



The Gainesville Master Chorale Handbook

Dr. Will Kesling, Director

The Gainesville Master Chorale

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www.gcchorus.net

Purpose

This handbook provides details about the Chorus and outlines the expectations for membership in our organization.

About Us

The Gainesville Civic Chorus began 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 current eighty-plus members are retired citizens, businesspersons, university professors, professional musicians and others from many walks of life. Now performing as the Gainesville Master Chorale (GMC), it is an auditioned chorus under the umbrella of the Gainesville Civic Chorus with eighty-plus members.

The GMC presents several major concerts each season. In past years, the chorus frequently has hosted Messiah Sing-A-Longs, performed at the Festival of Lights at the Downtown Plaza, and has been invited to participate in various baccalaureate services at the University of Florida. Most recently, members from the chorus have participated in various international choral activities such as the Festival Coral de Medellin in Colombia in 2017, and a musical vision trip to Peru to explore opportunities to bring the choral art back to the country.

Our Mission

The mission of the Gainesville Master Chorale 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 making. We work toward increasing awareness of our choir by publicizing our concerts, auditions, and choir news using a multifaceted approach.

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 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.

Black binders are required for each performance. There is no requirement as to the type of binder to be used, but it is expected that all music will be bound in performance order prior to the concert to minimize searching for music between pieces.

Printed music is a valuable resource so members are required to treat it with care. Make sure all music is returned following each concert.

Quality

We are committed to performing the best of choral music and we choose literature accordingly. For many of our concerts, an orchestra or other accompaniment 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.

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 list-serve manager of changes via email at info@gcchorus.org**. We will verify addresses and email accounts during the first few rehearsals each semester.

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.net.**

Chorus Information

The chorus also maintains a central email to streamline the direction and handling of questions. Your concerns will be forwarded to the appropriate Board member or other person responsible. Please send your questions or comments to: info@gcchorus.org.

Commitment to Rehearsal

Attendance at weekly rehearsals is compulsory. Being present ensures that members are familiar with the musical 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 your section leader**. 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.

Rehearsal and Performance Calendar

The Master Chorale rehearses Monday evenings from 7:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. in the Choral Rehearsal Hall, Room 120, School of Music, University of Florida. Sectional rehearsals may be called at times prior to regular rehearsal. Typically, we perform at least three major concerts per year, including one in the fall, the annual Sounds of the Season, and one in the spring. Many of our performances are free and open to the public and are held in local concert venues and churches.

Weekly Rehearsal Procedures

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, get your nametag that is used to track attendance and pick up any new music or rehearsal aids.

Dues

Regular member dues are \$125.00 per year, collected in August. Students enrolled for credit at the University pay no dues, and students joining the chorus without choir credit pay only \$20. We do not turn away singers because of inability to pay dues.

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 conduct 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. 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 unless otherwise noted.

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 bowties, black cummerbunds.

Women's attire

Floor-length black dresses, skirts, or dress pants; tops with at least ½ sleeves (no bare shoulders or spaghetti straps); avoid heavy sequins, fur collars, or colored trim.

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 chorus member 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.**

Chorus Leadership

Our Conductor

Dr. Will Kesling, Ph.D
Director of Choral Activities, University of Florida
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Board of Directors

The board of directors handles choir business and supports the artistic vision of the director. Structure of the board of directors is defined in the organization's bylaws. Please see a board member for more information or if you are interested in serving.