necessary to apply.

Intermediate Youth Chorus

Age: 10-13

Skill level: Experienced/Competent

Thursdays

6:15pm to 7:30pm

In the Intermediate Youth Chorus singers build on their vocal and choral skills, delving deeper into healthy vocal technique, more complex musical concepts, and working as a team to grow in ensemble connection in a welcoming, supportive environment. Through the process of learning and performing songs in a variety of styles along with engaging warm-ups and activities, choristers focus on developing excellent and expressive singing in unison and 2-part harmony. Previous vocal and choral experience is considered an asset but is not required to apply.

Senior Youth Chorus

Age: 13-18

Skill level: Proficient/Advanced

Tuesdays - 6:00pm to 7:30pm

In the Senior Youth Chorus singers work to master their vocal and choral skills, practicing healthy vocal technique, connecting with musical concepts to help understand and express the music, and deepening their attunement to ensemble in a welcoming, supportive environment. Through the process of learning and performing songs in a variety of styles along with engaging warm-ups and activities, choristers focus on developing excellent and expressive singing in 2- to 4-part harmony. Previous vocal and choral experience is recommended but is not required to apply.

Confederation Singers

Age: 18+

Skill level: Novice-Advanced

Mondays - 7:00pm to 9:00pm

The Confederation Singers is a community chorus of mixed voices that aims to foster excellent musicianship, healthy vocal technique, and engaged ensemble skills for all choristers in a welcoming, supportive environment. The choir performs a diverse selection of repertoire both accompanied and a capella, focusing on contemporary composers and songwriters while incorporating music of earlier historical eras in a variety of styles. Previous vocal and choral experience is considered an asset but is not required to apply.

Youth Chorus Placement

Singer placement in Junior, Intermediate, or Senior divisions of the Youth Chorus will be based on voice check results under the following criteria:

- Level of musical and vocal skill and experience
- Stage of social-emotional and cognitive development
- Age



CLASS LOCATION

Location: The Mack Choir Room (128 Great George Street) – 2nd floor

The Confederation Centre's South Pavilion is currently undergoing renovations as part of our revitalization project. For the duration of the construction phase, our choral classes will be located at the above address.

Accessibility

The Mack Choir Room is accessible via the stairwell adjacent to the lobby. We acknowledge that this temporary rehearsal space may not be accessible for everyone – please contact us directly if you have any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to having fully accessible choral rehearsal space in the newly renovated Centre building.



Semester Breakdown & Fees

Choral registration is open annually between May and September. The fees below cover participation per term. Applicants may register for one or both terms at one time.

Winter Term: September–December

Spring Term: January–May

2026–2027 Junior, Intermediate & Senior Chorus Registration Fees

- **Early Bird Rate** (May–Jul): \$75 per term
- **Regular Rate** (Aug–Sep): \$85 per term

2026–2027 Confederation Singers Registration Fees

- **Early Bird Rate:** (May–Jul): \$68 per term
- **Regular Rate** (Aug–Sep): \$86.25 per term

Additional Fees

Junior, Intermediate, & Senior Youth Chorus caregivers are responsible for purchasing **uniform shirts**. The cost is approximately **\$42**. Please contact the Choral Director to place an order and/or to try on sample shirts for size.

Payment and Refund Deadline: October 1st, 2026

After the registration deadline has passed, any interested prospective choristers are encouraged to contact the Choral Director to explore the possibility of joining at the start of the following term.

2026–2027 Choral Season Important Dates

Administrative	Holidays/Closures	Performances	Youth Chorus	Confed Singers
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<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Detail</u>
Saturday August 1	Regular Choral Registration Opens	
Monday August 3 - Thursday August 20	Voice Checks for 2026-2027 Season	Mack Choir Room
Monday August 31	Confed Singers Rehearsals Begin	Mack Choir Room
Tuesday September 1	Senior Rehearsals Begin	Mack Choir Room
Thursday September 3	Junior Rehearsals Begin	Mack Choir Room
Thursday September 3	Intermediate Rehearsals Begin	Mack Choir Room
Monday, September 7	Labour Day	NO REHEARSALS
Wednesday, September 9	Confed Singers Rehearsal	Rescheduled from Labour Day
Wednesday September 30	Truth and Reconciliation Day	NO REHEARSALS
Wednesday September 30	Deadline: Choral Registration Payment and Refunds	
Monday October 12	Thanksgiving	NO REHEARSALS
Wednesday October 14	Confed Singers Rehearsal	Rescheduled from Thanksgiving
Wednesday, November 11	Remembrance Day	NO REHEARSALS

Tuesday December 1	Full Youth Chorus Rehearsal #1	Mack Choir Room
Thursday December 3	Full Youth Chorus Rehearsal #2	Mack Choir Room
Saturday December 5	Youth Chorus Winter Concert	Clancey Hall
Tuesday December 8 - Thursday December 10	Youth Chorus Open House Rehearsals	Final rehearsals of Winter Term Family and friends welcome!
Saturday December 19	Confed Singers Winter Concert	Clancey Hall
Sunday December 20 - Sunday January 3	Winter Break	NO REHEARSALS
Monday January 4	Confed Singers Rehearsals Resume	[New Choral Space]
Tuesday January 5	Senior Rehearsals Resume	[New Choral Space]
Thursday January 7	Junior Rehearsals Resume	[New Choral Space]
Thursday January 7	Intermediate Rehearsals Resume	[New Choral Space]

Monday February 15	Islander Day	NO REHEARSALS
Wednesday February 17	Confed Singers Rehearsal	Rescheduled from Islander Day
Monday March 22 - Thursday March 25	PSB March Break	REHEARSALS ONGOING
Monday March 29	Easter Monday	REHEARSALS ONGOING
Saturday April 17	Confed Singers Spring Concert	Clancey Hall or Memorial Hall
Monday April 19	Confed Singers Open House Rehearsal	Final rehearsal of Spring Term Family and Friends welcome!
Tuesday April 27	Full Youth Chorus Rehearsal #1	[New Choral Space]
Thursday April 29	Full Youth Chorus Rehearsal #2	[New Choral Space]
Saturday May 1	Youth Chorus Spring Concert	Clancey Hall or Memorial Hall
Tuesday May 4 - Thursday May 6	Youth Chorus Open House Rehearsals	Final rehearsals of Spring Term Family and friends welcome!

Communication

Choristers and Youth Chorus caregivers will receive important information via email, so please ensure you have provided us with an up-to-date email address that is checked regularly. We are happy to include multiple email addresses per family if you would like your correspondence sent to numerous recipients.

Please be sure that nmacdonald@confederationcentre.com & artseducation@confederationcentre.com are on your safe sender list to avoid emails accidentally going to your junk or spam folder and that you have the phone numbers for the Arts Academy (902.628.6134) and the Choral Director (902.628.6144) saved to your phone contacts.

Please read all incoming communications in a timely manner and respond as promptly as possible when necessary. Information may also be handed out in person at rehearsals or posted to online communication platforms.

Attendance & Commitment

All dress rehearsals, sound checks, and performances are considered mandatory. Please check your calendar against the rehearsal and performance schedule at the start of the season, block these dates in your calendar and inform us of any unavoidable scheduling conflicts in advance and as they arise. If you/your child anticipates being absent from 4 or more rehearsals in one term, it may be best to wait to join the program until more consistent participation is possible. Please don't hesitate to reach out to discuss in such a case.

If there is an illness or other unexpected circumstance that requires lateness or absence, please let us know as soon as possible. If any chorister is absent from or late to two or more rehearsals without notice, the Choral Director may reach out to check in, clear signals, and discuss how best to improve communication and/or attendance moving forward.



Rehearsal Seating & Materials

Seating

Seating and riser placement will be assigned at the discretion of the Choral Director, with consideration of vocal, musical, acoustic, behavioural, and accessibility factors.

What to Bring To Rehearsal

We ask that choristers come to rehearsal prepared with a bottle of water and a pencil, along with any assigned scores or other printed material in a folder or binder.

Accommodations

Singers and caregivers are welcome to share information regarding physical, medical, sensory, or other supplies or accommodations they may need during rehearsal so that we can best support engaged participation and avoid misinterpretation of these items/actions as distractions or disruptions.

Food & Drink

We encourage choristers to bring a water bottle to rehearsal in the interest of maintaining hydration for a healthy voice. Food and chewing gum are not permitted in rehearsal for reasons of safety and musical expression. Please contact the Choral Director with any health, sensory, or other questions related to food and drink in rehearsal.

Sheet Music

Please take good care of all sheet music, being careful not to bend, fold, or rip the pages. If three-hole punching sheet music for use in a binder, please check first that any holes will not obscure the printed music. Any marks made in the music must be in pencil and must be kept neat, legible, and easy to erase. Be sure to return all sheet music at the end of each term for proper filing and storage.

Music Folders

Junior, Intermediate & Senior

Printed materials in a folder will be provided to singers when necessary. If you would like to take these materials home to practice, see the Choral Director to sign them out and please be sure to bring them back to every rehearsal. Materials may also be sent to families via email/shared online resources. Youth Chorus concerts are performed memorized, so folders and sheet music are not necessary for performance

Music Folders

Confederation Singers

Please be sure to have a black three-ring binder or choral folder for use in rehearsal, individual practice, and performance, and bring it every time the chorus meets.



Rehearsal Procedures

The following guidelines are intended to assist all participants in being fully present while rehearsal is in session.

Arrival/Settling In

Our goal is to begin singing all together promptly at the start of rehearsal. To that end, **all choristers are expected to arrive no later than 5 minutes before the start of each rehearsal**, except in the case of extenuating circumstances. This will allow the necessary time for singers to store belongings, gather materials, check in with peers, get to their seats, and settle in before rehearsal begins.

Belongings

Please leave additional belongings such as coats, bags, cell phones, and other devices in designated areas separate from the rehearsal seating area. If certain items are required due to accessibility, sensory, or other needs (e.g. fidgets, assistive devices, etc.), please inform the Choral Director.

Washrooms

Please attend to washroom needs outside of the rehearsal period. Washrooms are located in the back of the audience section on the main floor of the Mack Theatre. If unexpected needs do arise during rehearsal, please inform the Choral Director. In this case, only one singer will be permitted to leave the group at any given time.

Outdoor Footwear

Please remove outdoor footwear before entering the rehearsal room. Singers are welcome to bring indoor shoes to change into when they arrive.

During Rehearsal

Rehearsals generally begin with 5-15 minutes of warm-ups with the goal of focusing the attention of the ensemble, building collective energy, preparing the body and mind for singing, and practicing key musical skills and concepts that will benefit the choir as we work on repertoire together.

Following the warm-up sequence, the Choral Director will lead the ensemble in rehearsing concert repertoire, interspersed with other activities intended to help develop the connection and energy of the group and to facilitate the most joyful, skilled, and fulfilling music-making experience possible.

Choristers with questions or comments while rehearsal is in session are asked to please raise their hands and wait to be called on at the discretion of the Choral Director. The Choral Director will also endeavor to provide time for questions and discussion at logical transition points as distinct from periods occupied by ongoing ensemble work.

Please refrain from chewing gum or consuming food and beverages (besides water) in rehearsal.

Please prioritize connection to the full choir rather than engaging in side conversations while rehearsal is in session.

Any questions or comments can be addressed to the Director by raising a hand and waiting to be called on and/or by asking to have a separate conversation outside of rehearsal.

Departure

- Check in with the Director if you would like to take your choral folder home.
- Please ensure that you have all your belongings with you before departing.
- Wait for the Director to call your name before departing.
- Parents/guardians are asked to wait outside the main entrance.
- When the door opens, please be prepared to say the name of your chorister(s) when asked to help expedite the pick up/check out process.
- We must have visual confirmation that each chorister has connected with their parent/guardian before they depart for the night.

Cancellations & Storm Closures

The Choral Program reserves the right to cancel classes due to weather conditions or instructor illness. Please be advised that, in the event of school closure due to stormy weather, choral rehearsals are not necessarily cancelled. Please watch for an email on school days by 1:00pm or call 902-628-6134 to confirm the status of rehearsals. Even if rehearsal is going ahead as scheduled, always prioritize your safety when deciding whether to travel in inclement weather. **Rehearsals canceled due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled or refunded.**

Concert Attire

A uniform appearance allows the audience and ensemble to focus on music and expression without being visually distracted. All attire should be in good condition with minimal wear and tear. Please refrain from wearing any perfumes, cologne, or other strong scents.

Junior, Intermediate & Senior Chorus Concert Attire/Uniform



Tops:

- Blue polo-style Youth Chorus shirt. Chorus caregivers are responsible for purchasing Youth Chorus uniform shirts (**see page 13 for pricing details**). Please contact the Choral Director to place an order and/or to try on sample shirts for size.

Bottoms:

- Back dress pants (no shorts) or skirts knee length or longer; black dress shoes (no outdoor sneakers/boots); black socks/stockings. No patterns, symbols, or images.

Footwear:

- Please wear separate outdoor footwear into the venue and change into concert shoes once inside.

Confederation Singers Concert Attire



Concert black:

- Black shirts or blouses with $\frac{3}{4}$ -length or long sleeves and collars or modest necklines (no t-shirts or tuxedos; jackets and ties not required); black dress pants/trousers; black knee-length or longer skirts or dresses; black socks/stockings; black closed-toe dress shoes.

Footwear:

- Please wear separate outdoor footwear into the venue and change into concert shoes once inside.

Variations and embellishments on standard attire may be added or adjusted according to the season or concert theme.



Medical Information and Support Needs

It is important to notify our Arts Academy administrative staff about you/your child's existing medical conditions, learning disabilities, behavioral support, accommodation needs or any support systems that are in place at the time of registration and throughout the season. The more information we know before rehearsals begin, the better prepared we will be to serve the needs of all participants. All information about our choristers is confidential. Please note that, while we strive to be as welcoming as possible to learners of every kind, we do not have full-time Educational Assistants, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, or similar professionals on staff. As such, Confederation Centre of the Arts retains the right to refuse registration for a chorister if insufficient resources are available to ensure that the chorister, the Choral Director, and other members of the ensemble can have a positive and appropriately supported experience.



Code of Conduct & Community Agreements

All choristers, their families, and leadership are expected to always treat each other with respect and kindness. Discrimination, harassment, or abuse of any kind – verbal, physical, or otherwise – will not be tolerated, and may result in exclusion from the program.

This is consistent with the respectful workplace and harassment policies at the Confederation Centre of the Arts, which are upheld for employees and all participants in our programs. Choir members are expected to come prepared to do their best to contribute to the musical and interpersonal community of the chorus. Earnest effort, interest in learning, and an openness to trying new things will be essential to fostering the most fun and satisfying choral experience for everyone. In the interest of maintaining a safe space, all activities (warm-ups, exercises, rehearsal techniques, etc.) should be considered invitations to participate with the goal of learning and growing together as choral musicians.

While learning and growth can be challenging at times, no participant should ever feel required to do anything that makes them feel unsafe. Should a concern of this kind arise, please contact the Choral Director or the Arts Academy Director.

THANK YOU!

**We appreciate you taking the time to review
our Choral Program Handbook.
Looking forward to a great season!**

