



# Guelph Youth Singers

*Building Choral Excellence in Our Community*

## **31<sup>st</sup> Season**

**Handbook of General Information  
(2021-2022)**

75 Cardigan Street  
Room 103  
Guelph, ON N1H 3Z7

(519) 821-8574

admin@guelphyouthsingers.com  
www.guelphyouthsingers.com

*Please put this handbook in a place where you  
will find it for future reference.*

*Our Mission: To create an inclusive and supportive musical environment where youth in our community can  
learn, build confidence, and share in something bigger than themselves*

*Our Vision: We support the well-being of youth through inclusive, fun, and high-quality musical training and  
performance experience*

## **Contact Information**

### **Artistic Director & Conductor**

Markus Howard [markushoward2@hotmail.com](mailto:markushoward2@hotmail.com)

### **Choir I & II Conductor**

Marion Samuel-Stevens [msamuels@uoguelph.ca](mailto:msamuels@uoguelph.ca)

### **Accompanist**

Ken Gee [ken@artset.net](mailto:ken@artset.net)

### **Choir Coordinator**

Heather Fleming (519) 830-4310 [admin@guelphyouthsingers.com](mailto:admin@guelphyouthsingers.com)

### **Assistant Choir Coordinator**

Sammie Becker (226) 962-5617 [sammieguelphyouthsingers@gmail.com](mailto:sammieguelphyouthsingers@gmail.com)

**Number to call or text for absence due to illness for in-person rehearsals/events:  
(226) 962-5617 (Sammie's Cell)**

**Number to call or text for absence due to illness for online rehearsals/events:  
(519) 830-4310 (Heather's Cell)**

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*Guelph Youth Singers is a community choir that provides opportunities for talented children within Guelph and surrounding counties to sing and enhance their skills in musical knowledge and theory, to foster personal friendships, to hone social skills, and to develop performance ability.*

## ***The GYS Experience***

- *Weekly rehearsals with training in vocal technique, repertoire, theory, and sight-singing*
- *In-person and online workshops with professionals*
- *Social and learning weekends with other exceptional choirs*
- *Performance opportunities with professional musicians in some of Ontario's best venues*
- *The opportunity to sing with Guelph's prestigious and national award-winning choir*
- *Qualified families can receive bursaries to assist with program fees*

## ***GYS Structure***

GYS is a non-profit corporation and a licensed charitable organization. As such, it is managed by a Board of Directors comprised of parents and community members. The annual budget is approximately \$180,000, of which twenty percent is generated through a variety of fund-raising efforts. The remainder consists of choir fees, grants, and other income generated through performances.

As with most non-profit organizations, GYS relies on the time and talents of many volunteers. Every parent is expected to help, and many tasks can be accomplished right from home. We hope all parents can find something to fit their abilities, interests, and time. Tasks may include helping with:

- In-Person and online workshops and performances
- Publicity and marketing
- Social media support
- Fundraising initiatives
- Administration

*Please see section on volunteering in this document for more information.*

## ***Parent Meetings***

Each year begins with a Welcome Meeting that is also our Annual General Meeting. Please join us on Thursday, September 16 from 6:00 to 7:30 on Zoom. One parent from each family is required to attend this meeting and choristers are welcome. Items to be discussed at this meeting include, but are not limited to:

- A snapshot of the coming season
- Details on volunteer opportunities
- A brief presentation of the unaudited financial statement from the previous year (as is required by our governance structure)
- A chance to virtually meet with one another, ask questions, and share ideas.

We may also, from time to time, hold additional meetings to provide updates, announce special projects, answer questions, or check in with families. These meetings will be announced at least one week in advance.

## ***The Choirs (at a glance)***

### **Choir I: Tuesdays 5:30-6:15 PM - Online until further notice**

Each 45-minute rehearsal will include vocal warm-ups, rhythmic exercises, movement, and dance. The focus will be learning songs and excellent, age-appropriate vocal pedagogy through games and movement. Exploration of various styles of music will be incorporated as well as music from around the world. The singers will get personal attention from the conductor in small groups and the main goal is to bring the joy of music and singing to each rehearsal. Guests from the greater arts community will join the choir's excellent staff to enrich each young singer's experience. *Note: registered families can try 2 weeks of the online Choir I experience before paying registration fees.*

### **Choir II: Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 PM - Online until further notice**

Each 60-minute rehearsal will incorporate interesting repertoire based on various themes. Choristers will deepen their understanding of vocal pedagogy through vocal exploration, warm-ups, and the relationship of body and voice. A deeper focus on development of musical skills will also be incorporated through musical games and rhythmic reading in small group sessions with the artistic team. The main goal each week will be to bring the joy of music to singers in a fun, engaging rehearsal. Workshops will be included and will feature outstanding guests from the performing arts community. *Note: registered families can try 2 weeks of the online Choir II experience before paying registration fees.*

### **Choir III Pod 1: Wednesdays 6:00-7:00 PM - In Person at GYM**

### **Choir III Pod 2: Wednesdays 7:15-8:15 PM - In Person at GYM**

This season of Choir III will see the group divided into two pods and will come together outside for workshops and social connection as a complete ensemble. This treble ensemble will resurrect favourites from the past season, and learn, perform, and record a diverse program of new music, celebrating the joy of togetherness in our series "Inspired Voices". Guest artists will lead us through music and movement from around the globe as we joyously come back together to sing once again.

### **SATB Choir [Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass]: Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 PM - In Person at GYM**

SATB is the advanced mixed-voice choral ensemble of GYS. Open to advanced singers (upper voices and changed or changing lower voices), the choir works at a high level, exploring music from diverse genres and cultures. Singers will have strong sight-reading abilities, developed voices, and a love for elevated musical experiences. Guests this season include members of The Elora Singers, and song writer, Alpha Kayondo. Live recordings of learned repertoire, and unique and creative performing opportunities. Singers will learn microphone technique and singing with a sound system later in the season, as we explore repertoire from the collegiate a cappella community.

### **MTA [Music Theatre Academy]: Wednesdays 8:30-9:30 PM - In Person at GYM**

Unless there are any objections!!!...MTA is thrilled to be undertaking the script and score of "LEGALLY BLONDE JR". The joyous satire celebrates optimism and determination, with high-energy music and dance numbers, and iconic characters you will learn to love. Solo vocal training, ensemble singing, character work, and dance will leave the performers eager to come back to the courtroom each week and embrace all things pink. MTA participants will want to consider joining Pod #2 of Choir III. \*\*\*While rehearsals for MTA have moved to Wednesdays after Choir III, there will be five Sunday rehearsals this fall, from 2-4pm outdoors that we hope you can also attend. (Fall dates: Sept. 19 & 26, Oct. 3 & 17 & 24. Spring dates will be determined in the new year.)

## ***Legally Blonde Jr. Camp: Sundays 2:00-4:00 PM - In Person Outdoors (Location TBD)***

(5 Fall and 5 Spring Sessions)

For interested GYS members, especially those who cannot join rehearsals at the GYMC, we are offering Theatre Camp outside, where the campers will join the *Legally Blonde Jr.* cast to learn music and choreography from the show, and work on scenes and character development with our artistic staff. Geared towards our younger musical theatre fans and offered to everyone registered in GYS choirs, the Sunday sessions will give a taste of the MTA experience and will aim towards a short presentation of a song and/or dance learned during rehearsals. We hope that changing circumstances in the new year will allow interested camp participants to officially join the Musical Theatre Academy as chorus members, undertaking smaller character roles.

(Fall Dates: Sept. 19, 26, Oct. 3, 17, 24. Spring dates will be determined in the new year.)

## ***General Information***

### ***COVID-19 Safety Plan***

The GYS Safe Return Committee, staff, and Board of Directors have worked hard to create the COVID-19 Safety Plan which outlines all the ways we will strive to keep each other safe and healthy. This document can be found on our website, and will be updated regularly to comply with any new information or guidance from public health.

*A check box on the registration form indicates acknowledgement and acceptance of the GYS COVID-19 Safety Plan.*

### ***Vocal Assessments & Re-Auditions***

Membership in GYS is decided by audition (via virtual meeting this season), which is used to determine each singer's readiness and appropriate choir placement. In order to assess strengths and weaknesses, the Conductors may re-audition choristers who wish to advance to another GYS choir.

### ***Rehearsals***

Rehearsals for the entire season are scheduled as far in advance as possible, though changes are sometimes necessary. All rehearsals and events, including workshops, festivals, and dress rehearsals, are required. Please review the section on commitment for full details about expectations. We ask that parents ensure their chorister arrives **at least 10 minutes prior** to the beginning of all rehearsals. This allows us to fix any technical problems that may arise for online rehearsals and time for proper screening and following protocols for in-person rehearsals. This also provides time for choristers to greet their friends before getting ready to sing.

### ***Absences***

Choristers should only miss online rehearsals if they are too ill to participate fully. For in-person rehearsals, a COVID-19 screening questionnaire will need to be answered each week and anyone reporting symptoms will not be permitted to attend. **Please email [admin@guelphyouthsingers.com](mailto:admin@guelphyouthsingers.com) to report all absences and also call Sammie's cell to report absences for in-person rehearsals at (226) 962-5617 and Heather's cell to report absences for online rehearsals at (519) 830-4310.** If a chorister is absent and no email or phone call has been received, the chorister's home may be contacted. If a chorister feels well enough, they are encouraged to join online rehearsals and listen in order to benefit from the instruction. *If a chorister misses two rehearsals or more in any term for reasons other than sickness, they may be asked to leave the choir. No refund of any fees will be given in this case.*

Unavoidable schedule conflicts aside from illness do sometimes arise (such as Royal Conservatory Examinations) and in that case, the Conductor should be notified in advance, in writing (email is great!), and given the reason for the projected absence. Please include the Choir Coordinator ([admin@guelphyouthsingers.com](mailto:admin@guelphyouthsingers.com)) in your email.

### *Communication: Weekly Memos*

A weekly memo is shared by email each Friday while choirs are in session. Memos contain essential, choir-specific information, including notes and tasks from the conductor as well as time-sensitive information about events and fundraising. Weekly memos are our communication lifeline. **Please read these memos immediately** and let the Choir Coordinator know if you have not received one (it may have landed in your spam folder). Older choristers will also be on email distribution lists and there is an expectation that they will read and respond to memo items.

### *Theory & Sight-Singing*

A brand-new, online theory and sight-singing programme is being offered for all choristers as part of their registration fees this year. There are 4 levels from beginner to advanced and all choristers will benefit from taking part in *Sight Singing School*. Please email [admin@guelphyouthsingers.com](mailto:admin@guelphyouthsingers.com) for information on how to set up your login.

### *Vocal Coaching*

Guelph Youth Singers no longer offers private lessons as a part of our formal programming. We still see the value of vocal coaching as a resource for all singers, but our organization needs to focus our efforts on offering the highest level of choral education, and to maximize the singers' time together as an ensemble.

Expertise in developing the healthiest singers is paramount in producing great choirs, and our Artistic Team keeps vocal pedagogy at the forefront of their teaching. Nonetheless, we urge *all* members of GYS to consider incorporating private vocal lessons in their schedule. Lessons can be negotiated privately between families and any vocal coach.

Marion Samuel-Stevens is highly recommended and can be reached at [msamuels@uoguelph.ca](mailto:msamuels@uoguelph.ca).

### *Homework and Practice Tracks*

Practicing at home reinforces lessons from rehearsals and accelerates learning of both notes and words. It also helps the ear to develop much more quickly than can be achieved in just one rehearsal per week. Recordings of repertoire may be sent out as links to online sources, or to privately shared online folders, in weekly memos. These aids should be used for practice to improve music reading and accuracy. All Choir I & II and most Choir III music is memorized for performances and should be memorized as early as possible.

## ***Chorister's Commitment***

GYS members are always representing themselves, their families, and the Choir. GYS strives for a high standard of behaviour, in addition to a high standard of performance. A Code of Conduct is provided below, and choristers are asked to read it and accept it as part of their commitment to GYS at the time of registration.

*A check box on the registration form indicates a chorister's agreement to abide by the following Commitment:*

- ***To attend every rehearsal and event, on time, with all music ready, and prepared to sing***
- ***To read and/or have parents read all memos immediately***
- ***To participate cheerfully in all rehearsals, events, and fundraising activities***
- ***To acknowledge that they are members of Guelph Youth Singers and must act professionally at all times***

## ***Chorister's Code of Conduct***

*A check box on the registration form indicates a chorister's agreement to abide by the following Code of Conduct:*

**Be aware, at all times, of the professional image of the Choir** and behave in a dignified and respectful manner. Each chorister represents Guelph Youth Singers.

**Be courteous to chaperones, staff, volunteers, and other choristers.**

### **Rules to be followed at any GYS event:**

- Choristers must always be in the care of a chaperone. Any leeway for high school aged choristers is allowed only at the discretion of the head chaperone and the conductor. Choristers must not wander away from the group at any time.
- Gum and junk food are not permitted at any choir event, including rehearsals.
- Gaming electronic devices are not permitted at any choir event, including rehearsals.
- No non-choir related cell phone calls are allowed unless there has been prior communication between the parents and conductors about their usage.
- Uniforms must be worn respectfully: intact and not in combination with other clothes.
- Any jewelry, make-up, or ornamentation worn onstage or during online video recordings must be discreet.

### ***Discipline:***

Any chorister whose behaviour is deemed to be out of line with this code may be prevented from participating and may be asked to leave the choir.

*At all times choristers must be concerned with the safety, well-being, image, and professionalism of the entire choir and every individual chorister. If there is a question about the appropriateness of any action, or some other matter that needs to be addressed, choristers should speak to the conductor, the head chaperone, or the choir coordinator.*



## ***Parent's Commitment***

*A checkbox on the registration form indicates each parent's agreement to the following:*

I have read the enclosed registration documents and other information provided and have indicated on the registration form that I agree to participate as stated below:

- to support my child(ren) by making it possible for them to be in attendance and on time for all choir events
- to keep track of all information received through memos, emails, or phone calls
- to help with, or participate in, fundraising as I am able
- to be an active volunteer for the organization

I understand that from time to time, GYS choristers and parents have photos and videos taken for promotional or other purposes and, unless I notify GYS in writing to the contrary, I consent to such photos and videos being taken of me and/or my child. We ask for your help with safeguarding our children and our art by not video recording, photographing, or screenshotting our events or concerts.

I realize that Guelph Youth Singers will act carefully and thoughtfully on my child's behalf at all times. With that understanding, I release Guelph Youth Singers from any liability with regard to accidents that may happen while I am, or my child is, participating in choir activities.

## ***Refunds***

GYS has established the following policy regarding refunds:

1. A full refund will be provided if a family/chorister withdraws, in writing, before rehearsals begin.
2. A full refund, minus the non-refundable \$50 membership fee, will be provided if a written request is submitted before the 3<sup>rd</sup> rehearsal.
3. No refund will be provided if a family/chorister withdraws after the 3<sup>rd</sup> rehearsal.
4. At the discretion of the conductor, an exception can be made for boys who are no longer able to sing in a treble choir.

## ***Safety, Privacy, and Protection***

GYS is committed to creating a positive, safe environment for our choristers and staff. The intention of the GYS Safety and Protection Policy is to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect the members and supporters of Guelph Youth Singers and to ensure that proper steps are taken in the event of an incident.

When choristers join GYS, we ask for the following information:

- the chorister's name and that of their parent(s) or guardian(s),
- mailing address
- phone number
- email address
- emergency contact and medical information - for use in the absence of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

## ***Privacy Policy***

Guelph Youth Singers is committed to protecting the privacy of the personal information of its members, board of directors, employees, web-users and other stakeholders. GYS does not sell, trade, or give out its membership mailing lists. Over the course of operations, GYS frequently gathers and uses personal information. Anyone from whom such information is collected may expect that it will be carefully protected and that any use of, or other dealing with, this information is subject to consent.

### ***Personal Information Defined:***

Personal information is any information that can be used to distinguish, identify, or contact a specific individual. This information can include an individual's opinions or beliefs, as well as facts about, or related to, the individual. Business contact information and certain publicly available information, such as names, addresses and telephone numbers as published in telephone directories are not considered personal information.

### ***Privacy Practices:***

Personal information gathered by Guelph Youth Singers is kept in confidence. Only authorized GYS personnel, or those assigned by GYS personnel, have access to this information based only on their need to deal with the information for the reason(s) for which it was obtained. Safeguards are in place to ensure that the information is not disclosed or shared more widely than is necessary to achieve the purpose for which it was gathered. Personal information that is no longer required to fulfill the stated purpose will be destroyed or made anonymous (for example: emergency contact and medical information).

## ***Financial Information***

### ***Fee Structure***

GYS works hard to keep tuition fees as low as possible. The fees you pay are used to support the following:

- Instruction from accomplished and highly skilled conductors
- Theory and sight-singing programme
- Professional accompaniment
- Rehearsals in an acoustically superior venue
- Rental or purchase of original choral music
- Programme administration
- Professional production of virtual performances and/or live concerts

2021/22 annual tuition per choir is as follows and families have the option of paying in full, or in 2 or 9 installments.

- Choir I: \$675
- Choir II: \$900
- Choir III: \$1,050
- SATB: \$1,050
- MTA: \$500 (add-on for choristers ages 12 and over)
- *Legally Blonde Jr.* Camp: \$100 (add-on for choristers not already registered in MTA)

## *Registration*

*Registration involves three steps:*

1. Visit [guelphyouthsingers.com/registration-package/](http://guelphyouthsingers.com/registration-package/) and complete the online registration form
2. You will receive an emailed invoice confirming your registration fees and outlining payment options:
  - pay the entire amount owed for the upcoming choir year on September 1, 2021
  - pay the total in 2 installments dated September 1, 2021 and January 1, 2022
  - pay the total in 9 installments dated September 1, 2021 to May 1, 2022 inclusive
3. e-Transfers are the preferred method of payment and can be sent to [admin@guelphyouthsingers.com](mailto:admin@guelphyouthsingers.com).

If paying by cheque, please make them payable to Guelph Youth Singers and mail to:

Guelph Youth Singers, 103-75 Cardigan St., Guelph, ON, N1H 3Z7

*There will be a charge of \$37 for all returned cheques; \$30 of which will be directed to the Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund, and the remaining \$7 will be for bank charges.*

## *Financial Support*

### *Sibling Discount*

We want to support families during these difficult times and so are offering a Sibling Discount of \$450 for each additional family member that registers for the full season.

### *Summer Camp Discount*

All choristers who attended GYS Musical Theatre Summer Camp 2021 will receive a \$50 registration discount.

### *New Chorister Incentive!!!*

When a GYS family refers a new family and both register for the full season, each family will receive a 25% program discount for the year! This discount can only be claimed once per family per year and will be deducted after any other discounts have been applied. The referred family must not have been a member of GYS previously.

### *Bursaries*

GYS accepts applications for bursaries based on financial need and the availability of the Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund. Choristers and/or parents should submit an application form, available from the Choir Coordinator. All applications are reviewed by the Bursary Committee **in confidence**.

### *Donations*

All donations are gratefully received and contributions exceeding \$10.00 will receive a charitable donation receipt. If a donation is made, the mailing address is required on the tax receipt by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Please consider supporting the Dr. Dominic Gregorio Bursary Fund. Visit the GYS page at [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org) (via [www.guelphyouthsingers.com/donate](http://www.guelphyouthsingers.com/donate)).

## ***Volunteering with GYS***

Parent power is essential to sustaining this high-quality organization. There are countless ways for each person to contribute to the functioning of GYS. We need your talent and a bit of your time.

Below are some opportunities that may arise to support our choirs as they meet and rehearse in live and virtual environments. If something interests you, please contact the Choir Coordinator as soon as possible.

### ***Online Support / Choir I & II Rehearsal Assistant***

- Assist with break-out rooms and facilitating games and various activities to allow the conductor to work with small groups

### ***In-Person Support / Choir III, SATB, and MTA Rehearsal Assistant (must be fully vaccinated)***

- Attend rehearsal with your child(ren) and assist with COVID-19 Screening Questionnaires, taking temperatures, sanitizing, and ensuring all safety protocols are followed at all times

### ***Music Librarian***

- Assist with collecting, organizing, and distributing music

### ***Volunteer tasks requiring specific expertise***

- Media contact and relations
- Graphic artist
- Professional photography
- Grant writing
- Instrumentalist
- Video production

### ***Fundraising***

- Preparing and updating sponsorship packages for businesses, employers
- Support event-specific fundraising (e.g. poinsettia sales, online auction, raffles, etc.)

### ***Other skills?***

- Many parents have special skills that can help make choir a wonderful experience. Please let the Choir Coordinator know if there is something special you can offer.

## ***Mentoring Opportunities for Senior Choristers***

Choristers from Choir III and SATB are valued as mentors and assistants to Choirs I and II. If you would like to assist with Choirs I or II, please visit [guelphyouthsingers.com/volunteer-opportunities/](http://guelphyouthsingers.com/volunteer-opportunities/) and submit the online form. Time spent mentoring with GYS can be counted towards the 40 volunteer hours required to earn your Ontario Secondary School Diploma.