

The Duke Ellington School of the Arts

Show Choir

Director

Dr. Monique Holmes

Welcome!

Welcome to the Duke Ellington School of the Arts (DESA) Show Choir. Congratulations on your acceptance to one of the most elite high school performing groups in the nation.

This handbook has been prepared to help you understand the rules and responsibilities of being in the Show Choir. Please read this information carefully and keep it on hand for future reference. Each student is responsible for a thorough understanding of the contents of this handbook.

Any questions related to the Show Choir should be directed to Dr. Holmes, Director or the current President of the Parents and Friends Organization.

The Class

For students in the Vocal Department, Show Choir is a one credit course offered as part of the DESA Vocal Department. This is the only music department course offering multi-talented students the opportunity to develop all of their performing abilities. It is open to all students at Ellington, regardless of student's major or department.

The class meets five days a week throughout the year. It is in addition to your daily academic and arts schedule, which is governed by normal school policy, as rehearsals are held outside of the daily school class schedule. All absences must be pre-arranged with the Choir Director.

This class is reflected on the students' report card and it is graded based on participation during rehearsals and performances and attendance. **Rehearsals and performances are part of your grade if you are a vocal student.** If you come from another department and are not enrolled in the Show Choir class you will not receive a grade for Show Choir but you are expected to treat it as seriously as if it were a graded course. If for any reason a student is no longer a member of the Show Choir, the class must be officially dropped.

Leadership Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities to develop or strengthen your leadership skills as a Show Choir member.

Show Choir student officers may be nominated and elected at the beginning of each school year for the upcoming year. Those positions include:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Music Librarian
- Room Attendants

Section Leaders are appointed by the Director at the start of each school year. There are also Dance Captains appointed by the Director.

*Even if you are not an elected officer or an appointed leader, your position as a member of the Show Choir immediately sets you apart as a role model for your peers at Duke Ellington. *Keep this in mind at all times!*

General Guidelines

All members of the Show Choir are expected to reflect only their best qualities in their everyday contact with people in and out of school. Show Choir has a reputation of being an organization with members who are sincere in their interests in music, achieving academic excellence and in serving the community. The following suggestions are designed in aiding the student to achieve success in fulfilling this goal.

- Academic Excellence—All Show Choir members are expected to strive towards and maintain academic excellence (See section on Grades below). Any show choir on academic probation may be suspended from performing from Show Choir until improvement is attained. In addition, any student who is struggling to keep up with academics can receive tutoring and study time assistance through the Show Choir Academic Support Program.
- In Rehearsal - Be ready to perform and do everything to ensure an effective rehearsal. Listen to all instructions regardless of whether they pertain to you or your section at the moment. Rehearsals require cooperation on everyone's part. Please be on time, use breaks wisely, and no social talking.
- Cell phones are not allowed during rehearsal.
- Wardrobe/costumes must be clean at all times.
- In Concert - Be appropriately attired, on time for warm-up, and demonstrate a high degree of professionalism.
- When interacting with Officers of the Parents & Friends, Chaperones, the Business Manager, Vocal Coach and Guests it should be remembered that these people are acting on behalf of the Director. They should receive the same respect and cooperation, as you would give the Director.
- Respect yourself and each other. Respect other performers during shared performances.
- Every performance is important. Remember that each time we sing, it may be the first time a particular audience has heard our program—and it could lead to others. Each concert should be as if it were the one and only.
- Stand tall, be excited, involved, intense, and SMILE! BE AN ARTIST!
- **You are the “Best of the Best” and are expected to act as such.**

Attendance & Participation

The Show Choir is by far one of the most active groups at Duke Ellington School of the Arts. The Choir not only performs within the local metropolitan area but travels on a fairly regular basis to out of town venues. As a member of the Show Choir, you will be expected to participate in all performances throughout the year.

You will be informed well in advance of all upcoming performances; however, there are times when we might not know specific details until closer to the performance date. The majority of communications involving performances, meetings, and schedule changes occur through email to parents, and text messages to the students. It is understood that there will be some occasions where scheduling conflicts may arise. Conflicts will be worked out on an individual basis between the Director and the Show Choir member's parent/guardian.

The success of the DESA Show Choir lies heavily on the dedication and commitment of each selected member. It is essential that you attend all rehearsals and performances. It is also important that all members are prompt and prepared to learn.

Students are expected to fully participate in all rehearsals. **Quality participation includes listening attentively, being on time, following directions,** being supportive of others efforts, and using appropriate singing techniques to the best of your ability at all times.

Every member is an important part of the organization. If just one person is missing, the group is not the same. An individual's success or failure is the group's success or failure. Be responsible and take pride in your contribution!

Please remember that if you are going to be absent from a rehearsal or performance, it is YOUR responsibility to notify Dr. Holmes and the Show Choir Student President to receive Dr. Holmes' approval for this absence. Failure to do so will jeopardize your participation in Show Choir events.

Grades

Show Choir members are student artists and are expected to demonstrate excellence across the board. Support and assistance are available to students through a variety of avenues - teachers, counselors, Parents & Friends of the Show Choir. It is the student's responsibility to get help as soon as possible in order to maintain their grades.

Students should expect a mid-quarter review once progress reports are given. If a student is failing or unsatisfactory in a subject we will work on getting the student the help that is necessary to make sure they do not fail the term. Students must now get below a 2.7 GPA each quarter.

If a student receives a 2.6 or lower, they will sit out from performances for that quarter, but are still expected to come to rehearsal and do their homework on the side (so that they are not missing any new material).

If the student's grades are not brought up by the next grading period, they will be asked to leave the choir permanently.

Costumes & Accessories

The Show Choir has a wide range of costumes designed to support the choral repertoire. Students are responsible for the proper care (including regular dry cleaning) and storage of costumes. Students will be fitted for the following costumes:

Ladies Costumes

1. Black chiffon dress
2. Red Ruffled Shirt and black dance skirt
3. White and Gold dance dress
4. Blue turtleneck leotard and blue taffeta skirt
5. African Print Lapa

In addition to the costumes provided, ladies are

Men's Costumes

1. Black tux jacket
2. Black tux pants
3. White and black tux shirts
4. Black Pirate Shirt and Red Sash
5. Royal blue pants
6. African Sash and Headband

In addition to the costumes provided, gentlemen

required to have the following items to complete their wardrobe:

- Elbow length black satin gloves
- Black character dance shoes with no more than a 2" heel
- Black stockings and undergarments (carry extras!)
- Strapless black bra (recommended)
- Jeans & bright colored t-shirt
- White sneakers

are required to have the following items to complete their wardrobe:

- Black patent leather dress shoes
- Black dress socks
- Black belt
- Jeans & bright colored t-shirt
- White sneakers
- Black and Red Bow Tie
- Black and Red Cumberbund

No other jewelry or accessories are to be worn

Appearance & Decorum

Hair

Ladies are required to wear their hair in a bun. Hair should be pulled back tightly, using gel or a wig if necessary* and a bun sock or bun "tube". Have a scarf on hand to keep the hair neat.

Gentlemen's hair should be well groomed.

**No braids, dreds or locks are to be worn by gentlemen during performances. Ladies may wear braids but they must be micro braids and must be long enough to put into a neat bun.*

Attire

Ladies should have proper undergarments (black or flesh tone) and ensure that they are not visible under outfits. All ladies are required to have at least one black bra.

Gentlemen's tuxedo shirts should be cleaned and starched before every performance.

Decorum

At all times: while on travel, before and after performances, etc., remember that you are representing your school, your community, and Washington, DC, our nation's capital.

Make up

Ladies are required to wear full stage make up for all performances. This includes foundation, blush, eye shadow, fake eyelashes, powder and lipstick (lipstick should be a deep bright red):

- Stage lashes (they should not say "au naturale" on the box nor should they have colors, rhinestones or glitter attached to them)
- Liquid Foundation (cover girl's queen collection is good and inexpensive) thus MUST match their complexion.
- Pressed powder- must match their complexion
- Black liquid liner
- Black kohl eye pencil
- Black Radiance eye shadow set in bronze (color palate should work for all)
- Red blush
- Red lip pencil
- Revlon true red lipstick
- Brown contour

Gentlemen should wear foundation and eye pencil.

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE COULD JEOPARDIZE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN SHOW CHOIR EVENTS.

To Parents

The Show Choir is an extracurricular activity for students at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts and thus does not receive any financial support from the school. The participation of parents is therefore essential for the success of the Show Choir and your child's success as a Show Choir member.

We ask that all parents help in the following ways:

- Attend the monthly Parents & Friends meeting, which is held at 7:00 p.m. in Dr. Holmes' room on the 2nd floor (214).
- Support your child to attend every rehearsal whether these take place after school or on the weekends.
- Assist with your child getting to as many performances as possible.
- Volunteer to be on at least one of the Committees that make Show Choir function.
- Promote the Show Choir within your network of friends; colleagues and family by selling as many tickets as possible for Show Choir events that are open to the public.
- Find opportunities for Show Choir to be paid for performing.
- Fully integrate yourself into the Show Choir family willing to support other children and parents with whatever is needed.
- Contact the Director if you are concerned with any aspect of the program or your child's progress.

Committees

The following committees are leadership and volunteer opportunities for parents. We need everyone's participation to make the DESA Show Choir the best it can be.

Food Committee— Organize meals for the students and volunteers for official late evening rehearsals, and for performances; organizes the potluck dinners for meetings.

Concessions Committee—Organize sales of food, snacks, beverages, before and during performances.

Marketing and Fund Raising Committee - Organize all external outreach and marketing meetings; solicit support from foundations, corporations, and individuals; develop fundraising activities for parents and students.

Costumes and Accessories— organize costumes for all students; manage collection and distribution of all costumes as needed; maintain measurements for all students; organize sewing/purchasing of all new costumes.

Travel

The Show Choir at times travels a great deal. Travel consists of half to full day field trips to local venues within the National Capital area during the school day; evening and weekend trips; and long distance bus or air trips.

Specific information, guidelines and instructions will be discussed at the monthly Parents' Meeting or handed out prior to any major trips. Following are a list of things to keep in mind as a Show Choir member:

- All academic work missed should be made up as soon as possible. Making up work missed because of performances is one of the many responsibilities a student assumes when she or he joins the Show Choir.
- Whether traveling on a school bus, private charter or by car, all school rules apply.
- Downtime during rehearsals and on trips should be used productively by completing homework assignments.

Teacher Hospitality—Develop and organize monthly teacher appreciation activities.

Academic Support Program—Organize tutoring and studying activities for students who fall below a 2.0 GPA, have a D or less in a class, or parent requests assistance.

Website—Develop and maintain Show Choir’s website; with all performance information, explore ticket and gift sales; and create database of friends and donors.

Performance Support Committee— Organize all materials needed for performance including flyers, postcards, program and support reserved VIP reserved seating etc.

Show Choir Rewards Program— Organize special trainings to build skills that will help students perform better and succeed after they graduate; workshops to include dance, theater etiquette, how to write a resume and arranging for professional head shots for students

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- Your behavior is to reflect the values of the Ellington community and should always conform to the standards and rules of the DESA and the Show Choir.
- Be punctual! Be ready to go at the right time and place. This is a trait of a true professional. You can be left behind if you are late.
- Attire while traveling should always be neat, clean and presentable.
- It is essential that parents make appropriate drop-off and pick up arrangements for their Show Choir student. After performances, there may not be supervision available to wait with your student.

Parents & Friends of the Show Choir

The Parents & Friends of the Duke Ellington Show Choir is a non-profit, 501(c3) organization formed for the sole purpose of supporting the students, director and mission of the Show Choir. The non-profit status allows individuals and corporations to make tax-deductible gifts to the Show Choir.

All Show Choir parents are automatically members of this organization. Other members include parents of former members, school staff and administrators, and interested supporters.

This active parent support group assists the Show Choir with logistical and financial matters and helps to mentor and encourage students in their commitment to the Show Choir.

Meetings of the Parents & Friends of the Duke Ellington Show Choir are held every month. Elections for officers are held annually during the February monthly meeting.

Money Matters

Costume Fees

Students in Show Choir are asked to pay \$100.00 annually to cover all of the costumes that are issued to them.

Student Accounts/Travel Expenses

The Treasurer of the Parents & Friends maintains an accounting of funds within each student’s accounts. Funds accumulate through ticket sales, donations and direct

payments. Students may use these funds to defray any personal travel expenses involved with a long distance trip for performances.

The annual Winter and Spring Show Choir Concerts performed are perfect opportunities to raise funds for your student travel account. Be aggressive about selling tickets to friends, family, church members, neighbors, etc.

Please keep in mind that the student account is for travel expenses only. They are not to pay costume fees or any other non-travel related expenses. After graduation, all remaining travel funds will go to the Ellington Show Choir general fund.

Scholarships

The Show Choir offers scholarships to graduating Show Choir seniors to be used to assist with their college experience. The amount of the scholarship is determined by the years of active service in the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir. Scholarships are disbursed at the annual Cookout in the summer as say farewell to our seniors.

The requirements to be eligible for scholarships are as follows:

1. A cumulative GPA of 2.7 or greater
2. Evidence of full matriculation
3. Return of all of your Show Choir costumes and jewelry cleaned and properly stored in a cleaners bag.

NOTE: Failure to return costumes as stated above will result in the forfeiture of the student's scholarship.

The Show Choir Story

The highly acclaimed and national award winning Duke Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir has thrilled audiences throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe.

Organized in 1986 under the direction of Samuel L.E. Bonds, these student artists travel every day from neighborhoods covering the entire Washington Metropolitan area to attend Washington's premier arts-centered high school. They put in long days and extra time to be a part of the Show Choir with rehearsals everyday after school in addition to their academic and arts program. The quality of their performances reflects this hard work. The ensemble's incredible creativity and artistry effectively combines singing, acting, and dance in ways that virtually transform any performance space into a Broadway stage. The show choir is now under the direction of Dr. Monique Holmes.

A diverse repertoire, ranging from classical to jazz to gospel and a Motown review, coupled with an electrifying, professional stage presence has garnered the Choir invitations to perform at such impressive venues as the Carnegie Hall, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the White House, U.S. Government entities that include the Department of State, the US Trade and Development Agency, the Peace Corps, and sporting events that include the Washington D.C. Nationals and the World Figure Skating Championship to name a few.

In addition, the Choir has shared the stage with artists and performers such as Stevie Wonder, Patti LaBelle, Byron Cage, Vanessa Williams, Will Smith, Dave Brubeck, Cindy Crawford, Boyz II Men, Kenny Loggins, Anita Baker, Nancy Wilson and two of Ellington's most famous alumni: comedian and actor David Chappelle and mezzo-soprano opera star Denyce Graves.

The Show Choir is a professional performing experience that will bring great personal and professional value to any student that is willing to put in the considerable extra effort.

Show Choir Contract

Parents and students are asked to read the terms of this contract together, ensure a mutual understanding of its contents

Each student and parent/guardian must sign and return the contract to the Choir Director.

1. I, _____, have read and understand the responsibilities as outlined in this handbook for membership in the Duke Ellington School of the Arts Show Choir. I agree to do my part for the good of the entire program. I have also shared this handbook with my parents and they understand the program and my role in it.
2. I will maintain my academic grades as a priority. All work will be done on time and any work missed because of a Show Choir performance will be made up in a timely fashion. I will seek academic support as soon as needed.
3. I understand that musical and behavioral aspects of my participation with the Show Choir are both equally important and will be reflected in my class grade.
4. I agree to fulfill all of my rehearsal and performance obligations.
5. My parents and I understand that I am obligated to participate in all performances of the group, including competitions and festivals, and that I must fulfill all financial obligations associated by established deadlines.
6. I understand that once I am fitted for a costume that I am responsible for its upkeep and return.

Student's signature _____

Date _____

Parent's signature _____

Date _____

Date Rec'd _____

Director's Initials _____