

Oratorio Society of Minnesota Members' Guide 2010-2011

Membership

Membership means commitment to the entire season's schedule. Please mark your calendars accordingly. Schedule changes are sometimes necessary; these are announced at rehearsals and in e-mails.

Membership also means sharing your gifts whenever possible. All are sharing their musical talents, but you may have additional abilities, which could be shared with the group. As a nonprofit organization, the existence and advancement of OSM are extremely dependent on the donated time and talents of its dedicated volunteers and there are many opportunities for singers to perform in additional roles. The more singers (and family members) we have participating in additional volunteer tasks, the stronger the group will be. Joining a committee or signing up for short-term tasks such as envelope stuffing or party organizing is expected and encouraged for all members. It is also an excellent way to get acquainted and bond with other members.

Members are expected to continue their musical development and may be asked to re-audition periodically to see where they might be working on improvements.

Music

2010-2011 Policy: Scores will be borrowed or purchased through OSM. All purchased music must be paid for at the time it is distributed, so please remember to take your checkbook with you to rehearsal.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held each Monday evening from 7:15–9:15 p.m. at Macalester Plymouth United Church, 1658 Lincoln Ave., St. Paul, MN. There will not be a lengthy break and after the musical sessions there will be time available for ticket sales, socializing, etc. The rehearsal time may be extended to 9:45 in the weeks immediately preceding a performance, to allow for additional refinements.

Rehearsals are the core of our experience in the Oratorio Society—they provide the essential time to prepare the wonderful and often challenging choral works. Rehearsals need to begin promptly at the time specified, which means that members must be in their seats, warmed up, and ready to sing at that time.

It's a good idea to be at the rehearsal location about 15 minutes ahead of time — to find a parking spot, get inside, take off your coat, pick up handouts, visit, and so forth. It really makes life a lot easier to just build in that extra 15 minutes!

Always have a pencil with you at rehearsal to mark your music.

Please, no heavy fragrances, which might affect the allergies of others.

Please have the courtesy to listen attentively and refrain from unnecessary talking during rehearsal and announcement time. If you need to remind your neighbor to be courteous so you can hear the conductor or other speakers, please try to do so diplomatically.

During rehearsals, please turn off your cell phone, or put it on vibrate.

Members who attend a rehearsal but are not able to fully participate because of illness usually sit apart (to prevent germs spreading, obviously), but listen and take notes attentively. However, if you are suffering from a percussive cough, stentorian nose-blowing, or other persistently disruptive or distracting condition, please stay home and ask a buddy for rehearsal notes!

We occasionally plan gatherings for after rehearsal. Sign-up sheets will be passed around for those who would like to supply treats.

Attendance

Please remember to check yourself in on the attendance sheets every week so you will not be counted absent when you are actually present. It is important to take care of this as it could affect your eligibility to perform in concerts. According to current policy, a singer who misses more than two rehearsals per quarter will be expected to attend a make-up rehearsal (usually with the assistant conductor) before performing in a concert. Many additional singers like to attend this additional rehearsal to get in a little extra practice.

Practice at Home

Members are expected to work on music between rehearsals — fixing notes, difficult spots, texts, phrasing, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, etc. Should you miss a rehearsal, please ask someone in your section for markings you may have missed. Despite busy schedules, dedicated members spend at least a couple of hours per week on this, in addition to regular vocalizing. Use of home practice aids such as midi files, mp3s, and CDs is encouraged and members will be kept informed about their availability. If you have any questions about musical notation or other issues, please alert us by e-mail (see below) so assistance can be made available to you.

We are grateful to several generous members who have occasionally hosted sectional rehearsals (and parties!) within their homes in order to do some extra work, and we hope that these unofficial but productive sessions will continue.

Announcements

There is a very short time during each rehearsal for important announcements; other items of information are communicated in a newsletter, handout, or by e-mail. We can't afford to spend music time getting into discussions or reports during rehearsal. By popular demand, the allotted announcement time this season will be no more than a couple of minutes. If you have a pressing matter that affects the entire group, please e-mail it to the Chorus Manager no later than one day before the rehearsal. A table will be available for you to place posters, invitations to events, news items, etc., for others to view.

If you have more complicated issues, please communicate them directly to a board member, or write them down and put them in the suggestion container (red bag).

Concert attire and accessories

Black Folders: Members provide their own black (matte finish) folder for music, and must take it to dress rehearsals and concerts. Folders can be purchased through the Society if you wish.

Men wear black tuxedos, white dress shirt with white studs or buttons, black bow tie, black cummerbund, and black socks and black shoes. The dress shirt should not have a collar type that flips up at the ends. The shoes can be dress or casual but should not be tennis or athletic type. The bow tie should not be distractingly large.

Women wear a long black dress, or black skirt and blouse, black hose, and low, black shoes. Instead of being required to wear a standardized dress, women are free to wear attire of their choice in a style they find becoming, as long as it falls within the guidelines below (sorry if it sounds like a lot of picky details, ladies, but these guidelines have been developed to answer FAQs). And of course, our goal is to keep the concert-goers' attention on the music and our faces, not the dress or shoes.

Fabric: Black, matte-finish fabric, please. Generally, this rules out shiny satin or silk, as well as velvet and lace. Sheer fabric must be lined.

Neckline: Any simple-shaped neckline is acceptable, including collars, but please, no turtlenecks, mock turtlenecks, or plunging V-necks. The lowest point of the neckline should preferably be no more than three fingers' width (fingers placed horizontally) below the collarbone in front and the same distance from the base of the neck in back. Shoulders must be covered. Black simple long-sleeved jacket is fine.

Sleeves: Long sleeves are required; no sheer, lace, or balloon-shaped sleeves. Wrist finish may be elastic, plain-hemmed, buttoned, or cuffed.

Skirt: Skirt may be full or narrow. Dress/skirt should be ankle length. If the top of your ankle shows, the skirt should be lengthened. Skirt should just brush the top of your foot. **Be sure to wear your concert shoes when setting the length of your dress. Dress length is the single most obvious component, and the most commented on by the audience. A uniform length is very important. Be sure dress is not so long that it threatens to trip you on stairs, etc. Experiment with concert shoes on. Back slit is allowable, no higher than back of knee.

Waist: Waist may be gathered, loose, belted, etc. A belt is optional. Guidelines for belt: black matte, not metallic or sequined. A shiny black buckle is acceptable.

Shoes & Hose: Black matte or patent low-heeled shoes (2 inches or lower), please. No boots or ballet slippers, please. Be sure you test your shoe height while wearing your dress to attain the proper dress length. Remember to choose shoes that provide support, room, and comfort.

Jewelry: Jewelry is optional. If you choose to wear jewelry, please follow these guidelines:

Earrings---small earrings, gold or silver. If wearing hoop or dangle earrings, please keep them one-half inch or less in length. Necklace---plain gold or silver chain necklace without pendant and please keep width of chain to one-quarter inch or less. Please leave large, sparkly costume rings at home.

Thanks for making our group look professional and consistently beautiful!

Ticket Sales

In lieu of paying dues, each member must sell four tickets per concert, or twelve per season, and is encouraged to sell more, as the Oratorio Society depends heavily on this source of revenue in order to continue. The minimum sales requirement can also be met by the sale of four season tickets. Singers are expected to pay for this minimum of twelve tickets per season, whether or not they actually sell them to others, unless they have been granted an exemption for special circumstances. Singers who do not take care of this will be asked to buy twelve tickets at the beginning of the following season in order to remain in good standing.

Members buy tickets from their section's "ticket captain" (a member who has volunteered for the job). Members must pay for the tickets when they get them from their ticket captains, and there are no refunds – we need to keep track of exactly how many tickets are sold. Checks should be made payable to "Oratorio Society of Minnesota." Ticket Manager keeps track of how many tickets each member has sold.

Tickets are available to the public from chorus members, OvationTix, and door sales. Discount tickets are available only through members; tickets purchased through OvationTix and at the door are full price.

Timing of sales: All member purchases must be made by the end of the dress rehearsal just before the concert. All tickets sold after that must be purchased at full price from OvationTix, or at the door.

Will-Call tickets must be turned in to the Ticket Manager before the end of the final rehearsal. Please don't ask for exceptions, as this can disrupt planning for those who sell tickets at the door.

E-mail Policy

All communications distributed on behalf of the Oratorio Society of Minnesota to OSM membership through its electronic mailing (e-mail) are to be used for OSM purposes only, such as emergencies or to share information. Many people wish to promote concerts or other events, but we can't advertise everything for everyone; we will only send out such a message if OSM members are performing or are invited to participate in an event. OSM does not sell or lend its member e-mail list to any business or organization.

Anyone wishing to send a message to the OSM membership should submit the message to one of the following individuals for approval and processing:

- * President & Board Chair (Cynthia Stange, Cynthia@stangelaw.com)
- * Chorus Manager (Melinda Maurey, mjmaurey@hotmail.com)

Requests should preferably be submitted a few days prior to the desired distribution date. If you have questions, comments, or concerns about OSM issues, you are encouraged to send them in to oratorio_soc_mn@yahoo.com and they will be forwarded to the appropriate staff, board member, or other volunteer.

Important: to make sure you can receive official OSM communications, please make sure that oratorio_soc_mn@yahoo.com is on your safe contacts list.

Cancellations

The Oratorio Society does not cancel rehearsals or performances unless the venue itself closes. Please keep yourself informed of closings at WCCO-TV or radio and watch your e-mail for an announcement from OSM. In case of rehearsals at MPUC, these will be canceled if, and only if, the Macalester College campus closes down due to bad weather. In the unlikely event a concert must be canceled, it is your responsibility to inform your ticket customers, so please keep their contact information handy!

Performance and Staging Guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed by Oratorio Society chorus members over the years. Suggestions are always welcome.

Preparation

- * No perfume, cologne, heavy hairspray, or after-shave. Some singers have serious allergies!!
- * No onion, garlic, cigarette, cigar, pipe, alcohol, or other strong odors on breath.
- * Turn off chimes and alarms on watches and beepers, or don't wear the watch or beeper. No cell phones, please.
- * Have sections of the music you are not singing clipped or bound together so you are not turning pages during passages of music being performed by soloists and/or the orchestra alone.

On-Stage Etiquette

- * Carry music in whichever hand the conductor specifies, down at side, going on and off stage.
- * Be prepared to clear a path for conductor, soloists, and musicians if necessary.
- * Bring your music up when the conductor puts a foot on the podium as the concert begins & starting the second half of the concert.

- * Be sure to watch the conductor as much as possible. This may sound like a no-brainer request, but it's amazing how singers show the tops of their heads to the audience.
- * Look pleasant (or show appropriate emotion), relax, enjoy the music and concert experience.
- * Please turn pages inconspicuously and well ahead of choral entrances.
- * Stand or sit quietly. Avoid talking or making direct eye contact with members of the audience while performing. Expressive movement during singing can enhance one's experience of the music; be aware, however, that too much movement may be distracting.
- * During any long periods of time when you are not singing, hold your music at "resting" – in position, but a little lower than when you're singing. (Ex: while conductor or other speaker is addressing the audience; during solos and instrumental interludes)
- * Please do not follow along in your score during solos or instrumental interludes. Stay engaged with the music, but keep your head up.
- * Put your music down to your left side when the conductor steps off the podium at the end of the first half and the end of the concert, or if there is choral movement from one part of the stage to another.
- * Please do not clap for anyone on-stage, since you are part of the performance. A relaxed stance and a smile are encouraged!
- * We will begin to exit the stage when the applause has died out. Leaders should begin to exit immediately at that point. Be sure to go all the way out of the Green Room door/back stage area as quickly as possible. Please do not stop to talk until the entire chorus has exited the stage - keep the lines moving.
- * Encore - these vary, so pay attention to the conductor to see when/if the chorus exits, or stays on stage.

Board of Directors

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