

## Member Handbook

**ChoirWorks** is an auditioned SATB chorus of 60-70 volunteer singers performing a varied and challenging repertoire focussed on classical music. A registered not-for-profit incorporation, the choir each year stages concerts ranging from entirely *a cappella* performances, to major classical works with professional orchestral ensembles and soloists, and four-part carolling leading into Christmas. Based in the heart of Brisbane where it was formed in 1996, the choir has a tradition of excellence as its core goal, and retains the services of a professional Director of Music and professional accompanist. Its performances include collaborations in Brisbane's Concert Hall at QPAC, delivering *Symphony for our World* live before an audience of 2000 for National Geographic, recording music for Queensland Theatre shows and embarking on international tours to famous music venues in major cities across Europe and Canada. [read more](#)

**Director of Music — Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié** enjoys the adventure and global embrace of a career dedicated to music. She thrives on the creative discovery that flows from collaborative musical opportunities, whether working with combinations of choirs or with other composers, dancers, visual artists and cultural groups: the challenge often as rewarding as the music. Originally from Perth in Western Australia but now based in Brisbane on Australia's east coast, Debra's career has taken her from Hungary and through western Europe to north America. She attended Indiana University in the United States where she obtained a Master of Music Education degree and a Doctorate of Music degree in Choral Conducting. [read more](#)

**Accompanist — John Woods'** career in music and the arts began in the cold of the northern hemisphere, journeyed across the globe via balmy Asia and down-under into sunny Australia by the early 1990s. A decade later John took up residency in Australia. He was born in Stirling in Scotland where he entered the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, studying piano and bassoon. This led to scholarships awarded by The Scottish Arts Council and The Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust to specialise in piano accompaniment at The Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. John later worked as a guest répétiteur at the Royal Northern College of Music before travelling to the Far East doing similar work at The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. [read more](#)

### General information

**ChoirWorks** aims to:

- attract singers to join in performances of a high standard across many genres
- promote and support choral activity to embellish the cultural force within communities
- promote individual and collective well-being by co-operative and respectful social interaction

### Performances

The core of the choir's activities is the three major concerts it holds in a year, with at least one being an a cappella performance. Over the past decade the choir established a reputation for emotive Anzac Day performances which included commissioned works by Australian composers. In addition, the Director of Music seeks opportunities for the choir to be involved in other events. This has included live vocal backing for the National Geographic screening of 'Symphony for Our World' and collaborating with other choirs for larger works such as the Verdi Requiem. The choir also uses its choral talents to generate revenue to minimise the membership fees and to support specific projects. These extra engagements may include a "From Scratch" event, café-style concert, singing at weddings and carolling throughout December. All members are encouraged to make themselves available for these performances and activities.

### Rehearsals

During the COVID pandemic, the choir made use of a number of well-ventilated venues for rehearsals, evening singing outdoors. Rehearsals are held on Tuesday evenings from 6.30 - 8.45pm, currently at The Old Museum in Bowen Hills. There are three distinct rehearsal periods each of which culminate in a concert, although music may be rehearsed across seasons depending on the commitments for a particular year. In addition to Tuesday rehearsals, one rehearsal per season on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon is scheduled.

Final rehearsals are usually on the Friday evening prior to a performance. The dates for these are provided well in advance and details of all rehearsals and concerts are available on the choir website. There is an attendance sheet for you to sign at each rehearsal. The Constitution provides that where a singer has attended fewer than 75% of the rehearsals relevant to a performance, the Musical Director may make an assessment as to whether the member may sing in the performance. (If the outcome is that the member cannot sing, the member is not entitled to any refund of fees or levies.)

## **Fees**

The choir is self-funded so members pay membership fees to fund the running costs of the choir, the music, insurance, the Director of Music's honorarium and accompanist fees, etc. The current fee schedule is on the choir website on the 'Member info' page. Fees for students are discounted. Fees can be paid annually in the first three weeks of the year or by season (with a small discount for annual payments) by cash, cheque or direct deposit.

## **Membership**

Membership is open to any adult singer who satisfies the audition process. If you are thinking of auditioning for the choir, you are encouraged to join a rehearsal and take the opportunity of meeting the current choir members and the Director of Music to see if our choir is the right fit for you. If you decide you would like to join, an audition will be organised for you. The audition will consist of:

- your own choice of song (a simple hymn or short work - no operatic arias are expected!)
- vocalising led by the Director of Music
- an ear test (singing notes from a chord)
- a short sight-singing exercise

You will also be asked to complete an application form (available online) with relevant details. It should be noted that the choir has a limited number of places and it is necessary to maintain a vocal balance. If your audition is successful and there are no spaces in your voice part you may need to go on a waiting list.

## **Additional Information**

**Music** will be provided by the choir and must be returned in the same condition at the end of the season. Notations should be done lightly in soft 2B lead pencil only. You will need to rub out pencil notations before returning music. If music is lost or damaged, you may be required to reimburse the cost of replacement.

**Rehearsal apologies** or for concerts should be advised to [contact@choirworks.au](mailto:contact@choirworks.au) If you are aware ahead of time of an absence, you should also mark the rehearsal sign-on sheet with an 'A' (for absent) for the date you'll be away.

**Folders** supplied by the choir are used for most performances. You will be provided with a numbered folder for your first performance with the choir and this must be returned if you leave the choir.

**Uniform:** the choir has a formal uniform for all concert performances. The uniform has been kept as simple as possible as members have responsibility for providing their own uniform.

Women:

- black top, sleeve below mid-upper arm, shoulders covered, modest with no see-through panels
- matt full length black tailored 'corporate' trousers
- black closed-toe shoes with black socks or stockings
- coloured accessories as advised

Men:

- matt black long-sleeved collared business shirt
- matt black long trousers with black belt if required
- black shoes with black socks

Wearing the correct uniform is a pre-requisite for performance. Singers should keep jewellery to a minimum and avoid wearing perfumes or after shave. Deodorant is recommended!

**Tasks:** the choir depends on members to assist in practical ways in the running of the choir. Everyone is expected to actively promote concerts and pre-sell as many tickets as possible to ensure a good-sized audience. Leaflets and posters are provided to members for distribution. Those who are physically able are required to assist with setting up and dismantling equipment for both rehearsals and performances. The choir sometimes provides post-concert refreshments for the audience, soloists, orchestra and choir, when everyone is encouraged to 'bring a plate', assist with setting-up and serving, and clearing away.

**Tea break:** Traditionally there is a tea-break for about 15 minutes half way through each rehearsal, although the pandemic forced restrictions. When tea-breaks are possible, tea, coffee and biscuits are available for a gold coin donation. This is a great opportunity to get to know choir members. A duty roster for setting-up and clearing, and serving tea and coffee shares this task, and singers are asked to volunteer. A 'duty period' is about 6 weeks. Feel free to bring something home-baked to share – it's always appreciated!

**Communication:** information is provided via the website 'Members' page and email. It's intended to make the choir website the 'office' for member enquiries and communication and reduce the tendency to rely mostly on email updates. For example the 'Rehearsal Calendar' (found on the menu under 'Season \*\*\*\*') will include updates on occasional changes to rehearsal venues and times, so members are asked to check both the website and their emails frequently to stay informed. If you do not have email, you should find an 'email buddy' who will commit to passing this information on to you.

**Insurance:** the choir being a member of the Australian National Choral Association means its members have the benefit of personal injury insurance cover at rehearsals and performances and for travel to and from these events. The terms of the policy are available on request. Please note that personal possessions are not covered by this insurance.

**Management and administration:** an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Qld), the choir and is managed by a committee elected every year at the annual general meeting (AGM). The committee consists of the following honorary positions: chairman, secretary, treasurer plus up to five general members. The Director of Music is also a member of the committee. The committee meets as needed. Summaries of the meetings are made available to choir members as appropriate. Members are encouraged to volunteer for non-committee administrative roles such as Librarian.

The choir's AGM takes place in the second concert season of the year. Notice of the meeting and call for nominations for the committee, or items for discussion, are circulated to choir members at least two weeks in advance. A copy of the constitution and names of the committee members are on the choir website.

Choir contact - email: [contact@choirworks.au](mailto:contact@choirworks.au)

NB: because the committee is a voluntary group, incoming email are not monitored continuously. The committee aims to respond to emails within 48 hours but they should not be relied upon for urgent communication. If you wish to contact the Director of Music or a specific committee member put 'For (name as appropriate)' in the subject heading of an email, and the information will be passed to the relevant person who will get back to you.

The choir website address is: [www.choirworks.au](http://www.choirworks.au) or [www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com](http://www.brisbaneconcertchoir.com) It includes a password-protected 'Members' page.

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