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Emily A.P. Cox, Central Point, Rogue Valley Children's Chorus board member



Mail Tribune / Bob Pennell

Belting out a tune during a Rogue Valley Children's Chorus practice are, clockwise from bottom left, Hannah Walker, 12, piano player Margie Daly, Joshua Blesse, 13, Robin Ballard, 13, Katie Quiel, 13, and Dan Daly, 11. Auditions for the chorus are planned for Tuesday, Sept. 11, and Thursday, Sept. 13.

With its varied repertoire and supportive atmosphere, the Rogue Valley Children's Chorus builds friendships as youngsters work ...

# To find their own voices

By MEG LANDERS  
for the Mail Tribune

For Robin Ballard, the hardest part about being in a chorus was auditioning. The eighth-grade homeschooler says she was nervous and had butterflies in her stomach at her first appearance before a music director.

"For the audition, I practiced in front of friends and that helps," says Robin, who has since overcome her stage fright and sung in public for two-and-a-half years.

Robin is one of 150 members of the Rogue Valley Children's Chorus, a group of fourth- through eighth-graders who perform throughout the valley.

Founded in 1982 by Doris Sjolund, the chorus meets weekly throughout the school year for rehearsals in preparation for multiple performances. Venues include the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater, the Rogue Valley Manor and school assemblies, as well as

conventions and festivals.

From Bach and Beethoven to Rodgers and Hammerstein, from rhythmic African songs to traditional spiritual songs, members learn a variety of styles and sounds. Auditions for the chorus take place next week.

"A lot of kids have not sung in a chorus before, so it's a great place to start," says Gerry Flock, one of the directors.

"They get a real quality singing experience that you wouldn't necessarily get in a school setting," adds the Roosevelt Elementary School music teacher. "There's just more performance opportunities."

Emily A.P. Cox, secretary on the board of directors, was a member of the chorus as a fourth-grader.

"It was a great experience for me overall," says the 23-year-old Central Point resident. "Not only did I get introduced to great composers, but I got to make some lifelong friendships."

Those friendships came in handy.

"I made friends with children in other schools, so when I went to junior high, I already had friends," she says.

The best part of the chorus, though, was the performing.

"We traveled through the schools and that was so much fun to go sing in front of the other kids," says Cox, adding that she continued to use her singing skills in choirs all through college.

"Music's a wonderful discipline," says Flock, adding that through practicing and rehearsing, children learn skills with benefits beyond singing.

"It really breeds better commitment to all areas of their life, especially academics," he says.

Robin sees it mostly as a good time. "It's fun," she says, "and if you like music and singing, you should join it."

Meg Landers is a free-lance writer living in Medford. E-mail her at [landers@jeffnet.org](mailto:landers@jeffnet.org).

## AUDITIONS SET

**What:** Rogue Valley Children's Chorus.

**For:** Boys and girls in fourth through eighth grades.

**When:** 4 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 11, and Thursday, Sept. 13.

**Where:** South Medford High School Choral Room.

**Requirements:** Obtain a teacher's recommendation and sing the first verse of "America the Beautiful."

**Contact:** Doris Sjolund, 772-2163, or Gerry Flock, 664-8678.

**Cost:** About \$100 for both fall and spring four-month sessions.