



English Montreal School Board Chorale

Founded in 1980

Patricia Abbott, Artistic Director/Conductor • Marie-Ève Arseneau, Assistant Conductor
Anne-Marie Denoncourt, Accompanist

*The EMSB Chorale is a special project of the Educational and Technology Services
(formerly Pedagogical Services) Department of the EMSB.*



Commission scolaire English-Montréal
English Montreal School Board

HANDBOOK FOR CHORISTERS AND PARENTS

“MUSIC BRINGS US TOGETHER”

Welcome to the EMSB Chorale! We invite you to read this handbook carefully, as it contains important information for both choristers and parents. Adhering to the chorale’s policies and understanding its history, goals and expectations will help us all ensure the continued artistic success of the choir.

CHOIR HISTORY

Founded in November 1980 by Executive Director (1980-2000) Georgie Crawford and Founding Conductor (1980-1984) Iwan Edwards as the PSBGM Children’s Chorus (later the PSBGM Chorale), the chorale was renamed the EMSB Chorale in 1998 with the restructuring of the province’s school boards. It has a proud history of commitment to musical excellence and helping children achieve artistic goals through the performance of choral music. Jean Sult conducted the choir from 1984 to 1990, helping the choir to grow and expand into a Junior and Senior Chorale. Erica Phare conducted the Junior Chorale from 1988 to 1999. Patricia Abbott took over the artistic development of the Senior Chorale from Ms. Sult in 1990 and that of the Junior Chorale from Ms. Phare in 1999. Upon the retirement of Georgie Crawford in 2000, Pat Abbott also took on the administration and organization of the choir.

Over the years, the chorale has performed in most of Montreal’s major concert venues and has been a guest choir with many musical organizations. Performance highlights have included guest appearances with the the Orchestre Métropolitain, the Atelier lyrique de L’Opéra de Montréal, Ensemble Caprice, singer/composer Karen Young, The Lyric Theatre Singers, Musica Orbium, the McGill University Schulich School of Music Choirs, CBC Radio 2 broadcasts, concerts for Montreal’s Maisons de la culture, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Maison Alcan Concert Series, performances for the national choral conductors’ conference and more. We have participated in tours and international festivals in Europe (Belgium, The Netherlands, England), in the United States (Boston, Des Moines, Denver) and across Canada (Moncton, Vancouver, St. John’s, NL). The chorale has also won many first-place awards at the Montreal Choral Festival, the Kiwanis Music Festival in Ottawa and was a national finalist on two occasions in the CBC Choral Competition for Amateur Choirs. We are also very proud to have commissioned and premiered new works for all of our major anniversary seasons. Some of these are now standard repertoire for children’s choirs all over the world. In 2017, we sang three world premieres of works by Mark Sirett, David Désilets and Matthias Maute. We are proud of our long history of helping those in need through benefit appearances and fundraising concerts.

The chorale’s success can be attributed to clear goals, the programming of fine music, the hard work and commitment of our professional staff, choristers and parent volunteers. We trust that you will enjoy your time with us and be part of our future accomplishments.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Patricia Abbott, M. Mus., B. A. – Artistic Director/Conductor/Executive Director

Pat Abbott has conducted the EMSB Chorale since 1990. She has a master's degree in voice performance and vocal pedagogy from McGill University, and undergraduate degrees in history and journalism. She has conducted the Chorale du Gesù for 35 years and also currently conducts the Ensemble vocal Cantivo and Les Voix du Carrefour. In 2016, she completed a seven-year mandate as Artistic Director of the CAMMAC Music Centre in the Laurentians and for 16 years served as Executive Director of the Association of Canadian Choral Communities, now known as Choral Canada. From 1996 to 2007 she was the choral artist in residence at FACE School, teaching high school choral music and conducting The FACE Young Singers and the Ensemble Midi-Jazz. She has guest conducted and given numerous workshops across Canada and abroad, and has been a judge for the Juno Awards, the CBC Choral Competition and other festivals in Canada and France. Her work has been recognized with several awards including the Ordre du mérite choral from the Alliance chorale du Québec, the Distinguished Service Award from ACCC, and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Marie-Ève Arseneau, B.Mus., B.Ed. – Assistant Conductor

Ms. Arseneau is a graduate of McGill University and currently teaches band at FACE School. Her academic excellence was rewarded with a number of prizes including the Governor General's Medal at École Vincent d'Indy and the Bernard Shapiro Award at McGill, where she was also named a Schulich Scholar. She is also a piano teacher and has sung with several of Montreal's best chamber choirs. She has worked with the EMSB Chorale since 2006.

Anne-Marie Denoncourt, M. Mus., B.Mus. – Accompanist

A graduate of McGill University and Westminster Choir College, Ms. Denoncourt is one of Quebec's most accomplished accompanists. She works with many Montreal choirs, student and professional singers and instrumentalists, in addition to running a successful private piano studio. She has performed at numerous international events and on many radio broadcasts. She is also a long-time co-director of the CAMMAC Music Centre, as well as a teacher for the Suzuki Institute and the Père Lindsay (Lanaudière) Music Camp. Ms. Denoncourt has been the EMSB Chorale accompanist since 1999.

CHOIR MANDATE AND MISSION

- To provide musical training, professional concert experiences and general arts education to musically talented and motivated students from Grades 4 to Secondary V.
- To develop a lifelong love of music, beauty and an overall appreciation of the arts.
- To develop self-discipline, teamwork and a sense of community service.

REPertoire - The EMSB Chorale performs a wide range of standard choral repertoire, including classical music from all the major periods of music history (from Medieval to Contemporary music), Canadian works, folk music from Canada and around the world, spirituals, pop and jazz standards and music from the lyric theatre (opera and Broadway). Music is chosen for its musical, historic and educational value, which means that we perform both sacred and secular repertoire of many traditions and, when possible, in its original language.

MEMBERSHIP - Choir members are chosen by audition. The conductor's decision is final in this matter. Students in Grades 4 to 6 (some in Grade 7) sing in the Junior Chorale. Students in high school (some in Grade 6) sing in the Senior Chorale.

EXPECTATIONS AND COURTESY

The EMSB Chorale has a very fine reputation in music circles and we expect everyone to help maintain that reputation. In consideration of your fellow choristers, music staff and volunteers, common courtesy, good manners and calm, respectful behaviour towards each other and adults is expected at all times,

whether in rehearsal, at camps, in concert or on tour. A cheery disposition is always de rigueur. Please see the section on concerts for specific concert etiquette and deportment expectations. In addition, please observe the following rules:

1. No cell phones and no texting in rehearsals.
 2. No gum chewing, eating or drinking (other than water) during rehearsals. No food or drink in the rehearsal hall unless under supervision.
 3. Please do not wear perfume, cologne or other scents during rehearsals and concerts, as these may irritate or cause allergic reactions to those around you.
 4. Muddy, dirty or wet outer footwear must be left at the school entrance, especially in winter. Please bring shoes to wear indoors.
 5. Parents: Please make sure you make arrangements to pick up your child on time after rehearsals.
- Choristers who cannot meet these expectations and standards of courtesy will be asked to leave the choir.

REHEARSALS AND ATTENDANCE

Unless otherwise noted in the schedule, rehearsals take place at Westmount Park School (15 Park Place) in the auditorium at the following times:

Junior Chorale – Saturdays mornings from 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Senior Chorale – Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. AND Tuesdays from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Schedules are given out at the beginning of each semester, and also posted on the website. Reminders and any changes or updates appear in the Newsletter and on a door-poster at Saturday rehearsals.

To maintain the high level of performance for which this choir is known, attendance at all rehearsals, camps and concerts is expected. In the case of unavoidable absence (illness, family emergency, religious holiday, etc.), it is the chorister's responsibility to catch up on the music and to inquire about information communicated to choristers. Choristers whose attendance record is damaging to the artistic aims and integrity of the choir may be asked to re-audition or may be asked to sit out a concert. Anyone missing a dress rehearsal will not be allowed to sing in the concert unless specific permission is obtained from the conductor. ALL absences should be signalled to the conductor, before if possible, or as soon as possible afterwards.

MUSIC SCORES

The music scores we use remain the property of the EMSB Chorale. Music is costly and often difficult to replace, so we expect all choristers to take good care of their music. Notes and markings should only be done in **pencil**. Music is issued several times throughout the year and must be returned immediately upon request. Parents will be charged for damaged or missing music. The purchase of music is a significant cost for the choir, so taking care of it and returning it when asked helps us to keep the choir fees low.

CAMPS

Twice a year we go away for a music camp. In the fall, the Junior and Senior choristers have separate fall camps at the Base de plein air at Cap St-Jacques (Pierrefonds). In the winter, the whole choir goes to the Camp musical des Laurentides in St-Adolphe d'Howard. These camps are an important part of our musical preparation and provide important socializing opportunities for the choristers. Attending part of the camp is better than not attending at all in the case of scheduling conflict. Parents must fill out a registration/consent form for camp and include this with the camp fees.

CONCERTS

Each year, the EMSB chorale produces two big concerts in which all choristers participate. We produce a Holiday Concert in early December and a Spring Gala Concert in early May. The Holiday Concert is traditionally a fundraising concert for the Salvation Army's work with the needy of Montreal. No ticket is required and we ask for freewill contributions. The Spring Gala is a ticketed concert. Both concerts are open to family, friends and the public at large. Information for each is provided at rehearsals and through

our Newsletter and website. Each concert is recorded for archival purposes. Recordings are made available to the choristers at a modest cost.

In addition, the EMSB Chorale (Senior or Junior) may be invited to participate in other events or festivals. These are put in the schedule as far in advance as possible. Additional events not on the original schedule are only added after consultation with the Parents' Committee and if the conductor, choristers and accompanist can accommodate it in their schedules.

EMSB CHORALE CONCERT PREPARATION, ETIQUETTE AND STAGE DEPORTMENT

With the privilege of singing in a concert comes an artistic responsibility to respect your art and your audience. These simple rules will help the choir present a successful performance.

1. Performing in concert is very demanding. You should be well rested before a performance.
2. Go over/review your music often in the week preceding a concert. Remember that all EMSB Chorale performances are done from memory. Junior Choristers receive a practice CD with should be used to review the choir repertoire as often as possible. (The mp3 tracks can also be transferred to a USB key if you wish.)
3. If you look your best, you'll sing your best! Aim for a neat, tidy appearance, with hair pulled back from your face. Facial expressions are part of the artistic presentation and so the audience needs to see your face and your eyes.
4. Make sure your uniform is in order and properly worn.
5. No talking, laughing or fidgeting on stage EVER. No gum-chewing in rehearsal or on stage EVER. Exemplary discipline, focus and concentration on stage are essential elements of successful performances. Be especially careful during piano introductions, interludes and postludes. Hands should be at your side or loosely held behind your back unless instructed otherwise by the conductor. Choristers who cannot conform to acceptable standards of stage comportment will be asked to leave the stage.
6. Stay in your concert row and respect the cues when going on and off stage. Pay attention to instructions.
7. Respect the call time, which is usually AT LEAST ONE HOUR BEFORE THE CONCERT.
8. Do not applaud on stage. That is the audience's job. At certain points in the concert (after a group or section, at the very end), the conductor will acknowledge the work of the accompanist and the choir and we all bow at a given signal.
9. Choristers who are not well prepared for concerts (due to absences) and/or who do not attend the dress rehearsal will not be allowed to sing in a concert.
10. Parents – we ask that you cooperate by not taking photos during performances (noisy and very distracting), and by not waving and calling attention to yourselves or to your children. All cellphones and electronic devices should be turned off. Enjoy the performances of your talented children without these distractions!

THANK YOU FOR COOPERATING AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CHOIR'S PERFORMANCES BY ADHERING TO THE ABOVE STANDARDS

CONCERT UNIFORMS

Junior Girls: red concert vests and black skirts will be provided by the choir. Choristers are responsible for providing a white long-sleeved shirt or blouse (no frills or turtlenecks), black tights, black dress shoes (no running shoes or boots).

Junior Boys: red concert vests will be provided by the choir. Choristers are responsible for providing a black bow tie, black dress pants, white long-sleeved shirt, black socks, black dress shoes (no running shoes or boots). The choir has a small stock of black bow ties which can be purchased (\$15 each).

Senior Girls: Black concert dresses and red necklaces are provided by the choir. Choristers must wear appropriate black tights or stockings and black dress shoes.

Senior Boys: Tuxedo jackets, red bow tie and red cummerbund will be provided by the choir. Senior boys must provide their own black dress pants, white long-sleeved button-down collar shirt, black socks and black dress shoes.

Uniform deposits: Junior Boys - \$20 deposit which will be returned when the vest is returned / Junior Girls \$40 deposit which will be returned when the skirt and vest are returned / Senior - \$125 postdated cheque which is returned upon the return of the concert outfit (dress or jacket).

EMSB Chorale Uniform Wash & Care Guide

The black dresses, red vests, tuxedo jackets, cummerbunds and bow ties are property of the EMSB Chorale, on loan to you for the choir season which runs from September until May. Since it is expensive to replace these items, we ask that you kindly follow these care guidelines.

Senior Girls

- Please wear clear deodorant to avoid stains.
- DO NOT CUT the length of the dresses – EVER.
- Wash inside out in a mesh bag or pillowcase, in cold water, in the gentle or hand wash cycle.
- Hang to dry.
- DO NOT iron.

Senior Boys

- Suit jacket, cummerbund and bow ties should be dry-cleaned only or use a steamer.
- You must supply the white shirt, black pants, black socks, black shoes (no running shoes or boots).

Junior Boys and Girls

- Red vests and black skirts can be washed in cold water in the gentle or hand wash cycle.
- Hang to dry.
- DO NOT iron.
- You must supply the white shirt (boys and girls), black pants (boys), black tights (girls), black bow tie (boys), black socks (boys) and simple black shoes (no running shoes, boots or high heels).

If you have any questions, please speak to our outstanding Wardrobe Mistress, Cécile Roy.

AWARDS

Each year at the Awards Banquet which officially ends the choral season, the contribution of all choristers is recognized. All choristers receive certificates of participation plus a small token to mark particular unique attributes. In addition, awards of merit are given for extra effort and choir life involvement in the following categories:

Perfect Attendance: Awarded to Junior and Senior Choristers who have been present at all rehearsals, camps and concerts throughout the year and who have never been late.

Five-Year Award: Awarded to choristers who have been members of the choir for five consecutive years.

Choir Life: Awarded to Junior and Senior Choristers who show the following qualities and skills: willingness to help, initiating activities that promote a positive camaraderie for the group, cheerfulness, tolerance, thoughtfulness, friendliness and help in recruiting and welcoming new choristers.

Most Potential: Awarded to Junior and Senior Choristers who were new to the choir at the beginning of the season and who show the most potential for musical success.

Most Improved Chorister: Awarded to Junior and Senior Choristers who have shown the most marked improvement over the year both musically and in terms of discipline.

Most Consistent Chorister: Awarded to Junior and Senior Choristers who best fulfil the following criteria:

Musical development: preparation and memorization, posture, diction, singing skills, expression.

Self-discipline: punctuality, posture, silence or participation as required.

Cooperation: advising/explaining absences, attention to the conductor, response to direction, patience with others, willingness to assist.

Chorister of the Year: Awarded to the Junior and Senior Choristers who have perfect or near-perfect attendance, who show outstanding musical ability, exemplary self-discipline, courtesy and cooperation.

TOURING - Every two or three years, the choir undertakes a trip as part of an exchange or to participate in a festival or special event. Only those choristers deemed musically and socially mature will be invited to participate in choir trips. The conductor's decision is final in this matter. When on tour it is important for choristers to act responsibly at all times, to follow instructions and to behave with the finest manners possible.

INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS - We expect that parents will do everything in their power to make sure their children arrive on time to rehearsals, camps and concerts, and make sure that their children follow through on their commitment to the choir until the end of the season. That is the single most important thing you can do as a parent to help ensure the success of this choir program. The choir is administered by the Artistic Director with the support of the Parents' Committee and parent volunteers and, indeed, the choir could not be successful without this valuable volunteer help. We expect all parents to help in some way, be it on the Parents' Committee, or by selling concert tickets, helping in fundraising efforts, volunteering as a chaperone, assisting with uniform distribution, helping in the music library, baking for special events, etc. Your time and support are much appreciated and help to ensure a positive and fulfilling choir experience for all.

FUNDRAISING - The fees for participating in the choir represent only about a third of the budget required to run the chorale. We have managed to keep the fees low over the years by running several fundraising campaigns. All choristers are expected to help sell concert tickets, program ads and to help with fundraising efforts.

BURSARY FUND - The EMSB Chorale has a bursary fund initiated by the founder, Georgie Crawford. Donations are gratefully accepted and a tax receipt is available. This fund is used to assist those choristers who may be in need of financial assistance to cover choir and camp fees or the cost of participating in a festival. Applications are available from the Artistic Director.

COMMUNICATIONS

Information from the choir is communicated to parents in the following ways:

- a monthly newsletter which is sent by e-mail;
- weekly announcements and reminders posted on the auditorium door at every Saturday rehearsal, and occasional reminders sent by e-mail.
- the chorale website: www.emsbchorale.org

We invite you to read the newsletter and weekly sign regularly.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Patricia Abbott: EMSB office – 514-483-7200, ext. 7234 / pabbott@emsb.qc.ca

Pat is usually in the EMSB office on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons

Home: 514-351-3541 / abbottpat@uniserve.com

The EMSB Chorale is a member of the Alliance chorale du Québec and Choral Canada.

Choral Canada reminds us that:

Choral singing elevates the spirit, strengthens the soul and the body, and nourishes the mind. Choral singing enriches community, celebrates cultures, and enhances historical and cultural identities.