Ragazzi Boys Chorus Parent & Guardian/Chorister Handbook

MISSION

Ragazzi Boys Chorus is committed to excellence in musical performance and education.

Ragazzi educates boys to perform choral music to the highest standards of excellence, instilling self-confidence, cooperation, leadership, sensitivity and tenacity, building young men of character and distinction.

INTRODUCTION

With over 35 years of music education success, Ragazzi's programs run both deep and wide, encouraging the individual growth of our choristers as the organization aims to produce choral music of high artistic value. For choristers, there are many paths to success, but the goal is always clear: excellence in musical performance and education. Your child's success and enjoyment as a chorister will deepen as they mature.

Ragazzi will teach your child the principles of vocal production and guide them to become a competent choral singer. We will teach your child performance skills - how to project stage presence and connect to their audience. We also will teach your child music theory, the formal language of Western music.

GENDER IDENTITY & EXPRESSION

Ragazzi is a boys chorus because boys and young men are traditionally underserved in the field of choral arts. At Ragazzi, *boys* refers to gender expansive youth (cis boys, trans boys, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any boy-identified youth). We welcome any child who wishes to sing and expresses themselves as a boy. Ragazzi recognizes that gender-diverse children may transition away from expressing themselves as a boy during their participation in Ragazzi. Any transitioning chorister who wishes to remain with Ragazzi, adheres to Ragazzi's policies, and has the voice range and musicianship for the assigned ensemble will be welcomed and supported.

A RAGAZZI CHORISTER CAN EXPECT TO HAVE FUN WHILE

- Learning to sing in a healthy, classical style, developing good choral technique
- Developing familiarity with and an appreciation for many types and styles of music
- Becoming proficient in music theory and practical musicianship
- Growing as an individual within a team setting, learning self-confidence and good citizenship
- Connecting personal effort to personal and group success by sharing high artistic goals
- Becoming a global citizen of the world

The long-term benefits of a Ragazzi music education include all the positives neuroscientists and social scientists are discovering (Benefits of Music Education). In addition, Ragazzi choristers who

continue to sing make smooth transitions to college and work. They find like-minded communities of singers and have places to belong almost anywhere they go.

You can help your child along that path by

- Ensuring their excellent attendance at rehearsals and performances
- Celebrating their accomplishments by attending Ragazzi performances
- Keeping up to date with chorus communications
- Volunteering with Ragazzi
- Supporting their Ragazzi journey: music and theory milestones, summer session (camp), touring, annual evaluation and placement

OUR PROGRAMS

- **Choral Training**: school-year rehearsals and performances for our six levels of choruses
- **Music Theory**: integrated into Choral Training and Summer Session (Camp)
- **Summer Session (Camp)**: where the new season begins and touring skills are acquired
- **Tour**: domestic and international travel, level-appropriate

Citizenship

Ragazzi expects good conduct and behavior from every chorister during Ragazzi rehearsals and events, performances, and tours. Each chorister's behavior directly affects the ability of the chorus to meet its standards and enhances the reputation of the Chorus as a whole.

Ragazzi also has **Tour Standards** to safeguard the choristers and prepare for and guide through the Tour experience. We review them with parents, guardians, and choristers prior to each tour.

Attendance

RAGAZZI HAS CLEAR GUIDELINES ABOUT ATTENDANCE.

Ragazzi's attendance policies are designed to provide flexibility for other extracurricular activities while maintaining our high standards of musical excellence.

- Notify your child's Music Director whenever your child will be absent. Inform your child's Director of possible conflicts as early as possible. This gives everyone the best chance of resolving conflicts.
- Absences beyond our guidelines are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Artistic Director or relevant Music Director. See the Member Absences page
- We strongly recommend subscribing to your child's chorus-level calendar. https://ragazzi.org/members/calendar/subscribe-ragazzis-calendars/

Overall Expectations

Attendance is one of the criteria used for advancement and choral group placement.

All Ragazzi groups have the same basic attendance requirements:

- Be in place and prepared to sing on time (ten minutes early is on time)
- Wear a Ragazzi logo t-shirt or polo shirt to each rehearsal (new choristers will receive a Ragazzi logo t-shirt)
- Bring a water bottle filled with water to each rehearsal
- Bring all required music, sharpened pencils with erasers and theory materials in music bag to all rehearsals
- Attend one all-Chorus Saturday rehearsal *(Singing Saturday)* per semester, in addition to weekly or monthly rehearsals
- Sing in the concerts, recitals, and other performances throughout the year

❖ Singers in upper-level groups (Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble) are required to attend Summer Session (Camp) and go on Tour.
❖ Ragazzi Premiere singers are required to attend Summer Session (Camp).

Pre-Touring Groups

PRIMARY GROUP (PG)

- Weekly rehearsals and two end-of-semester Recitals.
- Daytime Summer Sessions (Camps) are optional.
- Recommended that each chorister attend one Ragazzi concert featuring Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars or Young Men's Ensemble, as an audience member. A chorister wearing a Ragazzi logo shirt and accompanied by an adult with a paid general admission ticket will receive complimentary admission to any Ragazzi-produced concert (gig admission may not be free).

RAGAZZI PREMIERE (RP)

- Weekly rehearsals and multiple performances.
- Spring Premiere tour is optional.
- Daytime Summer Sessions (Camps) are required.

Touring Groups

Ragazzi's touring groups often sing professionally. These choristers are expected to commit to membership for the full season, which *begins* at Summer Session (Camp) in July and *ends* with Tour in the following June or July.

AVANTI (AV)

- A domestic touring group
- twice-weekly evening rehearsals and many performances.
- Annual summer tours are required (domestic destinations).
- Overnight Summer Sessions (Camps) are required.

CONCERT GROUP (CG)

- CG choristers are expected to make Ragazzi their **principal extracurricular** priority
- twice-weekly evening rehearsals, plus once-per-month Saturday rehearsals, plus many performances.

- Concert Group choristers might be asked to meet their director or mentor 15 minutes prior to rehearsal, if absent from the previous rehearsal.
- Summer tours are required, alternating between domestic and international destinations annually.
- Overnight Summer Sessions (Camps) are required.

YOUNG MEN'S ENSEMBLE (YME)

- changed voices
- weekly rehearsals and many concerts and gigs.
- Summer tours are required, alternating between domestic and international destinations annually.
- Overnight Summer Sessions (Camps) are required.

CHORAL SCHOLARS (CS, a subset of YME singers)

- CS choristers are expected to make Ragazzi their **principal extracurricular** priority
- weekly evening rehearsals plus once-per-month Saturday rehearsals, plus many performances.

PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE

Choral singing is like a team sport. **100% attendance at concerts** is essential for individual and group success. Thus, attendance at all scheduled major concerts and recitals is required (typically December, March/April and May/June). Gigs *may* be optional. **If a previous commitment conflicts with** an announced concert or gig, notify your child's Music Director by email as soon as you discover the conflict. Win-win resolutions are hard to find at the last minute.

Please note that all rehearsals two weeks before a concert are *not* included in the absence allowances (below). They are critical to performance success and 100% attendance by all is expected and needed.

- **Call Sheets** have details about performance location, call time, drop off and pick up.
    - https://ragazzi.org/members/call-sheets/
- If your child arrives late for an **offsite rehearsal or performance call time**, they may miss critical, site-specific information. It's possible they could be asked not to sing in the performance.
- Absences for **sudden illness**: phone your child's Music Director or the Emergency Contact listed on the Call Sheet
    - Director phone numbers are listed in DirectorySpot (https://ragazzi.org/members/directory/)
- Your child's absence may require that the concert program (music selections) be changed, so please notify your Director as soon as possible.

Pre-Performance Preparation

Performing is physically demanding. Choristers stand for long periods of time, often under hot lights. Please:

- **avoid sleep-overs** the night before a concert
- avoid **major sports matches the day of** a dress rehearsal or concert
- have your child rest for an hour before you depart for call time

- **arrive well-fed** with an easily digestible, healthy meal
- showered, do not wear any cologne or other fragrance

REHEARSAL ABSENCE

Attendance is expected. Poor attendance impacts your child's sense of belonging and their success in Ragazzi, and negatively affects their entire group. Rehearsal absences can be for any reason – sports, academics, illness, travel, etc. We will email alerts when there is only one allowed absence left.

Report all absences to your child's Music Director.

Director e-mail addresses are listed on our website: https://ragazzi.org/contact/

For choristers rehearsing once per week (PL, PG, RP, YME)

- 3 absences allowed in **Fall** semester
- 4 absences allowed in **Spring** semester

For choristers rehearsing twice per week or once per week with a monthly Saturday rehearsal (AV, CG, CS)

- 4 absences allowed in **Fall** semester
- 5 absences allowed in **Spring** semester

If absent more than the allowed number OR if your child misses a pre-concert rehearsal for any reason

- your child will have to do a music check with their director
- your child may be asked to not perform specific songs if they aren't sufficiently prepared on them
- your child might not be able to perform in that concert – a worst-case situation

Tardies

- Tardy = up to 1/4 of a rehearsal missed
- 1/2 absence = 1/4 – 1/2 of a rehearsal missed
- absence = more than 1/2 of a rehearsal missed

Illness

- We understand that illness can strike at any time, and with any number of absences already recorded. If your child is ill, we do not want them at rehearsals or performances – simply report the absence by informing their Music Director.
- Keep your child home and well taken care of, even if they are already at their absence limit or it's a rehearsal within the two-week concert window. **Your child's health and that of the other children is our top consideration!** We appreciate your cooperation.
- Your chorister must be fever-free without the aid of fever-reducing medications (acetaminophen, ibuprofen, etc.) for at least 24 hours before returning to Ragazzi activities. Relatedly, if your child develops a temperature that is higher than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit at a Ragazzi activity, they must be picked up with in one (1) hour. Fever is defined as a temperature equal to or greater than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit (taken by any method).
- A child must be free from vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and upset stomach for at least 24 hours before returning to rehearsals.

- If your chorister didn't attend school on a given day due to illness, they likely should not attend any Ragazzi activity that same day.

TOUR ATTENDANCE

Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble tour each summer. Participation in tours and all tour rehearsals for these groups is required. Premiere's spring tour is optional. All tour destinations, timing, and cost will be announced as early as possible. Tour attendance exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. (See Once-in-a-Lifetime Exemptions, below.)

SUMMER SESSION (CAMP) ATTENDANCE

Summer Session (Camp) prepares singers for touring. **Thus, we do not take a chorister on a required tour until they have been to Ragazzi's Summer Session (Camp).** Completing a successful Summer Session (Camp) is **required** prior to touring with Avanti.

Premiere, Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble are required to attend Summer Session (Camp) each year. Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble's Summer Session (Camp) is sleepaway and overnight. Premiere's Summer Session (Camp) is a daytime experience. Primary Group has the option of a daytime Summer Session (Camp). Summer Session (Camp) timings and costs will be announced as early as possible. Summer Session (Camp) attendance exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. (See Once-in-a-Lifetime Exemptions, below.)

ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXEMPTIONS FOR TOUR OR SUMMER SESSION (CAMP)

To account for family gatherings and family events, each Ragazzi chorister is allowed one (1) tour or Summer Session (Camp) absence throughout their Ragazzi career, known as their "Once-in-a-Lifetime Exemption." Summer Session (Camp) exemptions are most successful taken when a chorister is returning to an ensemble for the next season, and not transitioning between two ensembles. Choristers have reported difficulties entering a new ensemble with summer session absences. Our experience has shown that Ragazzi choristers are more successful when they wait to utilize their exemption later in their Ragazzi careers. Choristers feel more confident in their musicianship, have smoother transitions between ensembles, and are better able to build long-lasting relationships with other choristers when they wait to use their exemption. Once-in-a-lifetime exemptions for tour or Summer Session (Camp) must be discussed with and approved by the chorister's director before the registration deadline.

Electronics

DURING REHEARSALS

Cell phones and personal electronics must be stowed for the duration of rehearsals, with the exception of breaks.

- Personal electronics may be used before and after rehearsal and during breaks.
- When such devices are permitted, Ragazzi choristers need to remove headphones or earbuds when approached by adults, to facilitate communication.

AT CONCERT SITES

- Cell phones may be used *before* concert rehearsal call time and *after* concerts but must be turned ***OFF*** before performance time and for the duration of the performance. Vibrate mode is not permitted.

AT SUMMER SESSION (CAMP)

- **No cell phones, except for choristers in high school (rising grades 9-12)**. High schoolers may only use their phones in their rooms or dorm. Staff will hold cell phones seen outside of the dorms for the duration of Summer Session (Camp).
- Tablets, laptops or computers are not allowed. Please plan your summer studies accordingly.
- Summer Session (Camp) has its own Handbook that further details the electronics guidelines.

ON TOUR

- Each tour will have its own requirements.
- To promote focused downtime and encourage a wide range of tour experiences, choristers should be prepared to have electronics time managed to support tour goals.

Please note *that Ragazzi does not assume any liability for personal property (compliant with these guidelines or not, held by us or not) taken to rehearsals, concerts, Summer Session (Camp), or on Tour. Choristers and families assume all risk for loss or damage to such property.*

Sheet Music Care

TAKE GOOD CARE OF SHEET MUSIC!

Printed sheet music is expensive to replace and needs respect.

- Musical notations and cues may be made only in **pencil**, and only as your directors instruct. Please refrain from unnecessary marks or doodles.
- Keep sheet music neatly in Ragazzi music folder, in the order specified by the included repertoire list
- No drawings on music are permitted. Inappropriate markings may incur a fine.
- Chorister numbers are used to identify their music. Do not write your chorister's name on the music, please.

Music is handed out several times a year and collected by the music librarian two or three times a year. We give advance notice of collection dates. If your child is absent from rehearsal when music is handed out or collected, it is their responsibility to contact the Ragazzi Office (ragoff@ragazzi.org) to make arrangements for obtaining or returning music.

- **Choristers are billed for lost or damaged music**. Current charges are $8.00 for the first piece of music lost and replacement cost for each piece thereafter. Face value of the music plus folder costs and a handling charge will be levied for loss of the entire folder. Seriously damaged sheet music is treated the same as lost music. We do strongly recommend holding your child responsible for lost/damaged music fines – it's a learning opportunity.
- **Lost music** charges are refundable if the music is returned in reusable condition by the end of the following semester.
- **Folders** are solely for Ragazzi-issued or related music, song sheets, vocabulary list, and vocal exercises. Please do not keep theory materials, evaluations, call sheets, personal papers,

notices, etc. in the music folder. Folders will be cleared of such items each semester as new music gets entered.
- **Bring a sharpened pencil** to every rehearsal in order to mark music with the proper implement.

Appearance and Uniforms

For all public appearances, choristers should look neat and clean. Audiences want to see singers' facial expressions, and a chorister's hair should neither block their view of the conductor nor the audience's view of them.

Choristers with hair, accessories, or other style choices that are distracting to the director, fellow choristers, or the audience may be asked to make less distracting choices in order to perform.

Uniforms are chosen to give the singers a consistent look, allowing audiences to focus on the music and the performance rather than on uneven dress. Uniforms are also a safety element, allowing faculty, staff and volunteers to identify Ragazzi choristers at a glance in public places.

Each chorister must have the casual and formal uniforms associated with their music group. Ragazzi maintains a **freely available collection of recycled uniform items**, including required t-shirts and polos. See https://ragazzi.org/members/member-performing/uniforms/ for more details.

AT REHEARSALS

Choristers must wear a Ragazzi t-shirt or polo to every weekly rehearsal. Any shorts/pants and shoes are acceptable.

AT PERFORMANCES AND OFF-SITE

See ragazzi.org/members/member-performing/uniforms/ for descriptions and photos of the required formal uniform (worn at most performances) and the casual uniform (worn on tour, at some offsite rehearsals, and for casual performances, including the National Anthem for the SF Giants).

- Ragazzi blazers are owned and maintained by Ragazzi, so choristers in Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble may trade up to larger blazers as they grow without having to purchase a new one. An initial fee is charged for a chorister's first year in a blazer, and an annual rental fee is charged for each subsequent year of participation in Ragazzi.
- Parents and guardians are responsible for keeping the blazer clean and keeping buttons attached during the performance season, and for returning it promptly at the end of the season. Blazers will be drycleaned by Ragazzi at the end of the season before they are redistributed.
- Ragazzi may do minor alterations on blazers but will not undertake extensive or customized tailoring.

ON TOUR

In addition to the formal and/or casual uniforms, each tour has its own uniform requirements, including specially designed tour-specific t-shirts. Directors may require outerwear that has the Ragazzi logo. Any hats worn on tour must have the Ragazzi logo.

AT SUMMER SESSION (CAMP)

The only uniform requirement for Summer Session (Camp) is the casual uniform, worn for the end-of-Summer Session (Camp) concert. Choristers may wear regular clothing the rest of the time.

Gigs and More

OTHER PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

Ragazzi seeks to perform for appreciative audiences and avoids performances where music is a background to other activities. Weekday performances, which are kept to a minimum and announced well in advance, may require occasional absences from school. Letters to your child's school from the Artistic Director will be made available explaining the reason for the absence as well as the educational benefits of Ragazzi. Ragazzi performing opportunities include operas, symphonies, concert series, schools, private parties, weddings, major sports events, churches, civic groups, retirement homes, radio and television. Solo opportunities may also arise.

OPERA, SYMPHONY, AND OTHER CHORUSES

Each year Ragazzi provides singers to perform in professional productions of other arts organizations (e.g. San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, West Bay Opera, Opera San Jose, etc.) around the Bay. It is Ragazzi's policy that singers recruited through Ragazzi are not paid for their participation in third party performances. Where possible, Ragazzi makes all arrangements for singers recruited through Ragazzi. Ragazzi handles all musical preparation, and all payments or other forms of remuneration specified in or resulting from such contracts are made to Ragazzi whether the singer is enrolled in Ragazzi at the time of the contracted performance or not.

If a chorister is engaged as a soloist in any performance, they must always be identified as a member of Ragazzi Boys Chorus (e.g. in press releases, programs, posters, etc.).

Gigs: Other Outside Performances

Every chorister (except for Prelude students) will be asked to sing at paying and non-paying gigs each year. Paying gigs are an important revenue source for Ragazzi, enabling choristers to contribute financially to the chorus by doing something they already love – singing. The office will communicate the details of each event and poll for availability.

We ask that parents and guardians respond immediately to communications about gig availability so that Ragazzi can respond to the offer. Please be as flexible as possible, making every attempt to participate when gigs are announced.

PLAYS, MUSICALS, OTHER CHOIRS, ETC.

We want choristers to be involved in the wider community and encourage participating in their school and church choirs; a Ragazzi chorister may be one of that group's best-trained singers. However, your

child's success in Ragazzi is our priority. To help your child's Ragazzi Director develop a rehearsal schedule that resolves possible conflicts, we ask that you:

- confer with your child's Ragazzi Music Director ***if it looks like they'll be involved in a play or musical*** that conflicts with Ragazzi rehearsals or performances
- provide contact information to your child's Ragazzi Music Director for all outside production directors

Chorister Progress and Placement

Ragazzi's choruses are split between its *introductory class* (Prelude), *training groups* (Primary Group and Ragazzi Premiere), and *touring groups* (Avanti, Concert Group, Choral Scholars, and Young Men's Ensemble). Commitment to group success is critical to meeting our artistic goals and honoring our mission.

Choristers at the touring levels should think of themselves as professionals, with everything that entails. Commitment and readiness to perform are factored into decisions about placement.

Placement in successive levels is Ragazzi's goal for your child. We want your child to reach their full potential as a choral musician. Because each chorister develops personally and musically at their own pace, placements are based on musical, vocal, and behavioral readiness rather than age or length of enrollment in the Ragazzi program. **Our emphasis is on providing the best educational and musical experience for each child.**

Moving to the next level occurs when a chorister's Music Director, in consultation with the Artistic Director, the Theory Director, and a chorister's parents or guardians, believes it to be the right time. Placements are announced annually in May or June for the following Summer Session (Camp) and fall semester, though placement may change mid-year during a chorister's voice change. We make every attempt to ensure that all Ragazzi choristers are successful. Frequently a chorister staying at their current chorus level until they are ready to move on best achieves that.

Placements assume that choristers maintain all applicable standards.

Progress reports are sent to parents and guardians each semester. Interim progress reports are sent as needed. Final placement notifications go out in late spring for the next Summer Session (Camp) and following season.

Ragazzi families at all levels must keep Summer Session (Camp) dates open so their chorister can start the season with their peers.

For more information about progress reports, evaluations, placement, and other measures of progress, please visit: https://ragazzi.org/members/resources/eval-place/

THEORY

Choristers must meet level-specific theory requirements to be considered for placement in a more advanced chorus.
https://ragazzi.org/program/music-theory/
https://ragazzi.org/members/resources/theory/

YOUNG MEN'S ENSEMBLE (YME) PLACEMENT

Entrance to Young Men's Ensemble is based on satisfactory membership in Avanti or Concert Group, on vocal health needs and voice change - regardless of age or grade in school.

- We want to keep choristers singing with their treble groups where possible, consistent with good vocal health. Singing in the treble range during voice change is natural and vocally healthy in boys, often for many months. There is richness in sound that comes from boys whose voices are maturing. Asking a treble boy to sing tenor or a tenor to sing bass is a recipe for vocal health problems. **Our goal is to do what's best for your child's vocal health.**
- YME is designed for choristers who have completed the Theory program and are no longer able to sing in the treble range with good vocal health. High School age choristers with unchanged voices, in the interests of their vocal health, will continue singing with either Avanti or Concert Group.
- At the recommendation of their Avanti or Concert Group Director, choristers who become comfortable singing tenor, baritone, or bass may apply for YME membership with the YME Director.
- Choristers with changed voices and significant choral experience outside of Ragazzi may audition for YME.

Discipline

MEETING THE STANDARDS

If there is difficulty in meeting standards, Ragazzi faculty will reach out to struggling choristers and their families. The Artistic Director has final say on placement within the chorus and reviews placement of choristers who are consistently unable to meet behavioral expectations or chorus responsibilities.

CONSEQUENCES

Ragazzi takes good citizenship and behavior seriously, for the benefit of all, and consistent with our Mission and Values. The following actions may, at Ragazzi's discretion, lead to placement in a different group, suspension for a time, or dismissal if the violations are serious and/or persistent:

- Physical, verbal or online abusive behavior, or any forms of in-person, written or online bullying
- Failure to observe Code Silence
    - Code silence is a Ragazzi honor code where, for a period of time, choristers are expected to be silent - making no sounds of any kind (no talking, no whispering, etc.)
- Destruction or abuse of other choristers' property, adults' property or Ragazzi's property
- Destruction or abuse of property belonging to rehearsal or performance facilities
- Dishonesty
- Theft

- Lack of a cooperative, positive attitude toward the rules and standards of the Chorus
- Disrespect for directors, accompanists, administrators, other choristers, chaperones, parent or guardian volunteers, or any other individual involved with a Chorus activity
- Excessive absences from rehearsals and/or performances

ZERO TOLERANCE

Ragazzi may dismiss, at its discretion, any chorister who it determines has engaged in any of the following:

- Drugs or alcohol: Any unlawful possession, use, sale, offer to sell, or furnishing or being under the influence of, any controlled substance as listed in California Health and Safety Code Section 11053 et seq., an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind; or unlawful possession of, or offering, arranging or negotiating the sale of any drug paraphernalia, as defined in California Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5, whether on or off premises used by Ragazzi and regardless of whether such use occurs while participating in a Ragazzi rehearsal or other activity or event.
    - In addition, Ragazzi may dismiss or otherwise discipline any chorister who it determines has engaged in the possession, use, sale, offer to sell, or furnishing or being under the influence of, any intoxicant of any kind – controlled or not; whether on or off premises used by Ragazzi and regardless of whether such use occurs while participating in a Ragazzi rehearsal or other activity or event.
- Weapons: Use, possession, or sale of any firearm, knife, explosive, or other object that could be classified as a weapon at any premises used by Ragazzi, at any Ragazzi rehearsal or concert, at a Ragazzi-sponsored event, or at an event sponsored by another organization in which Ragazzi is participating.

For Parents, Guardians, and Families

Ragazzi parents and guardians are the foundation and lifeblood of our organization, and we are deeply grateful to you. Informed, engaged parents and guardians are essential to our continuity as an arts organization – we can't do this without you!

One and Done

- familiarize yourself with Ragazzi's website; know how to access the Member Pages and performance call sheets

Ongoing

- help faculty and staff keep our choristers safe and secure – think of all the children as yours
- honor Ragazzi's drop-off and pick-up policies
- stay on top of Ragazzi's calendar
- read and respond quickly to Ragazzi communications

Seasonally

- volunteer your time in support of Ragazzi's teaching and performance mission
- attend family information meetings
- support all the choristers by attending concert performances

Annually

- register your child(ren) and maintain their account information
- fill out and sign the Letter of Agreement
- honor deadlines for tuition payments, paperwork, and invitations to perform
- donate to the Annual Fund to support Ragazzi's and your child's continued success

Chorus and performance excellence is dependent upon these expectations being met.

ONLINE REGISTRATION, HEALTH INFORMATION AND LETTER OF AGREEMENT (LOA)

Re-registration must be completed and submitted each year prior to the first rehearsal.

- Initial enrollment is done through the Ragazzi website via UltraCamp. You are responsible for establishing an account.
- Include and update health and safety information
- Review and update their information before Summer Session (Camp), tour, and the start of rehearsals
- The Letter of Agreement (LOA) is distributed electronically. It includes emergency medical consent, waiver of liability and media release consent. Review this Handbook with your child(ren) and sign and return LOA by the stated due date

The Letter of Agreement references this Handbook, but will serve as a permanent agreement, continuously in effect while your child participates in Ragazzi's programs.

- There will be changes to the Handbook from time to time
- Your continued participation will indicate your acceptance of all changes.

Financial Matters

Ragazzi plans its budget based on the stated tuition payment schedule and projected chorister numbers. Deviations from those negatively impact the chorus finances, necessitating the below policies.

TUITION

Payments are due by the dates outlined in UltraCamp unless alternative arrangements are made with Ragazzi's Executive Director or Finance and Administration Manager. Multiple payment options are available, all listed in UltraCamp. Families with two or more choristers enrolled in Ragazzi receive a 10% tuition discount. This policy applies to Choral Training tuition only. It does not apply to the First Time New Family Fee, Summer Session (Camp) tuition, or Tour tuition.

FLEXIBLE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FTAP)

It is Ragazzi's belief that no child should be prohibited from participating in Ragazzi due to family financial status. Families are welcome to inquire about and apply to Ragazzi's confidential Flexible Tuition Assistance Program (FTAP).

The FTAP program exists to keep Ragazzi affordable for those families for whom the cost would be burdensome and to keep choristers in the program if their families experience temporary financial

difficulties. Tuition reduction decisions are made based on need and are capped at 90% for Choral Training and 50% for Summer Session (Camp) and Tour. Under FTAP guidelines, registration and other fees, blazer rentals, and uniform purchases are not covered.

LATE PAYMENTS

Ragazzi reserves the right to assess a penalty for tuition payments that are more than one month overdue. The normal late payment penalty is $50 for every full month that a tuition payment is not received after its due date. Ragazzi reserves the right to deny any chorister participation in Ragazzi programs or events if there are tuition payments more than three months overdue.

REFUNDS

Choral Training: If a chorister withdraws, tuition must be paid through the end of that month. There is a $100 fee for processing and handling of refunds. No refunds will be issued after the following dates. Fall Semester: October 15; Spring Semester: February 15.

The First Time New Family Fee and any payment plan fees are nonrefundable.

Summer Session (Camp): Each Summer Session (Camp) has its own payment schedule and tuition may or may not be refundable, in whole or in part. There will be a minimum of a $100 fee for processing and handling of a refund.

Tour: Each Tour has its own payment schedule and tuition may or may not be refundable, in whole or in part. There will be a minimum of a $100 fee for processing and handling of a refund.

Communications

ONGOING

We communicate with families largely by email. Parents and guardians will be added to listservs relevant to a chorister's Ragazzi activities. It is important to stay on top of Ragazzi emails for information pertinent to you and your child.

Ragazzi also has a newsletter, "RagTimes," that we send to current and alumni families, audience members, and others at various times throughout the year. To sign up, visit http://bit.ly/PgY7KV.

PARENT AND GUARDIAN MEETINGS

Singing Saturday is one morning each semester devoted to engaging the whole Ragazzi family. All chorus groups gather for rehearsal while parents and guardians attend an information/working meeting.

- Singing Saturdays occur twice a year, in the fall and spring.
- At least one parent or guardian of each Ragazzi chorister should attend
- Make sure to obtain all distributed information and make note of any changes to Ragazzi obligations, especially any calendar changes.

Other meetings are called for specific groups of parents and guardians – including for

- New Parent and Guardian Welcome & Orientation
- group-level parent and guardian meetings
- new-to-Summer Session (Camp) presentations
- tour meetings
- volunteer training

Dates are published well in advance. Generally, you will not need to attend more than 3-4 meetings per season.

RAGAZZI.ORG WEBSITE – MEMBER PAGES

The "Member Pages" section of the ragazzi.org website is your principal source of information.

Username: *sing*
Password: *30years*

It is important to familiarize yourself with the Member Pages of the website. This section includes links to the UltraCamp login, calendars, call sheets, tour and Summer Session (Camp) information, volunteer information and signups, uniforms, carpooling and directory information, and many more resources. The public-facing Ragazzi website features performance information, faculty, staff, and board profiles, contact info, and audition and class information.

AT SUMMER SESSION (CAMP) AND ON TOUR

Tour chaperones and Summer Session (Camp) counselors ask that you limit real-time communication (calls, texts, etc.) with your child while they are on tour or at Summer Session (Camp). Choristers need to settle into a "zone" where they depend on their peers, their counselors, chaperones, and/or tour leaders. This "zone" also supports their growing sense of personal competence and independence. Phone calls, emails and texts from you can make your child's adjustment to Summer Session (Camp) or tour more difficult. Summer Session (Camp) and tour communications policies are covered in the Summer Session (Camp) Handbook and by each tour's specific guidelines.

RAGAZZI & SOCIAL MEDIA

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS AND ELECTRONIC MESSAGING

Please observe the following guidelines and requirements to protect and preserve the Ragazzi brand and reputation – whether on Ragazzi-sponsored media, or in independent messaging. Your contributions to blogs, wikis, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Wikipedia, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube, et al, should advance and enhance the wider community's perception of Ragazzi. Other Ragazzi-related personal messaging should conform to these policies.

Guidelines for Choristers:

- Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birth dates, and pictures. Do not share your passwords.
- Be aware that pictures, videos, songs, and audio clips may be protected under copyright laws. Verify that you have permission to use the images, videos, songs or other clips.

- If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable or is not true or respectful, tell a parent or guardian or a member of the Ragazzi faculty/staff right away.
- We strongly encourage choristers to only create postings that create a positive personal digital trail - that is, they should consider what their friends, parents, guardians, grandparents, potential schools and colleges and future employers would think.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.

Requirements for Choristers:

- Pretending, in any way, to be another chorister, faculty/staff member or anyone else in Ragazzi-related postings or messages is strictly prohibited.
- Postings or messages must respect Ragazzi's Privacy Policies.
- Postings or messages in any forum or mode may not be used to bully, harass, intimidate, threaten, demean or otherwise harm another chorister or their family.
- Postings or messages in any forum or mode that arise during any Ragazzi event (including tours and summer sessions (camps)) or are otherwise related to Ragazzi may not be used to bully, harass, intimidate, threaten, demean or otherwise harm *anyone*.

Choristers who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their membership in Ragazzi Boys Chorus.

Guidelines for Families:

- Only stills, video and audio recordings approved by Ragazzi should be used for social media content.
- It is your responsibility to respect all copyright laws and fair use standards for material owned by others, including Ragazzi.
- Please use good judgment. Make it clear that the opinions in your postings are yours and not Ragazzi's.
- Contact the office before posting if you're unsure about the content: ragoff@ragazzi.org, (650) 362-4425

Requirements for Families:

- Ragazzi-related postings may not include offensive or other inappropriate language or images.
- If we deem posted material to be inappropriate, if it contains a substandard performance, or we discover it violates copyrights or fair use standards, we will remove that posting or ask you to remove it, if it is a non-Ragazzi social media posting.

Volunteering

We need you!

All families are encouraged to serve on at least one volunteer team each semester. Doing so ensures that Ragazzi can continue to function. On behalf of the choristers who make Ragazzi so special, we thank you in advance for donating your time and your skills.

- Parents and guardians can volunteer in a way that works best for your family

    - There is a job to fit everyone's schedule, skills, and available time
    - Staff provide training, guidelines, information and tools necessary for every volunteer to be effective. For example, when in close interactions with the choristers, i.e.=. chaperoning and some other performance and rehearsal-based volunteering.
- A description of each volunteer position is available in the office and is posted at ragazzi.org/members/volunteer/
- Detailed information is also available by contacting Ragazzi's Chorus Manager, who coordinates volunteers (see contact information here: https://ragazzi.org/contact/)
- We survey parents and guardians to identify volunteer interest areas, experience, and skills.

Ragazzi reserves the right to require background checks for any volunteer. Ragazzi is committed to complying with all local, state, and federal laws regarding volunteers and children.

Super Volunteers

A volunteer who has direct contact with or supervision of children for 16+ hours per month or 32+ hours per year is designated as a "Super Volunteer." Super Volunteers need to do a LiveScan (fingerprinting) background check and complete Childhood Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) training.

Fundraising

Participation is essential to the financial well-being of Ragazzi. Tuition and ticket sales income do not cover all of the expenses to provide exceptional music education and performance opportunities. Each year we must fundraise a significant portion of our budget in order to support our operations and scholarship program. Those contributions can come from individuals, businesses and corporations (employee matching is a great way to double or even triple your giving), grants from foundations and government agencies, and revenue from the main annual fundraising events.

- We encourage all families to participate in these fundraising activities – they won't happen without your support!
- We encourage families to contribute as they can the Annual Fund – our goal every year is *100% family participation*
- Generous contributions come in **all** sizes, are tax deductible, and all gifts are listed in our concert programs
- ***Every* donation helps. *All* donations count.**

We LOVE our donors*!!!*

YOU CAN HELP RAGAZZI'S FINANCES BY

- attending performances and bringing friends, coworkers and neighbors
- donating to the Annual Fund and encouraging others to do so
- participating in eScrip (naming Ragazzi as a beneficiary). Participating merchants donate without any extra cost to you.

As with all arts non-profit organizations, ***our fundraising success drives the quality of our programs***. Ragazzi family involvement has afforded our singers a first-rate experience. We want to build on that and hope that every family will participate in one or more of our fundraisers.

Privacy and Safety

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIVACY POLICIES

- Ragazzi maintains a database of families' and choristers' information. Each family's account includes safety information, such as contact information and health data. Faculty and staff have access to this information, as do volunteers with safety and health responsibilities.
    - Once registered, it is vitally important for families to keep this safety information up to date.
- Ragazzi also stores some family/chorister information elsewhere online, as well as locally on office computers and in some cases in paper files.
- Ragazzi engages with other vendors for processing financial transactions, including our bank and several electronic payment services.
- For information stored remotely, we rely on our vendors to protect your information.
- For information electronically stored in the office, we rely on industry standard security software.
- We keep information stored physically under lock and key, with access limited to senior faculty and staff.
- Ragazzi will not share the personal information of any chorister without permission.
- Ragazzi will not share the private personal information of families without permission.
- Ragazzi families may not use or share private personal information of others to any person or group outside of Ragazzi.
- Only faculty, staff, choristers, first-degree family members of choristers, alumni and alumni families can join Ragazzi's private Facebook group.

ORGANIZATIONAL SAFETY POLICIES

- Ragazzi maintains a database with emergency contacts and medical information.
    - Parents and guardians MUST keep this information current. Check and update this information at least at the beginning of the new season, before any tour and before Summer Session (Camp) – your child's comfort, health, and safety are at stake.
- To protect our choristers with nut sensitivities, Ragazzi strives to be "nut free." **Our rehearsal space and all other spaces we rent or visit, however, have other tenants or visitors, and therefore we cannot guarantee these spaces will be free of all traces of nut allergens**. Choristers and families should not bring nut-containing foods to Ragazzi gatherings.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY POLICIES

- Ragazzi does background checks on all employees who have close contact with choristers, including faculty, collaborative pianists, Summer Session (Camp) counselors and tour chaperones. Employees also undertake sexual harassment prevention training and child abuse mandated reporter training.

- All employees and designated chaperones and counselors are empowered to be on guard for choristers' safety, to ask singers to conform to Ragazzi standards, and to follow directions whether they are at their usual rehearsal location, a different concert or rehearsal venue, on tour or at Summer Session (Camp).
- Employees are required to never be alone with a chorister - there must be another chorister or adult present, especially at Summer Session (Camp) or on tour, but also including at all rehearsals and performances.
    - Directors may be alone with choristers with parental/guardian knowledge and permission and under urgent medical emergencies. Families will be notified about urgent medical emergencies as soon as possible.
- Volunteer rehearsal and performance chaperones must be trained and adhere to published chaperone guidelines. They operate under the supervision of a Ragazzi Music Director or staff member.

CHORISTER AND FAMILY SAFETY AND HEALTH-RELATED POLICIES

- At concerts and gigs, never drop your child off without making sure there is a responsible Ragazzi adult visible to take charge of them.
- On rehearsal evenings, either park and walk your child in *OR* do a curbside drop at the sidewalk adjacent to the rehearsal venue. See https://ragazzi.org/members/resources/rehearsals/ for up-to-date specifics
- On time, but not too early
    - Before 5:15pm, choristers must be supervised by a Ragazzi faculty member (theory, mentoring, meetings, etc, by appointment).Do not bring choristers before 4:45pm to the theory study hall in Redwood City. Do not bring choristers before 5:00pm to the theory study hall in Palo Alto.
- Rehearsal pick-up is from St. Peter's Episcopal Church Redwood City, First United Methodist Church Redwood City, or First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto. Choristers are released to parents or guardians who walk up to the exit or to parent or guardian vehicles at a designated curb adjacent to the rehearsal venue. See map and specifics at https://ragazzi.org/members/resources/rehearsals/
- Ragazzi clothing must be worn at rehearsals, performances, and on tour. The ability to quickly determine affiliation is a vital safety tool.
- If you see something, say something - all adults are empowered to speak up if something is amiss. For urgent safety matters, treat any child as if they were your own and do not hesitate to deal directly with them, bringing in Ragazzi employees as you can. For non-urgent matters, find a Ragazzi employee and let them know what's concerning you.
- Personal boundaries are to be respected. Inform your music director or a staff member if your child experiences any physical, verbal or emotional event that could affect their safety or well-being.
- *Teasing and bullying are not tolerated*
- Vocal health is paramount at Ragazzi and requires that all parties act in the child's best interests. Families are expected to support Ragazzi's use of *Code Silence*, to help choristers care for their voices by drinking plenty of water and avoiding yelling. More info at https://ragazzi.org/members/resources/vocal-instruction/
- Ragazzi does not organize carpools. We do provide information via our internal Directory at https://ragazzi.org/members/directory/ that facilitates carpool formation. Please foster good

behavior among carpooling choristers. Behavior in the car on the way to rehearsals and to concerts influences demeanor during Ragazzi activities.

Glossary

SINGERS

- **Treble:** the range sung by girls, women and boys. Often referred to as soprano (higher) and alto (lower). Boys should be able to sing freely over about a two-octave treble range, which will vary somewhat from person to person.
- **Soprano:** the highest treble voice – boys or females
- **Alto:** a lower treble voice – boys or females
- **Voice Change:** When boys, during puberty, lose most of their treble range and begin to sing up to an octave or more below a woman's treble voice. It occurs as the voice box lengthens (as do the vocal cords) and boys develop a prominent Adam's apple.
- **Tenor:** the highest changed voice in men, with its own distinctive tonal quality. Voice parts are often split between Tenor I (higher) and Tenor II (lower).
- **Baritone:** the most common changed voice in the male range – not as high as tenor, nor quite as low as bass, but grouped with basses
- **Bass:** the lowest changed voice in the male range – when low parts split, it's baritones above and basses below

SINGING

- **SATB** music: 4-part music written for Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass – similarly, SSA or SSAA or TTBB music
- **Standard Rep or Standard Repertoire:** Five pieces for trebles that Ragazzi has chosen, that choristers memorize, from which music appropriate for many occasions can be selected. See list below for Ragazzi's standard rep.
    - "Ave Maria" by J.S. Bach and Charles Gounod
    - "Bist du bei mir" by J.S. Bach
    - "Laudamus Te" from *Gloria* by Antonio Vivaldi
    - "Panis Angelicus" by César Franck
    - "Sound the Trumpet" by Henry Purcell

PERFORMING

- **Recital:** in Ragazzi's case, the end of semester performances where many groups are represented, but Primary, Premiere, and Avanti groups are featured.
- **Concert:** Usually a Ragazzi produced event where we present music sung by our most experienced trebles and our changed voices, although other ensembles may also take part. Sometimes Ragazzi is presented by another sponsoring group, and in most cases those concerts are for our most experienced singers, only.
- **Gig:** a performance produced by an outside group – we just show up to sing. Gigs include performing for weddings or other ceremonial occasions (usually paid) or performing for senior centers or civic groups.
- **Dress Rehearsal**: Usually the last full rehearsal before a performance. Regular rehearsal attire is OK - no need for the concert uniform. If it's an ***off-site*** dress rehearsal, a Ragazzi logo shirt may be required.
- **Call Sheet**: A summary document with all the information needed to get your child to a recital, concert, gig, or special rehearsal, on time, dressed correctly, with everything they need.

CODE SILENCE

- When choristers are placed on “Code Silence”, they are required to be silent.
- Choristers may be placed on Code Silence by a responsible adult or established peer leader to maintain order, protect their voices or preserve their safety in public.