GRAND CITIES CHILDREN'S CHOIR



Student Handbook 2021-2022

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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 children in grades three through nine. All of the choirs rehearse one evening a week during the academic school 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 children 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 children 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 children 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 volunteers:

GG Coordinators:

GG Program: Larissa Hood

Kelsie Wiens - Poco Tatum Mosley- Canto Cassandra Fincher- Accordo Brooklyn Evans – Primo

GCCC Directors

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 32 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.

Amy DeWitt, Director, Primo Voce. Amy DeWitt is in her thirteenth year of teaching elementary music. She received her Bachelor's degree in Music Education from the University of North Dakota and her Masters degree in Music Education from North Dakota State University. Amy earned a certificate of Kodaly Mastery from Minnesota State University-Moorhead and also completed Level III Orff training at the University of St. Thomas. Currently, she teaches K-5 elementary music and chorus at Century Elementary School in Grand Forks, North Dakota. She lives in Grand Forks with her husband Kyle of ten years and their cat, Lily.

Jack Boyer, Director, Primo Voce. Jack Boyer is currently serving as the Elementary Music Specialist and Director of Bands for the Emerado Public School District in Emerado, ND. Prior to this position he was Director of Bands and Choirs for Larimore Public Schools in Larimore, ND. During his five-year tenure at Larimore, his band and choir students received high accolades at both the regional and state level in Small and Large Ensemble competition. His students have been selected to participate in regional, state, and national level honor bands and choirs. Under his direction, the Larimore High School choir completed two performance tours, including a performance at Carnegie Hall with GCCC in 2020 and was selected as the North Dakota Governor's Chorus through a blind audition process for the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Boyer also serves as the Sanctuary Choir director at Sharon Lutheran Church, a position he has held for three years. He formerly directed the Chancellor Choir of Augustana Lutheran Church for four years. A graduate of the University of North Dakota in May 2016, he plans to finish his Master's Degree in Music Education from the University of South Dakota in August of 2022. When he's not directing choirs and taking graduate classes, Mr. Bover enjoys spending time with his family: his wife Lynneah, their daughter Wren, and their black lab Pepper.

Kayla Skjervheim, Director, Accordo Voce. Kayla Skjervheim is thrilled to be the director of Accordo Voce this year! She is currently in her 9th year of teaching music in North Dakota public schools. Miss Skjervheim has been an elementary music specialist at Discovery Elementary School in Grand Forks since the school first opened in August 2015. Prior to teaching at Discovery, Miss Skjervheim was the Pre-K-12 music instructor at Munich Public Schools for two years. Kayla earned a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of North Dakota in 2012. While attending UND, Kayla enjoyed being a member of the UND Concert Choir, the UND Wind Ensemble, and the Grand Forks Master Chorale. She also served as the undergraduate student conductor for the UND Allegro Women's Chorus for two semesters. In addition to singing and teaching, Miss Skjervheim loves to play the piano, explore new places, learn new things, read great books, and spend as much quality time with family and friends as possible.

Ruth Ann Tuseth, Director, Canto Voce. Ruth Ann Tuseth brings a variety of experience to the GCCC directing team. Mrs. Tuseth has been the conductor 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 is a principal accompanist for the Summer Performing Arts program. She 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 and organist for the traditional worship service at First Presbyterian 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, she has been serving as a mentor for first year music educators as well as experienced teachers during her retirement. Mrs. Winger was inducted into the Grand Forks Public Schools Teachers Hall of Fame in 2018. She was honored to receive the North Dakota Music Educator of the Year Award; the WDAZ "Teachers Making a Difference" Award; the VFW Citizenship Education Teacher Award for North Dakota; and the Service to Children Award from the Ben Franklin Elementary PTO. She has shared her passion for music education by being a presenter for numerous organizations throughout the state. Mrs. Winger played clarinet with the Greater Grand Forks Symphony from 1978-2013. She continues to work with the Symphony on presenting their Young Audience Concerts. Mrs. Winger 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.

GCCC Accompanists

Alyce Stokke, Accompanist, Primo Voce Alyce Stokke has been a General Music Specialist in East Grand Forks since 2008. She taught at South Point (Grades 3-5) for two years and is presently at New Heights Elementary (Grades K-2). She earned her B.A. in K-12 Vocal Music and a B.S.Ed. in Middle School Education with concentrations in Math and Business & Vocational Education from the University of North Dakota in 2008. In 2018 she completed her M.M. in Music Education from North Dakota State University. She also has Orff Level 1 & 2 certification as well completing an Introduction to Dalcroze course. Mrs. Stokke is also the Music Director at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Grand Forks since 2008. Playing piano has been a passion of hers since beginning lessons at 5 years old and has accompanied a multitude of vocal solos, ensembles, choirs, lessons, and musicals. Mrs. Stokke also served as vocal lesson staff for SPA for a number of years. In addition to music responsibilities in the area, she enjoys riding motorcycle with her husband Kent and running after their three children, Paige (11 and in Accordo), Ben (10), and Ella (6).

Catherine Olson, Accompanist, Primo Voce. Catherine Olson is a hobby musician and mom to several Grand Cities Children's Choir singers. She received a Bachelor of Science in Business Education and a minor in Music from the University of North Dakota. She currently works at UND as the Self-Paced Enroll Anytime Coordinator. Her other hobbies include playing and singing piano at Christus Rex and Family of God churches, baking cakes for friends and family, camping, and spending time with husband Joseph and their four children: Michael (Primo), Ali (Accordo), Abby (Canto) and Megan (future GCCC member).

Cassel Everson, Accompanist, Accordo Voce. Cassel Everson is a retired music teacher who has taught elementary and middle school band students in the Grand Forks Public Schools beginning in 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.

Gretchen Kindseth, Accompanist, Canto Voce, Gretchen Kindseth received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music Education and Elementary Education from Jamestown College (University of Jamestown), Jamestown, ND. Her music career includes K-12 vocal instructor, accompanist for soloists and ensembles from elementary ages through the collegiate level, private piano teacher, church worship leader and organist, accompanist at International Music Camp, and most recently, early childhood music teacher. Gretchen is the current owner of Lifesong Family Music LLC, a music studio in Grand Forks that specializes in early childhood music classes for infants through preschool age children. She is honored to be a part of GCCC, working with children to foster their love of music for life!

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 voicemail, text 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:

Poco Voce	Thursdays	5:30 - 6:30 PM
Canto Voce	•	
Accordo Voce	•	
Primo Voce	Thursdays	6:45 – 8:45 PM

The primary rehearsal site for this performance season is Sharon Lutheran Church. Our main secondary site for rehearsals will be at UND Hughes Fine Arts Center. Changes to rehearsal times or locations are noted in the GCCC calendar. We will provide ample notice of any location changes. Please keep up with email notifications for any changes to the calendar.

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

- Arrive no 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 the safety of our singers.
- 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.
- During rehearsals, singers should choose behaviors which
 positively help the choir achieve its goals and do not interfere
 with the learning of others.
- 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.
- 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 in the newsletter 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 newsletter. 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 will be rented for a small fee each year. Some used uniform items (dresses, vests, pants) for Primo Voce are available for purchase at a reduced fee. Star pins awarded for each year's participation in GCCC may be worn at any performance.

PRIMO VOCE:

Formal concert attire (Two choices):

Choice 1: long, purple dress, black nylons/tights, black shoes.

Choice 2: black vest and pants, shirt, black socks, black shoes, and accompanying accessories.

Informal concert attire:

Black wind shirt, black pants, and athletic shoes.

POCO, CANTO, & ACCORDO VOCE:

Concert attire:

Choice 1: GCCC polo shirt, GCCC-issued black skirt, black tights, black shoes. Closed-toed shoes are required. No flip flops, sandals, or boots please.

Choice 2: GCCC polo shirt, black pants (classic cut chinos or Dockers), black socks, black shoes.

Each member is expected to keep their 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 obvious make-up, cosmetics, or perfume is permitted. Jewelry, earrings (only stud earrings will be allowed), accessories, watches, etc. should not be worn.

If a student has a need to make alterations to their dress uniform to meet a medical or physical need such as for mobility or a medical device, e.g., please contact Amy Sanner, Uniform Chair, for assistance.

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 cash, 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.

The Children's Choir will never refuse participation in the Choir due to a family's financial hardship or the inability to pay tuition or uniform costs. If this is the case for your family, the Choir has limited scholarship funding available to help with these costs. Please see Greg Nelson on registration night for more information and to make these arrangements. The remaining tuition is due in full on registration night. If you are unable to attend registration, please phone Greg in the evening at 775-0993 or email him at duhnelsons@gra.midco.net.

Tuition Costs. Tuition costs are as follows:

Poco Voce	\$150.00/year
Canto Voce	\$150.00/year
Accordo Voce	\$200.00/year
Primo Voce	\$225.00/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 requests the permission of parents 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 and indicate your preference on the Photo Release Form completed at registration.

GCCC Social Media

GCCC shares information with families and the public through our website and social media outlets. Please make a note of our contacts:

Website: www.grandcitiescc.org Instagram: @grandcitiescc

Twitter: @grandcitiescc Facebook: GrandcitiesCC

GCCC Directing Staff

Melanie Popejoy, Primo Voce University of North Dakota (701) 777-2818 melanie.popejoy@und.edu

Amy Dewitt, Primo Voce Century Elementary School (701) 746-2440 adewitt150@mygfschools.org

Jack Boyer, Primo Voce

Kayla Skjervheim, Accordo Voce Discovery Elementary School (701) 746-2205 Ext. 3376 kskjervheim180@mygfschools.org

Ruth Ann Tuseth, Canto Voce Cell Phone (701) 335-9029 rtuseth@gmail.com

Annella Winger, Poco Voce Cell Phone (218) 779-6030 annella.winger@gmail.com

GCCC Advisory Board

Shelly Amundson Cell: (218) 791-2020 shellyamundson@hotmail.com

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Geoff Gaukler Cell: (701) 740-5916 ggaukler020@mygfschools.org

Monte Gaukler Cell: (701) 740-5912 mgaukler23@gmail.com

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Kecia Peters, Managing Director Work: (701) 746-2205 Ext. 7107 kpeters090@mygfschools.org

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