

CHORAL  SOCIETY
OF MIDDLE GEORGIA

CHORAL MEMBER HANDBOOK

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Revised August 2024

Table of Contents

The purpose of this handbook is to ensure everyone has a positive singing experience, understands the commitment needed and expected to meet our mission and vision, and is informed of policies and procedures of Choral Society of Middle Georgia (CSMG). The handbook can be located on the website www.choralsocietymga.com

Section 1: Who We Are.....	Page 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and History • Mission Statement • Vision Statement • Board of Directors • Collaboration and Partnership 	
Section 2: Expectations.....	Page 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Basics • Weekly Rehearsals and Attendance • Rehearsal Etiquette 	
Section 3: Membership Dues and Music Cost.....	Page 6
Section 4: Funding of CSMG.....	Page 6
Section 5: Concerts: Showtime!.....	Page 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concert Etiquette • Concert Attire 	
Section 6: New Member Meeting With the Artistic Director.....	Page 8
Section 7: Final Thoughts.....	Page 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Sing in a Community Choir? • Quick Reference 	

Section 1: Who We Are

Introduction and History

The Choral Society of Middle Georgia (CSMG) is a community organization of singer-musicians from the central Georgia area. Originally founded as the Macon Civic Choral, Choral Society of Middle Georgia has provided inspiring choral concerts since 1975. With three major concerts each year, CSMG explores a diverse selection of choral styles while being dedicated to performing choral/orchestral works for its audiences. They perform a fall and spring concert as well as the annual performances of the Christmas portion of Handel's *Messiah* in December. The *Messiah* is offered on two nights.

The partnership between CSMG and Mercer University Townsend School of Music provides both members and college students with a unique opportunity to blend voices from a wide range of singers allowing for the selection of choral music written for larger choirs. The conductor and artistic director reaches beyond the scope of teaching for performances by including educational aspects about choral techniques. This gives members a greater experience and opportunity to improve their voices.

Membership is open to everyone, regardless of race, ethnic origin, national origin, gender, gender expression/ identity, sexual orientation, religion/creed, marital status, or military status. Singers with physical disabilities which do not prevent them from producing adequate vocal sounds will be assisted in every way practical.

Mission Statement

The mission of Choral Society of Middle Georgia is to provide musical training for both volunteers from the community and Mercer University students, produce exceptional performances that include both classical and contemporary composers, and preserve the arts through choral music for the cultural enrichment and enjoyment for its members and the central Georgia area.

Vision Statement

To provide valuable musical experiences and opportunities founded in the history of choral music and offer exceptional choral education to Georgia communities.

Board of Directors

Leadership for CSMG is provided by a Board of Directors. From the board of directors, officers include President, Vice President, Past President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The artistic director also serves on the board. The current board members and officers and information about the artistic director can be found on the CSMG website at www.choralsocietymga.com.

Collaboration and Partnership

CSMG works closely with Mercer University Townsend School of Music. Monday night rehearsals are held at the McCorkle Music Building on the Mercer Campus (Room 110). The artistic director is a professor and Dean of the Townsend School of Music at Mercer. The Mercer University Choir joins CSMG to create a large choral group of approximately 70-90 singers. Graduate students from the School of Music help lead sectional rehearsals as needed.

Section 2: Expectations

The Basics

Members should have at least basic music-reading skills; many of our members are experienced singers.

1. *Bring your pencil!*
2. When singing, focus should be placed on being a part of your choral section matching tones and not standing out as an individual voice.
3. *Watch and listen to the director!* As you are given instructions in correct notes, rhythm, dynamics, and other details of the music, mark your music accordingly (in pencil) so you are prepared, especially as you practice on your own between rehearsals.
4. Members must be willing to commit to regular rehearsal attendance.
5. Members should be supportive of the CSMG through active participation, volunteerism, ticket sales, and concert promotion.
6. *Watch for emails!* This is the primary communication method used for reminders, changes in rehearsals, concert details and flyers, etc.

Weekly Rehearsals and Attendance

CSMG has been successful largely because of the elevated level of individual responsibility and dedication to choral music. Singers are expected to learn a great amount of challenging music literature for each concert. Regular rehearsal attendance is a necessity for each member to fully participate and reap the benefits of the choral experience.

The purpose of weekly rehearsals is to teach the music, working on techniques such as section cohesiveness, blending, tuning and intonation, vocal production, and musical expression.

Rehearsals are on Mondays from 7:00-9:00 p.m. They are held August-October for the fall concert, November/December for the *Messiah*, and January-April for the spring concert.

Each member is allowed no more than two absences per concert, except for *Messiah*. With only four rehearsals for *Messiah*, no absences are accepted. Be sure to sign in to your section when you arrive at rehearsal. There should be no more than four tardies and/or early exits from scheduled rehearsals. After two absences, the member is ineligible to perform at the next concert. Exceptions can be made in extenuating circumstances when more than two absences occur. The member should communicate with the artistic director well in advance of the concert date to receive permission to perform. Attendance is mandatory at dress rehearsals* which take place the day prior to the concert.

**Concert attire is not required for dress rehearsals.*

Practice your part. You are encouraged to practice individual parts between rehearsals. Being prepared from one rehearsal to the next not only makes you a better member and singer, but also makes those around you stronger. It also saves a lot of time at rehearsals so the artistic director can move forward sooner to reach concert goals. Links to recordings of the music are provided to assist in your practice time. They can be found on the CSMG website at www.choralsocietymga.com

Rehearsal Etiquette

To perform well, singers need to be independently well prepared for rehearsals and performances and to also support and listen to each other. The following will help ensure that rehearsal time is used efficiently and effectively.

- Singers should be in their seats with their music and a pencil and ready to warm up prior to the start of rehearsal.
- Cell phones should not be used during rehearsals. This includes texting. While there are circumstances where we need to be reached by a family member for emergencies, please be sure your phone is silenced.
- In deference to the singers around you, do not wear strong fragrances. (Unscented deodorant is welcomed.)
- No food or drink except for water is permitted in the rehearsal area. You are encouraged to bring a water bottle. Your vocal cords will appreciate it.
- The artistic director will provide markings which you should write in your music *in pencil*.
- Limit conversations with your colleagues to before and after rehearsal. No chatting while the director is rehearsing the group.
- *Eyes on the director.*
- Welcome new people and help them learn parts by sitting beside them and encouraging them.
- We sing a broad range of music. Some you will love, some you will learn to love, and some you will not love so much. Focus on the joy we get from the actual process of singing together and remember that everything we sing in our concerts is a gift to our audience as well as our artistic director and choir colleagues. Give it everything you've got, and you can enjoy any song.
- If you do not know a part, stop singing and listen to those around you. Sing softly until you are sure. *And watch and listen to the director.*
- *Come prepared.* Practice might not make perfect, but it will get you very close and make rehearsals much smoother and enjoyable for all. Links are provided for each piece of concert music to assist with your practice at home. The more you practice between rehearsals, the more confident you will be. You can find the links on www.choralsocietymga.com.

Section 3: Membership Dues and Music Cost

Membership dues for each concert season (fall, *Messiah*, and spring) are \$100 per individual. Dues assist with established budgeted items that include compensation for the artistic director, accompanist, and additional instrumentalists; advertising of concerts; tickets and programs expenses; website maintenance; etc. Dues should be paid in full at the first rehearsal. If a member needs to split the dues between the fall and spring concerts, please make this request at the beginning of the concert season. We want everyone to have an opportunity to sing regardless of financial issues. Members are encouraged to help other participants in CSMG by contributing to scholarships available through the Board of Directors for members who are in need of financial assistance with dues.

Choral Society members are required to purchase the music for each concert. The average cost is \$25.00. The music will be available for pickup at the first rehearsal for the concert. When possible, CSMG borrows music from the Mercer University choral library to help defray the cost for the members. The borrowed music must be returned at the conclusion of the concert.

The Board of Directors works hard to establish external funding with the help of its members. Any donation you can make in addition to your membership fee helps in the growth and success of CSMG.

Summary of costs:

Membership Dues:

- \$100 for an Individual Membership per concert season

Music

- \$25 average cost per person

Section 4: Funding of CSMG

The Choral Society of Middle Georgia is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and supports itself through membership dues, concert ticket sales, corporate and individual donations, and grants. Members are strongly encouraged to sell tickets to our concerts and spread the word about concerts by distributing concert flyers, promoting it with your church or organization, sharing on social media, and inviting friends and family.

Visit the website at www.choralsocietymga.com and click on “Support Us” for more information.

Section 5: Concerts: Showtime!

The concert is the culmination of hard work and many hours of rehearsals. It is now our time to share this music with the community and give them a sense of joy during each performance.

Concert Etiquette

- Arrive in your concert attire prior to call time for the performance.
- Do not wear strong fragrances, especially since performances are usually in tight quarters. (Unscented deodorant is welcomed.)
- Do not talk or gesture to audience members anytime you are onstage.
- Enter and exit the stage quickly.
- When entering or exiting the stage, music is carried at your side in the hand away from the audience. Keep your folder at your side until the director gives the cue to raise it.
- Turn your music as quietly as possible. Avoid page turns during breaks or when the volume is lower in the singing or accompaniment.
- Music should be organized in concert order in a black folder or notebook.
- Tabs or paperclips to mark music are recommended. These are especially helpful to quickly find the appropriate song or section after your folder has been closed between performance sets or when a section of written music is planned to be skipped during the performance.

Concert Attire

The following rules and guidelines are to ensure a professional and unified appearance for the chorus.

All music must be in a black chorus folder or three ring binder for all performances. (A chorus folder is preferred, but a black binder is acceptable.)

Women	Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black floor-length dress with minimum 3/4 length sleeves; black full-length skirt or pants with black blouse (minimum 3/4 length sleeves). No sleeveless dresses or tops. • Modest round/scoop neckline • No excessive or shiny jewelry or hair ornaments. No excessive makeup. • Black shoes – no open toes. Make sure they are comfortable enough to stand in for an hour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black tuxedo (no tails) or black suit • White collared shirt (tux wing-tip or traditional dress) • Black bow tie • Black shoes and black socks

Section 6: New Member Meeting With the Director

Meet the Artistic Director and Voice Placement

CSMG is always looking for new singers. New members will meet the artistic director for an audition and interview to ensure that they are in the correct voice placement. This audition will help evaluate a singer's basic music skills and vocal abilities. This process is as low-stress as possible! Past singers who have been away from the choir for more than two consecutive seasons will be asked to participate in a voice placement evaluation with the director. The director will contact you to schedule your audition/voice placement.

Auditions for voice placement of new members will be held before each concert season.

What are we looking for in new singers?

- Good pitch and rhythm
- Ability to blend with other voices
- Desire to work hard as part of a choral group

Once accepted into the choir, each member is encouraged to familiarize themselves with the **Choral Member Handbook** which outlines what is needed and expected to make the choral community work well as a group.

Section 7: Final Thoughts

Why sing in a community choir?

- Relieves stress
- Singing works a different part of our brain
- Boost confidence and self-esteem
- Improve ability to read music
- Sing in different languages
- Build long-lasting friendships
- Share your voice and bring joy to your community
- Create memories for yourself, your choral colleagues, and audience
- Be a positive influence and example to young people thinking about joining a chorus

QUICK REFERENCE:

- *Rehearsals: Mondays, 7:00-9:00 p.m., McCorkle Building, Mercer University Campus.
Be in your seat ready to sing on time.*
 - *Dues: \$100 individual per season; Music: Approximately \$25 per concert*
 - *Pay attention to emails*
 - *Watch the director*
-



Check out the newly revamped Choral Society of Middle Georgia website at www.choralsocietymga.com ! M&R Marketing in Macon has worked closely with CSMG for several months to give us a comprehensive site where you can tap into resources, check out previous concerts, find links to concert music, and make contributions. Share this website with friends so they can also be a part of our CSMG family. It is easy to use both on a computer and your mobile device.

