

MEMBER HANDBOOK
September 2007 Edition

Diane Retallack
Artistic and Executive Director

WELCOME

Welcome to the Eugene Concert Choir organization! We are truly pleased to add your voice to ours as a community of singers who enjoy learning the choral masterworks and performing them for a growing appreciative audience in the Eugene-Springfield region.

This handbook is designed to provide you with background information on the operation of the Eugene Concert Choir and Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble, and with guidelines for your role in the choir. We hope you'll find that it answers most of your questions about expectations for choir members, and that it conveys our aspirations for professional quality and fellowship in all that we do as a choir.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Eugene Concert Choir is the premier choral organization in the region, serving our community through performance of choral masterworks, diverse musical experiences, and educational outreach.

HISTORY

The Eugene Concert Choir is celebrating its 33rd season as a vibrant part of the cultural life of the Eugene-Springfield Region. A Resident Company of the Hult Center for the Performing Arts since 1997, the Eugene Concert Choir organization consists of two choruses: the Eugene Concert Choir, a 90-voice masterworks chorus, and its associated chamber choir, the Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble. Directed by Dr. Diane Retallack since 1985, the choirs present all eras and styles of choral music performance, from the grandest of masterworks to the intimate treasures of chamber music.

The Choir was founded in 1974 as the Eugene Community Chorus under the direction of Philip Bayles. A board of directors was formed and the Choir was established as a 501(c) (3) non-profit tax-exempt organization. After several years, the Choir was renamed "Eugene Concert Choir" to reflect its growth in stature and professionalism. Over the past 30 years, the Eugene Concert Choir has performed the great choral masterworks, including the Verdi, Mozart, Brahms, Berlioz and Fauré *Requiem Masses*, Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and numerous other choral works of the great choral masters.

The choir has performed in partnership with the Oregon Mozart Players for the past 20 seasons and has collaborated with the Oregon Bach Festival, the Eugene Symphony Orchestra, Dance Theater of Oregon, and the Eugene Ballet Company, most notably in the staged and choreographed presentation of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

The Eugene Concert Choir and its associated chamber choir have released two CD recordings, *Holiday Joy*, and *American Spirit*, and touring ensembles from the choirs have presented concert tours in Germany and Austria in

1998 and Australia in 2003, culminating with a performance of the Verdi *Requiem* in the famed Sydney Opera House. The Choir will be going on tour to China in June of 2006 to sing the Mozart *Requiem* in the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing.

Educational outreach is an important part of the Choir's mission, and thousands of children have been enriched singing in the "Singing a Masterwork" project and other educational programs

REHEARSALS

Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble rehearses from 7:00 to 9:45pm every Monday during the concert season. Rehearsals are held at Grace Lutheran Church, at the corner of 18th and Hilyard Streets.

Eugene Concert Choir rehearses from 7:15 to 9:45pm every Tuesday during the concert season. Rehearsals are held at Emmaus Lutheran Church; 1250 W. 18th Street in Eugene.

Extra rehearsals are held during performance weeks and may be scheduled at other times as the repertoire requires. Sectional rehearsals are incorporated into regular rehearsals, or scheduled by each section as needed.

Dress Rehearsals

Dress rehearsals are generally held the day before a performance, although it is occasionally necessary to schedule them for the performance day. Please be seated and ready to sing well before the scheduled starting time; warming up beforehand is also a good idea.

Dress rehearsals are often the only opportunity to rehearse with all musical forces in the performance venue. Failure to attend a dress rehearsal may jeopardize your participation in a performance.

REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

Rehearsal Expectations

Please be seated and ready to warm up at the scheduled starting time.

Name tags will be provided for all members. Please keep yours with your music and wear it at rehearsals.

All choir members must bring **sharpened pencils** to all rehearsals. The Artistic Director will make critical corrections or modifications at each rehearsal, and choir members are expected to mark all instructions for all parts in their scores. Please check with a fellow section member or your section rep about markings you may have missed when you were absent.

Extraneous conversations with neighbors during rehearsals may cause you and other section members to miss specific instructions.

Break time is included in each rehearsal for announcements and a few minutes of socializing. Most information between choir members should be communicated through the newsletter, but if you must make a general announcement, please clear it with the Artistic Director before the rehearsal begins. Rehearsal resumes following the break; break time does not signify the end of the rehearsal.

Please stay a few minutes after rehearsal to put your chair away; we leave the room as we found it.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance Policy - Performances and Dress Rehearsals

The Artistic Director must be given advance written notice if a member will be absent from a performance or dress rehearsal. (In cases of emergency, the Artistic Director must be notified as soon as possible.) Members may be suspended or expelled after a single unexcused absence from a performance or dress rehearsal. Examples of excused absences from a performance or dress rehearsal are a debilitating illness, a personal or family crisis, or an important event which the choir member does not schedule (i.e., professional conference, wedding, funeral, or graduation ceremony). It is expected that work and vacations will be scheduled around performances and dress rehearsals; such absences will not be considered excused.

In the case of any unexcused absence from a performance or dress rehearsal in a single term, the Artistic Director may determine appropriate action alone, or consult with the Board of Directors. Members who are suspended or expelled for any reason may appeal such action to the Board of Directors.

Attendance Policy - Rehearsals

Members are expected to attend every rehearsal, and may be suspended or expelled after three (3) unexcused absences from rehearsals. Examples of excused absences from rehearsals are illness, work conflict, family commitment, vacation conflict, or performance commitment. An unexcused absence is defined as any absence without explanation or reasonable cause.

It is the choir member's responsibility to inform his or her section leader of any absence or tardy, *in advance whenever possible*. Please keep the phone number of your section leader handy.

The Artistic Director will be notified by the section leader if a choir member has three (3) unexcused absences from rehearsals in a single term, or is repeatedly late to rehearsals. The Artistic Director may determine appropriate action alone, or consult with the Board of Directors. Members who have been suspended or expelled for any reason may appeal such action to the Board of Directors.

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Concert Dress

Women: Identical floor-length black skirts and long-sleeved black blouses, which are ordered through ECC only. Women should wear black dress shoes and minimal jewelry (conspicuous neckline jewelry or noisy bracelets can be distracting). No perfume, cologne, or scented hair spray, please.

Men: Black tuxedos, white wing-collar shirts, black dress shoes and black bow ties; black cummerbunds are options. No cologne or scented aftershave, please.

Folders

Black folders are required for most performances. Members are responsible for obtaining their own folders, which may be purchased from a music store or borrowed from the member's church. Elastic bands on the inside re desirable to secure major works. A ring binder notebook may be more convenient when performing many short selections.

Performance Etiquette

Maintaining a high professional posture is an ongoing goal of the choir. Silence at rehearsals with orchestra and soloists is essential, especially when the orchestra is tuning. Do not engage in conversation while on stage, before, during, or after a performance - the conductor requires your undivided attention during that time. In order not to trigger symptoms in those with allergies or sensitivities to fragrance, please be careful not to wear fragrances of any kind during dress rehearsals and performances.

Ticket Sales

The importance of promoting choir performances and selling tickets to choir events cannot be overemphasized. A professional quality performance of choral music chosen to entertain and enlighten a growing community audience is what we work toward! It is extremely important that all members be actively involved in promoting the sale of tickets. Ticket sales can spell the difference between profit and deficit for the season.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Season Structure

The Eugene Concert Choir presents a concert series at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts which features two or three major works. In addition some performances may be scheduled outside the Hult Center in churches or other performing arts venues. The season begins in September and runs through May, with occasional summer performances. The season is augmented by the Concert Choir's fall *AuctionFest* fundraiser. The Choir and Vocal Arts Ensemble sometimes accept contracts to perform with other arts groups, and additional performances may be scheduled as a part of community and educational outreach.

Business Office Information

The Eugene Concert Choir maintains an office in the Midtown Arts Center located at the corner of 16th and Willamette in Eugene. General office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Phone: 687-6865. Fax: 687-5745. E-mail: choir@eugeneconcertchoir.org.

Website address: www.eugeneconcertchoir.org.

The mailing address for the Eugene Concert Choir and Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble is:

Eugene Concert Choir
Diane Retallack, Executive Director
1590 Willamette Street Suite 400
Eugene, OR 97401

Auditions and Re-evaluations

Formal auditions for new members of ECC and EVAE are held before the first rehearsal in September, again in January, and sometimes in the spring, at dates and times set by the Artistic Director. Singers will be considered for either choir at all formal auditions. Prospective members will be asked to sing a prepared song, preferably an art song or aria. An accompanist will be provided. Sight reading and tonal memory will also be tested. Audition times must be scheduled in advance with Diane Retallack.

Returning members of ECC are re-evaluated every other season. These re-evaluations are necessary in part because of guidelines stipulated by granting agencies. The Artistic Director will hear individuals from each

section sing short segments from the current or previous season's repertoire. Re-evaluation times are set by the Artistic Director. EVAE members are re-evaluated each year, and are required to sing an aria or art song at a Recital Night scheduled in the spring.

Anyone leaving ECC or EVAE must go through a formal audition to gain re-admittance to the choir.

Music

All music is selected by the Artistic Director. Suggestions for repertoire are always welcome.

Music is purchased or distributed at rehearsals. Choir members purchase some major works and selected repertoire; other repertoire is the property of ECC and is checked out from its library. Whenever possible, repertoire and prices for the coming season are listed in a summer newsletter mailed to all choir members.

Music checked out from the ECC music library is the property of the organization. Please do not mutilate, write on the music with anything that is not erasable, or otherwise deface the music. We suggest using a pencil with soft graphite that can be erased easily. **NO HIGHLIGHTERS**, please.

At the appropriate time, each choir member is responsible for returning the music he or she has checked out. Members who do not return their music in good condition and in a timely manner will be charged the current cost of the music, plus a \$5 reorder fee.

Newsletter

A weekly newsletter is distributed at rehearsals. The newsletter contains important information, schedule updates, members' announcements and news of other music organizations, as well as witticisms and words of inspiration. Read your newsletter thoroughly each week, preferably before rehearsal begins. Some items may require a response the same evening.

One purpose of the newsletter is to reduce the amount of break time used for announcements. Choir members are encouraged to use the newsletter if they have ads or other items of interest to contribute. If you have contributions to make to the newsletter, please contact Jill Liberty by Saturday evening before each rehearsal. You may reach her by phone at 344-7906, or via email at jl Liberty@efn.org.

Socials

Occasionally, an extended rehearsal break will be scheduled to give choir members an opportunity to become better acquainted. Sections will take turns providing the refreshments for these social breaks.

Usually, an after-concert party or reception will be arranged to celebrate our performance. The close of each season is always celebrated with a banquet to which all choir members and a guest are invited. This is a special opportunity to remember the pleasures (and challenges!) of the season, and to spend time together before the summer hiatus with spoofs and parodies.

Fundraising

Participation in our fundraising activities is an essential part of membership in ECC and EVAE. The Eugene Concert Choir is a non-profit organization. We rely on ticket sales, grants, business and private donations, and fundraising events to make the music happen. These activities are also occasions to work with and get to know other choir members. Our organization needs the enthusiastic support and cooperation of all its members to ensure artistic and financial success.

The choir's major fundraising event is the AuctionFest, held this year on November 9, 2007 at the Hilton Hotel. The AuctionFest combines fine cuisine, wine, and special choral entertainment, a silent auction of distinctive items and event tickets, and an oral auction of entertainment opportunities, mountain and beach getaways, and fantastic surprises.

Other fundraising projects may include a garage sale, the promotion of Entertainment Books, T-shirt sales, etc. Suggestions for fundraisers, especially those that involve music, are always welcome.

Volunteering

Because we have a small paid staff, there are always many tasks besides fundraising that need to be done. It cannot be emphasized too strongly how important our volunteers are to the health of the organization. Opportunities for short-term projects are announced in the newsletter and during rehearsals. Your participation will make a real difference to the success of the choir.

Compassionate Leave

A compassionate leave of absence from ECC may be granted, allowing the member to return to active participation without a formal audition, given the following conditions:

1. A written, confidential request for leave is conveyed to the Artistic Director.
2. The reasons necessitating the leave are debilitating illness, pregnancy or infant care, or family/personal crisis. In the event of an emergency, the written request to grant a leave may be submitted after the member has missed rehearsals. In responding, the Artistic Director will take into account the nature of the emergency as well as the timeliness, given the circumstances, of the request.
3. The period of time involved is not greater than ten months. If a leave will be needed for more than ten months, for whatever reason, it will be necessary for the member to go through a formal audition.
4. If during the leave the member's section went through the re-evaluation process, he or she will need re-evaluation on returning to the choir.
5. All requests for leave will be reviewed by the Artistic Director and granted or denied. The member has the option of making an appeal to the Board of Directors in the case of denial.

The member on leave must contact his/her section representative and the Artistic Director prior to the end of their leave, so that re-entry into ECC can be coordinated with the season's concert schedule.

Political Endorsements

Because of its status as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, the Eugene Concert Choir may not endorse any political candidate or issue, nor can it participate in any political campaigns. As individuals, choir members have every right to express their opinions. However, political announcements and/or endorsements will not be printed in the newsletter.