**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Why choose chorus over other activities?**
   Choral singing offers a complete educational growth experience that challenges, develops, and rewards the body, mind, and spirit. It builds self-esteem, teaches discipline, demands commitment, and fosters community and teamwork. Singing is likely to continue as a rewarding, lifelong pleasure.

2. **How is this chorus different from a school or church chorus?**
   Berks Youth Chorus [BYC] is not intended to replace school chorus or church choirs. We encourage all BYC singers to maintain membership in school chorus and/or church choirs. BYC builds community and bridges cultural divides by connecting singers from schools and towns throughout Berks County. BYC offers additional time for children and youth to sing, which we think is a really good thing!

3. **When can my child audition?**
   Open auditions are held in May, or, at the discretion of the directors, at other times during the year. Please email [info@berksyouthchorus.org] or call the BYC office [610-898-7664] to schedule an audition.

4. **What can I expect will happen at the audition?**
   For the younger age singers, the directors may want to check the singers’ vocal range, their ability to echo back simple patterns – sung and clapped – and how well they match pitch. Younger singers should also be able to read a short poem out loud with understanding and expression.

   For the middle and high school age singers, the audition may include vocal warm-ups and exercises to check pitch matching, vocal flexibility, vocal range, and vocal quality. Singers may also echo notes and scales played on the piano for tonal memory and sing simple rhythms and melodies to check sight-reading skills.

5. **Which chorus level will my child be in?**
   We currently have 3 chorus levels: Training Chorus for singers in grades 3 and 4; Chorale for singers in grades 5 through 8; MasterSingers for girls in grades 9 through 12 and boys with changed voices. The final decision about chorus placement is up to the directors after the audition process.

6. **What is different about each chorus level?**
   Each chorus level is designed for the age and ability of the singers. Musical skills, like singing in harmony and reading music, become progressively more challenging with each chorus.

7. **Can we start in the middle of the year?**
   That decision is made at the director’s discretion. Please contact the chorus office for more information.

8. **What kind of music do you sing?**
   We sing a wide variety of music from around the world, including some sacred music and lots of interesting secular music in many languages. We sing music from early historical times to music of today.

9. **Who are the directors?**
   We have three professional directors who are very active in the Berks County choral community. Michelle Metz is the Training Chorus Director. James Wilson is the Chorale Director. Christopher Hoster is the MasterSingers Director. Full biographies of each director can be found on the BYC website at www.berksyouthchorus.org.
10. What will my child learn?

**Music:** Artistry, expressiveness, tuning, rhythmic accuracy, music reading, aural skills, music theory, score reading

**Language skills:** poetry and language skills in English, pronunciation and vocabulary in many languages

**Cultural awareness:** geography, awareness of and information about many cultures through songs

**Self-esteem growth:** teamwork, discipline, respect, self-confidence

**Etiquette:** manners, commitment, ability to focus

**Listening skills:** ability to follow directions, improved memory, ability to apply previously learned musical concepts to a new piece of music

BYC singers learn how to use their voices to sing correctly, how to use a musical score, how to read music, how to sing in harmony, and how to work together as a team.

BYC singers develop values and behaviors proven to build strong, confident, well-adjusted young adults who are able to work effectively with others and succeed in a dynamic, diverse world.

Statistics prove that participation in a chorus, band or orchestra raises a student’s IQ and increases their ability to think and reason. These same students also had higher SAT scores. The longer the students participated in music programs, the more impact it had on their learning.

11. Are you a religious organization or are you affiliated with a church?

No. BYC is not affiliated with any religion and we welcome new members regardless of religious affiliation. We do, however, rent rehearsal and performance spaces from churches.

12. Do you sing religious songs?

Yes, sometimes. BYC will sing sacred music. This music is considered part of the great cultural heritage of music, and is not approached as a personal statement of faith.

13. Do you sing in churches or at church services?

Yes, sometimes.

14. Do all the chorus levels sing together?

Yes. All of the chorus levels will sing together at our fall, winter and spring concerts.

15. What is your season?

The calendar start and ending dates will vary for each chorus level. Typically, the MasterSingers start in late July with Summer Retreat and the Training Chorus and Chorale start in mid-August with Summer Camp. Rehearsals and performances for all usually end in early May.

16. When, where and how often do you rehearse?

Singers have special summer rehearsals and regular weekly rehearsals from September – May, with a winter break in December.

- **MasterSingers (MS)**
  - Summer Retreat, late July, GoggleWorks & St. John Baptist de La Salle Church
  - Rehearsals, Sept – May, Sun, 4 – 6:30 pm, Nativity Lutheran Church
  - Winter Retreats, Sat, Jan, Feb, April, St. John Baptist de La Salle Church

- **Chorale (CL)**
  - Summer Camp, mid-Aug, Atonement Lutheran Church
  - Regular Rehearsals, Sept - April, Mon, 6:30 - 8:30 pm, GoggleWorks

- **Training Chorus (TC)**
  - Summer Camp, mid-Aug, Atonement Lutheran Church
  - Regular Rehearsals, Sept - April, Mon, 6:30 - 8:00 pm, GoggleWorks
17. Can we visit a rehearsal?
Yes! We welcome prospective singers, their parents, and current parents into rehearsals. It is important for you to see the training BYC offers in order to fully understand and appreciate what each chorus member can experience. Prospective parents should call our office at 610-898-7664 to schedule a rehearsal visit. Current parents serve as chaperones at BYC rehearsals and other activities. They also schedule these times through the BYC office.

18. Are all the rehearsals, concerts, and special events required?
We expect each singer will attend all rehearsals, concerts and special events. We expect each singer to demonstrate a commitment to faithful, consistent and punctual attendance, and to remain active and committed to the program for the entire year.

19. Is it okay to miss some rehearsals?
Every voice is important and every rehearsal is crucial to the success of the singer and the group. It is expected that singers will be pro-active with other activities they are involved in and look ahead on their calendars to avoid missing a rehearsal. Since our singers rehearse only one day per week, they will fall quickly behind if they miss rehearsals. Singers and their parents should remember that the Director has the right and the responsibility to determine if any singer is prepared to sing in the next performance, regardless of attendance. If a singer is not prepared, he/she will not sing in a performance.

20. What if my child needs to miss a rehearsal because of a school activity, vacation or other?
Communication is very important. For absences due to school activity, vacation, or any other planned activity, an absentee notice should be submitted via email to the Executive Director a minimum of three days prior to the absence. For absences due to illness or other last minute emergencies, an absentee notice should be submitted via email to the Executive Director and a phone message should be left on the BYC phone. Regardless of the reason for the absence, as stated above, the Director has the right and the responsibility to determine if any singer is prepared to sing in the next performance.

21. What if my singer needs to miss a performance?
All singers are expected to be at all performances. The Executive Director must be notified via email as soon as possible.

22. Where are the concerts?
All BYC singers perform in the three BYC concerts each year: fall at Atonement Lutheran Church, Wyomissing; winter at DoubleTree Hotel, Reading; spring at Atonement Lutheran Church. Other performances are scheduled throughout the year at different venues in Berks County.

23. Are the concerts free?
Sometimes, for some. Singers who receive financial aid are offered a free pair of adult tickets for the fall concert and a free pair of adult tickets for the spring concert. Tickets for the BYC fall, winter, and spring concerts are VIP/$25; Adult/$15; Student/$10.

24. Will my singer need to miss any school to participate in your program?
Very rarely are there performance opportunities that happen to fall on a school day. We are sensitive and careful about this and understand that each family has to decide what is best for their child. None of these performances will be required.

25. Is there carpooling?
Many parents and singers do carpool, but BYC does not coordinate this effort. We provide a membership directory which can be used by parents who want to carpool.
26. **What is expected from the parents?**
   Parents must ensure that their singer is present and prompt at all rehearsals and performances.
   Communication is by email, so parents must check for important email messages, bookmark and check the BYC Members webpage often for updates, and put all BYC rehearsals and performances on their family calendar. Parents also volunteer to help with retreats, camp, rehearsals, concerts, fundraising, and other activities. Our parents are extremely supportive and share their time and talents in a variety of ways.

27. **Where can I find a calendar or schedule for the season?**
   For members, the Basic Schedule and Google calendar of rehearsals and performances are found on the Members page on the BYC website: www.berksyouthchorus.org

   For the general public, the Performance Schedule is found under Performances on the BYC website.

28. **How much will this cost?**
   Tuition for 2018-2019 is $525 for Training Chorus; $575 for Chorale; and $650 for MasterSingers. All singers, including scholarship applicants and recipients, pay a $25 tuition registration fee which is applied to the balance. Tuition covers Training Chorus and Chorale Summer Camp and MasterSingers Summer Retreat. There are no additional fees for these summer activities.

   All new singers, including scholarship applicants and recipients, pay a $50 Property Deposit that will be on deposit throughout the singer’s tenure with BYC.

   Rehearsal and concert attire costs vary for each chorus level. Attire may cost up to $125 per singer, but singers who receive financial aid do not pay for the attire. For tickets, see no. 23.

29. **What does tuition pay for?**
   Berks Youth Chorus is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Tuition helps pay for rehearsal and concert venue rental fees, director and accompanist fees, full and part-time administrative personnel, sheet music, folders, insurance, advertising, licensing, guest artists, instrumentalists and other operating fees. Singer tuition covers only a third of our expenses. The organization relies on parent fundraising activities, individual and corporate donations, and foundation grants to balance the budget.

30. **Do you provide any financial assistance or scholarships?**
   Yes! There is limited scholarship money available. An application is found in the registration contract. Scholarship awards include awards for tuition, attire, and concert tickets.

31. **What do the singers wear?**
   Each chorus has informal and formal performance attire. Singers purchase attire if they do not receive financial aid; singers receive attire on loan from BYC if they receive financial aid.

32. **Where and when do I go for uniforms/attire?**
   You child will be fitted for attire in the office during the summer.

33. **Do you have a Board of Directors?**
   Yes, there is a volunteer Board of Directors that governs the organization. The full Board meets six times a year. Numerous Board committees meet at other times throughout the year.

34. **Where is the BYC office?**
   Our office is in the accessibly-located GoggleWorks Center for the Arts in downtown Reading. Our address is 201 Washington Street, Suite 506B, Reading, PA 19601.