



# Nebraska Choral Arts Society

## *Handbook*

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#### **Welcome to the Nebraska Choral Arts Society!**

*Congratulations* on being selected to sing in the Nebraska Choral Arts Society (NCAS). This handbook is intended for singers and their families. It is meant to present the customs of NCAS, to provide information to questions you may have throughout the year, and to be used as a reference. It is not strictly a book of policies. The handbook is revised periodically to reflect the better wishes of the organization.

#### **NCAS Mission Statement**

The Mission of the Nebraska Choral Arts Society is to share the gift of great choral music, to inspire new generations with the love of singing, and broaden our reach to all ages and cultures.

### **About the Nebraska Choral Arts Society**

NCAS is a non-profit choral organization which is comprised of the Masterworks adult chorus, Choral Arts Society Teens (CAST), and Nebraska Children's Chorus (youth division).

**Masterworks** was founded in 1978 and has provided singers in the greater Omaha area the unique opportunity to experience large choral works with orchestra, soloists and guest ensembles of national and international renown. The Masterworks Chorus of the Nebraska Choral Arts Society continues that tradition and seeks to be a flagship to music in the area. *The Masterworks Chorus rehearses Monday evenings from 7:00 – 9:30 at Countryside Community Church at 87<sup>th</sup> and Pacific.*

**CAST** stands for Choral Arts Society Teens. It is made up of youth in grades 8 through 12, featuring advanced harmony and innovative repertoire. *CAST rehearses Monday evenings from 5:00 – 7:00 at Countryside Community Church, 87<sup>th</sup> & Pacific.*

**The Nebraska Children's Chorus** (NCC) is a professional training program for young singers in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. Since its formation in 1984, NCC has firmly rooted itself in the arts community of this area and beyond – performing with the Omaha Symphony, US Air Force Heartland of America Band, and other arts organizations, as well as maintaining their own season series. Beyond this immediate geographic area, the Nebraska Children's Chorus has performed at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., the Golden Gate International Children's Choral Festival (where they received two Silver Medals in the "International" category), the Princeton Invitational Choir Festival (First Place), and in 1998 represented the United States at the International Society for Music Education in South Africa. Other tour destinations include Canada, Germany, England, the Baltic States and Japan. NCC choirs also have toured over 16 states from New York to California.

NCC is made up of up to 300 young singers who meet weekly, eight months a year. They have an opportunity to be in one of six choruses under the NCC umbrella:

- Jubilate (Grades 2-4)
- Camerata (Grades 5-7)
- Cantori (Grades 5-10)
- Bel Canto (Grades 5-12)

Each choir focuses on tone production, music reading, vocal production, basic musical understanding, intricate harmonies, music from many cultures and languages, rehearsal discipline and choral literature. NCAS is committed to involving singers from a variety of ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. Programs are set up in various parts of the Omaha area to ensure that all segments of our population are represented. Further, tuition assistance is available to eligible students who could not otherwise afford to be involved in youth arts programs. We believe in music for all.

### **NCC Choirs**

**Bel Canto**, which means "beautiful singing" in Italian, is the most musically advanced choir of the Nebraska Children's Chorus, and includes grades 5 and up. They have been lauded in competitions and performances nationally and internationally: the Princeton University Invitational (First Place), International Choral Kathaumixw in British Columbia, Germany, Denver, Atlanta, Canada, South Africa, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, St. Petersburg, Russia, Japan, England and Wales. This choir features unaccompanied intricate harmony and music from cultures and languages all over the world. *Bel Canto rehearses Saturday mornings at UNomaha from 9:00-12:00 p.m. and Tuesday evenings at Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church from 6:00-7:00 p.m.*

**Cantori** is an upper level choir that develops strong vocal and musical skills with its singers. Cantori includes singers from grades 5 – 10. Besides making guest appearances in the greater Omaha area, Cantori shares their music in other areas of the Midwest as well as the nation. Most recently, Cantori has toured Oregon, Colorado, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina and Wisconsin. Committed to crossing as many cultural boundaries as possible, this group features advanced harmony of two-four parts with energetic performances. *Cantori rehearses at UNO on Saturday mornings from 8:00-10:00 a.m.*

***Camerata*** singers are in the intermediate stages of musical training, and are in grades 5 through 7. In this ensemble, particular emphasis is on music reading, vocal techniques, and rhythm studies, and they feature music in two- and three-part harmony. The group tours the Midwest, including Kansas City, Chicago and Minneapolis. *Camerata rehearses Monday evenings from 7:00-8:15 p.m. at St. Michael Lutheran Church, 132<sup>nd</sup> and Blondo.*

***Jubilate***, or “joyful” in Latin, focuses on basic vocal skills and musical understanding. Jubilate provides a wonderful musical framework on which children grades 2-4 can build and is indicative of the high energy and fun that this group experiences in rehearsals and concerts. *Jubilate rehearses Monday evenings from 5:45- 6:45 p.m. at St. Michael Lutheran Church, 132<sup>nd</sup> and Blondo.*

*We need to remember that we are created creative and  
can invent new scenarios as frequently as they are needed.*

**-Maya Angelou**

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance at all rehearsals and performances is mandatory. Excused absences are limited to two per semester for Jubilate, Camerata and CAST. Bel Canto, Cantori, and Masterworks are limited to 3 per semester. Absences over the maximum are subject to conductor review. Rehearsal absences must be reported to your conductor. Being late 10 minutes or more three times equals one absence. Families should call their conductors and PICs as soon as they know of an absence or delay. DO NOT contact the NCAS office directly with your absence.

### **School Participation**

Members are encouraged to participate in the vocal music programs in their schools. We want to have a working relationship between NCAS and the many school districts represented by our members. Experience and knowledge learned in both arenas can be mutually shared. When scheduling conflicts arise between school events and NCAS, singers should coordinate these with their conductor.

### **Communication**

#### **Notes Home & Emails**

Choir members may receive written and electronic communication from their choir regarding concerts, rehearsals, and general information. It is imperative that all families read the information when the singers bring it home. Please check the music folders after every rehearsal, as all written communication will be placed in these folders. Also, check your emails before rehearsals & events.

### **Choir Hotline**

Each choir has a hotline containing the most up-to-date information for that choir. This is important for new information such as rehearsal changes or new performance opportunities. The choir hotline must be checked once or twice a week to listen to the latest updates, especially the day of a scheduled event. A touch-tone phone is required.

To access the choir hotline, dial 342-6753. Press extension 1, and then press your choir ID number:

<b>Choir Name</b>	<b>Choir ID</b>	<b>Choir Name</b>	<b>Choir ID</b>
Bel Canto	1	Jubilate	6
Masterworks	3		
Cantori	4	CAST	9
Camerata	5		

### **Music**

Music selection is at the discretion of the Artistic Director and the choir conductors. Music selected will be on the basis of quality – regardless of religious or ethnic consideration. The cost of sheet music is included in tuition.

Printed music is very expensive and often difficult to replace. You must assume the responsibility of looking after it carefully. All music is the property of NCAS. Music is to be returned at the end of each season. There will be fees assessed for the cost to replace any missing music.

### **Registration**

Registration materials must be completed in full and deposits paid immediately after acceptance into NCAS. The remainder of tuition and season tickets must be fully paid by September 15.

### **Retreats**

The purpose of retreats is to give singers an opportunity to get to know each other and the NCAS staff. In addition, much of the music to be sung is learned. Retreats also allow the opportunity for FUN! Attendance at retreats is **required without exception**. Most choirs hold retreats in the fall; some may also have retreats in January.

### **Rehearsals**

Attendance at rehearsals is mandatory and NCAS members should be in their seats and ready to sing at scheduled rehearsal times. It is each NCAS member's responsibility to check in with the attendance person.

NCAS is not responsible for singers until 15 minutes before rehearsal or concert call time, and their responsibility ends 15 minutes after the scheduled pick-up. Members left after the 15-minute periods may go home with a staff member or Parent-in-Charge to await pick-up by parent or designated adult. We ask parents to abide by and not abuse this grace period.

In case of inclement weather, a decision to cancel will be made at least two hours before the scheduled event. Cancellations will be broadcast over KFAB (1110 AM) or KVNO (90.7 FM). If possible, a calling tree will be activated and email. If in doubt, call your Choir Information Line.

### **Dress Rehearsals**

Like other rehearsals, dress rehearsals are mandatory. Dress rehearsals are closed, meaning that they are open only to singers, staff members, PICs and designated chaperones. Large numbers of singers and assistants are normally at dress rehearsals, and additional friends, parents, and siblings increase distraction and make it difficult for performers to focus. Dress rehearsal absences must be cleared with the choir's conductor. NCAS polo shirts are to be worn at all dress rehearsals unless otherwise stated in your choir newsletter or Choir Information Line.

### **Fees**

#### **Tuition**

Each choir is assessed an annual tuition. This tuition accounts for 32.9% of putting a child through the Nebraska Choral Arts Society. Please refer to the following grid to figure the annual tuition.

#### **Uniform**

Uniforms for NCC are purchased through Dennis Uniform, and can vary in cost. CAST and Masterworks singers purchase their uniforms from Stage Accents. Used uniforms are also available through NCAS; further information on uniforms can be found later in this handbook.

#### **Tickets**

As part of your financial commitment, each family must purchase two season tickets, the cost of which is included in tuition. Tickets are required for all concerts. If you have multiple members, you will only be required to purchase one set of tickets. Masterworks members are strongly encouraged to purchase or sell four season tickets per year.

#### **Tour**

Tour costs vary by year and destination. More information is located further in this handbook.

#### **Multiple child discounts**

Discounts are available for families that have two or more children in the Nebraska Choral Arts Society. This 15% discount on tuition, applied to balance after deposit has been paid in full, is applied to the lesser cost choir for each additional member. Full tuition is paid on the highest level choir.

### Finance Charges

Deposits and tuition fees are non-refundable. All tuition payments must be received by September 15, 2007 for first semester entrance, and February 15, 2008 for mid-season entrance. Finance charges will be assessed beginning 15 days after the due date at a rate of 1.5% per month.

### Payment Plans

Please contact the NCAS office if you need to set up a payment plan. A fee of \$25 will be assessed to establish a payment plan. Three and six month plans are available for August entrants, three month plans are available for January entrants. Finance charges will not be assessed to these balances. If the plan is not followed, finance charges will be assessed on the original balance.

<b>Choir Name</b>	<b>Tuition*</b>	<b>Uniform**</b>	<b>Tour***</b>
Bel Canto	\$620	\$235	\$2000
Cantori	\$470	\$125	\$750
Camerata	\$400	\$125	\$400
Jubilate	\$345	\$125	\$100
CAST	\$420	\$125	\$750
Masterworks	\$75 plus fundraising & tickets	\$100	\$100

\*Tuition includes (2) Adult Season Tickets (excluding Masterworks)

\*\*Prices listed are for new uniforms from Dennis Uniform. NCAS does sell used items at half price.

\*\*\*Tours have not yet been set for the 2007-2008 Season. All costs are estimated using previous years as a guide. Final tour decisions are made in November.

### Financial Aid

Limited tuition and tour financial aid is available for families needing assistance. NCAS's goal is to make our program available to all committed youth. Application forms are available upon request from the NCAS Office. Financial aid applications for tuition must be submitted no later than two weeks before full tuition is due; applications for tour aid must be made by January 15. Financial aid can cover full tuition excluding the cost of the deposit (\$75) and season tickets (\$70). Tour aid is available on a very limited basis, and will cover only a portion of the tour on a need basis. Financial aid information is kept strictly confidential, and is based on a first come, need basis. Recipients of financial aid are expected to give a certain level of volunteer hours to NCAS.

### Concerts

Concerts give NCAS members opportunities to use their musical skills and gain confidence. Through concert performance, the stature and reputation of NCAS grows - thus providing NCAS members with an even richer experience.

While most concerts are planned a year in advance, a number of requests to perform are received during the concert season. Consideration is given to the preparedness of the chorus and the appropriateness of the time and event. Notice will be given as far in advance as possible. Choir members and families should be prepared for additional concerts and rehearsals.

Attendance at concerts is mandatory. If attendance at a concert is in question, it is your responsibility to contact the conductor and clear any absence.

As a performance courtesy, members must remain throughout the entire concert - whether performing or not. As they can distract performers, **cameras, recording devices and video cameras are not allowed at concerts.**

## Uniforms

NCAS members must be in regulation concert-wear to perform. Formal and casual concert wear can be purchased at:

### Dennis Uniform

726-740 N. 109th Court (North Old Mill)

(402) 496-9911

Monday – Saturday 12 noon to 6 p.m., closed Columbus Day and Labor Day

We estimate the cost for all new concert wear to be approximately \$125-\$150. The NCAS office has a limited number of used uniforms at reduced cost, call the office at 342-6753 to arrange to browse the selection. Please consider donating your used uniforms when your child outgrows them.

## Casual Concert Wear

### • NCAS Polo Shirt

Bel Canto	Dark Green
Camerata	Purple
Cantori	Burgundy
CAST	Black
Jubilate	Royal Blue
Masterworks	Ivory



Nebraska  
Children's  
Chorus



CAST



Nebraska Choral  
Arts Society

- Dennis Uniform khaki pants - some are straight front, some are pleated front – please check with your conductor or Parent-in-Charge to find out the standard for your choir (Jubilate and Camerata: no flat fronts, please).
- Brown Belt – any brand (Black for CAST)
- Dark Brown Socks – any brand (Black for CAST)
- Casual Brown Shoes – any brand (Black for CAST)
- **Bel Canto only:** (Some items from Dennis Uniform, others are not. Check with PIC.)
  - Navy blue Henley
  - Bel Canto windbreaker
  - Maroon T-shirt
  - Bel Canto Fleece
  - Girls: khaki skorts
  - Boys: khaki walking shorts

### Formal Concert Wear and Accessories

- Tuxedo shirt with studs
- Black Skirt/Pants (skirt below the knee)
- Boys: Black Socks & Shoes – any brand
- Girls: White, Opaque tights – any brand
- Girls: Black, flat, plain shoes
- Red Cumberbund
- Boys: Red Bow Tie
- Girls: Red Rosette

**CAST and Masterworks only: Formal uniforms are available from Stage Accents. Please contact your PIC or the choir president for more information.**

**Uniformity is our goal; ALL Jewelry (except for small STUD Earrings) and hair accessories are PROHIBITED during performance.** Chorus members will be asked to remove these items (if they forget) before they perform. Hair needs to be pulled back and away from the face. Hair accessories used for this purpose must match the color of the singer's hair as closely as possible.

**Returns:** Dennis Uniform's return policy is to accept returns on garments that have not been worn or washed. Please make sure you've purchased the correct items and correct sizes as soon as possible. The NCAS office will accept returns for two weeks following your purchase.

## Medals

You may notice some singers wearing medals during performances. These signify the number of years a child has been in NCAS. Children receive medals beginning with their third year in our choruses – these have red pin drapes. Four-year medals have blue pin drapes. Five-year-and-up member medals are on red, white and blue neck ribbons, and say, "Nebraska Children's Chorus – x Years." Children who move to other choirs retain their longevity standing for medals.

## **Tours**

The Nebraska Choral Arts Society is unique in the fact that all of our choirs take a spring or summer tour. Most children's choruses have only one "touring" choir. NCAS staff and volunteers spend many hours preparing for the tours. Along with the coordinating of performances and accommodations, much time and effort is spent on planning for the safety and security of everyone on tour. Adult chaperones will also go along on each youth tour to provide appropriate supervision. With all our experience with tours, we are certain that the singer's tour will be enriching, rewarding, and downright FUN! **All tours are mandatory, as the entire choir is necessary to ensure the sound of the group.** The tours are usually as follows:

- Jubilate one day regional trip
- Camerata, CAST, Masterworks, 2-3 day regional trip
- Cantori: two-five day regional trip or National Tour every 3rd year
- Bel Canto: National or International Tour

NCAS staff will accompany choirs and, if necessary, arrange for additional chaperones. NCAS staff is solely responsible for selecting chaperones. Chaperones are NCAS Artistic and Administrative Staff Members and Choir PICs who have been heavily involved with the organization throughout the year. Additional chaperones, if needed, will be selected by the NCAS Artistic Staff. When a chorus travels on weekends, they often perform at a religious service; however, we cannot be responsible for church attendance of chorus members while on tour. Chorus members must stay with the chorus at all times. They may not leave with friends, family, or go to a religious service of their own choosing.

## **Tour Costs and Policies**

Tour cost is separate from tuition. An itinerary, breakdown of tour costs and tour payment dates will be provided soon after the concert season begins. Tour payments help spread the cost over a considerable length of time. Payments are scheduled to coincide with actual tour costs that must be advanced - thus making it imperative that all tour payments be made as scheduled. Failure to make timely payments may often mean forfeiture of money in your tour account. **Tour payments are NON-REFUNDABLE.** Tour excess, if any, is used for various NCAS purposes.

## **Fundraising and Volunteering**

The Nebraska Choral Arts Society depends highly on the donations of others. Yearly tuition covers only 32.9% of the total cost for each singer each year. Therefore, active fundraising is essential to the survival of the Nebraska Choral Arts Society. Participation in these fundraisers is generally not required; though it is highly encouraged, and helps keep your tuition costs down.

Our largest fundraiser of the year is *Vocal* (Italian for "voice"). It features a silent and oral auction, dinner, and entertainment by NCAS choirs. Due to the success of this event since its inception seven years ago, some choir level fundraisers done in the past have been eliminated.

Committee members are always needed and volunteering for these fun events is a wonderful way to support your singer's talents.