

Singer's Handbook

Print version (.pdf)

This handbook will outline the expectations for membership in our organization.

About Us

Griffin Choral Arts was founded in the summer of 2007 by Dr. Stephen J. Mulder and Jan Whalen who developed ideas and organized the chorus based on other successful community choral programs. Founding Board President Elaine Bolton brought together the first Board of Directors who immediately established a solid community support base which provided the chorus with the necessary funds and resources to succeed.

Auditions were held in Griffin, Barnesville, Forsyth, and Jackson and 46 singers attended the first rehearsal in September 2007. A little over a month later in October, Griffin Choral Arts performed their first concert entitled "Flowers and Frost" at the Griffin First United Methodist Church for an audience of over 300. In March 2008, GCA performed a Masterworks concert that included a Bach cantata and Haydn's "Mass in Time of War" accompanied by a 24-piece professional orchestra.

Griffin Choral Arts has performed four concerts each season since its formation. In addition, GCA has performed at the Forsythia Festival in Forsyth, GA, and has collaborated with the Tara Winds and the Griffin Ballet Theatre. Our Conductor Stephen J. Mulder received his Bachelor's Degree from Dordt College (Sioux Center, IA) in 1989, and a Master's Degree (1994) and Ph.D. (1997) from Florida State University. Dr. Mulder came to Georgia in the Fall of 2000 to be an Assistant Professor of Music at Gordon College. Prior to his position at Gordon College, Dr. Mulder had conducted the Women's Glee Chorus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Mulder has extensive community chorus experience. He served as the Assistant Conductor of the Concert Singers of Cary (NC) from 1997 to 2000, helping establish their Chamber Choir and Children's Chorus. He has also sung and served in various capacities with the Tallahassee Community Chorus, the Key Chorale (Siesta Key, FL), Gloria Musicae (Sarasota, FL), the Choral Society of Durham (NC) and the Vocal Arts Ensemble of Durham (NC). His choral training has been colored by many renowned conductors and teachers including Dale Grotenhuis, André Thomas, Rodney Eichenberger, David Brunner and Daniel Moe. He has also assisted with choral projects for John Rutter, Daniel Gawthrop, Don Moses and Robert Shaw. Our Mission

The mission of Griffin Choral Arts is to: enrich our community through the performance of outstanding choral music from all traditions; ennoble our audiences with choral programs that elevate, educate, and entertain; excel in performance by welcoming challenge, discovery, and diversity; and enthusiastically support and promote the performing arts in the Griffin region. Strategic Plan

To improve and grow as a choir, we continually strive to recruit eager, talented singers. We generally accept new members in the fall, but we recruit at all times. We have a dedicated core of members who are enthusiastic about our mission and our choral involvement is an important priority in their lives. Our conductor leads us in growing artistically and we encourage one another in the development of joyful music. We work toward increasing awareness of our choir by publicizing our concerts, auditions, and choir news using any means available. Website

Other than attending a GCA concert, our website is the best way to introduce others to Griffin Choral Arts. The chorus maintains a website that communicates our mission, goals, leadership and membership as well as provides the community with information about our upcoming concerts. There are fun and interesting features for guests to enjoy and useful rehearsal supplements for singing members to use between rehearsals. Please visit the site frequently at www.griffinchoralarts.org Dues

To maintain an effective and stable financial base for our choir, we build on our revenue from annual dues of \$40.00 and are grateful for the financial support of friends and contributors. The dues do not begin to cover the cost of music and operating expenses, but the money collected is helpful especially at the beginning of a season before larger donations and grants have been collected.

Commitment to Rehearsal

Attendance at weekly rehearsals is compulsory. Being present ensures that members are familiar with the notes, dynamics, phrasing, blend, and balance. A choir member who is completely prepared will have a more meaningful personal experience and will be more capable of enriching others through song. Attendance

Responsible choir members exhibit a commitment to communication. If an absence is necessary, please notify Jan Whalen (whalemom@aol.com). There may be times when unforeseen circumstances prevent attendance. Singers must attend 80% of rehearsals for each project in order to perform with Griffin Choral Arts. In the event that a member is absent from a dress rehearsal however, performance in the concert may be precluded, at the discretion of the director. Members who find that their schedules cannot accommodate the attendance requirement should discuss a leave of absence with the director. Rehearsal and Performance Calendar

Commencing on August 23, 2010, we rehearse on Monday evenings from 7:00 p.m. until 9:30pm in the Music Suite of Griffin First United Methodist Church located at 1401 Maple Drive. Typically, we perform four major concerts per year – two in the fall, and two in the spring. Tickets for our performances are \$10 (general admission) and are held in various venues in Griffin and the surrounding region. We may perform smaller concerts at other times of year. The chorus gathers socially throughout the year as well.

Weekly Rehearsal Guidelines

Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:00 p.m., and members are expected to arrive early. The time prior to rehearsal is best used to arrange music (if necessary) so that the chorus can move directly from piece to piece. Upon arrival, take and put

on your name tag, pick up any new music or rehearsal aids, and check the assigned seating chart. Parking
Ample parking is available in the back lot of Griffin First United Methodist Church. Location of Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals are held in the Music Suite of the Griffin First United Methodist Church. The Music Suite is the first set of rooms as you enter the main church building from the back parking lot. Two choral rooms are utilized: the Alpha room (on your left as you enter), and the Omega room (on the right). Generally the choir will begin rehearsals in Alpha and conduct pre-rehearsal business in Omega. For sectionals, both choir rooms may be used and also the welcome center area and Sanctuary when four sectionals are needed.

Concerts are held in various venues in Griffin and the surrounding area. Dress Rehearsals

Many of our concerts are enhanced by brass or orchestral accompaniment. While these rehearsals may be longer than the weekly rehearsals, they are crucial to performance success. Please allow plenty of time to place the music in concert order before rehearsal begins. There is much to do in little time, so make every effort to be prompt. Concerts

We are very visible on stage so the way we conduct ourselves is important. Our department during concerts sets the tone for the entire event. We endeavor to project a sense of excitement, unity, and uniformity from the moment we enter until the performance concludes. Music folders are carried in the upstage hand when entering or leaving the performance area. Once in place on the steps or risers, step forward so that those in back have suitable space to open their folders.

Stand tall and comfortably. Take all cues from the director, particularly when opening and closing the folders. Be conscious of turning the music pages quietly. Performance Dress

The focus should be drawn to the music and its message rather than on individual members of the chorus. Members provide their own concert attire within the following guidelines. General

Avoid an extraneous jewelry or accessories (e.g., hair bows, wraps) which call attention to the individual. Matching jewelry is provided for the ladies. For the comfort of all choir members, please do not wear perfume or cologne in rehearsal or performance. Wear comfortable black shoes for long periods of standing.

Men's attire

Black Tuxedos, white tuxedo shirt, black ties, cummerbunds. (See the website.)

Women's attire

A designated uniform dress has been selected for the ladies in our choir. The dresses will be ordered immediately in the fall (measurements at the first rehearsal) so that we will all be suitably dressed for the first concert. The dress can be seen on our website.

Music and Folder Return

Printed music is a valuable resource so we ask that each member treat it with care. GCA retains ownership of the choral music. Your folder has been carefully filled and assigned. If you lose your folder and/or music, you will be expected to replace it. Make sure all music is returned following the concert. Place music and folders in the appropriate location following the performance and remember to remove all personal items from your folder. Commitment to Musicianship Although musicians in the chorus are at varying levels of musical experience, certain disciplines apply to everyone.

Listen to the director. It is very important for every chorister to watch and listen to the director concerning dynamics, phrasing, rhythm, and tempo. Make pencil notations in the music where needed.

Listen to the choir. Attentive listening is the key to sensitive voice blending and accurate intonation which ultimately result in an ideal choral sound.

Practice good posture. Good posture is vital. An upright posture encourages fine singing and promotes attentiveness. Sit at the front of the chair with feet flat on the floor. Keep the back straight, neck and head held in line with the spine, chest held high, shoulders relaxed, with arms holding music up in line of vision with the director. Drink water. Staying well-hydrated is essential to maintaining the voice in good condition. Feel free to bring a water bottle to rehearsals if desired.

Core Values Time.

We know that time is valuable, and we are committed to making the time together as pleasant, productive, and meaningful as possible. Rehearsals begin and end promptly on schedule and are carefully prepared to make effective use of our limited rehearsal time. Concert schedules are usually designed a year in advance so that singers can mark their calendars and plan ahead. Responsibility.

Members are provided with music and a choral folder for performances. A sufficient number of copies of the pieces are purchased or borrowed so that copyright law is obeyed. These copies are not intended to become part of any member's personal music collection and must be returned to the librarian at the end of the concert. Communication.

Pertinent choral announcements are made at each rehearsal but email is the major format for communicating information between rehearsals. It is essential for each member to ensure that their email address is current and to notify the director of changes. We will verify addresses and email accounts during the first few rehearsals each semester. We publicize our chorus through the GCA website: www.griffinchoralarts.org Quality.

We are committed to performing the best choral music and we choose literature accordingly. For many of our concerts, an orchestra or brass ensemble is engaged, thereby enhancing the performance experience. Appreciation.

Members are carefully chosen using such criteria as talent, expertise, dedication, a cooperative spirit, and a love of music. Mutual cooperation and respect among the members are the cornerstones of our success. Chorus Leadership

The leadership assists Steve in guiding the chorus toward its mission and goals.

Board of Directors, 2010-2011

Jean E. Dukes, President
Cherry Searcy, Secretary
LuBowen Cloud, Treasurer
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Elaine Bolton
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