



Florida BoyChoirs

2023 – 2024 Season
ChoirBoy Handbook

rev. 10/10/23

Tampa BoyChoir
St. Petersburg BoyChoir
Lakeland BoyChoir

Glorifying God Through The BoyChoir Tradition

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
About Your Florida BoyChoirs History of the Florida BoyChoirs	1
The “BoyChoir Experience” Choirs of the Florida BoyChoirs	2
Talent Search Membership by Audition The Audition Process	3
Rehearsals & Locations Voice Change and the importance of an all-boys singing experience	4
Concerts, Concert Tours, and Festivals	5
Rehearsal Camp Weekend Retreats	6
Advancement and Evaluation ChoirBoy Rank and Position Scores and Point System	7
Florida BoyChoir Training Scheme	8
Membership Policies Membership Agreement Attendance and Dedication Newsletters, Schedules and Communications Rehearsal Clothes Concert Clothes Supervision of the ChoirBoys Recording and Photographs Parents as Drivers Attitude of the ChoirBoy Standard of Conduct, Expulsion or Withdrawal	9
Financial Obligations	10
	11
	12



About Your *Florida BoyChoirs*

The ***Florida BoyChoirs*** is a Christian classical music organization open to vocally gifted boys of all faiths. The mission of the organization is to:

"Glorify God Through The BoyChoir Tradition".

This tradition is rooted in over 2000 years of boys singing in worship, concerts, and staged opera and musical productions.

The organization offers the ***Tampa BoyChoir, St. Petersburg BoyChoir, and Lakeland BoyChoir.*** Membership is available by audition to all boys in grades three through twelve of unchanged, changing and changed voice. No boy is denied full membership due to financial limitations. The ***Florida BoyChoirs*** is supported by donations, concert revenues and membership tuition.

History of the *Florida BoyChoirs*

The ***Florida BoyChoirs*** was founded by ChoirMaster Brian L. Collar in January of 1986 as a non-profit cultural youth organization. Since that time hundreds of Choirboys have made recordings and appeared on radio and television in the United States and Canada. They have toured throughout Florida, to eighteen U.S. states and internationally to Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Iceland, and Poland.

The ***Florida BoyChoirs*** has to its credit performances of classical, folk, opera, musical and spiritual compositions. Works by such masters as Bach, Britten, Bernstein, Handel, Pinkham, Schubert and others are regularly part of the boys' repertoire. Fully staged professional operas such as *Carmen, Tosca and La Boheme* are often a part of the season. The boys have performed with Opera Tampa, Florida Lyric Opera and St Petersburg Opera. Self-produced operas such as Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Malcolm Williamson's *The Happy Prince*, and a one-act adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* have been performed. The boys have sung with the Florida Orchestra in *The Lord Of The Rings Symphony*, a Broadway touring production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph & the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* and were featured in a Nostalgia Network *Christmas Special* broadcast nationally.



The BoyChoir Experience

The term "Choral Activities" refers to all events such as rehearsals, performances, tours, recordings, and rehearsal camps. Our ChoirBoys receive training in proper singing, music theory, sight-singing and music history. They perform the music of the classical masters as well as folk music, spirituals, opera and that of more recent genres.

Great personal enrichment comes from membership in the **Florida BoyChoirs**. Collectively, we refer to all Choral Activities, and their benefits to our ChoirBoys, as the "BoyChoir Experience."

Choirs of the Florida BoyChoirs

The City BoyChoirs are composed of gifted boys, in grades three through twelve, who perform locally. There is a ChoirRoom located in each of these cities. At present, the following choirs are offered;

Tampa BoyChoir

St. Petersburg BoyChoir*

Lakeland BoyChoir (new fall of 2023)

Florida BoyChoir Concert Choir

When performing locally, boys are selected from the ChoirBoys of the City BoyChoirs to form the **Concert Choir**. These tend to be more advanced boys who are able to perform a more demanding and advanced repertoire.

Florida BoyChoir Touring Choir

When performing away from the greater Tampa Bay area, boys are selected from the ChoirBoys of the City BoyChoirs to form the **Touring Choir**. These tend to be more advanced boys who are able to perform a more demanding repertoire and have demonstrated that they possess the self-discipline and maturity for an "on-the-road" experience. Concert Tours may be to more distant parts of Florida, out of state, or international and may last for a weekend or a few weeks.

* Note: The original *St. Petersburg Boychoir* was founded in 1958 by Donald Mathis and continued through 1985 providing training and concert opportunities to hundreds of boys. Our ChoirMaster, Brian Collar, began his musical training in the St. Petersburg BoyChoir at age nine and served as Student Conductor while in High School. It is his time as a ChoirBoy that Mr. Collar credits with his passion for choral music and his dedication to the art of BoyChoir.



Talent Search

Membership by Audition

It is the desire of the **Florida BoyChoirs** to see many boys experience the joy of singing. Membership is earned through an encouraging audition process intended to evaluate a boy's desire to sing, musical aptitude and his readiness to begin formal musical training.

As interested boys move through each level of the admissions process, they enjoy experiencing typical rehearsals together with other boys and ChoirBoys already seated in one of the BoyChoirs. Attending regular rehearsals provides the boy, his family and the ChoirMaster the opportunity to experience singing with the BoyChoir before being invited to commit to membership. There is no tuition or other costs during the audition process.

The Audition Process

Boys interested in membership attend regular weekly rehearsals. On rare occasions, a boy may advance through the three levels of the audition process in only three rehearsals. Most boys require additional rehearsals. Parents will be notified if the ChoirMaster believes that the boy will not be accepted into membership at some stage. Again, the experience should be a positive and encouraging one, regardless of the outcome.

Applicant Status (First Rehearsal Audition)

Applicants attend a regular weekly rehearsal along with other Applicants and the seated members of that choir. Boys passing the Applicant Audition are promoted to Candidate status.

Candidate Status (Second Rehearsal Audition)

Candidates continue to participate in rehearsals along with seated ChoirBoys. This allows the ChoirMaster to evaluate the boy in a working rehearsal and the Candidate to experience singing with the BoyChoir. The boy may attend in this status for one or more rehearsals. Should the Candidate Status be successful, the boy is promoted to the status of Apprentice.

Apprentice Status (Continuing Rehearsal Auditions)

Apprentice boys attend all rehearsals and events fully participating for a number of weeks. Once the ChoirMaster is confident that the Apprentice is ready, membership is offered to the boy's family. He then receives his Florida BoyChoir Golf Shirt, is promoted to ChoirBoy Status and officially "seated" in his city choir.



Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held from late August through May. There are, of course, breaks for holidays and in the summer months. There is a rehearsal each week for each of the City BoyChoirs. All ChoirBoys come together once each month for a Saturday Rehearsal and a Rehearsal Camp Weekend Retreat is held twice each season. As the quality of the choirs depends upon attendance, it is a condition of membership that ChoirBoys attend all scheduled rehearsals.

Weekly Rehearsals

Tampa BoyChoir ChoirRoom

Thursday evenings, 6:30 to 8:15pm
at the historic Friday Morning Musicale Center
809 Horatio Street, Tampa, FL 33606
(located in Hyde Park, Tampa)

St. Petersburg BoyChoir ChoirRoom

Monday evenings, 6:30 to 8:15pm
at the First Baptist Church of St. Petersburg
1900 Gandy Blvd N, St. Petersburg, FL 33702
(located just off Gandy Blvd, near 9th Street N.)

Lakeland BoyChoir ChoirRoom

Tuesday evenings, 6:30 to 8:15pm
Location to be announced

Saturday Rehearsals

One Saturday each month, 10:00 am to 3:00pm
Saturday rehearsals are attended by all of the ChoirBoys of every choir. It serves as a one day workshop to prepare repertoire, to receive specialized voice training and to combine with the other choirs. It is imperative that boys attend every Saturday rehearsal.

The location rotates between the St. Petersburg, Tampa and Lakeland ChoirRooms and is often followed by a fun social outing or activity to promote the building of friendships.

Rehearsal Camp Weekend Retreats (see pg 6)

Other Rehearsals

Special projects, such as for performances with opera companies and tours, require additional rehearsals.

Voice Change and the importance of an all-boys singing experience

The term "voice change" is greatly misunderstood and is often still, unfortunately, referred to as when the voice "breaks."

As the result of our rehearsal time, our ChoirBoys come to appreciate their **maturing voice** as a natural process during which the vocal apparatus, quite simply, grows larger producing lower tones. For most boys, it occurs in a series of stages from age 12 through 18. The most notable "shift" in the voice typically occurs around age 13 to 14 but can be earlier or later. Elsewhere, these boys are often told that they can no longer sing and, sadly, many stop singing altogether.

This is not the case.

It is, in fact, during the stages of voice change, that a boy is at his peak of Soprano potential. Our method, established by centuries of Cathedral and Concert BoyChoirs, and using the best of new voice science, makes it possible for boys to continue singing and performing during the entire process as they grow into their **new voice**.

It is imperative that boys dedicated to singing be trained professionally during voice change. While there are many types of school, church, and co-ed choirs, the all-boys choir environment provides the best supportive atmosphere in which a boy can sing under specialized training and flourish with his choir-brothers.



Concerts, Tours and Festivals

Concerts

The BoyChoir performs a number of concerts each season. Some appearances are private engagements or part of our own Christmas and Spring concert series. The boys are available to perform as part of local opera productions, for major works with orchestra, and for worship services of all faiths as well as for community and private events. When the boys of the City BoyChoirs combine, they perform as *the Florida BoyChoir*.

Concert Tours

Select boys will be invited to participate in the Touring Choir. Touring is a tremendous musical opportunity and personal growth experience.

Any overnight concert obligation is considered a tour. These may be weekend mini-tours or an extended tour of two to three weeks in June. While "on the road", the boys are managed by the ChoirMaster, Accompanist, a Proctor and/or a Tour Assistant.

Parents may be asked to join the tour staff but, in general, are asked to understand that a tour is not a family event. The boys benefit from the experience of independence which also maximizes the opportunity for ensemble bonding and personal growth.

All tour travel and lodging is carefully planned and often includes hotels, homestays with other BoyChoirs, and/or dorms or youth hostels (when in Europe).

"Chapel Choir" Appearances

The Chapel Choir is not a permanently seated choir but is composed of select boys assembled to sing at the occasional worship service for a local church or synagogue.

Florida International BoyChoir Festival

The Florida BoyChoirs, Inc. has hosted choral festivals to which BoyChoirs from all over the world have attended.

Our international festivals have brought together 282 boys (in 1992) and 208 boys (in 1994) under the direction of world renowned ChoirMaster Sir David Willcocks. Boys from as far away as Canada (1992), Germany (1994) and Iceland (1992 & 1994) have joined those from throughout the United States for a week-long celebration of the BoyChoir tradition.

It is the intention to again host another festival when the organization is ready. Boys will be selected from each of our choirs to represent our organization in the combined Festival Finale Concert and to attend all festival events.



Back stage at Atlanta Symphony Hall, April 2022



Rehearsal Camp Weekend Retreats

For many of the ChoirBoys, the weekend rehearsal camps are a favorite part of the BoyChoir experience. Held twice each season, attendance is required of choirboys. Camp is held at one of the retreat center venues or summer camps in the greater Tampa Bay area. Camp begins around dinner time on a Friday and concludes on Sunday afternoon.

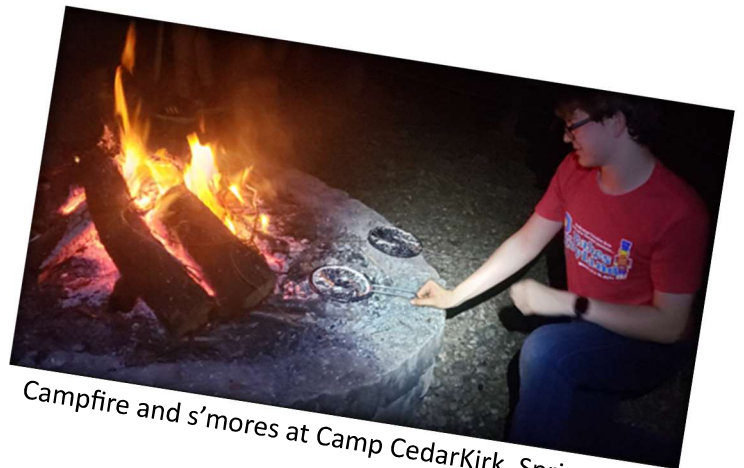
Although the primary purpose of choir camp is to provide a great deal of rehearsal time, plenty of time is committed to activities such as swimming, boating, fishing, sports, arts and crafts, horses, archery, paintball and campfires.

The weekend often concludes with a family cook-out and awards for musical, athletic, and arts and crafts activities. One boy from each choir is recognized with a special award for his work in rehearsal, his cooperative spirit and leadership.

Fathers are encouraged to attend and assist with rehearsal camps. The boys are under close supervision of staff, parents, camp professionals, and select alumni at all times. As with all BoyChoir activities, safety is the top priority.



A break from rehearsal for a canoe trip on the Alafia River at Camp CedarKirk, Spring 2023



Campfire and s'mores at Camp CedarKirk, Spring 2023

Packing List for BoyChoir Camp

Please bring:

- All BoyChoir music, theory book
- Green BoyChoir rehearsal shirt (bring, please do not wear on arrival)
- Play clothes for duration of the camp. Please consider the weather.
- Flashlight, toothbrush, soap, shampoo, sun screen, bug spray
- Bedding for a standard bunk bed
- A towel or two
- Please send any medication to be taken while at camp and communicate the specifics well in advance to arrival.

Do NOT bring: Weapons including knives, money, matches, or fireworks



Advancement and Evaluation

ChoirBoy Rank and Position

Our internal peer structure is designed to motivate ChoirBoys to achieve. Each BoyChoir has a Head ChoirBoy. There may also be an Assistant Head ChoirBoy and a Section Leader in each vocal section. More experienced boys are assigned to newer ChoirBoys and serve as a Mentor demonstrating our rehearsal traditions and procedures. Positions are appointed by the ChoirMaster.

We Award Achievement!

In situations where the boys have the opportunity to choose partners, cabin bunk mates, tour partners, and the like, they are polled by seniority based upon rank and total points. This fosters a healthy atmosphere of friendly competition, tradition and rewards accomplishment.

ChoirBoy Scores

All ChoirBoys participate in a motivational point scoring system. Every rehearsal, concert, tour, and camp is an opportunity to earn points throughout their membership. There are also projects and bonus point opportunities.

Point System

Weekday Rehearsals

up to 5 points, based upon performance

Saturday Rehearsals

up to 20 points, based upon performance

Deductions - Boys may lose one point for being late
or for not having music, BoyChoir shirt, etc.

Choir Camp Weekends - up to 25 points

Concerts – points are based on the itinerary

Music Theory Book – 100 points per book completed

Sight Singing Exams – up to 10 points

Music History Exams – up to 10 points

Composer Reports – up to 25 points

Head ChoirBoy

awarded 100 points per season

Assistant Head ChoirBoy

awarded 75 points per season

Each Choir's Section Leaders

awarded 50 points per season

Other points may be earned for various projects,
home rehearsals, and assignments.





ChoirBoy Training Scheme

Philosophical Approach

It is our philosophy that the best environment for the artistic child is created when there is a balance of spiritual, intellectual, cultural, athletic, and social experiences. A sense of accomplishment, enthusiasm, self-discipline and confidence will result.

ChoirBoy Training

Tremendous emphasis is placed upon the proper training of our ChoirBoys. We desire to produce not just "rote singers" but complete musicians with a deep love and knowledge of music and an appreciation of the art of BoyChoir. Our three level Training Scheme has been freely adapted from the *Royal School of Church Music* practice in that it includes the tradition of "ribboning." Boys are formally presented with their new ribbon in concert and wear them during performances whenever appropriate.

Training Areas: Boys receive professional instruction in Music Theory, Music History, Sight Singing, Ear Training, Conducting, and Vocal Studies.

Training Levels: After meeting a series of specific requirements, and with the ChoirMaster's approval, boys are promoted through three levels, each with its own ribbon color.



White Ribbon

Completed 1st Theory Book,
1st sight-singing level,
1 Composer Report,
earned 400 points

Blue Ribbon

Completed 2nd Theory Book,
2nd sight-singing level,
2 Composer Reports, 800 points

Red Ribbon

Completed 3rd Theory Book,
3rd sight-singing level,
3 Composer Reports, 1200 points
Conduct in a concert



Composer Reports

Boys select a composer from those whose music is currently in repertoire. Using any number of sources, the report is to tell the life story of the composer, including date of birth/death, family, type of music composed and major positions held, etc. Length of the report is by word count equal to 100 words per grade level (ie a 7th grade boy's report would be 700 words min.)

Annual Awards

Each concert season closes with an annual awards ceremony generally following the Spring Concert. Each ChoirBoy receives an award recording the points earned for the season as well as his career total of points. Special awards are given for the ChoirBoy of the Year, Music Theory, and various other awards.



Membership Policies

The following membership policies and requirements are the result of decades of trial, some errors, and a great number of successes. It is the organization's primary purpose to recruit talented boys, educate them in music, present quality concerts of tradition-appropriate choral literature, all in such a way which will Glorify God.

The following policies ensure the continued success of this objective;

Membership Agreement

At the start of each season, BoyChoir families are presented with an updated ChoirBoy Handbook, a Membership Agreement, Season Schedule and various other forms. We ask that these materials are read together with the ChoirBoy, discussed, and prayerfully considered before a commitment to the year's membership is made.

Attendance and Dedication

ChoirBoys are required to attend each and every rehearsal, concert, tour, fund-raising event and rehearsal camp for which they are scheduled. The only excused absences are those resulting from illness or family emergency. Boys missing a dress rehearsal may not be able to perform in that concert. The ChoirMaster has the sole authority to excuse an absence.

If a boy must be absent, it is important to notify the BoyChoir by email, phone or text so that it will not count against his standing in the choir.

Sports, while a valuable part of a boy's development, continuing transportation problems, homework (in most cases) and other extracurricular activities are usually not acceptable reasons for absence, early dismissal or tardiness. For boys with activities beyond the **Florida BoyChoir**, there may become a situation that requires that they prioritize their interests and make the appropriate choices. Membership requires that choral activities be the first priority. The ChoirMaster has the option to make exceptions in certain situations.

Newsletters, Schedules and Communications

The Season Schedule contains a tentative listing of all concerts, rehearsals, projects and other activities. Newsletters and updates are regularly emailed containing detailed information and changes, if any. All information is also available on our website, FloridaBoyChoirs.com, in the members section. Please feel free to send in your choir photos for use in the newsletters, website and social media.



Rehearsal Clothes

ChoirBoys are required to have at least one embroidered BoyChoir golf shirt. (Two shirts is recommended.) The boys wear them to each rehearsal and for certain functions. Choir shirts are purchased through the choir at cost. Shirts are to be tucked in and boys should wear comfortable shorts or long pants and closed-toe shoes: no sandals or flip-flops to rehearsals.

Concert Clothes

Depending upon the Choir and nature of the concert, our boys wear the embroidered BoyChoir shirt with black dress pants or Tuxedos and/or traditional red and white Choir Robes. The BoyChoir owns the Tuxes and Robes which are sent home and maintained by the parents. The Tux is dry clean only. Please do not iron the satin trim. It is important that they be clean and pressed prior to each performance. The boys must purchase black slip-on dress shoes and black socks. Some concerts afford the opportunity to arrive in the rehearsal uniform and change on site while other venues require arrival already dressed for the performance. The newsletters and season schedule will provide details for each event.

Supervision Of The ChoirBoys

The safety of our ChoirBoys is our first priority. More than one adult is present at all events and the boys are never left unsupervised.

Recordings and Photographs

Photographs, audio and/or video recordings are not permitted during concerts due to license and royalty legalities. A brief photo opportunity is often staged following specific concerts and recordings may be available. In many cases, the *BoyChoir will* take official photos and recordings or performances, rehearsals, choir camps and events. These become the sole exclusive property of the organization and may be used in print or digital reproduction. Once posted on social media they may be shared.

Parents As Drivers

It is our policy to use parents as drivers for concerts and events that are within a ninety minute driving distance. For longer travel a bus may be chartered. We require that while transporting ChoirBoys, all are secured in seat belts (one per ChoirBoy) at all times. If you plan to stop en route to or from any event, please communicate your intention in advance for approval. The ChoirBoys may not be exposed to smoking, vapes or alcohol at any time. Drivers must be fully insured and in compliance with legal requirements.



Amahl (above) and Tosca (below) with the St. Petersburg Opera (2022)



Attitude Of The ChoirBoy

It is important to realize that the mindset of a ChoirBoy has a direct effect upon his ability to be a contributing, productive and benefiting member of the BoyChoir. It is his attitude that will determine the amount of growth, pride and satisfaction which he receives from the experience. Our ChoirBoys tend to come from very supportive homes where parents take an active role in their son's life. As a boy progresses through the season, parental support becomes even more important. For example, it is interesting to note that a few boys think of leaving the BoyChoir in January of each year, or just after a major event such as a large concert. This downtime or "slump" is a result of the return to a rehearsal "working" mode following all the fun and excitement of a big event. Quite frankly, we expect artistic children to be occasionally "moody." Please know that with your encouragement and support it will pass. If you believe that your son's interest level may be decreasing or that there may be a problem, there are a number of things that can be done both in and out of rehearsal to help him through this brief phase. Please communicate observations and concerns with the ChoirMaster.



Our ChoirBoys (tuxed) with our friends of the Newark Boys Choir at the Georgia Boy Choir International Festival

Standard of Conduct, Expulsion or Withdrawal

Simply put, the ChoirBoys are expected to be on their very best behavior at all times. Boys who choose ongoing non-improving conduct issues, poor attendance, or display dishonest, vulgar or violent behavior will not continue in the **Florida BoyChoirs**.

Dismissal from membership is at the sole discretion of the ChoirMaster.

Should a boy be sent home from an event (rehearsal, concert, camp or tour), incurred additional costs are the responsibility of the parents. In this unfortunate event, or in the case of permanent expulsion, any advanced fees, including tours and/or contributions, are non-refundable. This policy requires an explanation: At the very core of this organization is a sincere commitment to the BoyChoir tradition, to our ChoirBoys and our Mission. We ask that the membership commitment to be undertaken only after a complete exchange of information. (It is for this reason that this handbook contains all facets of information on the organization.) Additionally, the operating budget is dependent upon donations and fees. It is unfair to the remaining ChoirBoys, the employees and the organization to permit families to obligate their support and then renege.



Financial Obligations

*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be given unto you. (Matthew 6:30-33)*

Above all, we trust in God for the funding of the **Florida BoyChoirs**. The revenues that make possible all programs come from membership donations, ticket sales, private bookings, activity fees, fund-raising projects and contributions from private, corporate and foundation sources. Funding is never requested nor accepted from any tax-derived sources such as city, county, state or federal grants.

Important Financial Note

It is policy that "no boy shall be denied full access to membership in the BoyChoirs due to financial concerns." We are proud to state that in the **Florida BoyChoirs'** history, no ChoirBoy has ever been denied membership nor participation due to financial difficulties.

Membership Contribution

Parents are asked to carefully consider financially supporting the **Florida BoyChoirs** to the best of their ability. The suggested contribution is \$800 annually. Some families choose to exceed this amount.

Financial contribution may be made at the start of the season, monthly or as able. Funds are needed for ongoing operational expenses.

Other Expenses

Choir Camp Weekends - \$120 to cover all expenses

BoyChoir Golf Shirt – \$18 each

BoyChoir Dress Concert Shirt – Prices will vary with size

Concert Tickets - Families are asked to purchase and sell tickets

Concert Tours (Florida BoyChoir Touring Choir)

The cost of tour will be announced as early in the season as possible.

Every attempt is made to make touring as affordable as possible.

Parent-led fund-raising will be coordinated to benefit each boy's account.

Payments

Payments may be made through a link on the website, FloridaBoyChoirs.com, or by check sent to any rehearsal or by mail to Florida BoyChoirs, Inc., PO BOX 2434, Riverview, FL 33568



Florida BoyChoirs, Inc. 1-888-469-3522
P.O. BOX 2434, Riverview, FL 33568

FloridaBoyChoirs.com

ChoirMaster@FloridaBoyChoirs.com

Non nobis Domine, sed nomini tuo da gloriam



Florida BoyChoirs, Inc.