

The Derbyshire Singers Members' Handbook

(Registered with The Charity Commission number 516921)

Introduction

Welcome to The Derbyshire Singers, one of the most respected choirs in Derbyshire. We are delighted to welcome you to the choir.

This handbook is designed to answer some of the questions you may have and provide an insight into how the choir operates, the standards we aim to achieve, our expectations of you, and your commitment to the choir.

Members will have the opportunity to develop vocal skills and an understanding of choral music, experience a wide repertoire and have the opportunity to work with and be tutored by professional musicians with national and international experience.

The choir is governed by two documents:

- a. The Constitution - this is the legal governing document based on the requirements of the Charity Commission
- b. This Members' Handbook.

The objectives of the choir as laid down in the constitution are to advance, improve, develop, and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals.

The following rules and regulations are designed to be the minimum required to maintain the choir's reputation and charitable status whilst remembering that members join the choir to enjoy choral singing.

Membership

Participation in the choir's activities is open to all persons over the age of 18.

There is no formal audition but membership is subject to the approval of the Musical Director or Principal Conductor, based on maintaining a balance of parts within the choir and the performance standards we aim to achieve.

Membership records, including Gift Aid declarations, and subscription payments are managed by the membership secretary in accordance with data protection requirements.

Communication with members is via updates at rehearsals, emails from the secretary and the members' pages on the choir's web site. Members may obtain the password to the members' pages of the website from the secretary. Members are asked to respond to emails promptly whenever possible. Members are welcome to speak to committee members or email the secretary about any concerns.

Members are expected to sell concert tickets and assist with other duties as and when required including at major fund raising events e.g. the choral day and weekend. The latter are held to help fund the quality of professional musicians employed for public performances as well as being a great opportunity to work with professional guest conductors.

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Details of concerts, notices, links to videos of current concert works, details of rehearsal tracks and general information can be found at www.derbyshiresingers.org Please refer to this regularly and advertise the existence of the public website as widely as possible.

Membership fees are fixed annually by the trustees in consultation with the membership and can be paid as a lump sum or spread over 12 months. Financial assistance is available for anyone aged 25 and under. Any other member with financial concerns should speak to the chair or secretary.

In order to generate additional choir funds, members are encouraged to use the Easy Fundraising web site www.easyfundraising.org.uk whenever purchasing goods and services online. Details of how this works can be found at <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/blog/how-does-easyfundraising-work-a-guide-for-shoppers/>

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held weekly with occasional extra rehearsals at the discretion of the conductor /choral director. There is always a rehearsal on the afternoon of our concerts. There are short breaks during national and Derbyshire School holidays. Rehearsals take place at the Presentation Convent, Matlock on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm. Members are expected to attend at least 75% of the rehearsals for any concert. If you are unable to attend a rehearsal please email the secretary prior to that rehearsal. Inclusion in the choir for a performance is at the discretion of the Musical Director or Principal Conductor.

A schedule of rehearsal dates will be maintained on the members' section of the choir website and emailed / given to members annually.

Rehearsal etiquette

Prompt arrival is expected for rehearsals together with a commitment to attendance.

Members should have a pencil and eraser with them.

Mobile phones should be turned off.

Help is expected in setting out and clearing away chairs at the beginning and end of rehearsals.

Most importantly, members should remain actively involved in the rehearsal even when not singing.

Concerts

The choir gives three major concerts a year at various locations in Derbyshire plus an annual Christmas concert.

Details of future concerts are on the choir website www.derbyshiresingers.org

All venues are risk assessed for each performance.

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Concert Presentation and Dress

In addition to our aim of presenting the highest standards of musical performance, the choir aims for high standards of presentation in all concerts. The concert starts as soon as the choir leads onto the stage.

Water bottles should not be taken on stage and audible watches /mobile phones etc. must be turned off.

It is important to listen to line-up instructions carefully, walk on in silence and stand on stage without talking. A signal is given to sit down and members wait in silence for the concert to start. Items that need to be placed on the floor should be placed there after members are seated. When the conductor (and soloists) appear for the first half, the choir stands and remains standing, unless they are not singing immediately, in which case the conductor's directions are followed to sit again. It is important to be still and attentive during times when other musicians are performing.

Ladies' Concert Wear

Ladies wear:

- Plain black, long sleeved or bracelet length sleeved tops
- Tops should have modest necklines and no sheer or lace inserts or sleeves. They should not be sparkly or shimmery because of distracting reflections of the lights. Black surface embroidery is acceptable.
- Plain black trousers (not jeans, leggings or jeggings)
- Black shoes/short boots and black tights/socks

At Christmas, ladies wear black shirts with red and gold scarves. The black shirts should have long or bracelet length sleeves and shirt collars. The scarves are provided.

Earrings should be small studs - no dangly earrings. Any other jewellery worn should be discreet and can include black earrings / necklaces. Whenever possible, please avoid taking a handbag on stage. Any handbags taken on should be small and black.

Men's Concert Wear

Men wear:

- Black dinner suit, belted trousers. No braces
- White long-sleeved shirt without a wing collar (sometimes men perform without jackets)
- Black bow tie
- Black shoes and socks

There is a Derbyshire Singers folder in which music is carried at most concerts. It is available from the secretary and currently costs £7.50.

Music provision

Whenever possible, music for major works is provided free of charge through the Derbyshire Library Service, to which the choir pays an annual fee. If this is not possible for a particular work, members are asked to pay the hire charge.

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Members are expected to purchase their own copies of sheet music (copies are bulk ordered by the committee and sold on to choir members), copies of Carols for Choirs books 1, 2 and 3 and European Sacred Music published by Oxford University Press.

Please do not order your own copies of sheet music as there are often multiple editions and always check on which edition of larger works will be used should you wish to buy your own copy.

We cater for people with sight impairment and those who prefer single copies for ease of performance.

The Derbyshire Singers takes no responsibility for members who use illegal photocopies.

Chamber Choir

To assist with fund raising and increasing the public's awareness of The Derbyshire Singers, we maintain a smaller pool of members known as the Chamber Choir. This group performs for a fee (towards choir funds) at weddings and funerals, and on occasions sings at other church services and performs at charity events. Members of the Chamber Choir are expected to attend extra rehearsals for these events as required.

Membership of the Chamber Choir is open to all members of the Derbyshire Singers and is subject to a vocal assessment and the maintenance of a balanced ensemble.

Management of the Choir and Appointment of Trustees

The strategic management and financial control of the choir is the responsibility of the trustees, comprising the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Concert Secretary, Publicity Officer, Librarian and 2 other trustees, in conjunction with the Musical Director and Principal Conductor.

Trustees are elected by the membership and serve a 3-year term, with one-third elected by the membership each year by rotation. A Trustee can be re-elected for a maximum of 3 three-year terms unless no suitable replacement is willing to stand for election. Members wishing to stand as a trustee must be nominated by 2 members.

Detailed operational management is carried out by a Concert Organising Group comprising the Stage Manager, Publicity Officers, Ticket Team, Programme Producer, Concert Secretary, Chair, Secretary, Choral Director(s).

Members of the current committee are listed on our website in the Members' Area.

The choir adheres to current legislation on data protection, health and safety and copyright laws.

Updates

This handbook will be reviewed by the committee every 2 years or earlier if a situation demands it. Changes will be communicated to members either directly or via the web site.