

# Achill Choral Society

## Policies and Procedures

### 1. PREPAREDNESS

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#### 1.1. AUDITIONING AND PROBATION

An effective auditioning process continues to be critical for the ongoing success of the choir, particularly if the size of the choir is going to be limited. Given that our Director needs flexibility to have good and balanced voices for the choir, new applicants with desirable voices will not be flatly denied access if the membership is full. Rather, after successfully completing the auditioning process, they will be put on a waiting list until a space in the appropriate section is available. Careful auditioning becomes critical so that as spaces become available, they are filled with committed, good, well-blended voices.

#### Action

- A letter should be given to each new choir member on their first night outlining some of the expectations of members (e.g., learning music, attending practices and performances), clearly outlining the physical demands of performances (singing, standing, sitting, moving, stairs), explains the audition process, and that outlines the criteria being applied during the audition itself.
- The Board should perhaps consider re-auditioning members every four years rotating annually by section, possibly first providing recommendations for specific improvements.

#### 1.2. AUDITIONING AND PROBATION PROCEDURE

The following criteria and information will be used and gathered at auditions:

- Assessment
- Tonal quality
- Size and potential to blend
- Control of dynamics
- Range
- Ability to hold pitch
- Ability to learn music
- Sight-reading
- By ear
- Previous choral experience
- Skills Inventory

- Ability to read music
- Instrumental skills
- Conducting skills
- Accompanying skills
- Organizational experience
- Other experience/skills that might be helpful to the choir

Note: Those skills listed in the inventory would not be required for entry but would be useful to know about. This information will be supplied by the applicant on the audition form.

### **1.3. AUDITIONING PROCESS:**

A quiet, unhurried, distraction-free time and space is desirable for both applicants and the auditioners.

Therefore, auditions will take place on a specified evening (3rd or 4th Wednesday in each session) at 9:00pm. Two auditioners with musical backgrounds will assist the Director. The President will also be present in the hall. One of the two will handle the applicants' forms and make notes during and/or after each audition. Initial assessments should be written on the form and signed by the Director. The Director should take enough time to make sure he fully appreciates each applicant's tonal quality, range, size of voice, ability to blend, hold pitch, sight read and learn by ear. The President will review the decision of the auditioners with each candidate within several days of the audition.

If the membership of the choir is such that there is no room in the appropriate section, the auditioning process must decide if the applicant is suitable to go on a waiting list. Vacant spaces in the choir will be filled: first, from a waiting list if existing; and second, from new auditions.

If the membership is below 80 (or decided cap), and if there is no one suitable on a waiting list, and there is a vacancy in the appropriate section, the auditioning process must decide if the applicant is suitable to begin a probationary period.

### **1.4. PROBATION PROCEDURES**

The probationary period will last 4 weeks. At the beginning of this period the applicant will receive a set of music, a welcome to the choir package consisting of a copy of the Constitution, Code of Ethics, Practice schedule and President's letter, as well as pay their membership dues. They will be expected to attend all rehearsals and learn as a fully participating member. At the end of the 4-week period, the director, and the President will decide if full membership should be granted. After 10 weeks, the Director should be able to assess the applicant's preparedness and ability for concerts. If the applicant is desirable but needs some correction or help in certain areas, the necessary feedback will be given at this time by the Director. If there is doubt about the applicant's suitability for long-term participation in the choir, they will be diplomatically but clearly told why they do not fit into the choir's operation. They will be asked to return their music and their membership dues will be refunded.

During the probationary period, the applicant will also have time to decide how they like the choir and if they are prepared to make a long-term commitment.

If all parties agreed, the applicant will be granted full membership, and be outfitted with a costume.

Obviously, it is preferable to weed out the clearly unsuitable applicants at the time of auditioning. However, the probationary period provides a “safety valve” in case the auditioners make a mistake in their initial assessment, or in case the applicant changes his/her mind.

Returning members who have missed one series of concerts will be readmitted without a full audition, but will be on probation for 4 weeks during which time the President and the Director will listen to ensure that there has been no change in their ability.

Returning members who have missed more than one series of concerts must have a full audition and are on an equal footing with new members applying to join the choir.

NOTE: This process will be fruitful only if the necessary follow-up is done after the probationary period. Probationary periods are ineffective, if the applicant’s admission is simply rubber-stamped or allowed to happen without review. It will be the duty of the President to make sure that follow-up takes place.

## **1.5. ATTENDANCE AND PREPAREDNESS PROCEDURES**

Responsibility for participation in our concerts belongs to the individual member, as well as to the Director and the Board of Directors. Encouraging personal practice and study is the essence. Understanding the effort required to bring in and set up staging, lighting, and sound equipment, the Board should find a way to organize enough time for this and for the subsequent placement of the choir on stage, balancing of voices, sound adjustments, instructions for exiting and entering, etc.

### **Action**

- Set standards of attendance and set standards of performance. It is expected that members will attend all practices and all performances.
- The Director and choir members must ensure the choir is fully prepared before the first concert of any concert series.
- The choir needs to be fully prepared so that the sound check before a concert is only that, and that the venue is cleared of choir members a minimum of 30 minutes before the concert starts.
- Members, especially new members, need to be reminded of the need to conform to the dress code, the holding of music folders, page-turning, hushed voices, and any other requirement for achieving a professional presentation.

## **2. COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE CHOIR**

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### **Action**

- The President should produce in September an opening letter to all members include the following points:
  - Welcome statement
  - Names and position of Board, and Committee chairs
  - General outline of music & performances planned for the coming year
  - Summary financial position

- Attendance and Preparedness procedures
- Name tags
- Reminder that standard communication is by e-mail (other methods by request from fellow members)
- Request for updating member information (updated list to be made available later)
- Code of Ethics that is expected from the Membership and the Director (via the website)
- Reminder that electronic practice music is available (via the website and/or CD)
- Constitution (via the website)
- Auditioning procedures (via the website)
- Music notation primer (via the website)
- Latin pronunciation (via the website)
- Long Range Plan (via the website)
- New Members should get paper copies of the following:
  - Attendance and Preparedness procedures
  - Code of Ethics
  - Constitution
- Maintain good communications with the membership regarding Board initiatives and leadership, including a minimum of three financial statements per year (by third week of each season, plus AGM).
- Conduct membership surveys every couple of years to assess the choir's demographics and needs and opinions regarding procedures and new initiatives.