

Bay Choral Guild Guidelines

Revised May, 2022

Bay Choral Guild is dedicated to excellence in musical performance. Membership in the chorus is a commitment as well as a privilege and a pleasure. These guidelines detail part of that commitment.

Responsibilities of Membership

A chorister's fundamental responsibility is to work with the Artistic Director and fellow choristers to make music.

Attendance is expected at all rehearsals, including workshops and sectionals. Singers are ordinarily expected to participate in all three quarters (concert sets) of a concert season.

Absences from regular rehearsals: If you know you will miss a rehearsal due to a foreseeable absence or know you will be late, you must notify the Director and chorus manager as far in advance as possible so that they can take it into account in planning the rehearsal. Last-minute absences, e.g., for illness, still require notification if possible.

If you miss a rehearsal, you are responsible for getting the rehearsal markings and putting them in your score. Markings are posted regularly on the web (currently in the "Chorister Resources" section of the BCG web site, baychoralguild.org).

Absences in concert week: If you know at the start of a quarter that you will have to miss a dress rehearsal or concert, you must get the approval of the Artistic Director in order to sing that quarter. Absence from dress rehearsals or concerts without prior approval is normally excused only in the case of illness.

Leaves of absence: If you cannot sing for a particular quarter, you may ask the Artistic Director for a leave of absence. You will be readmitted the following quarter without an audition.

Dues and music: It takes money to handle operational and program expenses and, as is the case for almost all performing arts groups, ticket sales don't come close to covering our annual expenses. Your financial support is essential. Membership dues are \$125 a quarter, payable at the first rehearsal of the quarter. If you need a partial or full scholarship in order to be able to sing with the chorus, speak to the chorus manager. If you are planning to sing all three quarters and it is practical for you to do so, we encourage you to pay the full year's dues (\$375) at the beginning of the fall quarter in order to help with cash flow for the chorus. You must also buy your music, typically for \$20 to \$40 per quarter, also payable at the first rehearsal. In special circumstances, see the chorus manager to arrange for late or partial payment. A prorated refund on dues is available if you leave before the fourth rehearsal in the quarter. You cannot

return your music for a refund unless there is a shortage and it can be resold to another chorister.

In rehearsal:

- Be on time and take part in the warm-up, even if you have warmed up your voice beforehand. The focus of many warm-up exercises is on the ensemble sound. Your participation helps the whole group.
- Bring a pencil to mark whatever breaths, cut-offs, phrasing, dynamics, and so on that the Director gives. If you miss a rehearsal, or suspect you may not have gotten all the markings into your score, get the markings from the [Bay Choral Guild website](#). And then, of course, observe the markings. Pay attention. When singing, watch the Director and listen to the rest of the group. When nobody is singing, keep your pencil ready and listen to the Director. Do not talk to your neighbor or focus on something else (such as your cell phone) when others are singing or the Director is speaking.
- Turn your phone off or put it in airplane mode during rehearsal. Check messages and take calls only during the break. Singular exception: If you are a professional who is “on call” during a specific rehearsal, your phone/pager should be in vibrator mode and you should quietly leave the rehearsal area to respond.
- Ask questions and make suggestions appropriately. If immediate attention is needed, raise your hand. Some questions are better kept until the break or after the rehearsal. For complex questions or suggestions, you are encouraged to email or phone the Artistic Director outside of rehearsal. Checking email regularly and reading the handouts can help you avoid asking questions that have already been answered. If something on a handout is not clear, it is generally best to ask about it before the rehearsal, not during rehearsal.
- If you find that you are asking questions more frequently than most other choristers, you should make sure you are up to date with the markings posted on the BCG website, consult a member of your section during a break, or hold your questions for the Artistic Director after the rehearsal.
- Avoid all scents and perfumes during rehearsals and performances. They can make it impossible for fellow choristers with respiratory allergies to sing.

Home study: Learn your part at home, and drill any difficult passages to work them into your voice. Rehearsal time is primarily for working on tuning, ensemble sound, and musical interpretation, not for teaching each part its lines. Practice recordings are usually available at or near the start of the quarter to help you study on your own.

Performance checks: Choristers who miss three or more rehearsals in a quarter or are late to four or more are subject to a performance check at the Director’s discretion. The Director will notify singers with poor attendance of the date and time of the check. In a performance check,

a chorister must demonstrate facility with the music, singing alone or in a small group, to be allowed to continue.

Email and web postings: Many kinds of information are communicated electronically, including

- the Director’s plan for the next rehearsal
- voicing charts detailing who sings which lines
- rehearsal calendars
- chorus rosters
- pronunciation guides and translations for foreign texts
- standing charts for the concert venues
- materials for publicizing concerts
- requests to assist with BCG receptions, concert set-up, and other activities and responsibilities
- announcements of BCG social events (e.g., hikes)

We communicate such information through the GuildGuild group on groups.io, and expect you to join GuildGuild as soon as possible. You usually are expected to print your own copies of handouts that are distributed as links or files attached to an email message. When you receive an email message or a handout with markings for the music, mark your score before the next rehearsal. You may occasionally receive a printed handout in rehearsal, typically if it was not ready until the day of the rehearsal.

Ticket sales: Our singers are the best promotional tool the chorus has. The majority of ticket sales come from you, either indirectly or directly. Advance-sale ticket prices are the same for sales through our website and paper tickets. If you want to be able to hand out paper tickets to your family and friends, the chorus ticket coordinator will give you concert tickets to sell and collect the funds from your sales. You are also encouraged to sell subscriptions at the beginning of the season, which currently aren’t available through the website. You also will have the opportunity to give a limited number of complimentary tickets to new audience members. To promote the concerts, we will ask you to circulate flyers, posters, and email messages.

Volunteering: BCG is a volunteer-directed and operated organization, with the exception of the Artistic Director, accompanist, and part-time contractors (bookkeeper, audio engineer, and graphic artist). Day-to-day operations are led by the task leaders, whose names are listed in the quarterly chorus rosters. Volunteer support—in time, money, or both—is both an opportunity and a responsibility of every chorister. Contact the appropriate task leader if you are interested in helping out in their area, or let a board member know that you are willing to help and they will try to match you with a task. Meetings of the BCG Board of Directors are normally held on the third Monday of every month. We also welcome help from your family and friends, particularly for tasks that choristers are unable to carry out, such as ushering or working the “box office” for concerts.

Rehearsals and Workshops

At the start of a season, a complete rehearsal schedule showing dates, times, and venues is posted to GuildGuild and on the BCG web site, baychoralguild.org, along with directions to all the venues.

Regular rehearsals are held weekly in Palo Alto on Monday evenings starting at 7:30.

Workshops usually are scheduled once each quarter, on a Saturday from 9:30-3:30 or as announced. The goals of an all-day workshop are to spend concentrated time working on the music, develop vocal technique, improve ensemble and sectional sound, and build our community. Workshops are an important part of the preparation for each concert and are not considered optional.

Dress rehearsals are held in the concert venues during the week of the concerts. For most concerts, there are 2 dress rehearsals, in Palo Alto and Campbell. Wearing your concert shoes or ones with similar heels allow sight lines to be checked, but there is no need to wear the rest of your concert attire. Your music should be in order in a black concert binder (or 2 binders, one for each half of the concert) so that you get used to holding it that way.

Concert warm-ups are held at the announced call times (90 minutes before concert start time) to prepare the chorus vocally, musically, and psychologically. Like the other rehearsals, they are mandatory. Arrive on time.

Concert Dress

Men:

Standard: Tuxedo (preferred) or black suit. White shirt with a plain or pleated front and no ruffles. Black bow tie, socks, and dress shoes.

Summer alternative (if announced): Black pants. White, collared dress shirt

Women:

Standard: Chorus-issue, custom-fitted black velvet tunic—see the wardrobe manager to get measured. Dressy, black (opaque), full-length (to the ankle) skirt or loose pants (not tights). Black or neutral hose (if worn). Black dress shoes. No purses, shawls, or other accoutrements on stage.

Summer alternative (if announced): White blouse/collared shirt with at least elbow-length sleeves.

Everyone:

“Black” means solid black, not dark grey or navy blue. White means white, not ecru, beige, cream, or off-white. Jewelry must not be large, sparkly, or colorful enough to attract the audience’s attention or reflect light if photographed.

Avoid scents: no perfume, aftershave, cologne, scented mousse, hair spray, or soap; no BO or garlic, onion, tobacco, or alcohol on the breath.

Music must be in black folders or black covers.

Concert Department

If you bring people with you, ask them to wait in the lobby or elsewhere during the warm-up. Audience members are not permitted in the house until the doors are opened to the public.

Pay attention to the instructions for getting on and off the stage and avoid unnecessary discussion. If you are not a row leader or designated sitter, just follow the singer next to you. The order of leaving is generally the exact reverse of the entrance.

Entering and leaving, carry your music in the hand away from the audience.

During the concert, keep your focus on the music and the Director whether you are singing at the moment or not. Your face and body language show that you are engaged with the performance. That, in turn, engages the audience.

Avoid extraneous noise or movement during the music as it will distract the audience. Do not bring a water bottle on stage unless absolutely necessary. Use a plastic container, not metal, and ensure that it cannot fall over during the concert.

After you file onto stage, do not lift and open your music until the conductor signals you to do so, and stay with the music until it is truly stopped. Do not anticipate the end of a piece or a movement by turning the page or rearranging your music. The conductor will signal the end.

When making a page turn in a quiet passage, mark your score to not turn the page in time with the music. Turn the page early, or else delay the turn if you do not sing at the start of the next page or have memorized that music.

When standing through a long solo, hold your music at your side. When sitting through a solo, you may keep your music open, but do not page along with the soloist. Turn immediately to your next entrance or the standing cue. You may page along in dress rehearsals, however.

Accept the applause for your performance with a smile. You may acknowledge the conductor, soloists and instrumentalists, but do so with decorum.

When filing out after the performance, do not break ranks to join your friends in the audience. Continue with the chorus all the way out of the hall.

Auditions

New members: New member auditions are held by appointment at the beginning of each quarter and may also be held at other times as needed. An applicant must ordinarily commit to a full season. The audition is for the Artistic Director to get to know the applicant's voice, decide whether it meets the standards of the chorus, and determine where to place the singer (for example, first or second alto).

Returning members: Former members who return after an extended absence will be auditioned in the same way as new members. Readmission will depend on the condition of the voice and on current vacancies. The Artistic Director may choose to waive this requirement.

Continuing members: Continuing members may be individually re-auditioned by the Director at any time. Although a singer can be asked to leave as a result of such evaluation, the primary intent is for the Artistic Director to stay familiar with all the voices in the chorus, discuss areas in need of improvement, and offer suggestions, e.g., to take voice lessons.

Solo and Small-Group Auditions

The Artistic Director may assign a vocal solo or a small ensemble in any of the following ways.

- Hire a professional soloist from outside the chorus when that is appropriate.
- Select particular choristers without an audition when the Director feels that certain voices are the right ones in terms of vocal timbre and musicality.
- Ask more than one chorister to audition for the same solo.
- Open up auditions to the entire chorus.

Audition dates: The Director will give clear dates by which choristers must be ready to audition and when auditions will be cut off. Because it is important that the selected soloists have time to prepare fully for performance, it may not be possible to delay auditions for individual candidates who are absent or ill.

Audition process: The Director may conduct open auditions privately, with all candidates on hand, so that voices can be balanced and matched, or in the context of a choral rehearsal. The results of open auditions will be announced only after all candidates have been heard and will not ordinarily be given on the day of the audition.

Feedback: If not selected, please do not be disheartened or angry. If you are not chosen the first time you audition, the Director has at least heard you and will be thinking of you for future solos. If you want feedback about your audition, please talk to the Director privately.