



**AMERICAN FEDERATION
PUERI CANTORES**

*The Vatican-based official student choral
organization of the Catholic Church.*



April 2022

AFPC Newsletter

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2022 Pueri Cantores Festival Season Wrap Up

After two years of being on hiatus because of the pandemic, we were thrilled to finally be able to host in-person Pueri Cantores Festivals again! Over 1,000 singers in grades 4-12 from 71 different Catholic school and parish choirs around the country gathered together again to unite in song, peace, and prayer.

AFPC would like to thank the host churches, conductors, organists, volunteers, participating choirs, parents, and all those who helped make these Festivals possible. Please enjoy the compilation of photos below from the 2022 Pueri Cantores Festival season.



2023 Pueri Cantores Festival Season

As Director of Music and Organist at Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston, MA, Richard J. Clark noted in his recent article: "Choirs, musicians, and artists have suffered great loss in the last two years... Many choir directors - even those with relatively robust choral programs of children and adults - acknowledge the necessary rebuilding process especially with children's choirs... It is time to reclaim our humanity with song. It is past time to reclaim our role in the sung Mass glorifying God and bring our brothers and sisters close to God. Sacred music, a healing balm is needed now more than ever. Music expresses the divine and only music the ineffable." [Read the full article from Richard J. Clark here.](#)

It is time! Time to bring our children back together to unite in song and worship. As you work to rebuild your children and youth choirs, please consider adding a Pueri Cantores Festival to your choir calendar of events next year. The mission of Pueri Cantores- and our Festivals- is to educate and engage young people in their faith and in the arts, and through them, enrich the lives of their families and communities. The Festival is a vehicle to enhance the spiritual wellbeing, growth, choral excellence, academic enrichment and leadership of students everywhere through the learning and singing of some of the finest sacred music of the Catholic Church.

We are working to put together a robust 2023 Festival Schedule, and locations/dates will be posted at www.pcchoirs.org as they are confirmed. We hope to see you next year!

2023-24 Pueri Cantores Rome Congress

Join us for the 44th Pueri Cantores International Congress in Rome December 26, 2023 - January 2, 2024! This extraordinary week-long celebration is part pilgrimage and part choral festival that traditionally occurs every five years, bringing together Pueri Cantores choirs from around the world to participate in many thrilling liturgies and concerts. The Congress culminates with thousands of Pueri Cantores choristers singing for the Papal Mass at St. Peter's Basilica on January 1, 2024 (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God), with the Holy Father, Pope Francis, presiding.

In order to be admitted to the 44th Pueri Cantores International Congress, all travelers must register with Corporate Travel, the exclusive travel provider for the American Federation of Pueri Cantores. AFPC contracts a sole travel partner for each International Congress to ensure that:

- Participants have access to **all** Rome Congress events
- The latest Rome Congress information from the International Federation of Pueri Cantores is efficiently and swiftly communicated to participants
- The movements of the American participants happen in a unified and safe fashion
- Congress pricing for our singers and their families is as economical as possible

Click on the brochure below to learn more about the Congress, and contact Corporate Travel to start planning for this once-in-a-lifetime experience!



44th International Congress of PUERI CANTORES

Your Choir Is Cordially Invited To Join Choirs of Young Singers From
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Meet the Singers



Atlari Amoako

Age: 12 Years in Choir: 5

Choir: St. Mary Magdalene,
Gilbert, AZ

What do you love about singing and being in choir?

Being in choir is fun because it's a big family of religious music lovers. Everyone is so nice and it's not in any way stressful. If you need to have a smile

on your face, your choir friends will put it back. I always look forward to going and learning beautiful music. It will always hold a special place in my heart.

Why do you enjoy participating in Pueri Cantores Festivals and what are your favorite memories from your Festival?

I participated in the Phoenix Pueri Cantores Festival this past February, and my favorite memory was when I stood next to the organ that had 2,000 pipes!!

How do you plan to involve music/choir in your future?

I plan to teach other kids the wonders of music, and I would love to be a professional musician in the future.

What else would you like to share about yourself and your choir experience?

I would like to encourage all kids to give choir a try. Even if you're very shy, I have seen so many shy people (including myself) make good friends throughout the years. I never would have met my best friend if it hadn't been for choir.



Aliyana Munoz

Age: 9 Years in Choir: 3

Choir: Sacred Heart School,
Covina, CA

What do you love about singing and being in choir?

I love singing because I like to express myself. I love being able to meet new people while in choir.

How has singing and being in choir strengthened your faith and relationship with God?

When I sing in choir, I feel closer to God.

Why do you enjoy participating in Pueri Cantores Festivals and what are your favorite memories from your Festival?

The 2022 Southern California Festival was my first choir festival and I absolutely loved it!

How do you plan to involve music/choir in your future?

I would love to be a singer in the future.



Aliyana singing with her choir during the individual preludes at the 2022 Southern California Festival in March.

[Click here to sign up your singer to be featured in a future AFPC newsletter.](#)

Choir Organizational Tip

Teaching Musicality Through Gesture

I first learned the importance of this topic in my undergraduate degree when my choral music mentor implemented it in our rehearsals to fix vowel shapes or phrasing. I remember a “focused [i] vowel” gesture: bringing our hands in at 45-degree angles, eventually meeting at fingertips. Or a “true round [o] vowel” gesture: tracing circles in front of our mouths. There were more, and they got even more ridiculous, but we bought in because we heard the instant change in our sound. Music is a multi-sensory experience. Every movement we make affects our singing.

If this is brand new to you or you've just never implemented it in rehearsal, I want to offer a practical example for you to try with your choirs using the AFPC Public Domain piece "Through North and South". My Cherub Choir is made up of first through fourth grade singers. September was the first time our children's choirs had gathered since March 2020; I had no idea what to expect. The Cherub Choir usually had around 15 voices; this year, 35 students walked through my door on the first day. Oh, and most of them were first graders! For reasons I think you can assume on your own, this group presented a number of new challenges. "Through North and South" was one of the first pieces we learned. With the "traps" of each phrase in mind, I have attempted to illustrate the gestures I taught in [THIS](#) score.

1. This phrase has a basic rise and fall shape. It requires good legato singing and gradual raising of the soft palette (from its already heightened place) as the range increases. **Gesture:** trace the slur shape (you could say "trace a rainbow") in the air from one side of your body to the other.
2. This phrase is almost the opposite of the previous. Despite being in a very comfortable speech register, we want to keep the resonating space open, and, more importantly, avoid plummeting into chest voice on the low note. **Gesture:** trace a straight line across your body or act like you're pulling a taut string. This encourages evenness in the register without any huge downward shifts. A second gesture—a relaxed, cupped hand moving upward—to keep the resonating space open could be done with the other hand. Two at once!
3. This phrase has two peaks on D and E. Similar to the first phrase where we need to create more resonating space, these two happen more suddenly and require a different mindset. **Gesture:** I had my singers trace three circles of three sizes in one continuous gesture—medium, small, large—almost like a gesture for conducting chant.
4. Singing with crisp rhythm is the challenge of the fourth phrase. **Gesture:** (This was their favorite) Lightly drumming the rhythm on your abdomen. Speaking first with the gesture is always a valid option, but especially in this case. Lastly, you could add another traced slur at the end of the phrase where the rhythm smooths out.

As conductors, we have to think fast, especially when children are in the rehearsal room. I knew within a minute that explaining or even vocal modeling were futile when teaching this song to a room of "green" singers. I came up with these gestures on the fly to teach these phrases and the kids locked on to them so much that in the weeks following, they did them on their own any time we sang the piece. (No, we didn't use these when we sang at Mass!) I have also used this phrase-by-phrase structure with the "Alleluia Round" by Boyce/Proulx (GIA) and have achieved similar results.

Teaching through gesture happens in every one of our rehearsals, which, by the way, are after school. It's a great way to engage the entire body, which helps get out the after school energy and jitters. I even notice that students will mimic my conducting gesture on their own. That first grader watching your conducting intently could be a parish music director some day. These opportunities cannot be missed! I encourage you to explore this territory with your singers to improve musicality and rehearsal time efficiency.

Choir Organizational Tip brought to you by Stephen Eros
Director of Liturgy & Music, St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church, O'Fallon, IL

Pueri Cantores Alumni Spotlight



Pueri Cantores is one of the many opportunities that brings members throughout the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend together. I first participated in Pueri Cantores back in 2012 when I was a student at Bishop Dwenger High School. The first thing I remember was the amount of music that had to be learned, and the students all having to rise up to the challenge. The music selection is always a good mix between traditional hymns and pieces written by modern composers. Not only does the choice of music expose the singers to countless composers and Mass settings, but also gives them the opportunity to lean on and learn from students who are at a higher skill level.

I have been participating in music for as long as I can remember. I'm pretty sure I started singing before I was even able to talk. When I went to college, I tried to find a career that was separate from music, thinking I needed to find my true path, rather than staying in what I thought was my favorite hobby. After a year of being "undecided," I was still drawn to audition for Ball State's School of Music. I passed my audition and was able to start my new major in Music Media Production starting my sophomore year of college.

My first two jobs out of college were more related to my actual major of music technology, but something didn't fit right. I missed singing every day in a choir. I missed being classically trained in voice by my teacher and pushing myself to be better in that skill. I knew there had to be a way to merge my love for my Catholic faith and my love for music. This past year, I was hired as the Director of Sacred Music at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Warsaw, Indiana. I immediately fell in love with how the liturgy of the Mass and the music that is chosen are so closely related to each other. Music is such an important part of the Mass in that it elevates our worship of God and unites everyone in song. My absolute favorite part of what I do is having the kids get involved with serving God in the Mass through music.

This year, I had one of my first full circle moments where I had to prepare my kids to sing for the Fort Wayne-South Bend Pueri Cantores Festival on the Solemnity of the Annunciation at St. Pius X Church in Granger. Again, in my first year as a music director, I realized how much music there was for all of the students to learn. I had a much greater appreciation, not only for the director at each school, but also the directors who run the regional rehearsals, and the director chosen to lead on the day of the actual Pueri Cantores Festival. The experience the students gain from learning that amount of music, the difficulty level the music presents, and participating with high school level musicians, overall greatly encourages students to keep pursuing music, and ultimately reminds them that their gift of music is first a gift from God, and is one that is given back to Him in praise and worship!

Abby Black, Director of Sacred Music, Sacred Heart Church, Warsaw, IN
& Pueri Cantores Alumnus Singer 2012

Are you a Pueri Cantores Alumnus Singer? Email info@pcchoirs.org to let us know what you are up to and to join our alumni network!

Featured Choir

Saint John the Baptist Catholic School



Cantamus and Clover Choirs Costa Mesa, CA 2021-2022 School Year Update



The Clover Choir serving the community
at the September Festival of Children
Event at South Coast Plaza



Cantamus Recorder Consort
Soprano - Olivia Curran, Alto - Lily Curran
Tenor - Lauren Nelmda, Bass - Carissa Vu



Choirs Participate in the January School Open House



St. John the Baptist choirs and handbell choir performed together outside for the annual school open house. The newly formed sixth grade choir, Cantamus sings 'God is Love' a hymn composed by Father Clarence Joseph Rufus Rivers, an African American Roman Catholic priest and composer of liturgical music. Four members of Cantamus organized and created a recorder consort. They play the music of composers Purcell, Bach and Handel for school and parish liturgies. We are getting back to the scheduled performance activities of spring and prepare for the AFPC 2022 Southern California Youth Choral Festival in March.

AFPC-NCEA Webinars

for Conductors of Catholic Student Choirs, Worship Leaders and Classroom Teachers, Elementary through High School

Catch up on our latest webinar here:



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Pueri Cantores in the Media

Click on the images below to read the full articles about Pueri Cantores in Fort Wayne-South Bend's *Today's Catholic* and Baltimore's *Catholic Review*.



TODAY'S CATHOLIC

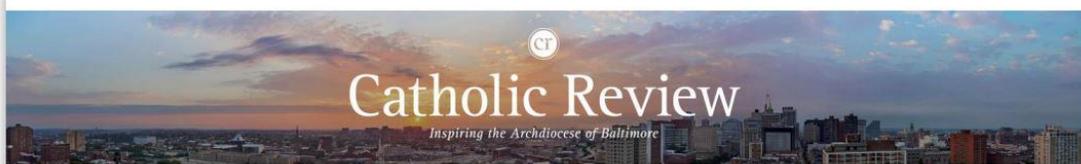
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Pueri Cantores make a joyful noise for Annunciation

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord falls on March 25, precisely nine months ahead of Christmas, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. This day commemorates when the angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary and relayed to her the message from God that she was to give birth to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Of her own free will, Mary could have rejected this proposed path, but she didn't. Her acceptance of God's will is a powerful testimony of faith for all ages, and is cause for celebration.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades celebrated Mass for the Annunciation at St. Pius X Church in Granger, and the occasion was



Youthful voices fill Baltimore Basilica with sacred song



More than 50 voices of young singers filled the chambers of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore with sacred songs March 12. (Todd Karpovich/Special to the Review)



Listen to Fr. James Conlon's January 15th interview with *Ave Maria Radio*. Starting at 56:15, Fr. James talks all things Pueri Cantores.

Fr. James Conlon is Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Ann Arbor, MI. He was recently appointed Ecclesiastical Assistant for the International Federation of Pueri Cantores and has been a member of the Board of Directors of the American Federation of Pueri Cantores since 2017. He has travelled to Rome twice with the SFA Middle School choir for the International Congress of Pueri Cantores, as well as, to the annual regional Festivals in Chicago.

Job Postings

Do you have a job posting for a choir director, music teacher, or worship leader position at your church or school? AFPC would be happy to advertise the position through our extensive communication channels. Just email the job description with contact information to info@pccochoirs.org.

Join our Monthly Sustainers Program!

AFPC's mission is centered around **educating and evangelizing young Catholic singers across the U.S through the medium of sacred music**, cultivating their passion for the arts, nurturing their personal and spiritual wellbeing, and developing a relationship with God and the Church that they will carry all their lives.

Supporting AFPC means supporting the youth of our Church, and through them, their families, schools, churches, and communities. AFPC's work is made possible through the support of individuals like you, who see the value in this apostolate and are committed to seeing it continue.

Please prayerfully consider becoming a **Monthly Sustainer** to help create a sustainable future for Pueri Cantores and allow us to continue our work to enrich the lives of thousands of children and families for years to come.

[Click here to become a Monthly Sustainer](#)



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