

# The Gainesville Civic Chorus Handbook

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*Season 42: Made in America*  
*2017 - 2018*

Dr. Will Kesling, Director  
Joshua L. Mazur, Associate Director

## Purpose

This handbook will outline the expectations for membership in our organization.

## About Us

The Gainesville Civic Chorus began its existence under the direction of Elwood Keister in 1976 as the Bicentennial Choir, and played a major role in the community's celebration of the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. So gratifying were its musical efforts and so congenial were its activities that its members re-formed as the Gainesville Civic Chorus the following year. The permanent name selection deliberately underscores the Chorus' commitment to the cultural enrichment of the Gainesville community, a commitment that was quickly recognized. In 1978, the Chorus received the Gainesville Cultural Commission's award as the community's "best organization involved in the performing arts." It has also gained recognition by both the City Commission and the Alachua County Commission as the community's official chorus. Among the sixty members are retired citizens, businesspersons, university professors, professional musicians and others from many walks of life.

The Gainesville Civic Chorus presents three major concerts each season. In addition, the Chorus hosts an annual Messiah Sing-A-Long, performs at the Festival of Lights at the Downtown Plaza and participates in the UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences annual Baccalaureate service. Over the last ten years, the Chorus has joined the Jacksonville Symphony and Chorus in singing many of the great choral masterpieces including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Haydn's The Creation and The Seasons, and Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem. In April 1997, the Chorus again joined the Jacksonville Symphony for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as the opening performance of the Jacoby Symphony Hall. In November 1993, the Gainesville Civic Chorus was invited to sing at Carnegie Hall to perform John Rutter's Requiem with Rutter conducting.

In 1993, in an effort to serve a greater portion of the community, the Gainesville Civic Choristers was created from within the Chorus itself. The Chorister name was changed to the Chamber Singers in 2014. The Chamber Singers perform in more intimate venues such as retirement homes and local churches.

## Our Conductors

**Dr. Will Kesling, Ph.D.**  
**Director of Choral Activities, University of Florida**  
**wkesling@ufl.edu**

Dr. Will Kesling has conducted hundreds of choral ensembles and forty-three professional symphony orchestras throughout the world. His talents for weaving together text and music, chorus and orchestra have garnered him international respect. A Washington Post concert review sums his abilities in two words, “clear professionalism.” A New York Daily News reviewer calls “Will Kesling’s conducting truly inspired and impeccably paced.” L’arena, di Verona, Italy newspaper headline reads, “Kesling baton perfect for Brahms.” The review goes on to say, “. . . you rarely have the opportunity to perceive in a maestro a clear vision of the work which is evident by the gestures, at the same time expressive with great precision.” (June 10, 2013).

Dr. Kesling has conducted a number of engagements in Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as well as in major concert halls internationally. He served as the Associate Conductor of the Manhattan Philharmonic Orchestra, New York City, as the Principal Guest Conductor of the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Russia, and was the Music Director and Conductor of the Mountain West Symphony Orchestra, Utah for 18 years.

Since his debut in 1991, Dr. Kesling has become one of the Soviet Union’s (now Russia) most popular American guest conductors. He has returned to conduct nine of the country’s top orchestras: Moscow State Academic Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, Moscow State Chamber Orchestra, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Petersburg Radio & Television, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra Classika, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra Congress, and St. Petersburg Mozarteum Chamber Orchestra. One of the highlights of his career came in 1992 when he conducted the Moscow State Chamber Orchestra and Bolshoi Opera Chorus in the first professionally produced performance of Handel's Messiah since the institution of Communism.

Dr. Kesling has also conducted professional concerts in Brazil (Orquestra Sinfonica Brasileira), Canada (Vancouver and Victoria Symphonies), the Czech Republic (Czech National Orchestra, National Theater Orchestra of Prague, Brno Philharmonic, Bohuslav Martinu Symphony Orchestra, Czech Virtuosi), Hungary (Budapest Chamber Orchestra), Kenya (Nairobi Symphony Orchestra), Korea (Changwon Philharmonic), Mexico (Orquestra Sinfonica Nacional), Uruguay (Orquestra Sinfonica del SODRE), Poland, and several sold out performances at the Festival Internacional de Música in Cambrils, Spain.

Dr. Kesling is a featured conductor for the Mezinárodní Hudební Musica Ecumenica in Prague, Czech Republic. In June 2002 Maestro Kesling opened this international festival with a performance of the Verdi’s Requiem and closed the festival with Dvořák’s Te Deum and Orff’s Carmina Burana, both concerts in Smetana Hall with the National Theater Orchestra of Prague and Czech Philharmonic Chorus. On this same series in 2003 he conducted the Verdi Hymn of Nations and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Czech

National Orchestra and the Czech Philharmonic Chorus. During the summer of 2004 Kesling celebrated the centennial of Dvořák's death leading a rare performance of the composer's Requiem in Prague and more.

Dr. Kesling is making his mark in Canada as well. He made his debut with the Victoria Symphony in April 2005, has logged eight appearances with the Vancouver Symphony and in May 2011 made his debut in Calgary with the Calgary Chamber Orchestra and Calgary Children's Choir.

Domestic orchestras conducted are the Honolulu and San Diego Symphonies, the Louisiana Philharmonic in New Orleans and the Connecticut and National Chamber Orchestras, to name a few. He has also guest-conducted the world famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir on a national CBS broadcast. He has several commercial recordings available on both the Integra Classics and Shadow Mountain labels, and conducted the feature film scores, *The Silence of Speed* and *The Two Sisters*.

For the past fifteen years Dr. Kesling has served as the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Florida as well as the Director of the Gainesville Civic Chorus Master Chorale and Philharmonic Orchestra. Previously Dr. Kesling was the Director of Orchestra and Choral programs at Utah State University for nineteen years. Over the past thirty-seven years his college choirs have received international attention and have made multiple appearances at both national and divisional conventions for the American Choral Directors Association. In March 2002, his Utah State University Chamber Choir appeared before the combined Western and Northwestern Division Convention of the College Band Directors Association. That same month, the Utah State University Combined Choirs were featured in the Opening Ceremonies of the Paralympics on NBC.

At the University of Florida, his choirs have appeared with the San Diego Symphony, National Philharmonic, Washington, D.C., Czech National Orchestra and the Czech National Theater Orchestra as well as the Kronos String Quartet, the Three Italian Tenors, and the Posaune Voce Trio of Birmingham, England and made a first ever American Choral Directors Association convention appearance.

On September 11, 2004 Maestro Kesling made his debut with the National Philharmonic in Constitution Hall, Washington, DC premiering the new Revolutionary War oratorio, *A Prelude to Glory*. In June of 2005 in Prague Dr. Kesling conducted the Czech National Orchestra Choir Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and *Carmina Burana*, joined by the Prague Chamber Choir. A debut performance, an all-Mozart affair, with the Varna State Chamber Orchestra and the Varna Municipal Chorus "*Morski Zvutsi*" was presented in July, 2010.

Dr. Kesling has conducted numerous All State choirs and festivals. He has published scholarly choral editions and compositions with a number of publishers and has penned a number of academic articles for professional journals. Dr. Kesling serves on the International Editorial Board for *Scientific Journals International*, *Journal of Culture and Art and Design Review*. He has three years of experience conducting military choirs and bands.

Maestro Kesling's served as a conducting coach at The International Music Academy offered by the Gustav Mahler Conservatory of Music in Vienna, Austria (May 20 – June 2, 2013). As a part of the Academy he conducted a public performance Spectacular Moments in Opera: Most Loved Choruses, Overtures & Arias with the Vienna Radio Orchestra and the choir from the University of Zagreb, Croatia. In June Dr. Kesling conducted two performances of the Brahms Tragic Overture and Ein Deutches Requiem in Verona and Vicenza, Italy with the Croatian Chamber Orchestra and choirs from Hungary, Italy and the United States.

In recognition of these achievements Dr. Kesling was awarded The Congressional Order of Merit by the Congress of the United States of America in September 2003 and the Ronald Regan Gold Medal in November 2004. In March 2006, Professor Kesling was awarded the Congressional Medal of Distinction for his contributions to the cultural life of the citizenry. On October 12, 2013 Dr. Kesling was inducted into Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, men's fraternity of musicians, as a National Honorary Member. Dr. Kesling received the Spirit of Gainesville Award for the Arts by the Gainesville Sun and Gainesville Magazine on November 25, 2013.

**Joshua L. Mazur, M.M.**

**Director of Music Ministry, Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, Gainesville, Fl.**

Joshua Mazur enjoys an active career as a singer, composer, and multi-instrumentalist. He returned to the Branscomb stage in his seventh production of "A Night at the Opera" with the Imperial Symphony Orchestra in the role of Silvio in Pagliacci. A native Lakelander, he has performed such roles as the Sergeant of the Police in Pirates of Penzance, Prince Yamadori in Madame Butterfly, Sergeant of the Police in Barber of Seville, and Frank in Die Fledermaus with the Imperial Symphony Orchestra. During his undergraduate studies at Florida Southern College, he won TBNATS "Most Promising Male Singer" award three consecutive years in a row, and was the state winner of the NATS Artist Award. During his graduate vocal studies at the University of Florida, he was most notably seen on stage in the title role in Phantom of the Opera with the University of Florida Opera Theater and the Ocala Symphony Orchestra. He has participated in masterclasses with such teachers as Jennifer Larmore, Victoria Livengood, Thomas Potter, Mark Thomsen, and Stella Zambalis.

Mr. Mazurs compositions are regularly published and performed internationally by significant regional choral and instrumental ensembles.

## **Our Mission**

The mission of the Gainesville Civic Chorus is to foster and share the art of choral music, as well as to serve our community, through the pursuit of choral excellence in repertoire and performance.

## **Strategic Plan**

To improve and grow as a choir, we continually recruit eager, talented singers. We accept new members twice a year but we recruit at all times. A dedicated core of members who are enthusiastic about our mission and our choral involvement is an important priority in our lives. Our conductors lead us in growing artistically and we encourage one another in the development of joyful music. We work toward increasing awareness of our choir by publicizing our concerts, auditions, and choir news using a multifaceted approach.

## **Website**

The chorus maintains a website that communicates our mission, goals, leadership and membership as well as provides the community with information about our upcoming concerts. Please visit the site frequently at [www.gcchorus.org](http://www.gcchorus.org).

## **Dues**

To create an effective and stable financial base for our choir, we build on our revenue from yearly regular member dues of \$125.00 and are grateful for the financial support of friends and the use of rehearsal space and storage at the University of Florida. Students enrolled for credit at the University pay no dues, and students joining the chorus without choir credit pay only \$20.

## **Commitment to Rehearsal**

Attendance at weekly rehearsals is compulsory. Being present ensures that members are familiar with the music details of the repertoire at hand. A choir member who is completely prepared will have a more meaningful personal experience and will be more capable of enriching others through song. There is no possibility of a good experience in a choir where members do not take attendance seriously.

## **Attendance**

Responsible choir members exhibit a commitment to communication. If an absence is necessary, please notify Dave Gaisser ([dgaisser@yahoo.com](mailto:dgaisser@yahoo.com)). There may be times when unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance. In these rare instances, absences may be excused. In the event that a member is absent from a dress rehearsal however, performance in the concert may be precluded, at the discretion of the director. Members who find that

their schedules cannot accommodate the attendance requirement should discuss a leave of absence with the director.

### Rehearsal and Performance Calendar

Starting August 21, 2017, we rehearse Chamber Singers on Monday evenings from 6:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. and the Master Chorale 7:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. in the Choral Rehearsal Hall, School of Music, University of Florida. Typically, we perform four major concerts per year – one in the fall, the annual Sounds of the Season, and two in the spring. Most of our performances are free and open to the public and are held in local concert venues and church sanctuaries. We perform smaller concerts at other times of year and collaborate regularly with the UF Symphony. The chorus will gather socially throughout the year and begin the fall season with a pot-luck meal in September. We will conclude the semester with a festive holiday reception and culminate the spring semester with an outdoor family picnic with games, awards, and perhaps even the Dr. Will Kesling Dunk Tank!

### Weekly Rehearsal Guidelines

Rehearsals begin promptly, and members are expected to arrive early. The time prior to rehearsal is best used to arrange music in rehearsal order (if written on the board) so that the chorus can move directly from piece to piece. Upon arrival, sign the attendance roster on the piano, pick up any new music or rehearsal aids, and check the seating chart (if one is used that night).

### Parking

The parking lots surrounding the School of Music at UF are zoned "parking by permit only" and members will be ticketed without the proper permit. If you arrive after 5:30 however these restrictions are lifted; **CHECK TO BE SURE YOU ARE NOT IN A 24 HOUR TOW AWAY ZONE.**

### Dress Rehearsals

Many of our concerts are enhanced by brass or orchestral accompaniment. While these rehearsals are usually longer than the weekly rehearsals, they are crucial to performance success. Please allow plenty of time to place the music in concert order before rehearsal begins. There is much to do in little time, so make every effort to be prompt. The GCC does not do "dressed" dress rehearsals – wear comfy clothes as long as there is time to change before the concert.

### Concerts

We are very visible on stage so the way we conduct ourselves is important. Our department during concerts sets the tone for the entire event. We endeavor to project a sense of excitement, unity, and uniformity from the moment we enter until the performance concludes. Music folders are carried in the right hand when entering or leaving the stage. Once in place on the risers, step forward so that those in back have suitable space to open their folders. Stand tall and comfortably. Take all cues from the director, particularly when opening and closing the folders. Be conscious of turning the music pages quietly.

## Performance Attire

The focus should be drawn to the music and its message rather than on individual members of the chorus. Members provide their own concert attire within the following guidelines.

### General

Avoid flamboyant jewelry or accessories (e.g., hair bows, wraps) which call attention to the individual. **Do not wear perfume or cologne in rehearsal or performance.** Wear comfortable black shoes for long periods of standing.

### Men's attire

Black Tuxedos, white tuxedo shirt, black bow-ties, black cummerbunds.

### Women's attire

Floor-length black dresses or skirts; tops with at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeves (no bare shoulders or spaghetti straps); avoid heavy sequins, fur collars, or colored trim.

### Music and Folder Return

Printed music is a valuable resource so we ask that each member treat it with care. Make sure all music is returned following the concert. Place music and folders in the appropriate location in the rehearsal hall and remember to remove all personal items from the folders.

### Commitment to Musicianship

Although musicians in the chorus are at varying levels of musical experience, certain disciplines apply to everyone.

**Listen to the directors and follow directions.** It is very important for every chorister to watch and listen to the director concerning dynamics, phrasing, rhythm, and tempo. Make pencil notations in the music where needed.

**Listen to the choir.** Attentive listening is the key to sensitive voice blending and accurate intonation, which ultimately results in an ideal choral sound.

**Practice good posture.** Good posture is vital. An upright posture encourages fine singing and promotes attentiveness. Sit at the front of the chair with feet flat on the floor. Keep the back straight, neck and head held in line with the spine, chest held high, shoulders relaxed, with arms holding music up in line of vision with the director.

**Practice positive reinforcement.** Smile at your neighbor and affirm them when you like what you hear. Never, ever correct or criticize.

**Drink water.** Staying well-hydrated is essential to maintaining the voice in good condition. Feel free to bring a RESEALABLE water bottle to rehearsals if desired. No other food or drinks are permitted.

## Core Values

### Time.

We know that time is valuable, and we are committed to making the time together as pleasant, productive, and meaningful as possible. Rehearsals begin and end promptly on schedule and are carefully prepared to make effective use of our limited rehearsal time. Concert schedules are usually designed a year in advance so that singers can mark their calendars and plan ahead.

### Responsibility.

Members are provided with music and a choral folder for performances. A sufficient number of copies of the pieces are purchased or used from current holdings so that copyright law is obeyed. These copies are not intended to become part of any member's personal music collection and must be returned to the librarian at the end of the concert.

### Communication.

Pertinent choral announcements are made at each rehearsal and it is the responsibility of each member to listen and make note of these announcements. It is essential for each member to ensure that their email address is current and to notify the president of changes. We will verify addresses and email accounts during the first few rehearsals each semester.

### Quality.

We are committed to performing the best of choral music and we choose literature accordingly. For many of our concerts, an orchestra or brass ensemble is engaged, thereby enhancing the performance experience.

### Appreciation.

Members are carefully chosen using such criteria as talent, expertise, dedication, a cooperative spirit, and a love of music. Mutual cooperation and respect among the members are the cornerstones of success.

### Chorus Leadership

The board of directors handles choir business and supports the artist vision of the director.

Joshua L. Mazur	President
Dave Gaisser	Vice President
Gina Romblad	Secretary
Andy Olivenbaum	Treasurer
Aima Whitbeck	Correspondence Secretary
Hannah Mazur	PR and Fundraising Director
Chianti Powe	Director at Large
Willey Lima	Director at Large
Catherine Springer	Director at Large