

# Oratorio Society of Minnesota Members' Guide 2016-2017

## Membership

To fully appreciate what OSM stands for, members should be familiar with our mission statement: *The Oratorio Society of Minnesota challenges and delights its audiences and singers through dynamic and diverse choral music performed with skill and passion. Its civic engagement and educational programs foster lifelong choral singing.*

Membership means commitment to the rehearsal and performance schedule. Please mark your calendars accordingly. Schedule changes are sometimes necessary; these are announced at rehearsals and in e-mails. Some singers may be unable to follow through on their commitment due to reasons such as illness, a family issue, unforeseen travel, or work conflict. Please send an email to [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com) to notify OSM of such situations, instead of simply dropping out of sight.

Membership also means sharing your gifts whenever possible. All are sharing their musical talents, but you may have additional abilities to share 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.

Singers are also encouraged to connect with OSM and with each other on Facebook, and are periodically invited to share feedback anonymously via online survey (SurveyMonkey).

OSM membership also means being a team player and making every effort to work harmoniously with others; please be aware that a singer may be dismissed from the organization if their conduct is deemed by the board of directors to be detrimental to OSM.

Members are expected to continue their musical development and may be checked by the Artistic Director periodically to see what they could be working on to continue improving their musical skills. Please be aware that a singer's participation may be suspended at the Artistic Director's discretion if their vocal condition or level of musicianship compromises the artistic quality of OSM performances; they may re-audition after the problems have been addressed.

You are encouraged to register in the membership area at [www.oratorio.org](http://www.oratorio.org), where you can provide your contact information and concert participation status, and access rehearsal and procedural information, home practice resources etc.

## Music

2016-2017 policy: Scores will be purchased through OSM. All purchased music must be paid for at the time it is distributed. Please remember to take your checkbook to rehearsal. If paying by cash, please try to have the correct amount because change may not be readily available.

## Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held each Monday evening from 7:15–9:30 pm at Macalester Plymouth United Church, 1658 Lincoln Ave., St. Paul, MN. If there is a break, it will not be a long one, so before and after rehearsal is the best time

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, preferably 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 for everyone to build in that extra 15 minutes!

Always take a pencil with you to rehearsal to mark your music.

Please, no heavy fragrances that may affect the allergies of others, although you are encouraged to smell clean and fresh. Unscented deodorant and clean clothes are great! Please, no onion, garlic, tobacco, alcohol, or other strong odors on breath. Mints are usually available!

**Please have the courtesy to listen attentively and refrain from unnecessary talking or interrupting 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. All members are expected to interact in a mature and peaceful fashion; verbal and physical aggression are not tolerated in OSM.

During rehearsals, please turn off your cell phone, or put it on vibrate. If you are experiencing an urgent situation during the evening and seriously need to communicate with someone, please have the courtesy to go out in the hall to do your calling, texting, or emailing so you don't distract other singers.

Members who attend a rehearsal and are not able to fully participate because of illness, usually sit apart from the rest of the chorus to prevent germs from spreading, but they can 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 provide 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 may be expected to attend a make-up rehearsal (usually with the assistant conductor) before performing in a concert. This is also a time when any chorus member can attend and take advantage of this additional rehearsal for a little extra practice.

If you need to be absent due to illness or a scheduling conflict, please notify us at [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com) so we will be aware of your situation. Please notify us also, if you need to drop out----instead of simply not showing for an extended period.

## **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. If you can sit down at the piano at home to work on your part, that's great! Since this is not an option for many people, the use of such home practice aids as midi files, Cyberbass, 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 we may provide assistance.

## 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 rehearsal time getting into discussions or reports. If you have a pressing matter that affects the entire group, please e-mail it to the Chorus Manager at least one day before the rehearsal (instead of a last-minute "ambush" on Monday night). If you wish to share flyers or invitations for musical events, you may place them on the edge of the platform in front—but please remember to take them with you after rehearsal!

If you have more complicated issues that require discussion, please communicate them directly to a board member or e-mail to OSM at [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com).

## OSM Board of Directors

Briar Duffy, [briarmd@gmail.com](mailto:briarmd@gmail.com)  
Mark Gustafson, [gusty@comcast.net](mailto:gusty@comcast.net)  
Gene Heupel, [gheupel@comcast.net](mailto:gheupel@comcast.net)  
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Bryan O'Neil, [bryan.oneil@comcast.net](mailto:bryan.oneil@comcast.net)  
Marian Santucci, [mariansantucci5@gmail.com](mailto:mariansantucci5@gmail.com)  
Nancy Wasserman, [nawass@aol.com](mailto:nawass@aol.com)

## 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 OSM 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 may wear the dress of their choice within the following guidelines. **Please remember: OUR GOAL IS TO KEEP THE CONCERT-GOERS' ATTENTION ON THE MUSIC AND OUR FACES, NOT THE DRESS OR SHOES!**

### FABRIC & STYLE IN GENERAL

- Black, matte-finish fabric, please. Generally, this rules out shiny satin or silk, as well as lace and heavy velvet.
- Sheer fabric must be lined.
- Please, **no ruffles or sparkly sequins that catch the light and distract!**

### NECKLINE

- Any simple neckline is acceptable. Plain collars are permitted; no turtlenecks or mock turtlenecks; **no ruffles**, please.
- Avoid showing cleavage!** As a guideline, the lowest point of neckline should be no more than about 3 fingers' width below your collarbone in front and same distance from base of neck in back.

- Shoulders must be covered.

### SLEEVES

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

### SKIRT

- Skirt may be full or narrow---**please, no ruffles or unlined sheer material.**
- Ankle-length skirt is very important. **If top of ankle shows, the skirt should be lengthened.** **\*\*Be sure to wear your concert shoes when setting the length of your dress.** *A uniform length is very important, and earns comments from the audience when it's a problem.* Be sure skirt 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, no metallic or shiny belts. A shiny belt buckle is allowed.

### SHOES AND HOSE

- Black** matte or patent *low-heeled* shoes (2" or lower); **no boots.** Be sure you test your shoe height while wearing your dress to attain the proper skirt length. Remember to choose shoes that provide support, room and comfort.

### JEWELRY

- Jewelry is optional. If you choose to wear jewelry, please follow the guidelines:
- Earrings: small earrings, gold or silver. If wearing hoop or dangle earrings, please keep them 1" or less in length.
- Necklace: plain gold or silver chain necklace without pendant. Please keep width of chain link to ¼" or less.
- Rings: please leave your 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 five single tickets per concert or ten tickets during the 2016-2017 season. You are encouraged to sell more if possible, as the Oratorio Society depends heavily on this source of revenue in order to stay operational. Singers are expected to pay for this minimum of ten tickets during the 2016-2017 season. If you are unable to sell your ten tickets to customers, you may still meet your quota by purchasing the appropriate number of tickets and donating them back to the OSM box office. Singers who do not meet their ticket sales quota will be asked to buy ten tickets at the beginning of the following season in order to remain in good standing.

You may purchase tickets online through our website, oratorio.org, but to get maximum discounts, 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 place an order, 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. The Ticket Manager keeps track of how many tickets each member has sold.

## E-mail Policy

All communications distributed on behalf of the Oratorio Society of Minnesota to OSM membership through its e-mail are primarily used for OSM purposes only, such as to share information or for emergency notifications. Many people wish to promote concerts or other events; although we can't advertise everything for everyone, we will send out concert invitations to members who have chosen to remain on the concert announcement list; if you wish to opt out and not receive such announcements, just send a message to [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com) to be removed from the list. OSM does not sell or lend its member e-mail list to any business or organization.

Anyone wishing to send a pertinent message to the OSM membership should submit the message to [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com) for approval and processing. Requests should preferably be submitted a few days prior to the desired distribution date. Please be aware that your message may be edited if deemed appropriate.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about OSM issues, you are encouraged to send them in to [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com) and they will be forwarded to the appropriate staff, board member, or other volunteer.

It is important to make sure you can receive official OSM communications, which will be sent from [oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com](mailto:oratorio.society.mn@gmail.com). If you have not been receiving OSM emails, you might check your spam folder and also verify that we have your correct contact information.

## Cancellations

The Oratorio Society will cancel performances only if 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 the unlikely event a concert must be canceled, it is your responsibility to inform your ticket customers, so please keep their contact information handy! In the case of weekly rehearsals at MPUC, these will be canceled if the Artistic Director decides to cancel and you will be informed by e-mail.

## Performance and Staging Guidelines

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

### *Preparation*

- Please make every effort to smell clean and fresh, because we will be in close quarters! A shower and shampoo within 24 hours prior to both dress rehearsal and concert would be appropriate, as well as unscented deodorant and clean clothes.
- 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 an unnecessary reminder, 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. These pages should have already been clipped together. The audience wants to see your face; not the top of your head.
- 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. However, a relaxed stance and a smile are encouraged!
- We will begin to exit the stage when the applause has subsided, or as the conductor specifies. Leaders should begin to exit immediately at that point. Be sure to go all the way out of the back stage area as quickly as possible to avoid a traffic pileup. 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.