

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 your questions and provide 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 guidelines 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 Choral Director or Principal Conductor, based on maintaining a balance of parts within the choir and the performance standards we aim to achieve.

Membership records are managed by the secretary. Gift Aid declarations and subscription payments are managed by the treasurer. Both are saved in accordance with data protection requirements.

Communication with members is via updates at rehearsals, emails from the secretary and items on the members' pages on the choir's website. 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 or with any ideas or offers of help.

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.

Members are expected to sell concert tickets and assist as and when required including at concerts.

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Subscriptions

The choir relies heavily on the income it receives from its membership subscriptions. These are fixed annually by the trustees. We operate a full-season subscription policy, unlike some other choirs that run on a concert-by-concert or term-by-term basis. This is because some outgoings, e.g. rent for the rehearsal venue and insurance, run throughout the season. New members joining later in a season will be asked to pay an amount proportional to the remaining length of the season once they have been accepted as a member.

Choral scholarships are available for anyone aged 25 and under. Any member with financial concerns should speak to the chair, treasurer or secretary.

All members are encouraged to sign up for Gift Aid with the choir. The only requirement is that you pay sufficient income and/or capital gains tax to HM Revenue & Customs at some point during the year to cover the Gift Aid recovered by the choir. Gift Aid costs you absolutely nothing but the choir gains a significant amount from it.

To generate additional choir funds, members are encouraged to use the Easy Fundraising website 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 Principal 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 Bowler Hall, Highfields Lower School, 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 Choral Director or Principal Conductor.

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

Unless needed for emergency contact, 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.

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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.

From time to time, a smaller number of members might be asked by the Choral Director or Principal Conductor to sing at an event in addition to the four annual concerts.

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

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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

Music is provided and the cost is covered by subscriptions. The only exceptions to this are that members are expected to purchase their own copies of Carols for Choirs books 1, 2 and 3 and European Sacred Music published by Oxford University Press. We use these regularly.

Please 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.

Management of the Choir and Appointment of Trustees

This is described in detail in our Constitution.

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 website.