

# Mississippi Baptist Young Musicians Honor Choir shares at First Church, Summit

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*Staff Writer*

For a Saturday night concert and Sunday morning worship Sept. 23-24, 80 children in the Mississippi Baptist Young Musicians Honor Choir led songs of praise at First Church, Summit.

Every year beginning in January, children in third through fifth grade who have a desire to sing and learn worship arts audition across the state for a place in the Mississippi Baptist Young Musicians Honor Choir.

Through the Worship Ministries of MBCB, the process starts at <https://mbcb.org/ministry/worship/worship-for-children-students/>, where children's choir directors and parents fill out the audition form and video the participants singing two songs. Before Memorial Day, the students are informed that they have made the Honor Choir and are sent more information, officially registering in the month of June.

After about two rehearsals in each area of the state (North, South, and Central Mississippi), each child has memorized their music, received their Polo, and is ready for the Saturday activities leading up to the concert.



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The Honor Choir will be celebrating its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024 with a concert and Sunday worship to be held at First Church of Florence.

"We worship the Lord through all different kinds of songs and worship arts, and everything is Christ-honoring," South stated. "It is all about coming alongside the host church and integrating our worship and worship arts with what they already do (on Sunday mornings). So there's still an offering, there's still preaching, there's still invitation, there's still call-to-worship, the congregation sings along, and we

have a prelude – it's just the children's way of feeling valued in their voice.”

Churches are not required to have a children's choir to audition kids. Honor Choir also accepts auditions from choirs of both public schools and private Christian schools, and from the parents of individual children who have a sincere interest in music.

In preparation for the weekend, South explained, “my team, all through the spring and summer, is planning the event: what we're going to sing, the music, the worship arts that we're going to do, the teachers that we want to involve all over Mississippi, my clinician, who is a really important part of that, and my accompanist.

“I just need kids that want to sing, learn, and sing about Jesus. We sing foreign languages, we sing difficult 2 and 3-part songs, we sing songs with difficult instrumentation, and we do all kinds of motions. This is real, legitimate, choral music for kids with the right range... It's not these low worship songs, and it's not these high worship songs. It's built in their range, and that's really important if you want these kids to be able to present them well.”

The weekend is a beautiful opportunity for children and families to hear the Gospel. *“From the lips of children and infants, You, Lord, have called forth Your praise.”* (Matthew 21:16, NIV).

As children are a part of worship ministry, South described, “They have Keyboard Festival and they get watered, and they see Jesus in all those hymns and all those songs. They go to SMACK [Summer Music and Arts Camp for Kids] and they get watered again. They come to Honor Choir, they get watered again, and those seeds are starting to grow, and that's worth more to me than having the event – that those kids can see who Jesus is based on what we do that weekend, learn where their

voice is, learn how to use their voice in worship, learn how to express themselves through worship arts, and literally change the lives of people who have no idea that they've come to have their lives changed. They've just come to watch their grandkids, or watch their nephews, and it's amazing to be able to be a part of that."

South shared how she has witnessed previous Honor Choir children grow to follow Christ into ministry themselves. While hosting a group of college students in her office one day, sitting on her piano bench, she recognized a young man, Tyler Little, who majored in Worship Studies. "I looked right at him and the room got really still," she remembered, "and I said, 'Tyler, do you remember me at all?' And he goes, 'You look so familiar!' And I said, 'Ms. Wyndy. Honor Choir.' The look of recognition that came over him started way down at his feet, and he went, 'Oh yeah!'... He was in my very first Honor Choir, when he was in the sixth grade."

The next year, South recognized another young man from Honor Choir, Oliver Gibbs, who, while majoring in music and worship in college, had already served two years in his church.

"I have never been more proud," South recounted as she considered these young men, and all the Honor Choir boys and girls who grow up to worship the Lord. "I cried for two days! Because you don't go into it intentionally to make an influence on somebody's life, you just do what God's called you to do, and then it just happens sometimes. God speaks to them for one reason or another."

Because a piano teacher saw a potential in South when she was only three years old, she began the musical direction God had laid out for her at an early age. "It takes someone willing to be on the lookout for kids who have an ability," South assured, "who will become a worship leader of a church, who will become a pastor, who will become a youth minister, who will become a pianist."



“I want kids to be able to find inside of them the call that God has on their life. They may not find it until they’re 17 years old, but I want them looking for it when they’re 11.”