

Chorale Etiquette

Rehearsals –

1. The first rule of chorale rehearsal is respect. You must respect the director, other singers, and yourself.
2. Upon arrival to rehearsal, you should find your seat, prepare your music, and give your attention to the chorale director.
3. When rehearsing, you must do your best to contribute to the rehearsal. Sit up straight, sing with supported sound, and keep your music in front of you, **not** in your lap.

This also means follow the music while keeping an eye on the director for cues (pauses, holds, cutoffs, repeats of a section, etc.). The easiest way to accomplish this is to hold your music at shoulder level and face the director. This way even while you are looking directly at your score, you can still see the director's cues and cutoffs in your peripheral vision. There is no reason the director should have to make noise to cut off the singers.

4. There should be no talking during a chorale rehearsal. When another section is rehearsing their part, you should remain quiet and attentive. When the director cuts off the chorale, it is not permission to immediately turn to your neighbor and begin talking.

Choral singing is a sociable pastime and chorales are full of sociable people! The camaraderie in a chorale is one of the most important aspects. Feel free to make merry to your heart's content before and after rehearsal and during the break. It is really easy to start up little conversations with your neighbor during rehearsal. When this happens, the director has to either talk over you or wait until you are quiet. Chatter slows down rehearsal and distracts the fellow singers who may be attempting to rehearse.

There should also be no use of phones, tablets, e-readers, etc. during rehearsals (and do not forget to turn off your ringer at the start of rehearsal).

These sounds are also distracting to your fellow singers who may be attempting to rehearse. Paying full attention to the director for the entire duration of rehearsal is a great way to show respect to the director and our art.

5. At the end of each rehearsal, you should ensure your seating area is clear of debris, all of your music is intact, and that your chair is stacked.
6. If you are sick, stay home!
In cases of non-contagious illness, sitting at the back of the room is acceptable.

Performances -

1. Walk quietly to your designated position, carrying your black folder in your hand facing towards the audience.
2. Remain still and keep your music folder closed at your side until the director cues to open it.
3. At the completion of a section of a large work, or the end of an individual selection, turn the music quietly to the next movement, choral entrance, or selection. As necessary, use paper clips so that you can turn directly to the next choral entrance. The turning of pages can be distracting to the audience. Please turn your pages quietly while singing.
4. Remain as still and quiet as possible, with music open to the next choral movement during solos. Do not follow the soloist(s) or instrumentalist(s) in your score.
5. At the conclusion of the performance, close your music and return it to your side as the director lowers his arms. This will usually be as applause starts and the director turns for acknowledgment.
6. At the end of the concert, smile and look pleased that you have been able to entertain the audience, especially as the director acknowledges the Chorale during applause.

Stage Exit -

1. Leave the stage in reverse order, with your music once again held in your hand facing towards the audience.
2. Keep moving forward off stage, to make room for others exiting behind you.
3. We can never be reminded enough not to talk until fully off stage and away from our audience. Sound from the wings of the stage can carry quite far.
4. If we are performing with an orchestra or large instrumental ensemble, be mindful of where the instrumentalists are sitting and watch out for (expensive!) instruments and cases.

Basic “rules to live by” as a vocalist -

BREATHE - This may seem obvious, but many choral singers simply do not allow themselves an adequate breath, and instead, "gasp" for air in order to stay with the conductor's beat. Admittedly, breath management can be challenging in group singing. Good choral directors are aware of this, and endeavor to indicate breathing with their conduction gestures. Ultimately, however, it is the singer's own responsibility to maintain efficient breath support.

DON'T OVER-SING - Singing loudly in order to hear oneself over other singers usually stresses the voice. "Showing off" one's voice is inappropriate in group singing -- it doesn't contribute well to a choral "blend," and it is usually resented by fellow singers. If you need to check the accuracy of your pitch, simply put a finger in one ear. Even when fortissimo singing is required, it is wise not to push the voice.

SING THE RIGHT PART - Singers can be incorrectly classified. If you are uncomfortable singing in the required range, and suspect that you are "misplaced", request a change of part or help with vocal technique. It is hoped that choral conductors will guide singers in the best possible use of their voice. It is possible to use certain vocal techniques, such as singing falsetto in the upper register, to render the voice more versatile, but beware of strain.

THINK POSTURE - A "collapsed" posture limits breathing capacity and puts stress on laryngeal muscles. Most choral singers rehearse sitting down with music in hand, a position that often becomes inefficient, through "slumping" back in the chair, crossing the legs, etc. "Sitting up" may seem to require effort, but in fact, an erect, well balanced sitting posture is less tiring in the long run. A good concept is to imagine the head "floating" directly above the pelvis, and the rib cage expanded. The music should be raised to eye level, however the shoulders should remain relaxed. Both feet should be "flat on the floor". When standing during a performance, be careful not to "lock" the legs. Always wear comfortable shoes. A rigid stance, combined with nervous tension and inadequate ventilation can cause chorale members to feel faint, and occasionally lose consciousness!

ARTICULATE WISELY - Discomfort in singing is often caused by tension in the articulation of consonants and vowels. Choral singers are generally encouraged to enunciate clearly, but care should be taken that the jaw, tongue, and lips remain as relaxed as possible. Furthermore, it is necessary to modify pronunciation for efficiency and ease of vocal production; for example, sopranos need to "open" vowels on high notes.

PREPARE YOUR MUSIC - Whenever possible, try to learn your part before coming to the rehearsal. If you are insecure about pitch, it is unlikely that you will sing well. Hesitation impedes good vocal technique!

AVOID TALKING - Not only is chatting disruptive to others (especially the conductor), but it tires the voice.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF - Being a chorale member is the same as being a member of an athletic team, and you have a responsibility to safeguard your health. Get plenty of sleep. "Hydrate", drink plenty of fluids in order to reduce irritating phlegm. Use common sense when you're sick, miss a rehearsal rather than sing over a cold or flu and avoid exposing other chorale members to your germs. However, if you are not contagious and do not want to completely miss rehearsal, attending rehearsal is acceptable but you should sit at the back of the room and only sing as much as you are comfortable doing.

TAKE VOICE LESSONS - If you really want to maximize your enjoyment of choral singing, a few voice lessons can provide valuable insight. Ideally, your teacher should understand and appreciate both choral and solo singing techniques.