

Towne Singers

Policies and Practices

Draft 5.1

(This final draft has been reviewed by the Board, and is approved for use beginning on November 15, 2024. A final review for spelling, grammar, and format corrections will be completed by Dec 31)

This document governs the day-to-day operation of the Towne Singers organization. It provides those policies and practices 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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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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 policies in this document must be compatible with the organization's bylaws. Changes to this document must be approved by the Board. In specific cases, the President may issue a temporary waiver to a policy, if that waiver is of benefit to the choir as a whole.

The Towne Singers is a non-profit organization.

2.0 ADMISSION AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 New Member Admission Towne Singers accepts new members twice a year (in January and September) when the choir starts preparation for that season's concert. A new members' orientation meeting is 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.

2.2 Returning Members Former members may return at the beginning of any season (in January or September). A returning member may opt to rejoin as a "non-singing member". Non-Singing Members are listed on the roster, receive emails to choir, and may sit in at rehearsals, but are not provided with music. They are charged dues at a reduced rate (see Dues section).

2.3 Choir Size and Balance The number of singers affects 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.

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.

2.4 Musical Criteria The 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 of 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 the suggestion that additional lessons are appropriate.

3.0 DUES

3.1 Dues Payments All members of the choir pay dues. The only exceptions are the Conductor, the Accompanist, and other paid musical staff.

The dues payment for membership is nominally in the \$200-\$300 range per season (Holiday and Spring). The Board finalizes the number each season as a function of the financial status of the organization. The dues support the general operation of the organization, and also cover the cost of acquiring sheet music and any “learning tracks” that are provided to the choir.

Dues for new members are 50% of the normal rate for the first season of membership. Members may pay the entire season amount in one payment at the beginning of the rehearsal season, or may pay in 4 equal installments. Due dates are approximately one month apart, and are published on the seasonal calendar. The initial payment of dues must be made no later than the third rehearsal.

Dues for "Non-Singing Members" are approximately 40% of the normal rate. They also receive a complimentary concert ticket, if requested

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
- Online via the TS Choir Resources web page
- Via the Zelle banking app

Monthly payments will be tracked by the Finance Team Director, and made available to the Section Leaders, so that reminders can be made to those choir members whose monthly payments are not received in a timely manner.

Dues 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 final deadline for payment is the last regular Monday rehearsal before the concert.

3.2 Refunds 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 in writing (email) within 2 weeks of the departure date.

Refund availability is as follows:

If, at the time of his/her departure, the member has paid dues increments that are not yet due, those increments are refundable if requested.

There is no refund for non-singing members. Refunds do not include transaction fees for online payments.

4.0. SCHOLARSHIPS

4.1 Program A scholarship program is available to those choir members having a financial hardship that impacts ability to pay membership dues. Scholarships do not cover the music fee portion of the dues, nor the costs of music folders and concert attire.

4.2 Requests Scholarship requests are submitted to the scholarship committee that is made up of the Finance Team Director (chairperson) and two other Board members appointed by the President. Each applicant must submit their scholarship request to the Finance Director (in writing, using the form from the website) at the beginning of each concert season (no later than the third rehearsal for that season).

4.3 Eligibility 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.

4.4 Funding The total dollar amount of scholarships granted each season shall not exceed 5% of the total expected dues income. The budget for scholarships shall be presented as part of the operating budget for the year.

4.5 Selection Criteria 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

Award levels may be for 75%, 50%, or 25% of the full season's dues

4.6 Award Notifications. The names of the scholarship applicants and recipients are kept confidential. Recipients will be notified by the Financial Team Director.

5.0 ATTENDANCE AND CONCERT ELIGIBILITY

5.1 Attendance Expectations Regular attendance at rehearsals is essential to providing a quality concert, and to supporting fellow choir members.

- Members who miss 2 Monday rehearsals are expected to attend at least 1 Saturday sectional.
- Members who miss 3 or 4 Monday rehearsals are expected to attend both Saturday sectionals.
- Members who miss 5 or more must meet with his/her Section leader to develop a corrective action plan (see below).

There are no exceptions for rehearsals scheduled on national holidays. Watching a rehearsal on Zoom does not count as an attendance. A new member may miss one of the first 2 rehearsals without being marked absent.

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

The pre-concert dress rehearsal is mandatory.

5.2 Corrective Actions Attendance is monitored relative to these expectations. The Admin team will issue a cumulative report each week. If it appears likely that a member is not on track to meet the expectations, he or she and the Section Leader should meet and develop an informal future attendance and study commitment that will lead to concert readiness. Such a commitment may take the form of informal ad hoc sectionals (with other members), extra time with learning tracks, and enhanced memorization. If such a commitment cannot be made, the member should not plan to sing in the concert.

5.3 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) their section leader. If a singer is chronically tardy with no notice to the section leader, the section leader should meet with the singer to develop corrective actions.

5.4 Concert Unavailability Singers who plan to attend/sing at rehearsals, but will be unavailable for the concert (due to a personal schedule conflict), are considered "regular members", and are welcome to attend Monday

night rehearsals (up until the last 2 rehearsals).

5.5 Non-Singers Those who have a "non-singing" membership may sit in at rehearsals, but will not be provided with music, and are not allowed to sing at those rehearsals

5.6 Policy Waivers 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

6.0 CONCERT PLANNING

6.1 Long Range Planning and Theme Selection The Artistic Team director maintains a list of potential themes for future concerts. The actual theme for an upcoming concert is established at least 6 months before the concert; and must be approved by the Board.

6.2 Music Selection The Artistic Team director forms a music selection group of 4-8 members to select music for the full choir to sing in the concert; the Conductor is also a member of this group. The selected repertoire is approved by the Board. The selected set should lead to a concert duration of 1-1/2 to 1-3/4 hours, including any Chamber group number, auditioned songs, narration, and intermission.

6.3 Chamber Group For songs that are exceptionally difficult and/or not appropriate for a full choir performance, a chamber group may be formed; the group size is typically 16-24 singers. The Conductor auditions and selects the singers for this group. Group rehearsals are held outside of the time frame for normal full choir rehearsals. Special selection conditions exist:

- If a member is not available on the designated audition date, they must arrange for an individual audition prior to the selections being finalized and announced.
- 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 (appointment must occur at the beginning of the rehearsal season).
- If a mid-season vacancy occurs, the Conductor may appoint a replacement from those that had previously auditioned for the season (new auditions are not required).

6.4 Volunteer Ensemble, As an alternative to the Chamber Group, the Conductor may select a piece appropriate to a medium-sized ensemble (12-24 singers). Non-auditioned volunteers are solicited for such a piece. The conductor finalizes the size and SATB mix of the group, based on the abilities of those volunteers.

6.5 Auditioned Solos and Ensembles Auditions for solos and small ensembles (2 to 8 singers) occur at the midpoint of the rehearsal season. The Artistic/Production Team establishes the number of ensemble and/or solo "slots" for the performance. 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 also as a member of a group.
- Singers may not perform solo works in two successive concerts. They may, however, perform as part of an ensemble in a successive concert.
- Singers may be included in more than one ensemble.
- 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. It must be a piece that the Conductor and Artistic Director select, and that is considered essential to 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 should 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

If piano accompaniment is required, it will be provided for the actual audition. Any pre-audition accompaniment is arranged for and paid for by the auditionee(s).

6.6 Incidental Solos Incidental solos are solos that are embedded within songs that the full choir is performing. Choir members sign up to audition for these solos. Auditions occur during the standard full choir rehearsal sessions. The conductor makes the final selection of singers to perform these solos.

6.7 Production Preparations Key responsibilities associated with the concert productions are as follows:

1. The venue selection should be finalized at least 6 months before the concert. It typically places constraints on the staging features and

- costs.
2. The Artistic Team is responsible for identifying all staging features, including video, lighting sound, attire, props, decor, sets.
 3. The production budget denotes planned expenses and income specific to the concert (except for sheet music and learning aids). The Artistic Team director prepares the concert budget for approval by the Board. After approval, the actual expenditures and income are tracked by the Team director, based on data provided by the Financial Management office.

7.0 TICKET SALES

7.1 Sales Mechanisms Tickets are sold via:

- Direct sales by members
- Online sales via the Towne Singers website
- Electronic sales via the Zelle banking app
- At the door prior to the concert

7.2 Pricing As of September 2024, the “default” concert ticket categories and pricing is as follows:

\$30 for adults

\$250 for a block of 10 adult tickets

\$20 for students 13 and up

FREE for children ages 12 and under

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.

7.3 Complimentary Tickets Complimentary tickets are offered to organizations and individuals in recognition of support provided, or as part of the compensation agreement of paid performers.

Complimentary tickets may be offered to:

- Members of the press with the expectation of writing a review.
- Purchasers of advertising in the concert program (per the package price)
- Non-Singing members 1 ticket
- Founder’s family: 4 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, Paid Performers, Stage Manager: 1 ticket (each)
- Volunteer Ushers, Cashiers, Ticket Sellers: 1 ticket (each)
- Persons who have provided exceptional support to the organization or the concert (must be requested by a Board member):

7.4 Required Ticket Purchases by Members 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.

8.0 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

8.1 Fiscal Calendar The IRS tax year for the Towne Singers is July 1 through June 30. The organization uses this fiscal calendar for other financial planning activities.

8.2 Primary Account The organization establishes a commercial checking account that is used for all income and expenditures related to operation. Supplemental accounts may be set up to facilitate improved rate of return, or special reimbursable events.

8.3 Fund Categories Organization assets are designated as Operations or Operating Reserves

- **Operations funds** are used for normal activities. Typical sources of income are dues, donations (less than \$1000), tickets sales, program ads, DVD/CD sales, and "transfers in" of money from the Reserve fund.
- **Operating Reserve funds** are established from income sources such as grants, large donations (greater than \$1000), bequests., etc. The Board can designate any portion of the total assets to be held in reserve. The nominal minimum is 15% of the total operating budget. Large donations should be held in the Reserve fund until Board decisions are made as to any needed use for those monies. The conversion of Reserve funds to Operations funds requires Board approval

The President can authorize the transfer of Reserve funds (up to \$5K) as necessary to ensure that temporary fluctuations in the checking account balance do not cause it to drop below a floor level of \$4K. Such a transfer is not considered to be a change to the approved annual budget.

8.4 Income and Expenditure Categories. A chart of accounts is prepared that details the income and expenditure categories that are used in the budget

8.5 Budget Preparation/Approval. A budget is prepared at the beginning of each fiscal year for approval of the Board. The budget details the best known information as to upcoming income and expenses. It is expected that the annual budget not show a net loss, based on normal expenditures and sources of income. The Board must approve use of Reserve funds to handle exceptional situations, such as special concert features, special travel, abnormal loss of income, etc.

8.6. Monthly Financial Reporting The following monthly reports are produced:

- Operational funds activity: includes starting balance, income, expenditures, ending balance.
- Reserve fund activity includes starting balance, additions, transfers out, ending balance
- Month-end total assets summary (Ops funds plus Reserve funds).

8.7 Payments. Payments are made in response to invoices, contract requirements, and reimbursement requests from members (who must use the Payment Request/Invoice Form available at the Choir Resources web page).

Signature requirements on the request form are as follows:

- For a budgeted item: by the Finance Chair **OR** the President
- For a non-budgeted item: by the Finance Chair, the President, and the Board

9.0 COMMUNICATIONS

9.1 Website The Towne Singers provides a website 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
- Provides information as to donating to the organization
- Provide resources to the choir members as to schedules, meeting reports, and rehearsal notes learning tracks, forms. etc. The choir resources information is accessible by password, and not available to the public

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

9.2 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.

9.3 Email System The Towne Singers email system shall be used to provide information to active members, 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.

9.4 Social Media Utilization Towne Singers social media accounts are for the benefit of the membership and audience members. Outside organizations are not permitted to promote their activities or events on TS media, unless written permission is approved by the President.

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

At 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.

At 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.

At Public Events (concerts and other performances). Photography and video recording by audience members is permitted, but not by choir members 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. .

9.6 Topics of Conversation The Towne singers rehearsal and performance environments are meant to be pleasant and enjoyable for all involved. Topics of conversation that could be divisive, polarizing, or intimidating should be “left at the door.” This applies to in-person conversation, and to any messages contained in social media or concert programs.

10.0 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.

11.0 BOARD LEADERSHIP

11.1 CO-Leadership. The 11 elected Board positions should be filled with CO-directors or CO-leaders wherever possible; the objective is to ensure that all job functions for each office can be fully performed. If a position cannot be filled as a "CO", then the elected leader must appoint a "principal " to support the job activities.

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