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AMIS MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR GIRLS' CHOIR FESTIVAL

DIRECTORS' HANDBOOK

The AMIS International Honor Girls' Choir Festival generally numbers between 60 – 90 students. These are limited to six per school to allow as many schools as possible to participate. Students must be in Grades 6 – 8, female, suited for the challenge of a 3-day (SSA) Festival. Student voicing should ideally include 2 sopranos, 2 altos and 2 second sopranos. Some schools rehearse with alternates who can take the place of one of the school's singers if someone must drop out. **Students are responsible for the complete learning of all repertoire and should not be recommended unless they are able to meet the demands of performing challenging literature with other outstanding students. They must be capable of concentrating during long rehearsals each day. Students must be well prepared so as to insure a positive experience. It is the responsibility of each teacher to be sure the students are fully prepared.**

Instructions for making school applications for the festival will be posted on the web site. These applications are due in October for the festival to be held the following April or May each year.

If there is not sufficient space for all schools applying, the names of schools applying will be drawn to create a list of participants. Any schools who cannot be accommodated in the festival at this point will be placed on a waiting list and brought into the festival if a school cannot take up its place in the festival. If a festival is oversubscribed, preference will be given to AMIS member schools. The hosting school, the school whose teacher is conducting the festival, and the school which hosted the event the previous year are automatically chosen to participate.

Additional Participants: Occasionally (but not usually) a school may be allowed to bring more than 6 participants if spaces open up. Directors should notify AMIS if they have additional prepared students.

Auditions: A formal audition process should be used to choose participating students. This should insure that students are capable of holding a part and singing in tune. Suggested methods of auditioning your students are available from AMIS headquarters if you request them.

Concert: **Recordings:** One audio recording per school is included in the registration fee. This is generally a CD for your school archives which can be copied for each participant if you wish.

Site: The concert location and time will be announced in a mailing and can also be found on the web site.

Tickets: Often the concert will be free with audience members encouraged to make donations to the AMIS scholarship fund. In other instances, especially if an outside concert venue is being used, tickets will be sold to cover the cost of the rental of the venue. Tickets to the concert are included for directors and official chaperones in the registration fee they have paid. Others from your school will need to purchase tickets if these are being sold. You will find information about this on the web site in the month or two prior to the festival.

Deadlines: These are designed for the success and smooth operation of each Festival. Directors are urged to use the deadline as the **last possible** date to submit materials. Almost all forms are now online. **It is important for directors to submit these forms rather than sending bits and pieces of information in emails.** You will automatically receive a copy of each online form you submit.

Directors' Dinner: Details of the Directors' dinner will be sent to you. Cost of this dinner is included in the registration fee paid by teachers and official chaperones. If you have a spouse or partner who is attending the festival and would like to join you at this dinner, AMIS will be happy to include them in the reservation and will collect the necessary fee from you at the festival.

Meeting: At the conclusion of the rehearsal on Thursday or Friday afternoon there will be a brief AMIS business meeting. Directors are required to attend.

Responsibilities: Directors are expected to be present at all rehearsals to help, listen and supervise.

Dress code: Concert: Girls – white blouse with sleeves, concert length black skirt (knee or longer) or dressy full length black trousers; black shoes; absolutely no bare midriffs or bare shoulders

Rehearsals: neat, clean, comfortable clothes. The Festival T-shirt will be worn on Friday for the afternoon assembly.

Festival Fees: These may be paid either in sterling or in Euros. You will need to request that your invoice is written in the currency you prefer. Payments may be made by transfer or in the form of a cheque. Please remember that registration fees are not refundable.

Festival: Conductor: Each year a teacher/clinician is chosen 'in-house' from among those working in participating schools. Occasionally someone will be brought in to serve as conductor. There are guidelines available for those wishing to put themselves forward to conduct a future festival. Candidates will be asked to conduct a bit of a rehearsal with the full band and/or sectional rehearsals at a festival. Using AMIS teachers as conductors for this festival provides an in-service opportunity for our teachers, allowing them the opportunity to select literature and serve as conductor/clinician for a large, select performing ensemble.

Host schools: If you are interested in hosting this Festival please contact the Executive Consultant, Georgia Bassett. You may wish to look at the festival hosting handbook which is available online.

Sightseeing: It may be possible to organize a few hours of sightseeing for the festival participants. In some cases this will involve a small extra cost. You will be advised about this in the lead up to the festival. You will need to supervise you students during any group sightseeing.

Arrival/Departure: Participants arrive during Wednesday afternoon/evening in order to meet host families where they will stay for 4 nights. When making travel arrangements it is important to avoid very late arrivals and very early departures on Sunday morning, out of consideration to the host families. Actual festival activities will begin at 8:30-9:00hrs on Thursday (or whenever the school day for the host school will begin)

All participants are expected to be present at the first festival activity and are requested to make travel plans accordingly..

Rehearsals will be held throughout the day on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The concert is scheduled for Saturday evening.

Folders: **All students should arrive with their music in a blackfolder.** These folders will be used during the performance unless the entire program is performed from memory. If you have to make or buy black folders, do so. Do not expect to borrow folders from the host school. This should be labeled with their name on the inside. Each piece of music should also be labeled. Students should bring a **pencil (with an eraser on the end)** to every rehearsal in order to mark their music. Be sure you have taught the students how to mark their music during rehearsals.

Forms: **Forms are now on line.** The deadlines for submitting these forms are listed on the web site. Please adhere strictly to these deadlines, submitting information ahead of the deadline where possible. **It is important to give all the information requested when you initially fill out the form (such as nationality, contact phone, Allergies, etc.**

Housing: **Students:** Members of the hosting community will welcome participating students into their homes for the Festival weekend. Housing is for 4 nights. We expect Directors and students to arrive Wednesday afternoon or early evening. Once student housing information has been submitted, including dietary concerns and allergies, the housing assignments will be made. As much as possible, roommate requests are honored but sometimes it is not possible to do so. **NO CHANGES** in housing assignments may be made except after prior consultation with the Festival Director and/or Executive Consultant, although for logistical reasons the organizers may need to make a housing change at the last minute. It is suggested that students give their host family a small gift of something from their school or from their personal culture e.g. chocolates, candle, oven mitts, placemats plus a thank you card.

Students should be discouraged from calling home at the expense of the host family.

Directors: All Directors and chaperones will be housed in hotels in the area. Information about the festival hotel can be found on the web site. You will be expected to pay your own hotel bill. Please be sure you are prepared to do so.

Rehearsal CD's: Encourage the students to use the rehearsal CD's for extra drilling of parts. Don't expect them to learn without rehearsals with you and the other students. The rehearsal CD's are to supplement, not replace, rehearsals.

Meals: Host families will provide evening meals for students Thursday and Friday evenings. Hosts will also provide breakfast each morning. Lunches Thursday, Friday and Saturday and pre-concert dinner on Saturday will be provided through the school and are covered in the registration fees for both students and teachers. Students must bring pocket money with them for additional meals and snacks. If a student arrives in time to meet hosts in the afternoon on Wednesday they will also be eating with hosts on Wednesday evening. Late arrivals should have eaten before arrival at the school

Mailing: DHL will be used to send music **only when requested**. These charges will be billed and are payable in either sterling or Euro cash or cheque on registering at the Festival.

Passports/Visas: **It is the Director's responsibility to check on the status of their students' passports and, where necessary, visas.** You should do this as soon as the festival participants are chosen. It is now often a very slow and complicated process to obtain visas for festival participants. You will need to provide the host with full details about the student (or teacher) requiring the visa as well as the address and fax number for the Consulate where you are obtaining the visa. This is Your responsibility. It is a very sad occasion when a student has to miss the festival because of not applying for the visa in sufficient time.

Payments: Any unpaid fees are payable in sterling or Euro cash or cheque on registering at the Festival.

Sectionals: Teachers will be assigned to assist as required. All teachers should submit their areas of expertise so they can be properly assigned to help with these.

Travel: Make your plans early. Housing begins late afternoon Wednesday and finishes after breakfast on Sunday. Early departures on Sunday should be avoided if possible as a courtesy to the host families. Transfer information from the airport/main train station to the host school will be available on the web site. The school in Warsaw will meet participants. Delays should be notified to the Festival organizer as soon as possible giving a new estimated time of arrival.

T-shirts: Festival T-shirts will be provided for all participants at the festival.
These are usually given out on Friday for use at the Friday assembly.

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