



# THE MASTERWORK CHORUS

## MEMBER HANDBOOK

May, 2014

### Welcome to Masterwork

It is a great pleasure to welcome both new and returning members to The Masterwork Chorus. In Masterwork our goals are to sing great choral music as part of a vibrant community of singers and to share this music with our audience. We are a volunteer chorus that aspires to sing at a professional caliber and be held in the highest artistic regard. We work on varied and exciting programs under the guidance of our Music Director.

The purpose of this booklet is to be your complete guide to The Masterwork Chorus. Whether you are a new member or a member of many years, please read and become familiar with the information in these pages. Any questions you have may be directed to the Membership Committee or a section leader. The information and policies outlined below have been developed by the Music Director and the Board of Trustees with input and recommendations from many chorus members.

### The Masterwork Web Site

Extensive information about Masterwork is on Masterwork's website, [www.masterwork.org](http://www.masterwork.org). The Members-Only Section contains specific information pertinent to all current members. Access the Members-Only Section by using the password "Handel2013", which is case sensitive.

### Membership in The Masterwork Chorus

The Masterwork Chorus is open to experienced choral singers, with strong vocal and sight-reading skills who desire to sing great choral music. A passion for music-making and a willingness to devote time to rehearsals, individual practice and concerts are important qualities of the successful candidate. In addition, we rely on members to contribute to the organization by volunteering some their time on committees or other chorus activities. Membership runs from September through the following May.

Upon successful completion of an audition with the Music Director, the payment of dues and indication of a willingness to fulfill the other obligations of membership, the candidate becomes a full member of the chorus with the ability to vote on chorus matters.

### Becoming a Member

Prospective members are invited to attend the first rehearsal of the season in September. During this first rehearsal, prospective members can "try out" the Chorus as a guest before deciding to apply for membership. If a guest decides to audition, the Membership Chair will schedule an audition with the Music Director. There may also be an audition period (at the discretion of the Music Director) in early January, at the beginning of the second half of the season. However, since membership runs from September through May, prospective members are urged to audition for Masterwork in September.

### Auditioning

The audition process is an opportunity for the Music Director and the chorus officers and membership chair to meet prospective members and answer questions. The Music Director is the sole assessor of vocal abilities.

The audition begins with the candidate singing something he/she knows and is comfortable with – anything ranging from an art song or aria to a simple hymn or folk song. The audition will also include vocalizing to determine range, vocal quality, and evenness of tone, as well as sight reading (including both rhythmic and tonal exercises read at sight) and a test of tonal memory, in which the candidate is asked to sing back a series of pitches played by the Music Director.

When auditions are completed, the Membership Chair will notify prospective members of the results. Upon successful completion of the audition, the new member then is expected to submit dues and registration within two weeks of accepting the offer of membership.

### **Responsibilities of Membership**

Masterwork Chorus members are expected to participate for the full season, from September through May. This expectation includes preparation for and participation in concerts during the fall, winter holiday, and spring seasons. Members are expected to sing all regular concerts, attend rehearsal regularly and be up-to-date on all music rehearsed. Members are individually re-heard, at least once every three years, by the Music Director. To maintain Masterwork's high level of musical performance, the Music Director may, at his/her discretion, re-evaluate a singer's ability to contribute musically to the Chorus.

### **Membership Card**

In the fall, once dues are paid, membership cards are issued to members in good standing. This card has the name and phone number of the member's section leader. It is very important to have this card with you for admission to the venues where we sing. You may be asked for your membership card at the Stage Door to Carnegie Hall or any other venue.

### **Music**

Members purchase their own music in the edition being used for a particular concert. Music is made available at rehearsals. As part of our goal of performing choral music at the highest possible level, members are expected to spend time outside of rehearsals learning and reviewing the music. And members are expected to mark their scores during rehearsal. If a singer must miss a rehearsal, s/he is responsible for learning any music rehearsed and for any markings made in the score during the missed rehearsal. These markings can be obtained from the section leaders.

### **Concert Schedule**

The concert schedule is announced at the beginning of the season in the August letter that goes out to all current members in good standing. Copies of the rehearsal schedule and the concert schedule are also made available at rehearsals and on the Masterwork website

### **Rehearsals**

The Masterwork Chorus rehearses on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 10:00 P.M., beginning the Wednesday after Labor Day and concluding in May. Rehearsals are held in Chatham United Methodist Church in Chatham, New Jersey.

- Members are expected to come to rehearsal on time and stay until the conclusion at 10PM. If you need to arrive late or leave early, please speak with your section leader in advance .

- Members are expected to prepare for rehearsal by reviewing the music and working on trouble spots in order to make the rehearsal time most effective.
- Members are expected to be respectful of the Music Director, Associate Conductor, and Accompanist and to be attentive and refrain from unnecessary talking during rehearsal
- Members should not wear perfume or cologne at rehearsals.
- Members are encouraged to wear name tags at rehearsals.

### **Attendance**

Members are expected to attend all rehearsals. The current attendance policy adopted by the Board is as follows: To be eligible to sing a concert, a member of Masterwork must attend at least 75% of the rehearsals up to two weeks before a concert. Dress rehearsals are mandatory. If a member is absent more than the above, he/she will be allowed to sing the concert at the discretion of the Music Director after a meeting during which the member demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the music.

### **Dress Rehearsals**

Attendance at dress rehearsal(s) is mandatory. The dress rehearsal is often the only rehearsal with the orchestra, and is held at the concert venue when possible. It is a critical time for final adjustment and fine-tuning immediately prior to a performance.

### **Concert Call Time**

The usual call time for a concert is 1½ hours before curtain time. It is important to be on time, dressed and ready to be on stage when called for the final sound check and to check seating positions.

### **Updates to the Chorus**

If schedules change on short notice due to, for example, bad weather on the evening of a rehearsal or performance, members are notified by e-mail and text message.

## **Financial Responsibilities of Members**

Chorus member dues are determined prior to each season and communicated in a summer letter to members. Dues are payable in a single installment for the full September-May program, and are due by the last rehearsal in September.

Dues for students are half of regular member dues. (*Students must be under age 26 and attending high school or college on a full-time basis.*)

Chorus members, including student members, are expected to purchase two (2) tickets to each Masterwork concert (or series).

Dues for members joining Masterwork in January are half of the annual dues amount, and are payable by the third rehearsal in which they participate. Members joining in January are expected to purchase two tickets to all performances for the remainder of the season.

Dues and tickets can be paid for by check, cash, or through PayPal credit card payment.

Chorus members who do not meet their financial responsibilities will not be permitted to sing in Masterwork performances. Members (or prospective members) who are truly unable to meet their financial responsibilities may speak with the Membership Chair in confidence to discuss a special arrangement.

### **Concert Attire**

Members are responsible for purchasing the prescribed concert attire as follows:

#### **Women:**

- Black Concert Dress\* (purchased through Masterwork)
- Black stockings and black flat or low heeled shoes with closed toes
- Earrings: pearl studs

\*Dress details: Dresses are unhemmed, so women need to hem dresses to the proper length. When wearing concert shoes, the bottom of the dress should brush your instep and front of your shoe should show. When storing the dress, do not hang straight for any period of time because the skirt will stretch. Hang on a hanger and then fold over the hanger.

#### **Men:**

- Black Tuxedo
- Lay down collar on shirt
- Black bow tie
- Black socks and shoes
- Jacket buttoned

### **Stage Department**

The following are not permitted on stage at any venue:

- Perfume or cologne of any kind – applies to both men and women.
- Scented hairspray or powder – applies to both men and women.
- Dangling, glittering jewelry, necklaces or hair accessories.
- Cameras or recording equipment.
- Pagers, cell phones, beepers or alarm watches.
- Large handbags or totes – leave your valuables at home. (Small, inconspicuous, black, clutch-type purses are OK.)
- Large water bottles in any color. (Plain water bottles with the label removed are OK.)

While on stage, do not:

- Converse with your neighbor (except quietly during intermission).
- Wave or converse with anyone in the audience.
- Fan yourself with your music or anything else.
- Applaud (you are the performance!) or stomp feet.
- Turn the pages of your score to follow along, especially during the soloists' performances, unless directed to do so by the conductor.

## Transportation

Chorus members typically provide their own transportation to concerts. However, Masterwork assists by chartering round trip buses for the New York City and possibly other non-local concerts. Bus seats are sold for round-trip at cost on a first-come, first-served basis.

## Section Leaders

Section Leaders are selected by the Membership Chair with the Music Director's and President's approval. Section Leaders have the following responsibilities:

### Leadership:

- Section Leaders set a good example for others by their regular attendance, musical ability, and enthusiasm for Masterwork's programs.
- Section Leaders make themselves aware of chorus programs, dates, schedules, times, membership policies and any other pertinent information so they can guide and lead others.

### Section Relations and Communication:

- Section Leaders make every effort to get to know the members and make themselves available for questions and discussions.
- Section Leaders meet the new members in the section, greet them, introduce them to others, and help orient the new members.
- Section Leaders help to identify members interested in the Masterwork organization who are willing to do things above and beyond the musical aspects of membership.
- Section Leaders are points of contact for maintaining communications between chorus members and the organization, for example for routine questions, dates, times, expectations.

### Section Leader Responsibilities:

- Assist in monitoring attendance records which are maintained by the Membership Chair.
- Inform the Membership Chair of any problems within the section.
- Diligently mark the music and pass the information on to others as needed.
- Assist with seating and line-up issues in preparation for performance.
- Be aware of special needs of members and ensure that these needs are addressed

## The Masterwork Camerata

Comprised of a small group of Masterwork's singers, The Masterwork Camerata performs varied literature for small choral ensembles. Camerata complements the mission of The Masterwork Chorus by serving as an auxiliary entity, representing the organization in performances in intimate venues throughout New Jersey.

Camerata singers are members in good standing of the full chorus who wish to do more singing and are looking for more disciplined and creative musical challenges. They must pass a separate audition and be willing to commit to additional rehearsal and performance time. The rigors of this group require its members to learn more technically challenging works and to be committed to learning the music on their own.

The music Camerata performs is for a smaller group and is predominantly a cappella or with piano or organ accompaniment. Camerata presents stand-alone programs during the year and, when appropriate, participates in concerts given by the full chorus. Details of Camerata's composition, rehearsals and concerts are announced at the beginning of each season. Members of Camerata wear the same stage attire as the full chorus.

### **Camerata Membership Requirements**

- Pass audition that includes vocalizing, sight reading, tonal memory and singing excerpts from music identified in advance of the audition by the Music Director.
- Be a participating, regular member in good standing of The Masterwork Chorus.
- If a Camerata member does not continue to meet Masterwork membership requirements, that person will be dropped from Camerata.
- Membership in Camerata is determined by audition and all members re-audition every 3 years.
- Members buy their music as they do in the regular chorus.

### **Other Masterwork Activities**

#### **ReachOut!**

This Community Outreach program is focused on presenting short choral performances for groups who might otherwise be unable to hear the chorus in a concert venue. ReachOut! seeks to reach senior citizens, patients in hospitals and nursing facilities, young audiences, and the disadvantaged of our community.

ReachOut! is a regular part of Masterwork's performance season. Some friends to whom we have "reached out" have attended concerts at other venues, and we have been pleased to share in a memorable and positive experience for audience and singers alike.

Dress for ReachOut! programs is business casual.

#### **Summer Sings**

Each summer, Masterwork sponsors a series of five or six Summer Sings. Held at Chatham United Methodist Church, Summer Sings are led by noted metropolitan area conductors, including Masterwork's own Music Director. They are opportunities for chorus members and members of the community to come together and share in the great, classical choral music in an informal setting. It is also an opportunity to sing during the summer hiatus, to gain experience in sight-singing, to expose prospective members to Masterwork, and to raise funds.

The rules of a summer sing are simple: you show up and pay an admission fee. Masterwork provides the music (or you can bring your own scores), refreshments, air conditioning, and an accompanist. Masterwork volunteers help make Summer Sings happen by obtaining the music, coordinating admission and distribution of scores, and providing refreshments

#### **Community *Messiah* Sing**

Masterwork sponsors a Community *Messiah* Sing each December in a local church. It brings together people who love *Messiah* and enjoy singing the choruses. It gives Masterwork some good exposure, it is a recruiting opportunity, and it raises funds for the organization.