

Eugene Concert Choir

Member Handbook



Revised September 2011

MEMBER HANDBOOK
September 2011 Edition

Diane Retallack
Artistic and Executive Director

WELCOME

Welcome to the Eugene Concert Choir organization! We are truly pleased to add your voice to ours as a community of singers who enjoy learning the choral masterworks and performing them for a growing appreciative audience in the Eugene-Springfield region.

This handbook is designed to provide you with background information on the operation of the Eugene Concert Choir and Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble, and with guidelines for your role in the choir. We hope you'll find that it answers most of your questions about expectations for choir members, and that it conveys our aspirations for professional quality and fellowship in all that we do as a choir.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Eugene Concert Choir, the premier choral organization in the region, serves our community through performance of choral masterworks, diverse musical experiences, and educational outreach

REHEARSALS

Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble rehearses from 7:00 to 9:45pm every Monday during the concert season. Rehearsals are held at Grace Lutheran Church, 710 E. 17th, at the corner of 18th and Hilyard St. in Eugene.

Eugene Concert Choir rehearses from 7:15 to 9:45pm every Tuesday during the concert season. Rehearsals are held at Emmaus Lutheran Church, 1250 W. 18th, at the corner of 18th and Polk St. in Eugene.

Extra rehearsals are held during performance weeks and may be scheduled at other times as the repertoire requires. Sectional rehearsals are incorporated into regular rehearsals, or scheduled by each section as needed.

REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

Please be seated and ready to warm up at the scheduled starting time.

Name tags will be provided for all members. Please keep yours with your music and wear it at rehearsals.

Bring sharpened pencils to all rehearsals. The Artistic Director will make critical corrections or modifications at each rehearsal, and choir members are expected to mark all instructions for all parts in their scores. Please check with a fellow section member or your section rep about markings you may have missed when you were absent.

Break time is included in each rehearsal for a few minutes of socializing. Periodically throughout the season, choir sections are asked to bring treats for special "social breaks." Rehearsal resumes following the break; break time does **not** signify the end of the rehearsal.

Please stay a few minutes after rehearsal to put your chair away; we leave the room as we found it. All those who can come early to set up for rehearsal are encouraged to come help out.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance Policy – Performances and Dress Rehearsals

The Artistic Director must be given advance written notice if a member will be absent from a **performance** or **dress rehearsal**. (In cases of emergency, the Artistic Director must be notified as soon as possible.) Membership may be discontinued by the Artistic Director after a single unexcused absence from a performance or dress rehearsal. Examples of excused absences from a performance or dress rehearsal are a debilitating illness, a personal or family crisis, or an important event which the choir member does not schedule (i.e., professional conference, wedding, funeral, or graduation ceremony). It is expected that work and vacations will be scheduled around performances and dress rehearsals; such absences will not be considered excused.

Dress Rehearsals are defined as the last rehearsal or set of rehearsals in the concert venue prior to the performance, and do not necessarily indicate “concert dress” apparel. Dress rehearsals are often the only opportunity to rehearse with all musical forces in the performance venue. Failure to attend a dress rehearsal may jeopardize your participation in a performance.

Attendance Policy – Regular Rehearsals

Members are expected to attend every rehearsal. Membership may be discontinued by the Artistic Director after three (3) unexcused absences from rehearsals. Examples of **excused** absences from rehearsals are illness, work conflict, family commitment, vacation conflict, or performance commitment. An **unexcused** absence is defined as any absence without explanation or reasonable cause.

It is the choir member's responsibility to inform his or her section leader of any absence or tardy arrival, *in advance whenever possible*. Please keep the phone number or e-mail address of your section leader handy.

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

Concert Dress

ECC Women: Identical floor-length black skirts and blue, green, gold or red blouses, which are provided through ECC only. Women should wear black dress shoes and minimal jewelry.

EVAE Women – Concert Dress: Identical floor-length black and royal blue dresses, which are checked out through the Eugene Concert Choir. Women should wear black dress shoes and minimal jewelry.

Renaissance Dress: You will be fitted for a Renaissance costume, which will be checked out through the Choir.

ECC Men: Men provide their own black tuxedos, white wing-collar shirts, black dress shoes and black bow ties; black cummerbunds are options.

EVAE Men – Concert Dress: Men provide their own black tuxedos and white wing-collar shirts. Royal blue vests and bow ties will be checked out through the Choir.

Renaissance Dress: You will be fitted for a Renaissance costume, which will be checked out through the Choir.

Fragrances

In order not to trigger symptoms in those with allergies or sensitivities to fragrance, please be careful not to wear fragrances of any kind during dress rehearsals and performances – no perfume, cologne, scented hair spray, lotion or aftershave, please.

Folders

Black folders are required for most performances. Members are responsible for obtaining their own folders, which may be purchased through the Eugene Concert Choir. Elastic bands on the inside are desirable to secure major works. A ring binder option may be more convenient when performing many short selections.

Performance Etiquette

Maintaining a high professional posture is an ongoing goal of the choir. Silence at rehearsals with orchestra and soloists is essential, especially when the orchestra is tuning. Do not engage in conversation while on stage, before, during, or after a performance – the conductor requires your undivided attention during that time.

Ticket Sales

The importance of promoting choir performances and selling tickets to choir events cannot be overemphasized. A professional quality performance of choral music chosen to entertain and enlighten a growing community audience is what we work toward! It is extremely important that all members be actively involved in promoting the sale of tickets. Ticket sales can spell the difference between profit and deficit for the season.

HISTORY

The Eugene Concert Choir is a vibrant part of the cultural life of the Eugene-Springfield Region. A Resident Company of the Hult Center for the Performing Arts since 1997, the Eugene Concert Choir organization consists of two choruses: the Eugene Concert Choir, a 100-voice masterworks chorus, and its associated chamber choir, the Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble. Directed by Dr. Diane Retallack since 1985, the choirs present all eras and styles of choral music performance, from the grandest of choral masterworks to the intimate treasures of chamber music.

The Concert Choir was founded in 1974 as the Eugene Community Chorus under the direction of Philip Bayles. A board of directors was formed and the Choir was established as a 501(c) (3) non-profit tax-exempt organization. After several years, the Choir was renamed “Eugene Concert Choir” to reflect its growth in stature and professionalism. Directorship of the Concert Choir passed to Paul Westlund and then Peter Jermihov. The current director, Dr. Diane Retallack, was hired in the summer of 1985 and founded the Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble at the start of 1986. Over the past several decades, the Eugene Concert Choir has performed numerous choral masterworks including the Verdi, Mozart, Brahms, Berlioz and Fauré *Requiem Masses*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* and Vaughan Williams’ *Dona Nobis Pacem*. The choir has performed in partnership with the Oregon Mozart Players for the past 20+ seasons and has collaborated with the Oregon Bach Festival, the Eugene Symphony Orchestra, Dance Theater of Oregon, and the Eugene Ballet Company, most notably in the staged and choreographed presentation of Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana* and Mendelssohn’s *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*. The Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble performs sophisticated choral chamber works and, for over 10 years, presented a popular English Madrigal Dinner. Carrying on the elements of this event, the Vocal Arts Ensemble presents a Renaissance MayFest Dinner in Elizabethan dress with Renaissance music, pageantry, dance, drama and revelry.

The Eugene Concert Choir and its associated chamber choir have released two CD recordings, *Holiday Joy*, and *American Spirit*, and touring ensembles from the choirs presented concert tours in Germany and Austria in 1998; Australia in 2003, culminating with a performance of the Verdi *Requiem* in the famed Sydney Opera House; China in June of 2006 to sing the Mozart *Requiem* in the Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing; and a concert tour in summer of 2009 featuring American works including the Bernstein *Chichester Psalms* in Prague, Vienna and Budapest.

Educational outreach is an important part of the Choir's mission, and thousands of children have been enriched by singing in past "Singing a Masterwork" projects and other educational programs. In 2009, an educational ensemble named ECCO (Eugene Concert Choir Outreach) was formed and serves the community through educational in-school presentations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Season Structure

The Eugene Concert Choir presents a concert series at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts. The season begins in September and runs through May. The season is augmented by the Concert Choir's fall dinner and auction fundraiser. The Concert Choir and Vocal Arts Ensemble sometimes accept contracts to perform with other arts groups, and additional performances may be scheduled as a part of community and educational outreach.

Business Office Information

Governed by a Board of Directors, the Eugene Concert Choir is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We maintain an office in the Midtown Arts Center located at the corner of 16th and Willamette in Eugene. The office is run by Angela Egremont, General Manager. Regular office hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone: 541-687-6865. Fax: 541-687-5745. E-mail: choir@eugeneconcertchoir.org. Website address: www.eugeneconcertchoir.org.

The mailing address for the Eugene Concert Choir and Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble is:
Eugene Concert Choir
1590 Willamette Street, Suite 400
Eugene, OR 97401

Auditions and Re-evaluations

Formal auditions for new members of ECC and EVAE are held before the first rehearsal in September, again in January, and sometimes in the spring, at dates and times set by the Artistic Director. Singers are considered for either choir at all formal auditions. Prospective members are asked to sing a prepared song, preferably an art song or aria. An accompanist is provided. Sight reading and tonal memory is also tested. Audition times are scheduled in advance through the Concert Choir office.

Returning members of ECC are re-evaluated every other season. The Artistic Director will hear individuals from each section sing short segments from the current or previous season's repertoire. Re-evaluation times are set by the Artistic Director. EVAE members are re-evaluated each year, and are required to sing an aria or art song at a Recital Night scheduled in the spring.

Anyone leaving ECC or EVAE who wishes to return to the choir must contact the Artistic Director, who will determine whether or not a formal audition will be required to gain re-admittance to the choir.

Music

All music is selected by the Artistic Director. Suggestions for repertoire are always welcome.

Music is purchased or distributed at rehearsals. Choir members purchase some major works and selected repertoire; other repertoire is the property of ECC and is checked out from our library.

Music checked out from the ECC music library is the property of the organization. Please do not mutilate, write on the music with anything that is not erasable, or otherwise deface the music. We suggest using a pencil with soft graphite that can be erased easily. NO HIGHLIGHTERS, please.

At the appropriate time, each choir member is responsible for returning the music he or she has checked out. Members who do not return their music in good condition and in a timely manner will be charged the current cost of the music, plus a \$5 reorder fee.

Newsletter and Electronic Communication

Newsletters, calendars and other choir information are also posted on our **website**: www.eugeneconcertchoir.org. Click on Member News at the bottom left on the home page, which will take you to the choir information page.

A weekly **newsletter** is distributed at rehearsals. The newsletter contains important information, schedule updates, member announcements and news of other music organizations, as well as witticisms and words of inspiration. Read your newsletter thoroughly each week, preferably before rehearsal begins. Some items may require a response the same evening. Choir members are encouraged to use the newsletter if they have ads or other items of interest to contribute. For example, it's okay to advertise free kittens, a piano for sale, your need for a house sitter, your role in a play, etc. If you have contributions to make to the newsletter, please contact Jill Liberty by Saturday evening before each rehearsal. You may reach her by phone at 541-344-7906, or via e-mail at jliberty@efn.org. Most information between choir members should be communicated through the newsletter. A general verbal announcement may only be made if you clear it with the Artistic Director before the rehearsal begins.

New members are also added to the Choir's **e-mail group** (eugenecc@yahoogleroups.com) when they join the choir. This is another avenue for distribution of timely information to choir members, such as emergency rehearsal cancellations or calls for volunteers for certain projects. Messages sent by choir members are moderated and some are passed on to be printed in the paper newsletter. Please do not opt out or bounce messages as you may miss important information related to choir activities. Let your section rep know if you are not on the e-mail list, since you'll need to be contacted by phone.

Another form of communication is the Choir's **E-news** which promotes our concerts and events. This is coordinated by Fran Ross, who can be contacted at franross@mac.com. The sign-up for the list is on the main page of our website. This promotion saves a lot of money and paper. We add you automatically when you join the choir. It's okay to opt out, but the e-mails are infrequent and are a good source of information regarding our performances and events.

The Eugene Concert Choir also has a **Facebook** page. "Like Us" on Facebook and receive up-to-date posts about our activities.

Socials

Occasionally, an extended rehearsal break will be scheduled to give choir members an opportunity to become better acquainted. Sections will take turns providing the refreshments for these social breaks.

The close of each season is always celebrated with a banquet and annual meeting to which all choir members and a guest are invited. In addition to electing board members, this is a special opportunity to remember the pleasures (and challenges!) of the season, and to spend time together before the summer hiatus. Spoofs and parodies are encouraged.

Fundraising

Participation in our fundraising activities is an essential part of membership in ECC and EVAE. The Eugene Concert Choir is a non-profit organization. We rely on ticket sales, grants, business and private donations, and fundraising events to make the music happen. We could not exist at such a high level of performance without the help of our wonderful volunteers. Our fundraising activities are also occasions to work with and get to know other choir members. Our organization needs the enthusiastic support and cooperation of all its members to ensure artistic and financial success.

The choir's major fundraising event is the dinner and auction fundraiser held in the fall. The auction/dinner combines fine cuisine, wine, and special choral entertainment, a silent auction of distinctive items and event tickets, and an oral auction of entertainment opportunities, mountain and beach getaways, and fantastic surprises.

Other fundraising projects may include raffles, product sales or other small events. Suggestions for fundraisers, especially those that involve music, are always welcome.

Volunteering

Because we have a small paid staff, there are always many tasks besides fundraising that need to be done. It cannot be emphasized too strongly how important our volunteers are to the health of the organization. Opportunities for short-term projects are announced in the newsletter and during rehearsals. Your participation will make a real difference to the success of the choir.

Compassionate Leave

A compassionate leave of absence from ECC may be granted, allowing the member to return to active participation without a formal audition, given the following conditions:

1. A written, confidential request for leave is conveyed to the Artistic Director.
2. The reasons necessitating the leave are debilitating illness, pregnancy or infant care, or family/personal crisis. In the event of an emergency, the written request to grant a leave may be submitted after the member has missed rehearsals. In responding, the Artistic Director will take into account the nature of the emergency as well as the timeliness, given the circumstances, of the request.
3. The period of time involved is not greater than ten months. If a leave will be needed for more than ten months, for whatever reason, it will be necessary for the member to go through a formal audition.
4. If, during the leave, the member's section went through the re-evaluation process, he or she may need to do a re-evaluation, at the discretion of the Artistic Director, on returning to the choir.

The member on leave must contact his/her section representative and the Artistic Director prior to the end of their leave, so that re-entry into ECC can be coordinated with the season's concert schedule.

Political Endorsements

Because of its status as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, the Eugene Concert Choir may not endorse any political candidate or issue, nor can it participate in any political campaigns. As individuals, choir members have every right to express their opinions. However, political announcements and/or endorsements will not be printed in the newsletter.