

MidSouth Music Institute, Inc.



2025-2026 Season Guidebook

Organizational Structure

The MidSouth Music Institute, Inc. (MMI) is a non-profit organization under Internal Revenue code section 501(c)(3). MMI is recognized as a choral arts education venue of equal opportunity for young people and is eligible to apply for grants and seek and accept donations in return for tax credit. This status assists the choir with growth and reaching full potential. Volunteer hours are deeply appreciated, a requested component of grant proposals, and extremely important to the success of the program.

MMI is governed by a Board of Directors. The organization also has an outstanding Teacher Advisory Council. The Executive Director oversees day-to-day operations, and artistic aspects are overseen by the Artistic Directors and conductors. Biographies, contact information, Board of Directors members, and Teacher Advisory Board members can also be viewed at

www.CoroRio.org.

ARTISTIC STAFF

J. Reese Norris & Joelle Norris: Founders

Terrell Hall: Artistic Director (adcororio@gmail.com)

Kathine Gaines, Amy Touchstone, Allen Sanders, Dr. Libby Hearn, Terrell Hall, Keely Kelso,

Dr. Saundra Bishop, Katie Brown: Conductors/Instructors

Jennifer Rushton, Dr. Saundra Bishop, Andrew Wasylina: Accompanists

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Amy Touchstone: Executive Director (cororio@gmail.com)

Emily Nichols: Operations Manager (midsouthmusicinstitute@gmail.com)

Dr. Saundra Bishop: Oxford Operations Assistant (cororio.oxford@gmail.com)

Kathrine Gaines: Development Manager (cororio.dm@gmail.com)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jim Brown, Rick Kelly, Alton Wilderness, Lisa Brown, Jennifer Rushton,

Tonya Orman, Emily Nichols, Lawson Culver, Bobby Rowland

Program Overview

The MidSouth Music Institute, Inc. is the umbrella organization under which CoroRio operates. CoroRio is an educationally based choral ensemble program. Participants learn healthy vocal technique, sight-reading, and music theory while experiencing performance excellence. The learning environment is creative, explorative, and fun. The students form lasting relationships with others outside of their community and develop a lifelong appreciation of music.

Auditions

Auditions for CoroRio can be scheduled by emailing the Artistic Director, Terrell Hall, at adcororio@gmail.com. Auditions for singers are held in the fall and spring of each year. Auditions may also be scheduled throughout the season by special request.

Membership

Singers are invited to participate in a choir based on the skills demonstrated in the audition. Students grades 1 – 4 are able to join CoroNino without an audition. Students in grades 5-12 are invited to audition for other age appropriate groups. Students in grades 2-12 interested in participating in the Oxford satellite choirs of CoroRio may register prior to an audition and will be placed in one of two Oxford based choirs based on skills demonstrated in the audition. MMI welcomes young people of all races, backgrounds, and abilities to be a part of the program. Tuition assistance is available for those demonstrating financial need.

It is expected that members of MMI understand the meaning of commitment and responsibility in a choral setting. Each child and parent should consider membership in the choir as an honor. Dedication to the program will enhance the singer and their family's personal experience and will foster a strong foundation of responsibility for the singer.

Membership in CoroRio is for one full season - August through May. Each singer is expected to remain active and committed for the entire season. Tuition is to be paid in full even when a child is unable to fulfill their commitment and resigns mid-season. As a non-profit organization, budgets and calendars are planned for and based closely on student registration. If changes to a tuition plan need to be made, please send written communication to Amy Touchstone at cororio@gmail.com in order to discuss options.

Resignation

We expect each singer who has made a commitment to sing for the entire season to live up to that commitment. However, if an unusual situation arises which would make it impossible for the singer to honor that commitment; a letter of resignation is requested documenting the reason for discontinuing participation in the program. **If a student resigns, the parent is still responsible for all fees.**

Registration, Tuition, Activity Fee

- Membership fees are based on one-year involvement in the Midsouth Music Institute, Inc. *Tuition does not include the cost of optional festivals and tours.*
- Registration is through Active Network. Tuition can be paid in monthly installments or in one annual payment.
 - A registration fee for all members will be due in addition to tuition. This will cover the cost of sheet music, uniforms, CoroRio annual t-shirt, classroom supplies, concert expenses (venue rental, instrumentalists, programs, etc.) and other incidental expenses.

2025-2026 Financial Assistance Requests for Tuition

The CoroRio vision is to transform the lives of children from ALL ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds by giving them the skills, self-discipline, and confidence to succeed in music and in life. In an effort to better align ourselves with that vision, combined with the financial burden we know many families are currently facing, we have instituted a need-based financial assistance program. *It is the desire of the MMI Board of Directors that every student who desires membership in CoroRio be able to participate, regardless of their family's financial means.* We are asking each family to carefully consider their resources and complete a Financial Assistance Request form indicating a suggested monthly tuition payment that is an honest reflection of their ability to contribute to the organization and the music education of their child. We have faith that our community will rally around this effort to nurture all our young people through the gift of music, not just those whose families can afford it.

Forms will be available on our website at cororio.org/financial-assistance-requests/ beginning August 1, 2025 and can be returned to Amy Touchstone at cororio@gmail.com beginning the same day. Forms will initially be evaluated by the Board of Directors no later than August 10, 2025 so that financial aid can be distributed in the form of coupon codes for registration prior to the first rehearsal on August 14, 2025. Personal information on the forms will be kept confidential and the Executive Director will notify the families of any assistance decisions made by the Board and distribute coupon codes.

The Board will continue to accept and review financial assistance forms at quarterly board meetings, and make financial assistance awards as funding is available. To have a financial assistance form considered at a quarterly board meeting, please submit to cororio@gmail.com by August 21, 2025, November 6, 2025, or February 26, 2026.

Ways you can help further the mission of the MidSouth Music Institute!

- Select MMI Donation on Active Network as you register your child for their annual tuition (\$10/month)
- Volunteer your time and talents with a MMI Event; see Emily Nichols for details on needs for both student and parent volunteers - midsouthmusicinstitute@gmail.com
- Sell an ad(s) for our annual program book (see below for how this benefits both you and MMI)

- Tell local businesses you frequent or have a relationship with about the mission of the MidSouth Music Institute and invite them to partner with us by being a seasonal or event sponsor - cororio@gmail.com
- Invite people to our events to help spread awareness about the organization in the community
- Share our posts on social media

Program Continuance Policy

In the event classes are unable to physically meet for ANY reason (i.e. closure due to governmental mandate, severe weather, etc.), classes will temporarily move to online meetings via Zoom or other specified video conferencing platform. No make-up, discount, nor refund will be given as long as the class meets at the originally specified time. Class cancellations, reschedules, and/or online access instructions will be emailed, sent via Band, and posted on our social media pages (Facebook and Instagram). We will not be able to call each student/family individually.

Weather Policy

MMI will follow the DeSoto County School Board (and/or other school boards local to the satellite choir) decisions on closings due to weather unless there has been a substantial change in the weather subsequent to the school announcement.

Program Advertising (Referral Credit Opportunity)

MMI produces a program book which is distributed at concerts throughout the season. The book will contain information about the organization, choir, photographs, a list of contributors, advertisements sold by the singers and other interesting items. *The following referral credits will be applied to a singer's Active Network account for any businesses that purchases an ad and lists the singer as their referral contact: ¼ page: \$25, ½ page: \$50, Full Page: \$75*

Uniforms

It is as important to the team effort to appear professional and artistic as it is to sound professional and artistic. Upon arrival at a concert venue, all singers should be clean and well groomed. Jewelry, earrings (except earring studs) and other accessories will not be permitted. If a singer is not in designated concert attire, they will not be allowed to perform in the concert. Please refrain from wearing perfume or cologne because it can potentially cause allergic reactions in other singers.

Each student will receive a CoroRio t-shirt and scarf/tie as part of their uniform. T-shirts will be given at either the beginning of the year or in the spring semester (determined by concert calendar) and are to be kept by the student. A scarf/tie will be provided at each concert and should be returned at each concert. If lost, replacements will be available at a cost of \$10 for scarves/ties and \$15 for t-shirts.

Performance Dress Code:

- Black dress shoes
- Black dress socks/hose
- Solid black dress pants that meet the shoe

- Solid black 3/4 or long sleeve dress shirt
- Designated scarf / tie

Commitment to School Music Programs

CoroRio is grateful to and reliant upon the support of the dedicated music teachers in the mid south area. Therefore, we strongly encourage that each of our singers be leaders of their school choirs. Exceptions may be considered in circumstances such as when the school music program requires that students choose between instrumental ensembles and choir or when the singer's advanced education schedules do not allow time for participation, therefore leaving CoroRio as the only alternative for choral study.

Attendance Policies

It is an honor to be a member of one of the choirs of CoroRio. Each singer (and their parent) is expected to demonstrate commitment by being punctual and consistently attending all rehearsals and performances. Each child is independently important to the success of the program. Just as with any other team effort, the success of the choir is reliant on the attendance of all of its members. Therefore, the child and family should make participation a priority in the child's life and schedule. We understand that there will be unavoidable conflicts from time to time, so please consult school calendars, sports calendars, and family calendars early in the year to avoid as many as possible.

In an effort to make our attendance expectations consistent among all members, we will adhere to the following attendance policy:

1. Any conflicts that the student has with rehearsal dates should be communicated in writing as soon as possible, preferably at least one (1) week prior to the missed rehearsal. Whether or not the submitted absence will be "excused" is left to the discretion of the ensemble director.
2. Students will be granted up to a maximum of two (2) "excused" absences per semester. Beyond those two "excused" absences, the singer will have to pass off his/her music for their directors in order to be eligible to perform at the concert at any scheduled concerts during the semester.
3. Singers with more than one (1) "unexcused" absence per semester may be dismissed from the program, pending a review and conference with the ensemble director and the executive director. If a student is dismissed from the program, tuition will not be refunded.
4. Each singer should make attending weekly rehearsals a priority. The CoroRio calendar provides dates months in advance. Because of this, CoroRio singers should make every effort to respect the policy: ***"if CoroRio is first on the calendar, CoroRio is first priority."***

School Related Absences

CoroRio members are expected to treat school choral and/or instrumental performances as a priority over a CoroRio performance unless otherwise negotiated between a CoroRio conductor and the school director. School performances are identified as performances for which a grade in school will be given (orchestra, band, choir concert); not an extracurricular activity (school plays, musicals etc.).

Dress Rehearsals and Performances

All dress rehearsals and performances are mandatory. An absence for any reason from a final rehearsal may result in the singer being excluded from the following concert and is up to the discretion of the conductor. Punctuality is imperative, especially on concert days. Students arriving after concert doors open will not perform.

Singer Procedures

The following policies will be enforced for the children's safety and in order to achieve productive, professional quality rehearsals out of respect for each other.

1. Arrive no more than 10 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time and immediately check in with the Operations Manager. Late arrivals should always check in before taking their seat.
2. Do not roam the building or campus at any time. Students should check in and go directly to the rehearsal area.
3. Do not bring food or drinks into the rehearsal area. A tightly sealed water bottle containing water will be permitted.
4. At all times, show respect for each other, parent volunteers, music and materials, and the facilities.
5. Pay attention to the conductor at all times and do not talk or in any way distract other singers. Cell phones are not permitted during rehearsal.
6. We are guests of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, and any other venue we rehearse/performance in. Please do not run, yell, or demonstrate any other disrespectful behavior.
7. Always bring your music, pencil, and any other hand-outs given by the director for the singer's use.
8. Folders and music are the singers' responsibility. If folders and music are lost or irreparably damaged, the student will be responsible for the replacement costs of the music.
9. If a singer is unable to actively participate in the rehearsal, s/he should still bring all necessary materials and observe quietly. It will benefit the singer to quietly listen when experiencing a minor illness rather than stay home and miss rehearsal completely. Additionally, research has proven those who sing through colds and minor illnesses encounter shorter, less-severe symptoms.

Disruptive Behavior

Removal from a rehearsal will result in a requisite meeting with the choir's conductor immediately following the rehearsal which may involve, at the conductor's discretion, the student's parents, and/or the Artistic/Executive Directors. Severe or repeat offenses will result in a leave of absence from the program, the length to be determined on an individual basis. It may also result in removal from the program.

Any singer caught with alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, drug paraphernalia, or any type of weapon

(including pocket knives) will be immediately suspended from the program.

Every singer is entitled to participate in CoroRio free from harassment, threats or fear. Singers harassing, threatening or making it difficult for others to participate will be subject to consequences through their choir director and the CoroRio staff.

Expectations of Parents

1. Parents are responsible for making sure they are receiving (and reading) organizational emails and messages via Band. We will use the email address you provide at registration for a majority of information. It is the parent's responsibility to join the appropriate Band (info listed at the bottom of all CoroRio emails.)
2. Parents are responsible for delivering their child safely to rehearsal. Please, do not leave your child unattended on the church campus. Additionally, parents are responsible for promptly picking up their singers.
3. Parents, please respect that rehearsals take place in a professional, artistic, and learning environment. Noise in the hallways by groups of adults or young children can be very disruptive to rehearsals and to church professionals in nearby offices.
4. Parents, teachers, and anyone else interested are always welcome to observe rehearsals. Please remember that it is imperative that the choir's surroundings be quiet so that the singers can concentrate. If disturbances occur, the director reserves the right to close that and subsequent rehearsals.
5. Final dress rehearsal and pre-performance rehearsals will always be closed to the audience, including families. This will enable the singers to concentrate on the music, the director, and any final instructions void of any possible distraction.
6. Performance halls will remain closed to all audience members, including parents, until 30 minutes prior to a scheduled concert.
7. For their safety, be sure your child knows who is picking them up from rehearsal. Children are asked to let the Operations Manager know if someone shows up that they were not expecting.

Cell Phones

All cell phones must be turned off prior to entering the rehearsal space. There will be no texting, photography or playing with phones during rehearsal. A singer observed using a phone during rehearsal may be dismissed from the rehearsal.

Development

As a non-profit organization, MMI is always looking for potential funding sources. Please contact the Executive Director or Development Manager to share any information.

Tour Policy

Tours are very important to MMI. They establish lasting friendships in a way that no other choir function can provide. Tours also assist the program with national and international recognition and networking. Singers are highly encouraged to participate in any tour scheduled for their choir. Currently, performance tours are offered annually to CoroRio,

CoroArroyo, and CoroFuente. Additional opportunities will be opened to members of CoroCorriente when accompanied by an adult family member.

Public Relations

The MMI Board of Directors and staff work to promote the MidSouth Music Institute to build awareness of and participation in CoroRio. If you would like us to make sure a particular resource such as your community newspapers are on the list, please email the Executive Director with the appropriate information. All public contact must be coordinated by the MMI/CoroRio staff.

Privacy & Disclosure Statement

All official MMI information will be distributed through the MMI Office email, website, Facebook, Twitter, and through Active Network. Any other communication should not be trusted as accurate unless otherwise stated.

Email, Postal Addresses, Telephone Numbers

We won't trade, rent or sell any of these to other parties.

Emergency Medical Forms

Every MMI singer must have an up-to-date Medical Release Form on file in our office in case of an emergency. This information will remain confidential and only available to MMI staff and MMI chaperones in extenuating circumstances.