



# Singapore Symphony Children's Choir Handbook 2019



*SSCC at the ASEAN Summit Gala Dinner, with Canada's PM Justin Trudeau, Suntec City Convention Centre, 14 Nov '18*



*SSCC performing with The King's Singers, Victoria Concert Hall, 24 Feb '18*

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## ABOUT THE SSCC



Formed in 2006, the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir (SSCC) has established itself as the leading children's choir in Singapore. It seeks to enrich the lives of our nation's young people through a holistic choral training programme that encourages personal and artistic growth.

The SSCC offers training and performance opportunities to children between the ages of 9 and 16. With instruction to develop vocal technique, music literacy and musicianship, the choir is committed to nurturing young talents and helping them achieve their musical potential. The experience of choral singing at a high level with the SSCC requires discipline and teamwork, which in turn fosters the building of confidence, self-esteem, and the development of important life skills. As part of the choral arm of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), the SSCC offers the unique experience of performing with the SSO in orchestral works that require children's voices.

The SSCC is proud to have Mr Christopher Ho and Mrs Rosy Ho as its Principal Champion.

### **Vision**

The Singapore Symphony Children's Choir is to be an inspiring and artistically-excellent choral programme for young people, esteemed both in Singapore and internationally.

### **Mission**

The Singapore Symphony Children's Choir seeks to enrich the musical and artistic growth of our nation's young people, and nurture a lifelong love for singing and classical music, thereby building a vibrant choral community for Singapore. We develop the talents of the nation's promising young singers, giving them the opportunity to perform with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

### **Desired Outcomes**

Each person who goes through the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir programme will emerge a disciplined and confident person who possesses good vocal technique and musicianship, and enjoys classical music. He / She is able to express himself or herself artistically, emotionally and socially in a disciplined and responsible manner.

## TEACHING STAFF



### Choirmaster – Wong Lai Foon

As a founder-conductor of the Singapore Symphony Children’s Choir (SSCC), Wong Lai Foon has dedicated the past twelve years towards building up the ensemble to become the leading children’s choir in the nation. Under her direction, the SSCC has garnered much praise for its impressive choral tone, and its musically precise and polished performances, earning it the commendation of “one of the best children’s choirs in Asia” in a recent review.

As a choral educator, Ms Wong aspires to inspire a generation of young choral singers to embrace the choral art and strive for musical and artistic excellence. As Choirmaster, she spearheaded the expansion of the SSCC, which now comprises a Concert Choir, Training Choir, three preparatory choirs, a Boys’ Ensemble, and a Youth Choir. Under her leadership, the SSCC enjoys a busy performing schedule, including performances with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

### Musicianship & Choral Instructor – Low Xu Hao



Low Xu Hao is a graduate of the University of Miami, Frost School of Music. He earned his Master of Music (Choral Conducting) under the direction of Dr Joshua Habermann and was awarded full graduate scholarships. He studied musicianship and pedagogy with Mrs Ersébet Hegyi and Mrs Judit Hartyányi from the Liszt Academy of Music, and Mr David Xiques from the San Francisco State University. Xu Hao has garnered multiple gold awards, and adjudicated in both local and international choral competitions.

### Choral Instructor - Phua Ee Kia

Phua Ee Kia was the recipient of the Singapore Ministry of Education Overseas Specialist Award and graduated with a First-Class Honours Degree in Music from the University of Birmingham, UK, in 2004. He studied voice with countertenor Nicholas Clapton, Professor of Singing at the Royal Academy of Music, London. Phua currently serves on the Artist-Mentor Scheme, an initiative helmed by the Singapore Teachers’ Academy for the Arts and supported by the National Arts Council that engages outstanding practitioners to develop MOE teachers’ competencies in specialised areas such as music.



# CHOIR STRUCTURE

The SSCC comprises six audition-based ensembles housed under a Training Wing, and a Performance Wing. The progressive training programme is centred around the development of good vocal technique, sight-singing skills, and musicianship.

## Developmental path through the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir

The typical progression for an SSCC member:

Preparatory Choir 1 (PC1) → Preparatory Choir 2 (PC2) → Training Choir (TC) →  
Concert Choir → Singapore Symphony Youth Choir → Singapore Symphony Chorus

The expected time taken to complete the training phase, is a maximum period of 3 years.

## Training Wing

Preparatory Choir 1A (Saturday, 1000 – 1230hrs)

Preparatory Choir 1B (Saturday, 1230 – 1500hrs)

The first level of the training programme introduces children to the fundamentals of vocal technique, such as breathing, posture, phonation and diction, together with basic sight-singing and ear-training.

Preparatory Choir 2 (Saturday, 1000 – 1230hrs)

The second level progressively builds upon the skills introduced in Preparatory Choir 1, preparing children for eventual admission to the Performance Wing of the SSCC training programme.

Training Choir (Saturday, 1230 – 1500hrs)

This ensemble gives choristers a foretaste of the demands of the Concert Choir, with the introduction of more challenging repertoire. By this level, singers are expected to be fairly confident as individual singers who can contribute towards creating a healthy choral tone. Musicianship and sight-singing skills are further developed.

## Performance Wing

Concert Choir (Saturday, 1500 – 1800hrs)

The treble choir is a highly disciplined and demanding one, providing exciting musical opportunities for members. It is the main performing ensemble and the only children's choir with the exclusive opportunity to perform with the SSO.

Youth Choir (Monday, 1930 – 2200hrs)

A mixed choir that provides an opportunity for mature members of the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir (SSCC) to continue their development in classical choral singing, as well as for young adults to further their interest in choral singing. The SSYC is an extension of the SSCC, serving as a bridge between the SSCC and the Singapore Symphony Chorus (SSC).

## **Boys' Ensemble**

(Saturday, 1500 – 1630hrs)

A specialised vocal training programme which caters to boys with changing voices. Most choristers in this ensemble have been a part of the SSCC for some time. Each voice changes differently and we train our young men through this process, learning to use their new instruments. Members in the BE will be assigned to a singing ensemble (either CC or YC), to allow them continued use their instrument.

## **Musicianship**

The SSCC is committed to helping each child be the best they can be. This includes their development as a chorister and we do so through stretching their musical abilities in our ear training and musicianship classes. In these sessions, your child will develop the ability to sight-read music off a score, gain confidence as a performer, as well as communicate effectively through singing as a medium of expression. Musicianship is conducted as part of the curriculum in the training wing.

## **Annual Assessments and Midyear Promotions**

Assessments are necessary for us to evaluate each members' individual growth in the SSCC programme, in terms of vocal ability and musicianship. To ensure a high level of excellence and to uphold musical standards, members are assessed throughout the year, with progress reports developed to each child, and issued at the end of the year.

Promotion to the next level may also take place in the middle of the year, at the recommendation of the choirmaster.

# MEMBER EXPECTATIONS AND COMMITMENT

Membership in the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir is a commitment to faithful, consistent and punctual attendance. This demonstration of professionalism is fostered from the earliest stages of the training programme, and it is expected that rehearsals and performances take a very high priority in each child's life. Every member plays an important role in the success of their choir and consistent rehearsal attendance is essential to the success of both the individual member and the organisation.

## Performances

SSCC members are expected to perform at all scheduled projects and performances. It is vital that members are present for concert programmes that stretch across multiple performances. Absence for any 1 performance, will result in exclusion for that entire programme.

SSCC reserves the right to exclude members who are not adequately prepared from performing in the next scheduled concert. Behaviour and attendance will also be taken into account.

If a mandatory school conflict occurs, the absence must be discussed in advance with your choirmaster and chorus administration as soon as the singer receives the school concert/activity date.

Commitment to the organisation is on a long term basis; for developmental purposes, it is important that members participate in all concerts and rehearsals. Any member missing 2 consecutive concerts will be removed from the SSCC programme and will need to re-audition to re-join the organisation.

## Attendance

### (I) Punctuality

Members should endeavour to arrive 10 minutes before the start of all rehearsals and activities to ensure sufficient mental preparation for the rehearsal.

### (II) Apologies & Absences

We recognise there will be circumstances beyond your control that necessitate absence from a choir rehearsal, such as illness, family tragedy or school organised activities. In these exceptional events, please let the chorus administration know at the earliest opportunity via email to [choral@sso.org.sg](mailto:choral@sso.org.sg) or in case of illness, via SMS to the choral mobile number

Absences for any reason other than illness, family tragedy or conflict with a school organised activities will be considered on an individual basis in consultation with the choirmaster and choral management.

Classes missed without apologies will be regarded as absences without notice. Members with 3 or more absences without notice, or attendance that does not demonstrate commitment to the SSCC programme, may be excluded from rehearsals and concerts.

### **(III) Makeup Classes or Replacement Classes**

Due to the nature of the rehearsal schedule, we are unable to provide any replacement or makeup lessons for classes missed.

### **(IV) Attendance Requirements**

Rehearsal schedules are subject to change. The SSCC reserves the right to add and cancel rehearsals as necessary.

To be eligible to perform in a concert, a minimum of **80%** attendance at rehearsals is required. This percentage excludes the attendance for compulsory rehearsals. Attendance is compulsory at ALL rehearsals in the 2 weeks (or otherwise notified by the SSCC's teaching staff) leading up to a performance, especially dress and tutti rehearsals, and concert day warm-ups.

### **(V) Dress and Tutti Rehearsals**

All scheduled dress and tutti rehearsals are mandatory. An absence from a tutti (or final) rehearsal before a performance in most cases will result in the singer being excluded from that concert. If a final rehearsal has to be missed, singers should be in touch with the choirmaster and not arrive at the concert expecting to sing.

Any deviation from this policy is considered on an individual basis in consultation with the choirmaster.

### **(VI) Concert Day Warm-ups**

Concert day warm ups are generally scheduled 2-3 hours before a performance. Attendance to these warm ups are compulsory. Members who do not attend or who are late to warm-ups may be excluded from the performance.

Any deviation from this policy is considered on an individual basis in consultation with the choirmaster.

## **Conduct & Disciplinary Action**

As a representative of the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir, it is expected that every child's behaviour will be a positive reflection of our organisation.

To maintain a conducive learning environment for all, parents should ensure that their children are well behaved during rehearsal sessions and performances. Members who behave in a disruptive manner or display a lack of interest and/or an attitude problem may be dropped from future rehearsals and performances. If a member persists with such disruptive behaviour despite repeated warnings, he/she may be asked to leave the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir, in which case no refund will be made of any fees paid.

Minor misbehaviours may be described as below:

- Refusal to do class work or follow choirmaster/ teaching staff's instructions
- Causing disruption during lessons (i.e. making noise, wandering around the classroom without permission)
- Disrespectfulness and rudeness to the choral teaching staff and/or fellow members

The following disciplinary measures will be administered within the SSCC's classrooms:

1<sup>st</sup> offence – A direct verbal warning will be issued to the child in class

2<sup>nd</sup> offence – Second direct warning to child in class

3<sup>rd</sup> offence – Referred to choirmasters, choral management will be in touch with parents

4<sup>th</sup> offence – Parents notified, re-evaluation of child's suitability for SSCC's training programme in which case either a suspension or expulsion will be considered.

In cases of serious misbehaviour i.e. verbal or physical assault and harassment, and, destruction of property, the choirmasters and choral management will be immediately informed, and, parents notified of possible suspension or expulsion.

### **Provisional/Probation Enrolments**

Members who have been accepted into the SSCC's training programme, or have progressed onto the next training phase, on provisional/probationary terms, will be closely monitored over the next term after which an assessment will be made with regard to their suitability to continue in the SSCC training programme. Trainees who do not show sufficient improvement, and/or are still found to be lacking in the desired attributes, may be asked to sit out of performances, or be asked to leave the programme.

# ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

## Update of Personal Particulars

Changes in personal particulars especially mailing addresses, contact numbers and emails must be notified to the SSCC's administrative team so as to ensure prompt and effective communication.

## Declaration of Learning Difficulties and Medical Conditions

It is imperative to be upfront with the SSCC's administrative team, on your child's learning difficulties and/or previous and existing medical conditions. This information will help the SSCC team prepare, and assist your child effectively, should the need arise.

## Leave of Absences

### (I) Application

LOA requests, short-term or extended, must be submitted in writing to the choral management for approval. In the event that you have to be absent from rehearsals, please submit your leave application with relevant supporting documents as soon as possible. Your application should reach choral management at least 10 days in advance. Where you are required to send in substantiating documents, do ensure that the attachments are in a Windows readable format e.g. PDF, jpg and word doc.

Members sitting for major national examinations (eg PSLE, 'O' & 'A' levels, IB) are allowed to apply for a study leave, for a maximum period of 4 weeks. Extended leave of absence, beyond 4 weeks, will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

### (II) Return from Leave

Returning members from extended leave (9 months or more) will be subject to re-auditions and should notify choral management approximately two weeks prior to returning to the choir, so that records can be updated and music made available.

## Withdrawal & Termination

### (I) Voluntary

- Missing rehearsals more than 5 times without notice

Members will be considered voluntarily withdrawn if he/she misses lessons more than 5 times without prior written notice.

- Personal / Health Reasons

Any member who wishes to withdraw from the choir must submit a written withdrawal notice with a minimum of a full term's notice. This notice of withdrawal should include a reason for departure and the date from which the withdrawal is to be effective, and will be used administratively.

If prior written notice is not submitted, members will be liable to pay for the next academic semester or year's full semester's fees, even if they are no longer continuing with the SSCC.

**Non-Voluntary (i.e. Termination)**

Singapore Symphony Children's Choir reserves the right to dismiss any student due to prolonged absences with/without valid reason, disciplinary reasons, overdue tuition payments or parental non-compliances with the SSCC's members' policies.

Withdrawn/terminated members who wish to re-join SSCC will be subject to a reaudition.

In all cases of voluntary and non-voluntary withdrawal and termination, there will be no pro-ration or refund of fees (partial or entire).

Fee refunds for personal / health reasons, within reason and sufficient documentation, will be at the discretion of management.

# UNIFORM AND PERFORMANCE ATTIRES

## Weekly Attire

- SSCC T-shirt
- SSCC lanyard and photo pass

## Training Wing (PC1, PC2, TC) Performance Attire / Concert Choir (CC) Informal Attire

- SSCC T-shirt
- Plain dark blue or black denim jeans
- Plain patent black flats (Girls)
- Plain patent black shoes and black socks (Boys)



From L-R: Oh Chin Aik (SSCC member from Jan '14- Jun '18, currently in SSYC).  
Giselle Lim (member since Jan '16)

## Concert Choir Formal Attire

### Girls

- Red dresses - dresses to be hemmed and adjusted to 2 inches below the knee
- Long hair to be tied up in a bun (ballet exam standard)
- Light makeup to be put on
- Plain black shoes

### Boys

- White shirt
- Black long pants
- Red cummerbund and bow tie
- Black socks
- Plain patent black shoes



*From L-R: Caleb Yeo (SSCC member from Jan '17- Jun '18, currently in BE / SSSC).  
Chloe Ong (SSCC member since Jan '14, also in SSSC)*

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Singapore Symphony Children's Choir is a non-profit organisation and relies on grants from the National Arts Council, generous donations, performance income and member participation fees.

Ensembles	Fee (w/o gst)	Fee (w gst)
Preparatory Choir	S\$1600.00	S\$1712.00
Training Choir	S\$1850.00	S\$1979.50
Concert Choir	S\$2400.00	S\$2568.00
Boys' Ensemble	S\$1200.00	S\$1284.00

These additional administrative fees are included for all new members:

<b>One time registration fee</b>	S\$85.00
<b>Starter Sack and Music</b> Including general administrative fee, all SSCC materials and music printing	S\$100.00

Membership to the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir is a year-long placement with fees thus payable in advance for the entire year. Parents may have the option of breaking up the payment in two.

Programme fees paid are non-refundable. If a member withdraws or is terminated from the SSCC programme at any time during the season, fees will not be refunded.

An administrative fee of S\$50.00 will be imposed for late payments as other administration duties may have to be carried out. SSCC reserves the right to terminate a member's enrolment should the term fees remain outstanding for more than 6 weeks after the due date.

### Bursaries / Financial Aid

Bursaries are awarded at the start of each year and cover all or partial cost of semester fees. Please note that bursaries do not cover administrative fees.

To be considered for a bursary, children must be accepted into the Singapore Symphony Children's Choir, and demonstrate that they are recipients of the Ministry of Education Financial Assistance Scheme (MOE FAS), to order to receive aid to attend the choir.

### Friends of SSO Membership

All new participants of the SSCC will receive an honorary Friends of SSO membership (FSSO) that will last for a year. Thereafter, the FSSO membership will be annually renewable at the member's own discretion –the standing rate of membership fee applies. For further reference, please refer to [www.sso.org.sg/friends](http://www.sso.org.sg/friends) or contact [friends@sso.org.sg](mailto:friends@sso.org.sg) for queries relating to the Friends of SSO membership programme.



*SSCC in Puccini's La Boheme, with the SSO, 27 Apr '18*

## COMMUNICATION

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## SOCIAL MEDIA



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