



## **Wycombe Philharmonic Choir Handbook**

### **Introduction to Wycombe Philharmonic Choir**

Wycombe Philharmonic Choir (WPC) was founded in 1944 and is currently one of the largest mixed voice choir in the area- the choir generally has between 60 and 80 members. The choir performs three main concerts each year, at Christmas, Easter and in the Summer. Our repertoire is very wide and varied ranging from well-loved classical works to folk songs, songs from musical shows and spirituals.

In addition, the choir performs at the Mayor's Carol Service each December and at a range of fund raising concerts. You may also have heard us singing Christmas carols at John Lewis and at High Wycombe railway station in aid of local charities.

We rehearse each Friday evening from 7.45-9.30 throughout the year, with short breaks for Christmas and Easter and a longer break in the summer.

Our current Musical Director (MD) David Cooke has been successfully leading the choir since 2003. Under his expert direction the choir's reputation for high quality performances continues to grow.

Our very accomplished and greatly appreciated piano accompanist is Michael McMillan.

During split rehearsals and in David Cooke's absence David Carter or Sacha Tomkins step in to help. Sacha has also been our concert conductor in the occasional absence of David Cooke.

### **Fees**

Wycombe Philharmonic Choir is largely self-funding. Most of our income comes from membership fees and concert ticket sales.

A membership fee of **£56.00** per term (January 2018) is payable within three weeks of the start of each term in September, January and April. Students are offered a discount of 2/3 the per term rate. The fees cover the costs of our weekly rehearsals such as premises hire, the costs of our Musical Director and Accompanist and providing the music.

If you have to be absent for a term, but plan to come back the next, a reserve fee of £5.00 is payable to ensure that there will be a music pack for the next concert ready for you when you return.

If you are concerned about paying the fee, please speak in confidence to your Line Rep or the Chairman, as discretionary fees can be made available.

Cheques should be made payable to Wycombe Philharmonic Choir; cash should be in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your name.

**You are encouraged to pay this fee by standing order at £14.00 per month- please ask the Treasurer for a Standing Order Form to send to your bank or download one from the website.**

Concerts involving an orchestra or external professionals incur additional costs. To help to meet these, the choir seeks sponsorship. If you know of any sponsorship opportunities, please inform a committee member. Should you feel able and willing to make any additional payment to a special fund for specific projects this would be very much appreciated.

### **Organisation**

A committee manages the affairs of the choir. The committee meets regularly throughout the year. Minutes are kept of meetings and are available on the members' website.

An AGM, to which all members are invited, is held once a year, usually in November, and often as the later part of a Friday rehearsal.

Please feel free to raise any issues or concerns with any member of the committee or with your Line Rep. Suggestions made via the Suggestion Box are discussed by the committee and musical suggestions are considered by the Musical Director.

**Committee Members 2017/18** (to email please click on the relevant link on the members' website)

<b>Chairman</b>	Michael Wiltshire	<b>First Soprano Line Rep</b>	Jenny Plews
<b>Musical Director</b>	David Cooke	<b>Second Soprano Line Rep</b>	Jacqui Harbour
<b>Treasurer</b>	Lesley Roworth	<b>First Alto Line Rep</b>	Sue Wallace
<b>Secretary</b>	Cheryl Scott	<b>Second Alto Line Rep</b>	Ann Batho
<b>Librarian</b>	Rosie King	<b>Tenor Rep</b>	David Reynolds
<b>Concert Manager</b>	Michele Gasper	<b>Bass Line Rep</b>	David Carter
<b>Webmaster</b>	Bill Powell	<b>Publicity and PR</b>	Ricky Spencer

**Wardrobe Mistress** –Sue Wallace

**Subscriptions** – Shirley Jones

### **Performances**

The choir regularly prepares for performances at Easter, Summer and Christmas every year, with some additional smaller choir appearances depending on requests and members' availability. We have sung in halls, churches, at open-air venues, in colleges and arts centres large and small.

Please make sure you put concert dates in your diary at the beginning of the new choir year so that you are available to perform.

Performances are a team event and every voice is important. We need everyone! If you find it difficult to get to a particular venue, please let your line rep know so that we can try to organise transport for you. Obviously, there will be occasions when individual members of the choir cannot

take part in a performance, in which case please let your line rep know as soon as possible. It is really important that the balance of the choir is maintained for performances and that the musical director knows in advance of any absences as this may affect the content of the programme.

Make sure that you tick the 'I will be singing at the. ...Concert' sheet to ensure that a place/seat is allocated for you and your name is included in the programme.

Full choir uniform is worn for all performances and Wycombe Philharmonic Choir music folders are used.

We aim for a good performance in every aspect so that our audiences enjoy it, get value for money and come back for other concerts. Concert etiquette involves sitting and singing as a unified group, keeping distractions to a minimum, remaining silent when not singing and being respectful of other performers.

Please help to publicise our performances by displaying the performance posters, emailing or handing out flyers to potential attendees and by selling as many tickets as possible. It is mainly by the efforts of choir members that we garner an audience- with good ticket sales we can afford to buy more music or give even more than we already do to charities. If insufficient tickets are sold, events may be cancelled which would be a disappointment and a waste of all your time, energy and effort.

### **Rehearsals**

**Day:** Every Friday (with short breaks over holiday periods)

**Time:** 7.45pm to 9.30pm (please arrive promptly to allow time to register)

**Venue:** First Floor, Wesley Methodist Church, Priory Road, High Wycombe HP13 6SE

The Rehearsal Schedule for each term is sent out at the start of the term. This helps to ensure that members have the right music and rehearsal time is used effectively. Please make sure you have a soft pencil (B or 2B) with you to mark your music with any directions from our MD.

We ask that you tick off your name on the register at each rehearsal you attend. Please try to attend as many rehearsals as possible (80% is suggested) to ensure complete preparation for public performances. If you miss a rehearsal, please make sure that you have looked on the schedule to see what you have missed and use the rehearsal files in the members section of the website to familiarize yourself with what you have missed. Please also check with other members of your section so that you can add any relevant pencil markings to your music.

If other commitments mean you have to miss a performance, please feel free to continue to attend rehearsals to learn the music (as it then becomes part of the choir's repertoire and could appear again in the future), but sit at the back or miss the last few rehearsals just prior to performance.

There is often an additional rehearsal on the afternoon of a performance or the day before- details will be on the Rehearsal Schedule and will also be confirmed nearer the time. If possible, please tell your Line Rep if you will be unable to attend a rehearsal. You will also be asked to sign up at the Front Desk for the next concert in advance so that the seating plan for the concert can be worked out, and your name can be included in the programme if the choir is listed for the concert.

During rehearsals there will be times when the choir splits to work more intensively on sections, and times when the whole choir is together but your specific line is not singing. Please take the opportunity to look carefully at your line and follow it in your mind whilst the other sections rehearse so that you will be even more prepared to fit it into the other lines when your time comes to sing. It is very tempting to think that 'down time' is an opportunity to chat with your neighbours;

this is distracting to the rest of the choir and very discourteous to those helping us to learn and rehearse.

If there are particular things that you have found difficult in rehearsal please let David or Sacha know so that they can help or have a word with your Line Rep. It is often helpful to go back to the rehearsal files on the website between rehearsals for a little bit of extra practice if you can. Practice really does make perfect!

The benefit of all your hard work comes when our audiences enjoy the performance they have paid good money for and tell us so.

### **Repertoire and Music**

Repertoire is selected by our MD, in discussion with the Committee. He endeavors to choose pieces to balance, challenge and provide enjoyment for the choir together with the audience entertainment. Members are also encouraged to make suggestions either directly or through their Line Reps. There is also a **Suggestion Box** at the front desk and on the members' website. We are continuously developing the Choir's repertoire of major choral works, part songs, motets, spiritual, operatic choruses and modern music.

Music is usually provided free from the choir's own library or loaned from the County Library; if you would prefer to own your own music copies so that you can write all over them- totally encouraged but only if you own the copy- our MD can get it for you, usually at discounted prices. Occasionally you will be asked to buy your own copies of something we are likely to use time and time again, such as Carols For Choirs Volumes 1,2 and 3 which we use every Christmas.

When borrowing music, **please look after it**. You are encouraged to mark your part with our MD's indications but with a light pencil-B or 2B only- then rub them out prior to returning the music. Suitable pencils and erasers are available at the Front Desk for a small charge. Please do not highlight your line with a permanent marker. The next person who uses it may have a different line. We also loan out music from our extensive music library for a fee to other choirs, which benefits our choir. If you have damaged any of the copies we will have to buy a replacement to keep the set in pristine condition.

If you discover you have been allocated music that has been damaged and needs repair, please do not attempt to repair it yourself. Please give it to Cheryl Scott who will repair it if possible in line with County Library guidelines. You will be given a replacement whilst yours is being repaired.

Music should be returned to the Choir Librarian immediately after concerts or as requested at the time. Charges may be made for copies which are not returned on time or which have been defaced. Please see the **Bucks County Council Library Care of Performance Sets** document for further information. This is available on the members' website in the documents of interest section.

To keep music manuscript costs to a minimum, choir members will be asked to download and print for themselves music from the WPC website or a reputable source; clearly you can write all over these copies. Keep them in your own music library as the choir might repeat the piece at another concert.

**Please note that photocopying music is illegal. Music must not be copied, even if it is your own and you wish to use it in a concert.**

All subscribed choir members will be provided with a WPC music folder to hold music neatly and to give a good appearance at performances. Ask a committee member if you need one, and

practice holding it at rehearsals as it can get heavy. Please take care when putting music into the folders and when removing it and use post-it notes or similar to mark pages in anthologies.

If you leave the choir or decide that it isn't for you after your taster sessions, please ensure that you return any borrowed music and the WPC folder to enable others to enjoy using it in the future.

### **Uniform**

Members are expected to look smart at all performances. Choir uniform is usually worn although on occasion we have opted for a different look, with guidance from the committee and members.

#### ***Ladies***

Black plain scoop-necked T-shirt

Choir jacket, supplied by the Wardrobe Mistress for £29.38

Long (floor length) black skirt or trousers

Black tights or knee length black socks under skirts and trousers (to avoid flashes of flesh when seated)

Black shoes

Small black handbag (a secure green room cannot always be guaranteed)

Plain gold or silver jewelry- please avoid anything sparkly as this can be distracting under concert lighting.

#### ***Men***

Long sleeved, plain bright white shirt (no lines, patterns or pockets)

Black or very dark navy trousers

Black or very dark navy socks

Black shoes

Official choir tie- supplied by the Wardrobe Mistress for £7.00

### **Voluntary Tasks**

The choir is a well-oiled, albeit large machine that works easily and smoothly with the help of all its members. Lots of little tasks add up to a big job- just like how the choir learns music for public performances. If you are able, please help tidy the hall at the end of each rehearsal or help put away music. We can always find a small but very helpful job for you to do. At some concerts volunteers are needed to set up/pack away chairs and staging, to collect tickets, sell programmes, to provide/set out/serve refreshments and to look after soloists. If you or your family/friends would like to volunteer, please give your name to your Line Rep or the Concert Manager so he/she can call upon you/them if needed, any help will be very much appreciated.