

GRAND CITIES
CHILDREN'S CHOIR



Student Handbook
2016-2017

Grand Cities Children’s Choir Handbook

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About Us

Founded in 2002, the Grand Cities Children's Choir (GCCC) is a performance-based, choral program whose mission is ***to offer young people of the Greater Grand Forks area the experience of musical artistry and excellence through choral singing in a youth-centered atmosphere.*** The GCCC program strives to create a spirit of community and understanding through the universal language of music; therefore, all students are encouraged to participate regardless of ethnic, social or economic background.

As the membership in our program continues to grow and change, GCCC has been comprised of different performing groups selected to highlight the talents of our singers. This year, our program will be operating with four performing choirs, each dedicated to excellence of musicianship by developing the skills available at varying levels of the students' musical learning. These choirs are Primo Voce, Accordo Voce, Canto Voce, and Poco Voce. This year, Primo Voce will be performing as a large mixed ensemble, in addition to performances as men's and women's ensembles. Membership in the program is by audition and offered to boys and girls in grades three through nine. All of the choirs rehearse one evening a week during the academic school year.

The Grand Cities Children's Choir program is a division of the Summer Performing Arts Company (SPA) and the Grand Forks Public Schools. SPA is an educational program that channels the energy of students into positive creativity and teamwork. These aspects, with a greater appreciation for the arts, help shape students into more active members of the Grand Forks Community (see "Summer Performing Arts", p. 17). While the SPA program is administered throughout the summer, GCCC is a division designed to continue offering unique arts experiences to the youth of the Greater Grand Forks area during the academic year.

Primo Voce (*Principal Voices*). Primo Voce is the name given to one of the mixed ensembles of the GCCC program. This ensemble is open to singers in grades 7-9 who demonstrate the ability to sing in tune with others, a basic knowledge of vocal technique, and self discipline. The choir performs 2, 3, and 4-part literature which covers a wide variety of musical styles and time periods. Rehearsals will focus on vocal skill development, ear training, sight singing, and performance preparation.

Accordo Voce (*Harmonizing Voices*). Accordo Voce is the name given to one of three treble voiced ensembles of the GCCC program. This ensemble is open to boys & girls in grades 5-6 who demonstrate the ability to harmonize as well as sing independently of others. The choir performs 2 and 3-part treble literature which covers a wide variety of musical styles and time periods. Rehearsals focus on vocal skill development, ear training, sight singing, and performance preparation.

Canto Voce (*Singing Voices*). Canto Voce is the name given to one of three treble voiced ensembles of the GCCC program. This ensemble is open to boys & girls in grades 4-6 who demonstrate the ability to sing with others by matching pitch and express a desire to develop their vocal potential. The choir performs unison and 2-part literature which covers a wide variety of musical styles and time periods. Rehearsals focus on vocal skill development, ear training, sight singing, and performance preparation.

Poco Voce (*Little Voices*). Poco Voce is the name given to the youngest ensemble of the GCCC program. This ensemble is open to boys & girls in grade 3 who demonstrate the ability to sing with others by matching pitch, express a desire to develop their vocal potential, and behave in a manner that enhances the development of the choral ensemble. The choir performs unison literature and will be introduced to part-singing through rounds, partner songs, and ostinatos. Rehearsals focus on vocal skill development, ear training, sight singing, and performance preparation.

Grazioso Guidares (GGs)

Graduates of the Grand Cities Children's Choir program have the option to serve as mentors (GGs) during their Sophomore, Junior, and Senior years. *Grazioso Guidare* (GG) is Italian for the words "gracious guide." These students spend numerous hours volunteering their time and talents to each of the choirs. In return, the hours can be counted towards community service on their high school transcripts.

The GGs developed the following mission statement:

"We seek to inspire, motivate, and guide individuals on a path of musical excellence, while encouraging them to bring out the best in themselves and each other."

The goals of the mentor program are:

- To make one on one connections with all members of the GCCC program
- To act as musical and personal role models for the members of the GCCC program
- To assist with rehearsals musically as section leaders or vocal demonstrators
- To assist with rehearsals in business, organizational and social matters pertaining to rehearsals or concerts
- To motivate members of the GCCC program to "Strive for Excellence"
- To be exposed to possible careers in teaching, specifically music education

The GG program is coordinated by the following adult volunteers:

GG Coordinators:

Haley Lund - Poco
Laurie Holcomb - Canto
Alex Stroth - Accordo
Jasmyne White – Primo

GG Program:

Gwen Puckett

Directors and Accompanists



Melanie Popejoy, Artistic Director, Primo Voce. Melanie Popejoy is Associate Director of Choral Activities at the University of North Dakota where she conducts the Allegro Women's Choir and Vivo Chamber Ensemble, and instructs courses in Choral Music Education Methods and Music Fundamentals. In addition, she is the Founder and Artistic Director of the Grand Cities Children's Choir, serving as co-conductor of the *Primo Voce* choir. She has taught in

Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, and Texas prior to coming to North Dakota. In her 33 years of teaching, Mrs. Popejoy has taught at the elementary, middle school, high school, and collegiate levels. She has conducted numerous honor and festival ensembles, and served as an adjudicator.

Mrs. Popejoy has earned numerous teaching awards throughout her career, including selection as the Raytown South Middle School (MO) *Teacher of the Year*, Meadowbrook Elementary (TX) *Teacher of the Year*, Waco Independent School District (TX) *Teacher of the Year*, the DeLay Middle School (TX) *Teacher of the Year*, Wal-Mart/Sam's Club North Dakota *Teacher of the Year*, *Distinguished Alumnus* award from the Central Missouri State University Department of Music; an *Athena Award for Professional Excellence and Community Leadership*; North Dakota Chamber of Commerce *Outstanding Leadership Award*; Grand Forks Thursday Music Club *Gold Note Award*; the *Phenomenal Woman Award* from UND Multicultural Student Services; and selection as the North Dakota Choral *Director of the Year*.

Danielle Larson, Director, Accordo

Voce. Danielle Larson has been the Vocal Music Director at Valley Middle School since August 2012. She is an active member of the North Dakota American Choral Director's Association and has been a member of the Summer Performing Arts faculty. Prior to teaching in Grand Forks, Mrs. Larson taught 6-8 vocal music at Central Middle School in East Grand Forks, MN from 2011-2012 and 5-12 vocal and instrumental music at Lakota, ND from 2010-2011. Mrs. Larson received a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Education summa cum laude from the University of North Dakota (UND) in 2010. As a student, she focused equally on vocal and instrumental music, and soloed with both the UND Wind Ensemble and UND Concert Choir. In addition, Mrs. Larson was selected as the Theodore Presser Scholar at UND in 2009 and awarded Outstanding Achievement in Music Education at UND in 2010. Mrs. Larson enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, cooking, crafting, and singing at church. She resides on a farm north of East Grand Forks, MN with her husband, Brad and daughter, Josephine.



Ruth Ann Tuseth, Director, Canto

Voce. Ruth Ann Tuseth brings a variety of experience to the GCCC directing team. Mrs. Tuseth has been the director of Canto Voce since 2007. She has served as an elementary music specialist at Ben Franklin, Lake Agassiz, Lewis and Clark and Winship Elementary schools in Grand Forks and a K-12 Vocal Music specialist at Thompson ND. She has had training in Creating Original Opera for children through the Education at the Met program and had the opportunity to work on several original productions with kids. Mrs. Tuseth has been a supervisor of music student teachers at UND. She is also a principal accompanist for the



Summer Performing Arts program. Mrs. Tuseth served as the chancel choir director and principal organist at First Presbyterian Church for 24 years, and she is currently serving as the director of the Sing and Ring program at United Lutheran Church. Mrs. Tuseth received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Iowa and her Master of Music degree from the University of North Dakota.



Annella Winger, Director, Poco Voce.

Annella Winger was the original director of Poco Voce in 2005-2007. She returned to this role in 2016. Mrs. Winger was the music specialist at Ben Franklin Elementary School for 34 years, retiring in June 2015. Through the North Dakota Teacher Support System, Mrs. Winger has been serving as a mentor for first year music educators as well as experienced teachers during her retirement. She also continues to work for the Grand Forks Public Schools

in a variety of different capacities. Mrs. Winger was honored to receive the North Dakota Music Educator of the Year Award in 2015; the WDAZ “Teachers Making a Difference” Award in April 2014; the VFW Citizenship Education Teacher Award for North Dakota in 2013; and the Service to Children Award from the Ben Franklin Elementary PTO in 1995. She has shared her passion for music education by being a presenter for numerous organizations throughout the state. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education and Elementary Education from the University of North Dakota. Being a lifelong resident of this community, she cherishes spending time with the four generations of her family who all reside in Grand Forks.

Kecia Peters, Managing Director, GCCC. Kecia Peters is the Managing Director of the Grand Cities Children's Choir program. She holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Music from the University of North Dakota and graduate degrees in School Psychology from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She has been employed as a school psychologist for the Grand Forks Public Schools since 2004 and serves as an MTSS data coach for the district. Ms. Peters has been a

part of the GCCC family since 2005. She began her work with GCCC as a director of Canto and Accordo Voce before transitioning to the position of Managing Director in 2008.

Sharon Pugh, Accompanist, Primo Voce. Sharon Pugh holds Bachelor of Music and Masters of Music degrees in Piano Performance from Bowling Green State University in Ohio, with a specialty in Accompanying. She and her family moved to Grand Forks in August 2010, and Sharon currently works at Poppler's Music. She is also active within the music ministry at HOPE Church. In the past, she has served as the Director of Development for Lakeland Public Television in Bemidji and as the Director of Admissions at Heidelberg College in Ohio; however, she has always made time for being a musician in many different settings, from accompanying within college music departments, to working with church choirs, to playing in contemporary Christian bands. Outside of music, Sharon enjoys cooking, walking her dog, family camping trips and rollerblading. Her favorite thing about moving to Grand Forks: Chippers!

Cassel Everson, Accompanist, Accordo Voce. Cassel Everson has been teaching elementary and middle school band students in the Grand Forks Public Schools since 1982. Her degrees include a Bachelor of Science from North Dakota State University, and a Masters of Education from the University of North Dakota. She is a charter member of Higher Ground, the contemporary worship team of Sharon Lutheran Church. Cassel is an accomplished instrumentalist in percussion, woodwinds, and brass. She has been a proud parent supporter of the Grand Cities Children's Choir since the inaugural season and an equally proud SPA parent supporter since 1992.

Lynn Liepold, Accompanist, Canto Voce. For over 30 years Lynn Liepold has served as an accompanist for numerous choirs and soloists, both vocal and instrumental. Currently, she serves as the Director of Music Ministry at United Lutheran Church. She is also the owner and operator of Lynn's Sewing for You. She and her husband, Loren, are proud supporters of GCCC. Lynn has served on the Parent Board of GCCC and two of their three children have been GCCC choristers and GG's. Lynn enjoys working with Mrs. Tusetth and the Canto Voce kids and is looking forward to another great year!

Roxanne Gessler, Accompanist, Poco Voce. Roxanne Gessler received her Bachelor of Music degree from Concordia College, Moorhead, MN and her Masters of Music degree from the University of Arizona, Tucson. She is currently the Director of Music Ministries at Sharon Lutheran Church. Her past experiences include teaching at UND and U of A, accompanying the Tucson Children's Choir, and performing in many piano, vocal, and chamber concerts. Her daughter, Lacey, is a charter member of GCCC. Mrs. Gessler has enjoyed every concert and thoroughly embraces the nurturing philosophy of GCCC and the opportunity to be a participating member.

Attendance Policy

Membership in the Grand Cities Children's Choir is a commitment to faithful, consistent and punctual attendance. It is expected that rehearsals and performances take a very high priority in your life. You are holding a valuable place in your choir. Listed below are the attendance requirements.

Students are required to attend at least 85% of all rehearsal times. Any absence beyond 15% may jeopardize the student's opportunity to perform. You are encouraged to maintain a perfect attendance schedule.

If you must be absent, you must notify your choir director by leaving a message or sending an email before 3:00 p.m. Directors' contacts are included at the back of the handbook. In cases of planned absence, notice as far in advance as possible is appreciated.

Any absence beyond the allotted amount may require a conference with the director. Should an excessive number of absences occur, removal from the program will be considered.

Exceptions to Attendance Policy. Exceptions to the attendance policy will be made in the following instances: major illness, death in the family, mandatory school performances, or other youth arts organization events.

Absence from Rehearsal Beyond the Allotted Amount. The appropriate director will consider excessive absences for any reasons other than those stated under "exceptions" on an individual basis. Attendance and punctuality that do not demonstrate commitment to the Grand Cities Children's Choir will result in not being allowed to perform and possible removal from the program.

Mandatory Rehearsals. All rehearsals are mandatory unless otherwise indicated on the choir calendar. An absence, for any reason, from a dress rehearsal before a performance on the choir calendar will normally result in the singer being excluded from the corresponding concert. If a dress rehearsal has been missed, singers should not arrive at the concert expecting to perform; however, the member is still expected to attend the performance. Membership in the Grand Cities Children's Choir will be reviewed if more than one scheduled mandatory concert is missed during the season.

Performance Attendance. Attendance is required at all scheduled performances except for the reasons stated in *Exceptions to Attendance Policy* above.

Commitment. Each singer has made a commitment to sing for the entire season. If, however, an extremely unusual circumstance occurs which would prohibit a singer from honoring that commitment, a personal conference between the director and parents must occur. If a student resigns from the program in the middle of the performance season, the parent remains responsible for the entire tuition fee.

Rehearsals

Each choir maintains a weekly rehearsal schedule. Following are the regular rehearsal times:

Primo Voce.....	Thursdays.....	6:45 – 8:45 PM
Accordo Voce.....	Thursdays.....	6:45 – 8:00 PM
Canto Voce	Thursdays.....	5:30 – 6:30 PM
Poco Voce.....	Thursdays.....	5:30 – 6:30 PM

Rehearsals will be held at Grand Forks Central High School during the fall semester and at Red River High School during the spring semester.

Changes to rehearsal times or locations are noted in the GCCC calendar.

We strive to make rehearsal time enjoyable and educational. The following procedures help us achieve the professionalism for which GCCC is known:

- Arrive not more than 15 minutes before the designated rehearsal time, go directly to check-in and report to the rehearsal room. Parent communication in advance is necessary for late admittance to or early dismissal from a rehearsal so we can ensure of our singers.
- Give attendance notes, permission slips, etc., to the choir's director or GG coordinator.
- Students should only be in the rehearsal area, not roaming about the building.
- Water bottles are allowed in rehearsals. Other types of drinks, food, or candy are not.
- As a community, singers, directors and parent volunteers will show respect for each other and the rehearsal facility.
- Running, yelling, and rowdy behavior in the building or on the grounds would not be appropriate at any time.
- Always bring your music folder and a pencil to rehearsal. GCCC will be utilizing an online system for tracking attendance this year which will require scanning a QR code that will be kept within the singer's folder.
- During rehearsals, singers should choose behaviors which positively help the choir achieve its goals and do not interfere with the learning of others.
- If, for any reason, a student cannot actively participate in a rehearsal, he/she should bring a written note and observe quietly and attentively.

- Members are responsible for taking home any handouts that are distributed at rehearsal. These notices are important sources of information and should be requested by the parents from the singer.
- Dress rehearsals for our Fall and Spring concerts require singers to wear their concert uniforms in order for our staff to verify that each singer possesses all components of the uniforms and to ensure uniforms still fit the child.
- Dress rehearsals are scheduled at slightly different times than regular rehearsals. These times are noted on the GCCC calendar.
- At the end of the spring semester, members are responsible for returning their black folders and music to their respective director. Members who do not return their folders following the spring concert may be charged a replacement fee of \$20.

Performances

Performances require the very best in conduct, appearance and musicianship. Specific concert instructions will be distributed on concert call sheets prior to the date of the performance. Below are our suggested guidelines prior to a concert:

- You should always eat a nutritious meal and get plenty of rest before a concert. Be sure to use the restroom prior to arrival at the concert site.
- You should arrive ten minutes before the performance call and immediately join your choir.
- Tardiness at a performance may exclude you from participation at that performance.
- All performers must arrive attired in proper concert dress as noted in the concert call sheet. Failure to wear proper concert dress will result in non-participation in the concert.

- Singers should conduct themselves at all times in a calm, polite and professional manner. They must give their undivided attention to the director at all times.
- All singers must know the music. Each musician must have a confident command of the concert repertoire. Failure to demonstrate this at the final rehearsal may result in release from the corresponding concert commitment.
- During a performance, if you feel ill, you should quietly sit down on the riser and rest for the remainder of the song. Then, if feeling better, you may get up and sing again, or if not, quietly leave the stage. Assistants are watching and will help if necessary. Once you leave the stage, you should not return except after intermission or when choirs are moving around.
- Remember that at all times you represent the Grand Cities Children's Choir.
- Dress rehearsals for our Fall and Spring performances are open for families to attend. We respectfully ask that any audience members during this rehearsal observe quietly, knowing that our students will be focused on their expectations for the performance.
- 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. Make sure to reference your child's specific concert attire requirements below.

IMPORTANT! A singer who fails to dress or groom properly for an event will not be allowed to participate.

Uniforms

At the beginning of the year, choir members' measurements will be taken and uniforms ordered. All uniform items for Primo Voce and polo shirts and black skirts for Poco, Canto, and Accordo Voce are ordered through GCCC. All other uniform pieces are provided by families. Black skirts for Poco, Canto, & Accordo girls will be rented for a small fee each year, as well as some dresses and tuxedo pieces for Primo Voce. Star pins awarded for each year's participation in GCCC may be worn at any performance.

PRIMO VOCE:

Formal concert attire:

For girls: long red dress with black bodice, black nylons, black shoes.

For boys: black tux vest and pants, tux shirt, cuff links, button covers and gold/black buttonhole studs, black socks, black shoes.

Informal concert attire:

Black wind shirt, black pants, and athletic shoes.

POCO, CANTO, & ACCORDO VOCE:

Concert attire:

For girls: GCCC polo shirt, GCCC-issued black skirt, black tights, black shoes. Closed-toed shoes are required. No flip flops or sandals, please.

For boys: GCCC polo shirt, black pants, black socks, black shoes.

Each member is expected to keep his/her concert attire in excellent condition, i.e. pressed, cleaned, etc.

Formal concert attire is intended to be worn only for performances. Informal concert attire (such as wind shirts) may be worn outside of performances; however, you should remember that when wearing these articles, you represent GCCC and appropriate conduct is expected.

Good personal hygiene is a must for all singers. Shirts are to be tucked in. Dresses should be pressed and wrinkle-free. Hair should be groomed away from the face and may be fastened with a natural (matching hair color) barrette (no bows, ribbons, or colored barrettes). No unusual colored hair dye, obvious make-up, cosmetics, or perfume is permitted. Jewelry, earrings (only stud earrings will be allowed), accessories, watches, etc. should not be worn.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition for participating in the Grand Cities Children’s Choir is paid once for the year and is dependent upon the ensemble in which the singer is enrolled.

Tuition payments may be made by check or credit card. Tuition checks should be made payable to “Grand Cities Children’s Choir” and submitted to Greg Nelson, Finance Manager, whose contact information is in the back of the handbook. Payment of tuition must be made in full on the date of registration. Tuition is non-refundable after the start of rehearsals.

If your child is eligible for “free/reduced lunch” through your school system (eligibility will be verified), your child can receive a reduction in tuition fees. Please see Greg Nelson for more information on registration night to make these arrangements. The remaining tuition is due in full on registration night.

The policy of the choir is that no child will be turned away due to inability to pay tuition. If there is a special circumstance involved with your ability to afford tuition or uniforms, please contact Greg Nelson in the evenings at home at 775-0993 or your child’s choir director to make such arrangements.

Tuition Costs. Tuition costs for the 2016-2017 concert season are as follows:

Primo Voce	\$225.00/year
Accordo Voce	\$200.00/year
Canto Voce	\$150.00/year
Poco Voce	\$150.00/year

Uniform Costs. Each student must purchase performance uniforms appropriate to the choir in which they hold membership. For Primo Voce, this includes one formal and one informal uniform. You will receive more information on uniform costs at registration. Payment for uniforms is due when they are ordered.

Communication

On your child's audition and registration forms, parents are asked to provide a current mailing address, email address, and phone numbers. This information is used by GCCC directors, staff, and advisory board members to contact parents regarding operations of the choir and in cases of emergency.

Parents are required to provide current email addresses to receive weekly updates from their child's director and notifications or reminders of choir events. GCCC will not publish or share your phone or email contact information with any outside organizations. If you currently do not have an email address on file with our organization, your child's director will be contacting you to request that you provide one.

GCCC also shares information with families and the public through our website, www.gogccc.org; Facebook page; and Twitter account, @GCCChoir.

Because GCCC operates as a division of SPA and GFPS, we adhere to their policies for public use of photographs on our website and social media sites. Group photos of our choirs appear on our website and in media publications for the organization. If you do not wish to have your child's individual photo appear in any of our publications or on social media sites, please notify your director.

Summer Performing Arts (SPA)

The Grand Cities Children's Choir program is a division of the Summer Performing Arts Company (SPA) and the Grand Forks Public Schools. The Summer Performing Arts Company, or SPA, is a program available for students in the elementary, middle and high schools in Grand Forks and the surrounding communities. It is instructed by staff from the Grand Forks region (including the Grand Forks Public Schools and the University of North Dakota), and special guests from around the country. Through SPA, students learn and grow through a variety of experiences in the arts. SPA produces several theatrical performances each year, as well as a series of concerts. There are many classes in a variety of areas, including vocal and instrumental ensembles, visual arts, and technology. SPA is offered through the Grand Forks Public Schools, and graduation credits are earned by students for their work. Grand Cities Children's Choir is thankful for the support of SPA and the Grand Forks Public Schools over the past ten years.



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