

GUIDELINES FOR PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCES

Practice Nights

1. Our practice (or, as we die - hard ex-rugby players would have it - "training") nights should be a pleasant and rewarding experience - a sociable evening out with a group of mates with a similar interest as well as a learning experience for getting better and better at what we do. That's how it was when we trained for whatever sport each of us pursued and that's how it should be at choir practice: serious, hard work and concentration leading to better performance - but always enjoyable. We are amateurs after all!
2. In that light, we don't want what follows to be read as putting a dampener on our practice nights: but it is important that we follow a few basic "rules" that, as they become instilled in us as normal behaviour, will stand us in good stead in our performances. They will make our practices more enjoyable for everyone.
3. The overriding principal of these "practice night" guidelines is to show respect. Respect for our:
 - Musical Director (MD) (or her nominee) because it is just good manners to listen while the MD is talking to us. Even if we are not interested, or we have heard it before: and
 - colleagues around us who may need/want to hear the MD.

So please, **don't talk**.

Assembly

4. The Duty Committeeman will normally get choir members assembled (in their part groups) and quiet (social chit chat is ended) prior to the MD taking charge of practice. The Committeeman will do this from the podium prior to inviting the MD to take over. We should be seated, ready to start our practice promptly at 7:30 pm.

Rehearsal for performance

5. From the time the MD takes over, we must behave as if we were in performance. Clearly this cannot always be the case as the MD will want to go over a section with one (or more) of the voice-parts. While this is happening there must be no talking in the other parts - and particularly no "helping" other parts by singing/whistling/humming their music with them!

Listen while we play it on the keyboard!

6. Our MD plays and repeats some voice parts to assist with the learning process. Again, it is bad manners (and distracting for those near-by) to sing, whistle or hum along with the keyboard. Please listen until requested to sing.
7. There will obviously be moments when the MD wants to recount an anecdote, tell one of her terrible jokes, give us some serious information etc., and those would be moments to relax the "performance/rehearsal" mode. But they would only be "moments" - and once the MD tells us we are in rehearsal again, then the formal "etiquette" applies.

Mobile Phones

8. Mobile phones should normally be switched off during practices. However, if members must have their mobiles on at rehearsal, then they should be in “silent/meeting” mode, and any calls received should be taken outside the rehearsal room.

No Alcohol

9. In keeping with established ARC principles, the consumption of alcohol is not permitted at practice.

“Permission to speak, Ma’am”

10. Inevitably, we need to ask questions of, or seek clarification etc. from the MD. Rather than just shout it out - raise your hand and get the MD's attention. And if you think you know the answer to your fellow chorister's question, don't yell it out - let the MD answer it. If he/she doesn't know the answer, your raised hand will be an offer of assistance.

Look at me!

11. While it is obviously difficult in the early stages of learning a new piece of music or new words, it is vital that we watch the conductor. The normal expectation is that members will gain a sound knowledge through doing our homework on Sibelius, so that at practice we know most of the music and the words and don't need to keep looking down at our books or resort to “part-bashing”.

Comment on other member’s singing

12. Our MD is the only person in the choir authorised to comment critically on members’ singing. So please refrain from making unsolicited comments on other members’ singing - either to a member directly, or to other members.

Performance Guidelines

13. Many members derive great enjoyment from participating in high quality public performances. Our presentation and appearance as a choir is an important part of our performances.

14. Based on many years experience, the following guidelines have been drawn up as the desired ‘code of conduct’:

- we normally perform in Concert without books;
- mobile phones are not taken on stage;
- while in “Performance Mode” (‘Game On!’) members are under the direction of the MD and/or an appointed Stage Manager/Marshall (SM/M), and are asked to willingly accept their authority in the course of the performance;
- members should be dressed in the uniform prescribed for the occasion which should be clean, tidy and in good repair with buttons and zippers done up and nothing protruding from shirt or trouser pockets;
- the choir will ‘form up’ close to the performance space at the direction of the SM/M. Movement both onto and off the performing space will be by ranks and carried out in an orderly way as directed by the Stage Manager;

- on stage, members should maintain silence when not singing and should stand still, with feet slightly apart, hands loosely clasped at their sides with knuckles facing in and looking at the Conductor;
- unless otherwise advised, the choir will form-up for performance in a shallow semi-circle, with all members facing towards the Conductor and with all unnecessary movement kept to a minimum;
- when sitting, choir members should keep their hands folded loosely with palm down on their knees;
- when song books are:
 - carried, they should be held on edge, in the cupped left hand with the spine down and the arm at full extension;
 - used in performance, they should be held open in both hands at upper chest level, so that eye contact with the Conductor is maintained. They should be raised and lowered in unison at the MD's signal;
- it is not normally acceptable for members to 'break ranks' during a performance, or to join the choir once it is 'formed up' for performance;
- audience acknowledgement at the end of a performance by choir members will be by waving a raised right hand at the signal of the MD/Conductor; and
- when we are performing with another choir, band or artist, it is impolite (and distracting to our neighbours) to sing along (or hum/whistle) with them unless specifically invited to do so.