

The logo for Vanderbilt Youth Choirs is centered on a black rectangular background. It features the word "VANDERBILT" in a white, all-caps, serif font at the top. Below it, the word "YOUTH" is written in a large, bold, gold-colored, all-caps, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the word "Choirs" is written in a white, all-caps, serif font, with the "C" being significantly larger than the other letters.

VANDERBILT
YOUTH
Choirs

Vanderbilt Youth Choirs Handbook

Mary Biddlecombe, Artistic Director

Sarah Bronchetti, Assistant Director

Tucker Biddlecombe, Director of Choral Activities and
Cantori and Decani Director

Julie Claverie, Program Administrator

Vanderbilt University Blair Academy Program

Mary Biddlecombe, Director

Melissa Rose, Dean, Blair School of Music

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VANDERBILT YOUTH CHOIRS ENSEMBLES

The Vanderbilt Youth Choirs Tradition

The Vanderbilt Youth Choirs Program was established as part of the pre-college division of Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University, in 1988. VYC has a distinguished history of sharing the love of music with hundreds of children, developing fine musicians and offering quality concerts to the Nashville community. Vanderbilt Youth Choirs graduates have earned scholarships in music at some of the nation's finest universities. Whatever their long-term pursuits may be, VYC graduates find that the poise, self-confidence and discipline learned in choir equips them well for the challenges ahead. The program is classically based, with strong emphases on healthy vocal production, music reading skills and performance. The singers, grades 1-12, come from all over the area. What brings these children together is a love of music, a desire to sing and make friends with other singers, and a dedication to achieving their musical goals.

VYC Chorale

Any VYC student who has completed at least 1 semester in grades 1-12

Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Wednesdays, 4:45 – 6:15 p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor
This choir is a small ensemble made up of auditioned VYC students. For admittance, students must demonstrate beautiful singing, good attendance in their primary choir, and a requisite understanding of solfege and handsigns. This choir is in addition to their primary choir, so students in Chorale are involved in the Vanderbilt Youth Choirs program twice/week. This group performs with the Nashville Symphony, on the VYC Fall and Spring concerts and many other opportunities around the Nashville community.

VYC Concert Choir

Girls, Grades 8-12

Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Mondays, 4:45 – 6:15p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor
This select touring choir gives multiple concerts each year, tours each summer and attends a fall camp. Concert Choir has performed numerous times with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and other area arts organizations. Recent concert tours and festivals have taken the choir to Italy, Budapest, Prague, Ireland, Costa Rica, Indiana, New Mexico and Oregon.
Important Note: typically, new members admitted in fall semester only. If a student is unable to travel with the choir, they are welcome to audition to sing with Choristers.

VYC Cantori

Boys with changed/changing voices

Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Thursdays 6:10 – 7:20 p.m; Tucker Biddlecombe, conductor
Cantori is for boys whose voices are in the process of changing or have already changed. We work on healthy vocal technique and new ways of using voices as they go through transition. Repertoire includes pieces for men's voices and ensemble pieces to sing with the other Vanderbilt Youth Choirs. There are several opportunities to perform each semester. Travel has taken them to several states, Carnegie Hall and international tours to Italy and Germany. A good sense of pitch, unforced sound and a willingness to explore new ways of singing are needed for this group.

VYC Choristers

Girls in grade 5 and up

Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Mondays, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m; Mary Biddlecombe, conductor

This intermediate choir is made up of girls in grades 5 – 12 who are learning about singing with healthy vocal technique, furthering their development as musicians through solfege, Curwin handsigns, and repertoire appropriate for intermediate learners. Students in this choir sing 2 - 4 concerts per year and attend camp each fall. They sometimes join other VYC choirs in performances in the Nashville area and have enjoyed weekend tours to several states. In 2020, members of the Choristers were invited to travel to Mobile, AL to perform for the American Choral Directors Association Southern Division conference.

VYC Decani

Boys in grade 3 and up

Rehearsals are in Choral Hall, Tuesdays, 5:45 – 6:45 p.m; Tucker and Mary Biddlecombe, conductors

This chorus sings repertoire that boys have enjoyed for centuries and includes classical music, art songs, folk songs, and modern compositions written specifically for boys' voices. Members of Decani have performed with the Nashville Symphony, the Boston Camerata, Renaissance Center in Dickson, the Kentucky Symphony, Vanderbilt Community Chorus, at civic events, in local schools, churches and at Blair. Travel has taken them to several states and an international tour to Germany. For admission to this chorus, a child should demonstrate singing that is on pitch and in tune with a pleasant quality. In 2020, members of the Choristers were invited to travel to Mobile, AL to perform for the American Choral Directors Association Southern Division conference.

VYC Young Singers of Blair

Students in grades 3 - 5

Rehearsals are in room 2190, Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m; Sarah Bronchetti, conductor
Singers in the YSB work on healthy, beautiful singing in unison, two parts, rounds and canons. They receive music reading instruction through Curwin handsigns and solfege while learning about musical concepts on the page. This choir typically sings with the Training Choir and explores singing harmony and descants rather than the melody. A beautiful, unforced tone is desired for admittance into the Young Singers of Blair.

VYC Training Choir

Students in grades 1-3

Rehearsals are in room 2192, Thursdays, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m; Sarah Bronchetti, conductor

This choir focuses on the beginnings of beautiful singing in an ensemble. Singing, kinesthetic music activities and fundamentals are the heart of this group's focus. These developing singer musicians will learn how to find the singing voice and produce it beautifully with an unforced yet energized approach. By learning the language of music, it is our hope that students increase their enjoyment of music. They begin recognizing musical concepts by looking at notated music. They sing mostly in unison while typically joining the Young Singers of Blair in part singing, rounds, canons and call and response. Students must be able to read words to be admitted into the group. This group will perform once a semester, with a focus on learning and enjoyment.

STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Concert Choir/Cantori/Chorale

Each Choir Member Will:

1. Attend all rehearsals, retreats, tours, and concerts.

- a. At least twenty-four hour's notice must be given for any absence to be excused. This notice must be given by a parent/guardian via email or phone. If a student is not in rehearsal and we don't know about it, parent/guardian will receive an email.
- b. Students will not be excused from performances and/or dress rehearsals, except under extraordinary circumstances. Students who are absent for performances will be subject to suspension from the program for up to one semester.
- c. Attendance and participation for all tours is expected. This includes domestic and international touring. If a student decides not to tour with the ensemble, they should not expect to remain with the ensemble for that semester.
- d. Rehearsal attendance will be monitored. Three unexcused absences during a semester will result in a potential one semester suspension (student will not be allowed to perform, tour, etc.).
- e. Excessive excused absences may have to be addressed in a meeting with the Artistic Director, the student, and parent/guardian.

2. Treat your directors and administrators with respect and compliance.

- a. Noncompliance with directions from either directors or administrators will not be tolerated.
- b. Noncompliance in rehearsal or performances judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the immediate removal of the student from the program.
- c. Noncompliance during retreat or tours judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the student being sent immediately home at the expense of the parent or guardian.

3. Treat your fellow chorus members as you would wish to be treated.

- a. Any rude or inconsiderate behavior toward your fellow chorus members will not be tolerated. Pejorative language or behavior will not be tolerated.
- b. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Artistic Director, VYC Administrator, and parent/guardian present.

4. Come to rehearsal prepared, and on time.

- a. Concert Choir, Cantori and Chorale members will be responsible to bring their music to each rehearsal. Promptness to rehearsal is expected.
- b. Students should be in their proper position by the start of physical warmups. The director will start on time. Repeated instances of tardiness may result in a meeting with the Artistic Director and parent/guardian.

STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Choristers/Decani

Each Choir Member Will:

1. Attend all rehearsals, retreats, and concerts.

- a. Please give at least twenty-four hours' notice if a student will be absent from rehearsal. This notice must be given by a parent/guardian via email or phone. If a student is not in rehearsal and we don't know about it, parents will receive an email/phone call.
- b. Students will not be excused from performances and/or dress rehearsals, except under extraordinary circumstances. Students who are absent for performances will need to meet with their guardian and the Artistic Director and will be subject to immediate removal from the program.
- c. Rehearsal attendance will be monitored. Three unexcused absences during a semester will result in a potential suspension (student will not be allowed to perform, tour, etc.).
- d. Excessive excused absences may have to be addressed in a meeting with the Artistic Director, the student, and parent/guardian

2. Treat your directors and administrators with respect and compliance.

- a. Noncompliance with directions from either directors or administrators will not be tolerated, either in rehearsals or on tours.
- b. Noncompliance in rehearsal or performances judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the immediate removal of the student from the program.
- c. Noncompliance during retreat or tours judged to be purposeful or belligerent may result in the student being sent immediately home at the expense of the parent or guardian.

3. Treat your fellow choristers as you would wish to be treated.

- a. Any rude or inconsiderate behavior toward your fellow chorus members will not be tolerated. Pejorative language or behavior will not be tolerated in rehearsals, retreats or on tour.
- b. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Artistic Director, VYC Administrator, and parent/guardian present.

4. Come to rehearsal prepared, and on time.

- a. Chorister members will be responsible for bringing their music to each rehearsal.
- b. Students should be in their proper position by the start of physical warmups. The director will start on time. Repeated instances of tardiness may result in a meeting with the Artistic Director and parent/guardian.

STUDENT CONDUCT RULES: Training Choir and Young Singers of Blair

Each Choir Member Will:

1. Come to rehearsal prepared and on time.

- a. Be in assigned seats by the time rehearsal begins.
- b. Read instructions on the board and follow them. If there are no instructions written, wait for instructions from the teacher.

2. Treat your directors and administrators with respect always.

- a. Purposeful noncompliance with directions from directors or administrators will not be tolerated.
- b. Any consistent mistreatment of directors or administrators will result in a disciplinary meeting with the student, parent and Artistic Director.
- c. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the student, Artistic Director, VYC Administrator, Director, and parent/guardian present.

3. Treat your fellow choristers as you would wish to be treated

- a. Please keep your hands to yourself at all times
- b. Please raise your hand to speak
- c. When other students are singing or speaking in turn, you are not.
- d. Be kind to those around you. Rude or inconsiderate behavior will not be tolerated.
- e. Any consistent mistreatment of fellow chorus members will result in a disciplinary meeting with the Director. Repeated instances will result in a disciplinary hearing with the Artistic Director, VYC Administrator, and parent/guardian present.

In return, we as a VYC staff will:

Choose engaging, varied, and appropriate repertoire; present quality performances to the community; cultivate an environment of dignity and respect; and responsibly attend to each student's educational needs.

Pick up/drop off procedures for Training Choir and Young Singers:

- Each student should be brought to their classroom by their parent or guardian.
- The door to the classroom will be opened 5 minutes before the class start time.
- At the end of class, students will be walked down to the Blair Academy lounge where parents/guardians may pick up the students. Parents/guardians should let the teacher or TA know when they have their child.
- Students should be picked up in a timely manner.

To VYC Parents:

Welcome to the 36th year of the Vanderbilt Youth Choirs and the 60th anniversary of the Blair Academy!

Members of the Concert Choir, Cantori and Chorale will join the Nashville Symphony Orchestra in the movie presentation of "Home Alone" in December. They will provide the choir for the movie! Get your tickets now!

Many of our students will audition to participate in the American Choral Directors Association Honor Choirs in Dallas, Texas this year. Students who are accepted will sing with some of the very best choral musicians in the United States.

After an incredibly successful tour to Italy in June of 2024, Concert Choir will be touring domestically in summer 2025. We are so excited to bring our music to other parts of the country!

Finally, Concert Choir, Choristers and Decani students will be singing Gustav Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony* with the Nashville Symphony and Nashville Symphony Chorus under the direction of Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero as he conducts his final concert as the music director of the Nashville Symphony.

I am grateful that we are together making music and enjoying each other's company. Mrs. Claverie and I will continue to work to streamline communication with our families. Please be sure to read any communication you receive from us carefully!

As always, thank you for your continued involvement in the VYC, and the Blair Academy program.



Mary Biddlecombe
Artistic Director
Vanderbilt Youth Choirs
Director
Blair Academy

TENTATIVE CALENDAR (FALL 2024)

For the most complete and up-to-date information, including times of rehearsals and concerts, please see our website: <https://blair.vanderbilt.edu/blair-academy/youth-choirs/>

AUGUST

- 14 CR rehearsals begin
- 15 TC, YSB, CA rehearsals begin
- 19 CH, CC rehearsals begin
- 20 DE rehearsals begin

SEPTEMBER

- 14 National ACDA Auditions

OCTOBER

- 7 NO REHEARSAL – CC/CH
- 8 NO REHEARSAL - DE
- 9 NO REHEARSAL – CR
- 10 NO REHEARSAL – TC/YSB/CA

NOVEMBER

- 25-28 NO REHEARSALS – Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

- 2-8 CR, CC, CA Home Alone
- 13 Dress rehearsal
- 15 2:00PM VYC Winter Concert

LOOKING AHEAD...

JANUARY

- 8 CC, CH rehearsals resume
- 10 CR rehearsals resume
- 11 TC, YSB, CANTORI rehearsals resume

KEY: CR = Chorale; CC = Concert Choir; CH = Choristers; TC = Training Choir; YSB = Young Singers of Blair; CA = Cantori; DE = Decani

EXTRA CONCERTS OR REHEARSALS

The VYC is often asked to perform outside of our traditional concerts already on our schedule. Any extra rehearsals or concerts other than what is already in this handbook will be announced as soon as it is known so that plenty of notice is given. These will also be posted immediately on the VYC website calendar.

TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS

PLEASE NOTE: First semester VYC students must have a school music teacher recommendation to be eligible.

The Scholarship Application Form will be emailed to families in the beginning of the semester. Scholarships are awarded based on need, available money and dedication to the VYC (attendance, work ethic, discipline, ensemble director recommendation) Once a student is awarded that scholarship, he/she must be in compliance with the following guidelines in order to maintain their scholarship:

- Stay within the stated attendance guidelines
- Be actively involved in the rehearsal process
- Exhibit high standards of leadership and decorum

Because of the limited funds available, we are not able to award full scholarships. In addition, an application for tuition scholarship will be considered only for those students who are registered for the semester by **August 23rd**.

In anticipation of assistance, scholarship applicants should opt for the deferred payment on the registration form until it is clear if the student qualifies for scholarship and how much scholarship can be offered. After scholarship is awarded, it is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that the remaining tuition is paid. All remaining fees for tuition from the previous semester must be paid, and all agreed payments for past tours must be paid before scholarship for tuition for the new semester will be considered.

All registrations and scholarship applications must be in by **Tuesday, September 3rd**. No applications will be accepted after that date. For the second semester, it is not necessary to fill out another scholarship application, but if circumstances have changed and there is no longer the need for assistance or assistance is required that wasn't before, please inform the VYC director or administrator.

It is necessary to register each semester. Failure to register within the first three weeks of the second semester will mean a forfeit of the scholarship for second semester. Please note that the Blair Academy office (Elm Stephenson) records the tuition payments and the VYC administrator (Julie Claverie) records the payments for attire. Notice of scholarship amounts will be sent shortly after the deadline of **September 3, 2024**. If you have questions about tuition or scholarships please ask the Blair pre-college registrar, Elm Stephenson at elm.a.stephenson@vanderbilt.edu If you have questions about tour payments or attire, please ask VYC administrator, Julie Claverie at Julie.claverie@vanderbilt.edu

WEBSITE

All things VYC can be found at <https://blair.vanderbilt.edu/blair-academy/youth-choirs/> . Please check the site frequently for information about everything from rehearsals to forms you will need throughout the year.

REGISTRATION

Blair requires students to be registered prior to receiving instruction. You must be a registered Blair Academy student at Vanderbilt in order to participate in the Vanderbilt Youth Choirs or any other program at the Blair Academy. Students who are not registered at the time of the first rehearsal will be invited to sit in the back of the rehearsal hall and observe the rehearsal.

Registration each semester can be completed by clicking on [this link](#).

Parents may choose to pay in full at registration or may defer the payment and make monthly payments and have until December 1 in the fall semester and May 1 in the spring to complete tuition payment. If you have questions regarding registration, please contact Elm Stephenson elm.a.stephenson@vanderbilt.edu or at (615) 322-7655.

CONCERT ATTIRE 2024-2025

Concert Choir and CANTORI

have several options to choose from this year. Please read carefully.

1. Order 1 dress or 1 top and 1 bottom yourselves from <https://formalfashionsinc.com> from the choices listed below:

Dress:

[Style 3762AA-E Performance Knit Dress](#)

OR

One of the following tops:

[Style 2109BK](#) - Black Dress Shirt

[Style 9733AA-E](#) - Performance Knit Blouse

[Style 9762AA-E](#) - Performance Knit Blouse

AND

One of the following bottoms:

[Style 2701](#) - Flex Fit Waist Dress Pant with Tailored Front

[Style 2701W](#) - Ladies Flex Fit Waist Dress Pant with Tailored Front

[Style 516FAA-E](#) - Palazzo Pant

Or they may

2. Purchase Style 3762AA-E Performance Knit Dress or Style 2109BK - Black Dress Shirt and Black adjustable pants directly from Julie Claverie no later than **September 10th**. Payment is by check or money order made payable to BLAIR SCHOOL OF MUSIC and due at the time of ordering.

Shoes:

Black dress shoes: close-toed flats or a 1"- 2" character shoe are acceptable. Character shoes may be purchased at Spell's Dancewear 4231 Harding Pike #1, Nashville, TN 37205.

Ties and Scarves:

Will be provided to students to wear during concert and return immediately following the performance.

Choristers

TO BE PURCHASED THROUGH VYC:

VYC black polo shirt

STUDENT PROVIDED:

khaki pants/skirt, black closed toe shoes (any kind) and beige or nude solid color socks/tights

Young Singers of Blair

TO BE PURCHASED THROUGH VYC:

Blue VYC t-shirt with logo

STUDENT PROVIDED:

black pants or skirt, beige or nude solid color socks/tights and black closed toed shoes.

Training Choir

TO BE PURCHASED THROUGH VYC:

Green VYC t-shirt with logo

STUDENT PROVIDED:

Khaki pants or skirt, beige or nude solid color socks/tights and black closed toed shoes.

ALL STUDENTS

Belt:

If wearing a pant style with belt loops a simple black belt is allowed but not required

Hair:

At all performances (unless stated by the director) the hair should be placed out of the students' eyes in a professional style. All hair clips and accessories should be discreet and blend with the hair color.

Jewelry:

Jewelry should be worn under the uniform. All earrings should be small loops or studs.

PARKING POLICIES IN BLAIR SCHOOL LOTS

After 4:00 p.m. on weekdays and anytime on weekends, *free parking* is available on the second floor of the West Garage. You must enter through the entrance on Children's Way, directly across the street from the Blair School. As you enter the garage, turn LEFT to access the second floor.

Visitor parking is available in South Parking Garage, at the corner of Children's Way and 24th Avenue.

Vehicles parked in Blair lots without a valid permit will be ticketed and towed.

Vehicles parked in the Fire Lane or in areas not marked for parking will be ticketed and towed.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you need disability related accommodations for this course; if you have emergency medical information to share with me; or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

Hearing Protection

Protection of your hearing is essential to your lifelong success as a musician. You can prevent noise-induced hearing loss, but you must avoid overexposure to loud sounds, especially for long periods of time. The risk of hearing loss can be reduced by controlling volume levels in practice and rehearsal, avoiding noisy environments, and turning down the volume (particularly when using earbuds).

The use of earplugs helps to protect your hearing health in cases where you cannot control volume. **The Blair Main Office and Music Library have disposable earplugs available at no charge**; earplugs are also available at most pharmacies. The Musicians' Hearing Center at Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center offers professional personal hearing healthcare services, in addition to custom hearing protection for musicians, sound engineers and other music professionals. For an appointment call: 615.936.5000;
<https://www.vanderbilthealth.com/service-line/vanderbilt-bill-wilkerson-center>

Title IX

Reporting form: <https://vanderbilt.guardianconduct.com/incident-reporting/>
615-343-9004
titleix@vanderbilt.edu
2100 West End Avenue, Suite 700, Nashville, TN 37203

Vanderbilt University is committed to equal opportunity and to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for all members of the University community (including students, faculty, staff,

postdocs, and trainees), guests, and visitors. The University's policies, programs, and activities are designed to foster courtesy and respect. The University prohibits and seeks to eliminate all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. Under federal law, Vanderbilt has a duty to take steps to prevent and redress sexual misconduct. Such conduct is contrary to Vanderbilt's values and is not tolerated.

This Sexual Misconduct Policy (Policy) outlines the procedures that apply to allegations of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment and sexual assault, involving members of the Vanderbilt community. It is applicable to all members of the Vanderbilt community, with respect to conduct that occurs on campus and conduct that occurs off-campus that has an on-campus effect, including conduct in connection with University programs or activities or that otherwise interferes with or limits the ability of a member of the community to participate in or to receive benefits, services, or opportunities from the University's programs or activities.

Questions about the policy and its applicability to any alleged conduct may be directed to Vanderbilt's Title IX Coordinator, who oversees compliance with applicable non-discrimination policies, including this policy.

HONOR CODE

Vanderbilt University students pursue all academic endeavors with integrity. They conduct themselves honorably, professionally, and respectfully in all realms of their studies in order to promote and secure an atmosphere of dignity and trust. The keystone of our honor system is self-regulation, which requires cooperation and support from each member of the University community.

RECORDING POLICY

Schools, departments, programs, and individual faculty members, speakers, and artists may have policies governing the creation, use, and/or distribution of recordings—video or audio—of lectures, virtual course sessions, speeches, performances, and other activities. Individuals must obtain authorization prior to recording such activities, and to abide by the various policies governing their being recorded, including, but not limited to, policies related to use and distribution of recordings. Failure to abide by recording policies may be an Honor Code violation or may result in corrective action through the University's accountability process depending on the circumstances. In addition, examinations and the questions therein, lectures, teaching notes, scholarly writings, course handouts, assignments, and other course materials are the property of the individual faculty member. Copying or distributing any such materials without the authorization of the copyright owner may constitute a copyright infringement violation.

VANDERBILT PROTECTION OF MINORS PROVISION

The Vanderbilt University Statement on the Protection of Minors: The care and safety of our students is of primary importance to all at Vanderbilt. All Vanderbilt University personnel adhere to Tennessee state law on mandatory child abuse reporting to either the appropriate law enforcement agency or the state hotline operated by the Department of Children's Service. In addition to external reporting, Vanderbilt has a mandatory internal child abuse reporting

procedure. If you have reason to believe abuse or inappropriate behavior has occurred concerning a minor participating in a Vanderbilt University program, please consult the program director, or Risk Management (615-322-5155), or report via the Vanderbilt hotline at 844-814-5935. The Tennessee Child Abuse reporting hotline number is 877-237-0004.

The 2024 - 2025 VYC Handbook serves as the official syllabus of the program. All VYC students and faculty are expected to abide by the policies and procedures of the Handbook.