

Australian Boys Choral Institute

Education Policy

The Australian Boys Choral Institute (ABCI) exists to provide a high level of education in choral music for boys and young men. In the education of each member, due regard will be paid to the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the highest standards of performance.

Training and musical education of boys in the training groups will be based on principles derived from the teaching of Zoltan Kodály.

The ABCI will encourage each member to fulfil his potential through the promotion of the individual and group disciplines necessary for the membership of the Australian Boys Choir Performing Squad or The Vocal Consort, but it is acknowledged that not every member will earn a place in those senior performing groups of the ABCI. Each member will, however, have the opportunity to experience performance from time to time in a junior choir after successful participation in an appropriate training program.

Entry to the ABCI's training program is by audition, when the boy's talent and potential to develop into choristers is evaluated. Boys are normally aged between 7 and 8 years at audition. To be accepted, boys must be able to demonstrate the following:

- Language skills (including reading) appropriate to their age;
- A pleasant vocal tone;
- Ability to reproduce vocal patterns in tune within their range;
- Better-than-average vocal range for their age;
- Rhythmic competence appropriate to their age; and
- The ability to concentrate and cooperate in a music learning situation.

Given that specialist vocal rehabilitation is largely beyond the scope of the Institute's activities and resources, staff will also give due consideration to any pre-existing vocal pathologies that may be apparent in audition candidates.

All due diligence will be undertaken to preserve the vocal health of singers, and medical consultation will be strongly recommended in the unlikely event a member of the Institute's training programs should develop vocal difficulties.

In the early stages of training, priority will be placed on the individual's enjoyment of and growing commitment to singing. Boys will not be considered to be members of the ABCI until they have satisfactorily completed a probationary period, usually lasting two terms. Boys are admitted formally to the Institute first as "Tyros" following successful completion of their probationary period.

It is fundamental to the program that each boy be encouraged to progress at his own rate. Four training levels or stages of development called ranks are defined, and boys must qualify for the appropriate rank before moving from one group to the next.

The four ranks after Probationer are: Tyro, Junior Singer, Senior Singer and Chorister. These groups may be further sub-divided or rehearse in conjunction with one another as required.

Boys receive basic training in the areas of:

- Musical literacy and aural skills;
- Repertoire; and
- Vocal technique.

The development of rehearsal and performing skills, self-reliance and leadership are also addressed within the overall program.

Social competence, self-discipline and attendance record will also be taken into consideration in decisions about promotion.

Attendance at all rehearsals is a basic requirement of the training program. Punctuality and application are also required. Failure to demonstrate on-going progress or satisfactory commitment will result in a boy's exclusion from the Institute.

The annual Music Summer School held in January and intensive Weekend Workshops held twice each year are a necessary part of the program, as are such occasional additional training sessions as may be called from time to time.

Movement of a qualified individual from one group to another will be arranged at a time negotiated between music staff. When the decision has been made the Office will be notified by the Teacher-in-Charge of the group from which the boy is to be transferred.

Administrative staff will notify families of the starting date for a boy's new rehearsal group, as well as any other necessary details concerning the transfer. Promotions are recognised by the conferring of badges and/or certificates at Installations Ceremonies (held twice each year).

Acceptance into the top rehearsal group of boys (the Australian Boys Choir “Performing Squad”) will be dependent upon a place being available.

Staff are responsible to the Artistic Director for all musical matters and for the educational progress and discipline of boys under their care. Normally one Teacher-in-Charge will exercise responsibility for the progress of each group and may be assisted by other staff.

The ABCI cannot take responsibility for the social, moral or physical development of its members, but staff will monitor these aspects and consult with parents where appropriate if individuals appear to be encountering considerable challenges.

Music staff, through the Artistic Director, will provide families of boys in training with progress reports at least twice each calendar year. This may be in writing, or at a pre-arranged Parent-Teacher interview.

Further rehearsal groups cater for young men whose voices have changed. Membership of the Kelly Gang is open to Choristers whose voices have successfully negotiated their voice-change. Membership of The Vocal Consort is by audition, and is open to young men with mature, cultivated voices.

The Institute currently also facilitates a group for young men who have not achieved the rank of Chorister (the “Cambiata” training group). Members of this group have elected to continue singing through their voice-change, receiving guidance with this challenging aspect, and continuing their work on the Institute’s skill syllabus. Although places may be limited, Cambiata singers may audition for membership of the Kelly Gang or The Vocal Consort upon completion of the Institute’s training requirements

The educational activities of the Institute are supportive of and subsidiary to the performance activities of the Institute's performing groups.

Regular review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.

Document History

| Version | Date | Adopted |
|---------|-------------|-----------------|
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Responsibility: Artistic Director