

# Towne Singers

## Policies and Procedures

(as approved by the Board on January 13, 2020)

This document governs the day-to-day operation of the Towne Singers organization. It provides those policies and procedures that are not within the scope of the Bylaws, but which have been approved by the Board, and which are necessary for operation of the organization.

Any changes to this document must be approved by the Board. This document is made available to all members.

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## **TOWNE SINGERS' PURPOSE AND MISSION**

The Towne Singers is a community chorus open to anyone who likes to sing, and who agrees to comply with the bylaws, policies, and procedures of the Towne Singers' organization. The group is open to people of all ages and backgrounds. Per the organizational bylaws:

- The purpose of Towne Singers is to provide the opportunity for members of the community to join together, share the joy of singing great choral music, and have fun in the process!
- The mission of Towne Singers is to enhance the musical abilities of the choir and its members, and to use those abilities to produce concerts of great enjoyment to our audience.

In support of this mission, we sing a wide variety of music: classical, patriotic, Broadway, spiritual, popular, jazz, folk ---- music with appeal to audiences of all ages and tastes.

The chorus plans, prepares and performs two concerts a year ---- Spring and Holiday. Our goal is to bring quality concerts to the community. To do this we rely on our members to:

- Be faithful in attendance of and preparation for rehearsals
- Support the concert productions by selling tickets and ads
- Promote the chorus through various fundraising efforts
- Recruit new singers
- Perform various tasks that support the operation of the chorus

The Towne Singers is a non-profit organization.

## GENERAL POLICIES

Admission: Towne Singers accepts new members twice a year (in January and August) when the choir starts preparation for that season's concert. A new members' orientation meeting will be provided at each of the first two rehearsals of each season, prior to the beginning of the rehearsal. Prospective new members must attend one of the orientation sessions, and at least one of the first 2 rehearsals. New members must make their initial dues payment by the 3rd rehearsal. The Conductor will have each new member perform a 'pitch-matching' exercise to ensure that the singer is in the correct section.

Prospective members are always welcome to visit a Towne Singers' rehearsal.

Returning Members: Former members may return at the beginning of any season (in January or September).

Choir Size: The number of singers impacts what Towne Singers can perform in terms of:

- Music selections
- Concert venues with risers adequate for all singers, and Conductor visibility
- Performances other than regular concerts
- Transportation arrangements for the group

Although there is no formal policy on maximum membership, we are physically limited by the capacity of our risers and/or venue. Overall size limitations may be cause for placing prospective singers on a waiting list.

Section Balance: In order to achieve proper vocal balance for the best choral sound, the Towne Singers reserves the right to limit the size of certain sections. The balance objectives may be cause for placing prospective singers on a waiting list.

Musical Criteria: Towne Singers was formed to provide a place for people to sing and to have fun. However, it is also recognized that for every concert or performance, our goal is to strive for the best quality in musical entertainment. Although the ability to accurately read music is not required, it is desired. Singing members are expected to strive for the following modest musical criteria:

- Sing in tune
- Sing with proper rhythm
- Use proper volume dynamics
- Blend with other choral voices
- Follow the musical direction of the Conductor

Each Section Leader is expected to identify any problem areas relative to the above, and work with the members on corrective actions. If the problem persists, the Section Leader must advise the Conductor, who may retest any member for seating placement, section placement, or voice quality (to evaluate the singing difficulties, and to provide guidance). If the problem significantly affects the ability the choir to produce a good choral sound, the member may be asked to leave the choir for the remainder of the season, and return the following season, with that suggestion that additional lessons are appropriate.

## ATTENDANCE AND CONCERT PARTICIPATION POLICY

The attendance policy for members' eligibility to sing in concert is as follows:

Holiday Season: There are usually 15 scheduled rehearsals: 13 Monday-night rehearsals and 2 Saturday Conductor-led sectionals. Singers may miss no more than 3 of that total. In addition, attendance at the dress rehearsal is mandatory.

Spring Season: There are usually 19 scheduled rehearsals: 17 Monday-night rehearsals and 2 Saturday Conductor-led sectionals. Singers may miss no more than 3 of that total. In addition, attendance at the dress rehearsal is mandatory.

If a scheduled rehearsal falls on a National Holiday, an absence on that night is counted as a missed rehearsal for the season. In addition, each Section Leader is expected to organize and lead at least one sectional for his or her full section, during each season. Attendance at such sectionals counts as a "make-up" for any absences at the scheduled full choir rehearsals.

If a new member misses one of the first 2 rehearsals, that absence is not counted in the "missed rehearsals" for that person.

If a returning member plans to miss the first 3 rehearsals of a season, he or she must provide advance notification to the Conductor, Section Leader, and Librarian in writing, pay the first month's dues in advance, and arrange to have his/her music picked up by another member.

If a choir member becomes unable or ineligible to perform in a concert, he/she must notify the Section Leader immediately, who in turn should notify the Conductor and the Administrative chairperson. He/she may still participate in rehearsals, but that participation must be discontinued once the choir begins to rehearse in the final seating configuration for the concert.

The attendance policy may be waived on a case-by-case basis by the Conductor to accommodate exceptional circumstances, but only if the waiver provides an overall benefit to the choir and the concert. In such cases, the Conductor shall confirm the readiness of the choir member to sing in concert by performing a "readiness test".

Tardiness: It is disruptive to the entire choir for singers to be late. Towne Singers expects all members to be on time (considered to be the downbeat). For those occasions when work or family duties cause members to be tardy, the singer is asked to inform (telephone or email) his/her section leader. If a singer is consistently tardy with no notice to the section leader, a fourth un-notified tardy will be considered a missed rehearsal.

## BOARD MEMBER PROCEDURES DOCUMENTATION

Each Board member is expected to keep a set of desk procedures that summarize the tasks that are performed in his/her role, and the specifics as to how to accomplish those tasks.

## CHAMBER GROUP

The Chamber Group is a subset of the Towne Singers, and is established to:

- Perform at smaller venues not suitable for the entire choir
- Perform pieces that were written for smaller groups
- Perform pieces of a difficulty level that cannot be accommodated by the choir as a whole
- Act as the “outreach” arm of the Towne Singers

The Chamber Group size is nominally 20-24 singers, and is auditioned from the general membership of the Towne Singers at the beginning of each season. The selection criteria for the Chamber Group are established by the Conductor. If a member is not available on the designated audition date, he or she must arrange for an individual audition prior to the selections being finalized and announced.

Before auditioning, prospective chamber members must commit to an attendance level more restrictive than that required of the general choir membership:

- No more than 3 rehearsal/sectional absences during the holiday season.
- No more than 4 rehearsal/sectional absences during the spring season.
- No more than 2 consecutive absences during either season.

If the chamber auditions do not yield a sufficient set of qualified members for the planned repertoire, the conductor may appoint one of the Paid Singers as a chamber group member (such an appointment must occur at the beginning of the rehearsal season).

If a mid-season vacancy occurs in the group, the Conductor may appoint a replacement from those that had previously auditioned for the season (new auditions are not required).

Chamber Group members are expected to be available for special fund-raising and/or outreach concerts. Certain performances may involve only a subset of the Chamber (e.g. quartets or octets).

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Website.** The Towne Singers provides a web site that serves as a mechanism to:

- inform the public as to upcoming concerts and ticket sales information
- provide information as to how to join the choir
- provide resources to the choir members as to schedules, meeting reports, and rehearsal notes.

The website shall not provide any personal information about Towne Singers members (e.g. names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.), except as necessary for new member queries.

**Roster.** The Towne Singers publishes a roster that is for internal use of Towne Singers members only. Internal organizational email is based on the information in this roster. Roster information and email address shall not be provided to any other organizations or personnel without the written permission of the President. Distribution of the roster to the general choir membership shall be made via hardcopy only, so as to minimize the risk of the information being misused.

**Email System.** The Towne Singers email system shall be used only for information exchange related to Towne Singers activities. The email system shall not be used for any personal or outside-organization advertising. Use of the email system for other purposes requires the approval of the President.

**Photos, Videos, and Audio Recordings.** Members the Towne Singers must adhere to the following rules relative to recording at activities and events. “Social media” (as referenced below) includes YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Meetup. The President may waive a specific policy if doing so benefits the Towne Singers, and does not create any privacy issues.

### Rehearsals

- Photos and Video recording are not permitted unless specifically approved by the Conductor.
- Audio recording is permitted, but only for personal use (as a rehearsal aid). Such audio recordings may be shared with other Towne Singers via email.

### Parties and Other Non-public events

- Photos and video recording of Towne Singers private events is permissible, and may be shared with other members via email.
- Such recordings, however, shall not be posted on social media.

### Public Events (concerts and other performances)

- Photos and video recording by audience members is permitted.
- Photos and video recording by choir members is not permitted when on stage.
- Photos and videos taken by audience members may be posted on social media, but only if they portray the Towne Singers in a positive light.
- Audio recording is inappropriate, since an audio recording of the concert is provided to members via CD.

## DUES & FEES POLICY

Membership Dues: All members of the choir shall pay dues. The only exceptions are the Conductor, Asst Conductor, Accompanist, and any other paid staff.

Dues for Towne Singers membership is nominally \$200 per season (Holiday and Spring), but the Board may adjust that number each season as a function of the financial status of the organization. The dues include the cost of sheet music (including shipping/handling), and the cost of any “practice-CDs” that are provided to the choir.

Members may pay the entire season amount in one payment at the beginning of each rehearsal season, or may pay monthly. Monthly payments should be made at the beginning of each calendar month. The initial payment of dues (for new and returning members) must be made no later than the third rehearsal. Dues may be paid in the following ways:

Via check mailed to the Towne Singers P.O. Box

Via cash or check collected at rehearsal in a specially-marked container

Monthly payments will be tracked by the Finance Chair. Email reminders will be sent to choir members whose monthly payments are not received in a timely manner.

Dues & fees must be paid for a member to remain in good standing. Singers who do not have paid-up dues/fees will not be permitted to perform at the concert. The deadline for payment is the last regular Monday rehearsal before the concert.

If a choir member is unable or ineligible to perform in a concert, he/she is expected to pay the full season membership dues if still participating in rehearsals. This will be determined by the member's attendance record tracked by the Administrative Chair.

Returning members with outstanding membership due payments from the prior season are expected to pay the outstanding balance in addition to any returned check fees before returning for the current season.

If a member has paid full or partial dues and terminates membership before the end of the season, he/she may be granted a refund, if requested by the member in writing within 2 weeks of the departure date. The refund schedule is as follows:

- If a member drops before the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday rehearsal, a full refund may be issued if **all** music is returned unmarked. If not, only the amount in excess of \$50 will be refunded.
- If a member drops after the 4<sup>th</sup> but before the 7<sup>th</sup> Monday rehearsal, and has paid more than \$100, only the amount in excess of \$100 will be refunded.
- If a member drops after the 7<sup>th</sup> but before the 10<sup>th</sup> Monday rehearsal, and has paid more than \$150, only the amount in excess of \$150 will be refunded.
- If a member drops after the 10<sup>th</sup> Monday rehearsal, no refund will be provided.

## SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Towne Singers maintains a scholarship program for those choir members having a financial hardship that impacts ability to pay membership dues. Scholarships shall not cover the music fee portion of the dues, nor the costs of music folders and concert attire.

Scholarship requests are submitted to the scholarship committee that is made up of the Finance Chair, and three Board members appointed by the President.

Each applicant must submit his/her scholarship request to the Finance Chair (in writing, using the form in the Appendix) at the beginning of each concert season (no later than the third rehearsal for that season)

Any member who has been granted a scholarship must complete one full season without a scholarship before being eligible for a subsequent scholarship.

Any new member must complete one concert season before being eligible for a scholarship.

The number of scholarships granted each season shall not exceed 5% of the total choir membership.

The budget for scholarships shall be presented as part of the operating budget for the year. The total dollar amount of awarded scholarships shall not exceed that in the approved budget.

The scholarship committee shall consider the following factors when prioritizing the granting of the scholarships:

- The financial need of the applicant.
- The duration of membership in the choir
- The need of the relevant Section for additional members
- Demonstrated service to the choir

The names of the scholarship applicants and recipients are kept confidential.

All scholarship recipients are expected to volunteer for a specific task in support of the organization.

## FINANCIAL

Within the organization's bank account balance, a portion shall be designated as a reserve fund (approximately 15% of the average annual operating expenses). No expenditures shall cause the bank account to dip below this funding threshold, unless the Board agrees that an "emergency" situation exists that warrants the use of the fund.

To receive reimbursement for incurred expenses, a Check Request Form must be completed and signed:

- for a budgeted item: by the Finance Chair and the President
- for a non-budgeted item: by the Finance Chair, the President, and the Board

LEGAL COMPLIANCE

The U. S. Congress passed Sarbanes-Oxley legislation in 2002 in response to a large number of for-profit scandals. Strengthened protection for “whistleblowers” is one of two provisions of Sarbanes-Oxley that also applies to non-profits. The other provision is retention of documents related to lawsuits. IRS Form 990 asks whether you have policies related to these two areas, making it important to have such policies adopted. It is the intent of Towne Singers to adhere to all laws and regulations that apply to the organization. The support of all members is necessary for achieving that compliance.

- If any member of Towne Singers reasonably believes that some policy, practice, or activity of the Towne Singers is in violation of law, that individual should file a written complaint with the organization’s President, or other Board member, as appropriate.
- If any member of the Towne Singers observes or reasonably believes that an act of harassment or discrimination has occurred by word or action, that individual should file a written report with the organization’s President, or other Board member, so that appropriate action can be taken.

## TICKET SALES

### Pricing

The “nominal” concert ticket pricing for individuals is:

\$25 for adults

\$15 for children ages 3-10

Children ages 2 and under are admitted free

There is also a group ticket price. If 10 or more tickets are purchased as a block in a single transaction, the price per ticket is \$20 for adults, and \$10 for children. Members are encouraged to contact other music, civic, or religious groups to facilitate group sales.

For each season, a different pricing structure may be established by the Board as a function of the expected venue and production costs.

### Complimentary Tickets

Complimentary tickets may be provided to members of the press with the expectation of obtaining a review.

Complimentary tickets may be provided to purchasers of Advertising. However, the value of the complimentary tickets shall not exceed 20% of the purchased value of the advertisement, based on the lowest price of an adult ticket.

The purpose of this policy is to give guidance to the distribution of complimentary tickets. It is also to ensure that the value of the gift does not exceed the value of the return. Value can and will be measured in economic and non-economic terms.

Complimentary tickets are also available (**upon request**) to certain parties as follows:

Founder: 6 tickets

Conductor: 3 tickets

Accompanist: 2 tickets

Rehearsal Venue Office Staff: 2 tickets

Performance Venue Office Staff: 2 tickets

Paid Singers: 2 tickets (each)

Musicians: 1 ticket (each)

Volunteer Ushers, Cashiers, Ticket Sellers: 1 ticket (each)

### Required Purchases by Members

At this time, Towne Singers does not require members to buy a minimum number of tickets. The Board may change this policy as necessary. If a member does not sell many tickets, s/he is expected to contribute to the choir in other ways, including fundraising, direct monetary contribution, selling ads, time donation.

## CONCERT POLICY

### Music Selection

The Artistic/Production Committee works well in advance to design an overall concert plan along with the musical selections. Suggestions for concert themes and individual pieces are solicited from the membership. Final approval is by vote of the Board.

### Concert Budget

Concerts should be planned such that expenditures “break even” with concert income (ticket sales, ad sales, etc.). However, the Board may allocate “surplus” funds from the operating budget to augment/support the income portion of the concert budget.

### Solo/Ensemble Auditions

The Artistic/Production committee establishes the number of ensemble and/or solo pieces for the performance. Singers are encouraged to audition for such concert performance “slots”. The audition date is published early in the rehearsal schedule to allow for sufficient preparation time. Selected pieces must be in keeping with the concert’s theme. A member may audition as a soloist and as a member of a group.

Soloists: Singers may not perform solo works in two successive concerts. They may perform as part of an ensemble in successive concerts.

Ensembles: Singers may be included in more than one ensemble for a concert performance.

All singers selected should be from the regular membership.

Paid Singers are not allowed to audition for ensemble parts, unless the ensemble consists of 5 or more members. As necessary to support the concert theme, a Paid Singer may be designated (by the Conductor and Artistic Director) to perform a solo. The solo must be a piece that the Conductor and Artistic Director select, and that is considered essential to the concert quality.

An Audition Committee ranks and recommends the solo/ensemble pieces for the concert, based on the number of “slots” available for those pieces. The Audition Committee (of not more than 6 members) is jointly appointed by the Artistic Director and the Conductor. The committee must represent the different demographic groups in the choir. The criteria for evaluation/ranking of pieces for the concert are:

- Correctness of pitch
- Articulation of the text
- Enthusiasm for and interpretation of music and lyrics
- Stage presence & audience engagement
- Completeness of memorization
- Use of attire planned for the actual performance

## Towne Singers Policies and Procedures as of January 13, 2020

### Audience Logistics

Concert audience members are not permitted to enter the performance venue prior to the completion of rehearsal/preparation activities. Towne Singers are not permitted 'save seats' for friends/family prior to the opening of the venue to the audience.

### Special Concerts and Performances

All invitations for Towne Singers to perform outside the spring and holiday concerts are evaluated by and voted on by the Board. In general, the choir is open to outreach programs and choir fundraising opportunities.

## **TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

Everyone is encouraged to individually strive for the best quality sound for every performance. In order to develop each singer's talent to its ultimate potential, the Towne Singers are working together to improve vocal abilities by offering the following to all singers:

Recommendations for private or group voice lessons

Sectionals held by the Conductor

Additional sectionals held by Section Leaders

Practice-CDs for selected pieces, as deemed by the Conductor

Musical techniques given by the Conductor

Tape recording oneself is recommended for tracking progress. Section leaders are available for advice.

**APPENDIX**

## Towne Singers Scholarship Application

SEASON: Fall\_\_\_\_ Spring\_\_\_\_ YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Years in Towne Singers \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Request \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate extent of scholarship needed: Full\_\_\_\_\_ Partial\_\_\_\_\_

### Scholarship Policy:

- Scholarships shall not cover the music fee portion of the dues, nor the costs of music folders and concert attire.
- Any member who has been granted a scholarship must complete one full concert season without a scholarship before being eligible for a subsequent scholarship.
- Any new member must complete one full concert season before being eligible for a scholarship

*All information is kept strictly confidential*

Towne Singers  
Check Request Form

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Payable to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Check \$\$ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Check Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Invoice Attached: Yes / No

Description of Services: \_\_\_\_\_

Budgeted item: Yes / No

Approved by Board on: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check Request Approval:**

President \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Finance Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Received by Treasurer on Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Sent on Date: \_\_\_\_\_