

American
**FESTIVAL
CHORUS**
AND ORCHESTRA

**CHOIR MEMBER
HANDBOOK**

Message from the Music Director

Welcome

Welcome to the American Festival Chorus (AFC) and thank you for your membership and commitment to this organization. I look forward to your participation. AFC is composed of volunteer singers, and seeks the highest level of professional and artistic standards through a commitment to quality rehearsals and performances of the great choral masterpieces as well as popular and contemporary music. As a member of the Chorus, you have the privilege and obligation to be an ambassador for AFC.

The American Festival Chorus was founded in the summer of 2008. The American Festival Chorus brings together talented singers, including many students from the USU Music Department.

The musical success of this organization is dependent on your diligence. Choir membership requires a desire to participate in making wonderful music with the conductor and your fellow singers, and a commitment to the entire season.

I am happy to have you join with us!

Craig Jessop
Musical Director

This handbook includes information that will help you understand what is expected of you as a member of this organization. Please read it carefully, as the policies it outlines are intended to make our work together more productive and conducive to the mission of the Chorus.

Vision Statement

The American Festival Chorus and Orchestra is the premier professional musical organization in this region. We create unique performing opportunities and synergistic partnerships, and celebrate the human experience through music.

Mission Statement

To provide a culture of musical excellence that edifies and educates performers and audiences.

Artistic and Administrative Staff

The music director is responsible for the selection, preparation, and performance of the entire season.

The associate music director works with the music director in all matters relating to the preparation and performance of the chorus and orchestra, including conducting rehearsals when necessary.

The managing director is responsible for all non-musical aspects of AFC including, but not limited to: attendance, library, recruitment, concert attire, rehearsal set-up, parking, budget development, production details, historical archives, and overseeing of general membership policies.

Rehearsals and Performances

Rehearsals

1. Rehearsals are normally held on Wednesday evenings from 7-9:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Edith Bowen Laboratory School on the Utah State University campus. The downbeat is at 7 p.m. sharp. Be in your assigned seat before 6:55.
2. Retreat: Each semester (fall and spring) an all-day retreat is held at the Edith Bowen School. Attendance is required. The purpose is to rehearse in depth for upcoming concerts.
3. Each singer will be assigned a part number, and part division (*divisi* assignments). Color-coded seating charts will be distributed.
4. Attendance is recorded for all rehearsals and performances. If you must be late or absent, or if you must leave early, contact the Choir Secretary in advance.
5. Dress rehearsals and sound checks are all mandatory.
6. Some rehearsals will be held on stage at the Kent Concert Hall (KCH) on the Utah State University campus; other venues will be announced. Rehearsals are open, except when otherwise designated.
7. Decorum:
 - a. Turn cell phones, beepers, pagers, and other electronic devices off before rehearsal begins. No texting. All personal business must be set aside during rehearsal. Bring a pencil. Bring a water bottle if desired.
 - b. Do not talk during rehearsal (especially when the conductor stops to make comments or corrections).

- c. **Do not ask questions** during the rehearsals or raise your hand to make a comment. Questions or concerns should be addressed to the managing director following the rehearsal.
 - d. Always be aware of good posture and vocal support.
8. If you have items of interest to be announced to the Chorus, address them to the managing director.

Performances

1. The performance and rehearsal schedule is announced well in advance of the beginning of the season. Please reserve these dates on your calendar.
2. Call time is usually 45-60 minutes before the concert. It is for detailing last-minute changes and adjustments from the music director. Please allow sufficient time for traffic difficulties, parking, and changing clothes.

Attendance Policy

1. At least 80% attendance is required for regularly scheduled rehearsals. Attendance at dress rehearsals, retreats, and sound checks is mandatory.
2. You must purchase music scores for each concert. If you lose your score, you must pay for a replacement copy.
3. Attendance will be taken at each rehearsal.
4. At some rehearsals, repertoire for more than one concert will be rehearsed. Members must participate in the entire rehearsal.
5. An AFC member who wishes to take a leave of absence may do so by notifying the Choir Secretary. In order to retain membership in the organization (be considered a member in good standing) he/she must pay semester dues during the period of inactivity. This will allow AFC members to take leave, as needed, but still maintain a position in the chorus.

Concert Etiquette

1. Professional demeanor is expected at all events in which we participate as a chorus. Members causing embarrassment to the Chorus are subject to dismissal.
2. Chorus members must not go into the lobby before a concert in concert attire.
3. The performance begins the moment you enter the stage area. Talking or gesturing (i.e. waving to family or friends in the audience) on stage is strictly prohibited. Refrain from drawing attention to yourself.
4. Hold music in your left hand and down at your side when entering and exiting the stage. Black folders are required. The tux jacket must be buttoned while on stage.
5. At the end of each work or movement within a work, there is a FREEZE. Do not move your music, turn a page, scratch your ear, or fuss with glasses until there is a release from the conductor. The music director will signal when to raise and lower your music.
6. We are all in tight quarters during concerts and rehearsals. Please be considerate of others in use of onion, garlic, alcohol, and tobacco. No scent of any kind (perfume, cologne, after-shave, scented lotions and hygiene products, or scented hairspray) is allowed. Deodorant is OK! Many chorus members suffer allergic reactions to these scented products. Do not douse yourself in the morning thinking that the scent will have faded by evening—it doesn't fade.

Commitment Forms

In the spring of each year, a commitment form for the next season will be distributed. After reviewing the policies and new schedule, please indicate your intentions and return the form promptly to any of the AFC officers.

Parking

Parking on campus after 5:00 pm on week day evenings and on weekends is not restricted. For performances, park in the parking lot south of the Fine Arts Center near the tunnel.

Attire

Singers must purchase approved concert attire.

- *Men*
Black tuxedo with white wing collar tuxedo shirt. No cummerbund. Black dress shoes and black socks. Black tuxedo shirt buttons are to be worn.
- *Women*
Women must wear the approved concert attire. Black shoes and black stockings. No casual or open-toe shoes or sandals. Jewelry is limited to a small pair of simple stud earrings. No pendants or necklaces.
- Uniforms must be maintained (cleaned and pressed) and replaced when necessary to assure proper fit and look.

Auditions

Auditions will be held on an as-needed basis.

Communication

- During the concert season Chorus members will receive a regular newsletter via email from the choir secretary.

Semester Costs for Chorus Members

- Chorus members are responsible for semiannual dues, attire, and music. See addendum for current costs.

Tickets

In order to fill the hall and to generate necessary revenue, each Chorus member is expected to sell at least 4 tickets to each of the local events.

Volunteer Opportunities

This is a volunteer nonprofit organization and as such we rely heavily on member involvement. If you have a skill or interest that might be of value to AFC, please contact the managing director.