

SYDNEY

CHILDREN'S
CHOIR

NORTH SHORE CHOIRS

CHORISTER & PARENT HANDBOOK 2011

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1. Introduction

As well as providing some background information on the Choir, this handbook should act as a first point of reference for all choristers and parents on matters such as timetables, uniform, rehearsal procedure and commitment requirements etc.

Chances are you'll find the answer to your question right here in this booklet, so please read before you ring or email!

2. Our Organisation

Sydney Children's Choir is part of Gondwana Choirs, a not-for-profit organisation.

Gondwana Choirs is a company limited by guarantee. One parent in each family is required to become a member of the company. The parent member is then entitled to vote at the AGM and also to stand for election to the Board. Membership costs \$40 per year (included in the term fees) and members' liability is limited to \$20. The memorandum and articles of the company are available for viewing at the office.

Mission

It is our mission to develop a unique Australian choral voice whilst providing training and opportunity for talented young Australians to perform with innovation and excellence alongside artists of the highest calibre in Australia and throughout the world.

Vision

- Identify and develop gifted young musicians from across Australia and provide them with the skills, opportunities and inspiration to achieve excellence in performance.
- Seek out young people who would otherwise have no access to music education and involve them in our choral education programs.
- Give these young people life changing opportunities to perform and collaborate with leading artists, both nationally and internationally.
- Be known nationally and internationally for exciting and original choral repertoire.
- As ambassadors of Australian music, share this with the world.

Core values

- **Excellence:** to ensure that young people have the opportunities to fulfil their musical potential by offering them the highest level of training and a chance to collaborate with their talented peers from across Australia and the world.
- **Professionalism:** to offer young people the skills and opportunities to succeed in a professional environment with the very finest artists in Australia across a broad range of art forms.
- **Creativity:** to continue to develop our unique Australian repertoire of choral works and to encourage choristers to participate in composition and the creation of new works.

- **Accessibility:** to ensure that any suitably talented child has the opportunity to participate in our programs without financial, social, physical or distance barriers.
 - **Community:** to provide a happy and a safe environment in which young people are proud to learn, perform, compose, be inspired, socialise and flourish.
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3. Artistic Director – Lyn Williams OAM

Lyn Williams is Australia's leading director of choirs for young people, having founded two internationally renowned choirs: Sydney Children's Choir in 1989 and the national children's choir Gondwana Voices in 1997. She has recently added a number of other choirs to the Gondwana Choirs program, including the Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir, Junior Gondwana, Gondwana Singers and Gondwana Chorale. Her exceptional skill in working with young people is recognised internationally for its high artistic quality and ground-breaking innovation.

In addition to her work with young people, Lyn Williams has become one of Australia's foremost Music Directors and Conductors for major events. She was Music Director of the Opening Ceremony of the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games, and for the Rugby World Cup in 2003, as well as the NSW Centennial Ceremony in 2001. Under Lyn's direction, major new symphonic scores were commissioned from leading Australian composers for each of these events. Lyn has conducted many major professional choirs and orchestras in Australia, including the Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Australian Youth Orchestra and the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs. In 2001 she co-directed *Parables, Lullabies and Secrets* with her national choir Gondwana Voices, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Neil Finn and Michael Leunig.

She has been working with the Torres Strait Islander dancer and choreographer Sani Townson since 2005 and together they have been developing Torres Strait Island songs and dances for Gondwana Choirs to perform. In 2008 the Sydney Children's Choir commenced a collaborative project with Torres Strait Island communities which involved Lyn and Sani working with primary and secondary school children across the Torres Strait Islands and saw the Sydney Children's Choir tour to Thursday Island and work with children from across the Torres Strait. This culminated in the world premiere performance of *Ngailu Boy of the Stars* at the City Recital Hall Angel Place in April 2009. This multi artform work which the Sydney Children's Choir commissioned was performed to critical acclaim by the Choir and 18 children from the Torres Strait Islands who travelled to Sydney for an intensive rehearsal season and concert. Since then Lyn and Sani and Australia's best Indigenous singers and musicians have also worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in schools in Cairns, the Northern Territory, Shepparton, Northern NSW and across Sydney to identify children with potential for the Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir.

In January 2004 Lyn Williams was awarded Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in recognition of her services to the Arts as Founder & Director of Sydney Children's Choir and Gondwana Choirs. She also received NSW State Award at the 2006 Classical Music Awards for her long term contribution to the advancement of Australian music. Lyn is a Churchill Fellow and also a composer and in 2009 she won the APRA-Australian Music Centre Vocal / Choral Work of the Year for her work *The Dominion of Dreams*.

4. Choral Education Director and SCC North Shore Conductor – Allison Harrigan

Allison Harrigan is the Sydney Children's Choir Choral Education Director and Conductor of the North Shore Choirs. She oversees the training program of the Sydney Children's Choir. We aim to provide each child entering the program with a rewarding and enriching choral experience at each level of their musical development.

Allison holds a Masters degree in Choral Conducting and Aural Training from the University of Queensland. She has lectured in both of these subjects at various Melbourne universities for the past seven years. Allison has conducted many quality tertiary, school and community choirs. She is in demand as a guest conductor for choirs and lecturer at choral conferences. Allison has enjoyed roles as Head of Junior Music at Scotch College and Caulfield Grammar School in Melbourne. Now based in Sydney, she prefers to focus on her special interest in vocal technique for young voices and Australian choral music.

5. Educational Objectives

Since the inception of the Sydney Children's Choir and then the Gondwana National Choirs and Gondwana National Indigenous Children's Choir, a particular performance style has developed. This open and honest style of musical performance is a reflection of our particular rehearsal techniques and most particularly our respect for the young people we work with. This same openness of communication and respect for both fellow staff (administration and artistic) and volunteers is central to the culture of the organisation.

The Sydney Children's Choir has 16 separate choirs rehearsing weekly. Children are placed into the choir which we feel is most appropriate for their level of musical and personal maturity. It is our aim to make each child feel challenged but happy within their choral environment.

The Sydney Children's Choir's Choral Training Program is based around our core values (excellence, professionalism, creativity, accessibility and community) and aims to develop skills in the following areas:

- choral singing
- music theory
- artistic expression and style
- aural and sight-singing
- composition
- professionalism on and off stage
- leadership
- dedication, focus and commitment
- self-discipline & maturity
- movement
- personal awareness
- self-confidence
- a sense of enjoyment

The Sydney Children's Choir regularly holds workshops with leading Australian performers, composers and artists. Through direct contact with these musicians and composers, we hope to increase our choristers' understanding of what music is and how can be made, and to enthuse and inspire them through a wide variety of musical role models.

The Sydney Children's Choir's is dedicated to commissioning and performing works by contemporary Australian composers. Frequently, the choristers also participate in the creation of new works. In this way, SCC has greatly increased the previously limited canon of works available for children's choirs.

6. Board & Staff

Board

Lyn Williams OAM	Artistic Director
Rebecca Davies	Chair
Claire Duffy	
Nicholas James	
Warren Lee	
David Longmuir	
David Lumb	

Administration Staff

Alex Cameron-Fraser	General Manager alexandra@gondwanachoirs.com.au
Jess Chambers	SCC Operations Coordinator (Tue/Thu/Sat) scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au
Anita Burkhardt	North Shore Operations Assistant (Mondays)
TBC	SCC Administrator (Tue – Fri) scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au
John Nolan	Artistic Administrator
Rachel Whealy	National Choral Program Manager
Erica Byrne	Indigenous Children's Choir Coordinator
Caroline Kane	Finance Manager
Cassandra Bayley	Accounts Administrator (Mondays only) cassandra@gondwanachoirs.com.au
Clare Ainsworth	Philanthropy Manager clare@gondwanachoirs.com.au
Daria O'Neill	Development Manager daria@gondwanachoirs.com.au

Artistic Staff

Lyn Williams	Artistic Director & Conductor Senior Choir
Allison Harrigan	Choral Education Director & Conductor North Shore Choirs, Stanhope & Atherton Choirs, SLEEK Tutor
Tom Johnson	Pianist SCC North Shore
Dan Walker	Conductor Kats-Chernin Choir
Erica Byrne	Conductor Mini Blue, Mini Green, Mini Mauve & Jarman Choirs
Amandine Petit	Sight Singing Teacher Twist, Stanhope & Atherton Choirs
Sally Whitwell	Conductor Leek Choir, Pianist Jarman, Walker, Twist Stanhope & Atherton, Kats Chernin & Senior Choirs
TBC	Conductor Mini Yellow, Mini Orange and Mini Red Choirs
Tristan Coehlo	Music Craft Tutor
Marcus Bortolotti	Music Craft Tutor
Laura Altman	Senior Sight Singing Tutor
Joseph Twist	Senior Sight Singing Tutor
Elizabeth Choo	Vocal Coach

7. Contact & Correspondence

Our Sydney Children's Choir Administrator is your main point of contact regarding Sydney Children's Choir activities. The Administrator works Tuesday – Friday and can be contacted on 9251 4226 or scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au.

The North Shore Operations Assistant will manage all North Shore Choir rehearsals. This person will be contactable on Mondays on 0457 371 542. If you are running late or unable to make the rehearsal, please call and leave a message on this phone. Messages will be checked on Monday afternoons.

Regular newsletters and bulletins will be emailed to you. These contain important information about the Choir's upcoming activities, including rehearsals and performances. We ask that you take the time to read these carefully when you receive them, or you may miss some very important information.

Other important information, including schedule updates, notices of key upcoming dates and fee invoices, will be sent by email to your nominated email address. **It is very important that you provide us with at least one working email address and check your email regularly**, as important updates are issued via email weekly, if not more often.

Please add scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au (the Administrator's email address) to your 'safe senders' list and let us know if you have not received an email for more than a fortnight so she can check if there is a problem with her emails to you.

NB Jess Chambers is our Sydney Children's Choir Operations Coordinator, and she manages Kats-Chernin and Leek rehearsals, Saturday School and performances. She is contactable in the office at 9251 4226 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and on 0429 990 122 during rehearsals and performances only. Jess is the person to ask on all matters relating to uniform, supervision and general choir operations.

8. About our North Shore Choirs

Monday will be a busy day of rehearsals at the Sydney Children's Choir North Shore. Some of the youngest choir groups of the Sydney Children's Choir's will rehearse at this time.

Whilst choristers in the North Shore choirs can expect to take part in one to two major performances during the year and approximately two smaller scale performances, in general these choirs are training choirs. Learning to sing in a choir, without the pressure of an upcoming performance, is the first vital part of training with the Sydney Children's Choir.

North Shore Choir rehearsals are held at: Pymble Uniting Church Hall (corner of Livingstone Avenue and Pacific Highway Pymble)

Parking

Parking for parents is available in the side streets surrounding the Pymble Uniting Church. Limited onsite parking is available down the ramp at Pymble Uniting Church but of course the Minister's marked parking place must be kept free. For safety reasons no parking is available onsite upstairs in the circular driveway.

Mini-singers North Shore

- A choir for choristers in Years 1 and 2 at school.
- Choristers are taught songs and musical games to develop their vocal skills and music reading skills. An important part of rehearsal is focusing on singing in tune with correct vocal technique. Choristers enjoy learning quality choral music in unison and also singing canons.
- Children are not required to sit a placement test for entry into this choir.
- **Rehearsals are held from 3:45 – 4:25pm on Mondays during NSW school terms.**

Walker / Twist North Shore

- This choir is for choristers in Year 3 - 5 and some advanced Year 2 choristers.
 - Choristers learn to sing beautifully in tune with correct vocal technique. This choir enjoys more challenging choir repertoire including works in unison and two parts. There is a strong emphasis on music reading, aural training and sight-singing skills.
 - **Rehearsals are held from 4:45 – 6:00pm Mondays during NSW school terms.**
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9. Weekend Camps

Weekend camps are an essential and therefore compulsory activity for all choristers in Walker and Twist Choirs. During the camp, choristers participate in a variety of different activities which will assist their choral development. This includes intensive rehearsals, composition, drama and visual art workshops as well as games and other activities. Camps are also an excellent chance for choristers to get to know each other outside the weekly rehearsals and importantly for the choir to develop a cohesive sound over an intensive weekend of working together. It is recommended that Walker / Twist choristers in Year 2 attend as day students.

Walker and Twist North Shore choristers will attend Camp with Millers Point Saturday School choristers on Saturday April 30th – Sunday May 1st. Put the dates in your diary today!

Camp fees are \$200 (residential) and \$178 (day students). Invoices will be sent in Term 1 and are payable before the Camp.

10. Rehearsal Procedure

Choristers should arrive at rehearsal 10 minutes prior to its start time (arriving on time is arriving late!) and then:

- Collect their name tag and have their name marked off by the rehearsal supervisor (in the Sydney Children's Choir red t-shirt) or North Shore Operations Assistant
- Visit the toilet (no one should need to visit the toilets during rehearsal)
- Check in with the rehearsal supervisor and collect any music and pencils as required
- Be in their seats ready to sing 3 minutes before the start of rehearsal

At the end of rehearsal, choristers are required to:

- Pick up all rubbish from the floor, return music, pencils and chairs
 - Collect any notes sent out by the office
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11. Duty of Care

The Sydney Children's Choir is operated by Gondwana Choirs. We are committed to maintaining best practice standards in our duty of care for our choristers.

Each rehearsal is supervised by one or more volunteer supervisors who are dressed in a red Sydney Children's Choir t-shirt. These supervisors mark the roll at the start of the rehearsal and supervise your child during the rehearsal.

We understand that sometimes it may be necessary for you to drop off your child more than 15 minutes prior to the start of a rehearsal; however please note that during this time the staff member on duty is busy setting up the rehearsal space and cannot take responsibility for supervising your child.

We ask that you ensure that your child is collected promptly after rehearsals. **If for unforeseen circumstances you are delayed, please call 0457 371 542 and leave a message outlining your estimated time of arrival and a contact number where we can reach you in the interim.**

12. Attendance & Commitment

Being a member of the Sydney Children's Choir means making a commitment to consistent and punctual attendance at all activities.

Although we aim to develop a strong sense of commitment from our choristers we also recognise that once in a while an extremely important event (such as a birthday party) may fall in choir time. We do not want our younger children to feel as though they are often missing out because of Choir. For this reason, we understand that a chorister may **very** occasionally miss a rehearsal. This should not occur more than three times a year. Please let your child know about this limit so that they may have the opportunity to make priorities (e.g. own birthday, best friend's birthday, family celebration). Obviously this does not include special rehearsals in the lead up to a public performance (see below).

If a chorister cannot attend a rehearsal due to illness or other circumstances, you must advise us prior to the rehearsal so that suitable notice can be given to the conductor. Please contact the Administrator Tuesday - Friday (by email scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au) or the North Shore Operations Assistant on Mondays (by phone 0457 371 542).

Attendance at major rehearsals prior to performances (for example dress rehearsals, rehearsals at the concert venue, or any other special rehearsals) is NON-NEGOTIABLE. This is because if a chorister misses any one of these rehearsals they will be missing vital instructions, which are essential to the success of the performance. **Please note that choristers who are unable, for any reason, to attend these rehearsals will not be able to participate in the performance.**

A strong commitment to the choir is fostered from the youngest choir groups upwards. Upon reaching the performing choirs, a high degree of commitment is required: a single missed rehearsal can leave a chorister and therefore an entire choir ill-prepared for a rehearsal or performance.

Missing several rehearsals generally means that a chorister lacks adequate preparation for singing with the choir. A chorister in this situation may be asked to join another choir group for the rest of the term.

13. Notice of Intention to Withdraw a Chorister

A full school term's notice in writing to the SCC Administrator (scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au) is required before the withdrawal of a chorister, or the payment of half a semester's participation fees in lieu is required.

14. Professionalism

Most Sydney Children's Choir performances are held in professional situations where choristers appear as professional artists. Training is provided for the younger choir groups to prepare choristers for the high level of self-discipline and professionalism required of them at the performing choir level.

Choristers are therefore aware of appropriate rehearsal and performance conduct.

Should choristers' conduct be inappropriate, they will be given two written warnings, which need to be acknowledged by parents. After a third warning a chorister will be moved to another choir group or asked to leave the Sydney Children's Choir.

15. Uniform

Our rehearsal uniform is the blue Sydney Children's Choir polo t-shirt, blue jeans and sneakers. It is to be worn by all choristers at all rehearsals. A Sydney Children's Choir jumper is also needed by all choristers in the cooler months for rehearsals.

The blue Sydney Children's Choir polo t shirt can be purchased for \$27.50 (by cash, cheque or credit card) at the first North Shore rehearsal for Term 1: Monday February 7th.

From time to time, there will be a different uniform requirement for a particular performance. You will be advised of these on a case-by-case basis.

16. Music

Any music issued to choristers during the course of the year remains the property of the Sydney Children's Choir. All music must be returned at the end of the year in good condition. Fees will be charged for lost or damaged music.

Choristers must have pencils and an eraser at each rehearsal.

17. Getting Involved & Supervising

The Sydney Children's Choir could not function without the support and help of parents, and is indebted to all its volunteers. Assistance comes in many forms, from assisting with fundraising, stuffing envelopes and helping in the office, to supervising rehearsals, concerts and weekend camps. If you would like to become involved, please contact Jess Chambers at scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au

Supervision

Supervision is such a vital part of our programs as it assists creating a safe and fun learning environment for all our choristers - and hopefully it is an enjoyable time for the Supervisors as well! Regular rehearsal supervisors assist with such activities as marking choir rolls, supervising breaks, distributing music and newsletters and looking after the general welfare of the choristers. There is also an opportunity to supervise at performances, recordings, tours and camps.

Below is some feedback that we received from a Senior Choir Supervisor:

I love being a part of the music making. I've always loved choral singing but never had the opportunities that my girls are getting. Call it my "vicarious choral experience"...

...I'm constantly learning by working with the kids. They never cease to amaze me - what they achieve, how they go about it and how Lyn supports them along this journey.

If you are interested in supervising, Jess would love to hear from you: scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au

18. Funding and Fees

Gondwana Choirs is a not-for-profit organisation and relies on grants from the Australia Council and Arts NSW, individual donations, sponsorship, performance fees, corporate event fees and chorister fees to fund our activities.

Important Information

- GST is included on fees only where indicated
- Fees are payable in advance on a per semester basis (1 semester = 2 school terms)

Fees must be paid before a choristers is eligible to attend rehearsals

- Fees are payable by personal cheques, internet funds transfer and credit card (MasterCard and Visa only) and cash (at rehearsals)
- There will be an additional charge of 1.5% of total fees for all credit card payments
- There is a 20% discount on the fees of a second, younger child from the same family and a 40% discount on the third and subsequent choristers from the same family
- A full school term's notice in writing to the SCC Administrator (scc@gondwanachoirs.com.au) is required before the withdrawal of a chorister, or the payment of half a semester's participation fees in lieu is required.

2011 Choral Training Program Fees Per Semester (i.e. 2 school terms)*

Minisingers North Shore	\$389
Walker / Twist North Shore	\$490

*Company membership, Music Levy and Uniform Hire are included in the above fees. GST is not applicable to these fees