



# choir member handbook

## 2023-2024

updated 07262023

### CONTENTS

- p. 2 Mission, Vision, & Core Values Statements
  - Statement on Cultural Equity
  - Staff and Committee Contacts
- p. 3 About Seattle Pro Musica
  - Board of Directors
- p. 4 Education & Engagement
  - Member Responsibilities
- p. 5 Rehearsals
  - Rehearsal Etiquette
- p. 6 Attendance (**including updated COVID-19 Guidance**)
- p. 7 Internal Chorus Publications
  - Concert Schedule Information
- p. 8 Uniform Guidelines
- p. 9 Publicity
- p. 9 Committees

Seattle Pro Musica, P.O. Box 17939 Seattle, WA 98127

206-203-5104 | [seattlepromusica.org](http://seattlepromusica.org)

A not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization established in 1972

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To enrich and inspire our audiences, singers, and community through the experience of choral artistry, and to increase access to and appreciation of choral music.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To be among the world's finest choral organizations, known as innovative, inspiring and essential to our growing community.

## **CORE VALUES**

Seattle Pro Musica is committed to:

- Artistry
- Excellence
- Community
- Integrity

## **SEATTLE PRO MUSICA'S STATEMENT ON CULTURAL EQUITY**

Everyone deserves equal access to a full and vibrant creative life, and this access is essential to a free and healthy society. To support the creative life of our community, Seattle Pro Musica commits to policies and practices of cultural equity that foster equal access, inclusion, and justice.

We recognize cultural equity as a framework of values, policies, and practices that ensures that arts institutions serve the needs of all people, especially those who have historically been underserved based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, size, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion.

As we pursue our artistic mission, we will hold ourselves accountable to cultural equity. By acknowledging and challenging inequities, both as an individual arts organization and in partnership with others, we can and will make change happen.

---

This handbook is designed to give you some basic information about Seattle Pro Musica and our obligations to one another; additional information will be provided annually, and may replace or revise the information contained herein. If you have questions, concerns or suggestions, feel free to speak with the Artistic Director, Executive Director, Membership Chair or any member of the Membership Committee.

Artistic Director: Karen P. Thomas (she/her, they/them) – [karen@seattlepromusica.org](mailto:karen@seattlepromusica.org)

Executive Director: Katie Skovholt (she/her)– [katie@seattlepromusica.org](mailto:katie@seattlepromusica.org)

Operations and Administrative Associate: Kate Kelley (she/her, they/them) – [kkelley@seattlepromusica.org](mailto:kkelley@seattlepromusica.org)

Membership Chair: Robert Wade (he/him) - [robertcwade@gmail.com](mailto:robertcwade@gmail.com)

## **ABOUT SEATTLE PRO MUSICA**

Seattle Pro Musica is a critically-acclaimed choral ensemble of talented singers with strong musical skills. Individual choir members are often given the opportunity to perform solo works as well as sing in small ensembles. Seattle Pro Musica organization has four ensembles; the full choir (apx. 70 members); the small mixed chamber ensemble (Vox - 24-32 members); the SSAA small ensemble (Chroma - 9-16 members); and the TTBB small ensemble (Orpheon - 9-16 members). Seattle Pro Musica prides itself on being a chorus committed to excellence and to giving individuals in the chorus the opportunity to flourish. Above all, Seattle Pro Musica is a community of people with a passion for choral music. Members experience joy in the quality of music they achieve together, striving for excellence in performance and overflowing with enthusiasm to share the art.

The choir receives support from audiences, volunteers, foundations, corporations, government arts agencies, individual donors, and, most importantly, its members. The biggest single fundraiser is the spring auction, which generates over one third of Seattle Pro Musica's annual income. Ticket revenues and CD sales provide another segment of Seattle Pro Musica's operating budget. This income helps pay direct costs: rehearsal and performance venue rental, music purchase, orchestra fees, marketing costs, concert expenses, recordings, and staff salaries. Grants, individual donations, and corporate matching also provide support.

Seattle Pro Musica is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. As such, it is governed by a Board of Directors elected by the membership. The Board has fiscal and legal responsibility for the organization. They engage in long-range strategic planning, set policy, and oversee financial operations. The Seattle Pro Musica staff is headed by Artistic Director Karen P. Thomas and Executive Director Katie Skovholt. There is also an enthusiastic group of more than 80 volunteers who provide support for office staffing, concert staffing, the auction, concert and event promotion, fundraising, and more. New volunteers are always welcome.

Seattle Pro Musica has fourteen commercial CD recordings, 11 of which are currently available on CD. These can be purchased by contacting the office (206-203-5104 or [admin@seattlepromusica.org](mailto:admin@seattlepromusica.org)). CDs and individual tracks are also available as downloads through [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com) and other retailers such as iTunes.

Seattle Pro Musica is a resident ensemble of Seattle's St. James Cathedral. This honor is given to only a few ensembles, whose artistic excellence is of the highest order. Being a resident ensemble enables us to rehearse and perform in a beautiful space with fabulous acoustics. In exchange, we occasionally perform by request for a St. James mass or other event each year.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Seattle Pro Musica's Board of Directors has fiscal and legal responsibility for the organization. The Board of Directors engages in long-range strategic planning, sets policy, and oversees financial operations. Any Seattle Pro Musica member is eligible to be considered for the Board of Directors, as are non-singers interested in supporting the group. There is a copy of the choir by-laws posted on the members' only page of the website which provides comprehensive information on board elections.

The Board of Directors meets once per quarter. Meeting dates and locations are published in the Announcements. Chorus members are welcome to attend these meetings. Minutes from the meetings are posted on the members' only page of the SPM Website.

## **ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR AND SECTION LEADERS**

SPM employs between two and four additional artistic staff leaders annually, hired and supervised by the Artistic Director. Our Assistant Conductor and Section Leaders provide supportive leadership in their sections at rehearsals and performances, as well as leading warmups and sectional rehearsals at the direction of the Artistic Director. Additionally, our Assistant Conductor helps to prepare the small ensembles for their performances, and is generally prepared to act as a substitute for the Artistic Director and Conductor should they need to be absent. See the roster for names and contact information.

## **EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT**

Choral education is an important aspect of Seattle Pro Musica's mission. In our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, we launched a *New American Composers Initiative*. This initiative has three ongoing parts, to be achieved annually:

- Commissioning a new choral work from a living composer
- ...who will come to spend a week in residence with Seattle Pro Musica
- ...and will, as part of their residency, visit multiple local schools to present collaborative musical workshops and share their specific expertise with students.

## **MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

The members are the foundation and heart of the organization. It is the membership, working as a unit, that accomplishes Seattle Pro Musica's mission by being first-rate musicians, promoters, and contributors. There are numerous ways for members to contribute time and talent. At a minimum, each member is expected to contribute the following:

- \$75 annual dues (including members on sabbatical and auxiliary members).
- Members are required to attend the annual fundraiser, either as a ticket-purchasing attendee at any level, or as a performer/volunteer.
- For the annual fundraiser, each member is strongly encouraged to:
  - solicit donations or donate goods and services (valued at \$350 or more);
  - make a direct financial contribution (of \$250 or more);
  - provide volunteer support (12 hours or more);
  - or some combination thereof. This is not required, but deeply appreciated.

Members who have concerns about their financial obligations are invited to talk with the Membership Chair, the Executive Director, or the Artistic Director. Dues may be paid in installments.

Members are no longer required to sell tickets to Seattle Pro Musica performances, but are strongly encouraged to advertise to their networks (word-of-mouth is the best way to increase our audiences!). SPM will provide members with tools to help them market concerts to friends and family, including small functional discounts.

Members are encouraged to contribute in other ways, such as: contributing time and expertise to assist with fundraising activities; singing in ensembles for education and engagement programs and special events; distributing postcards and brochures; assisting with publicity on social media outlets; and publicizing our concerts through word of mouth.

Everyone in Seattle Pro Musica has something to contribute! We are fortunate to have a strong base of individuals providing in-kind services, including professional graphic artists, legal counsel, and marketing experts. All of these contacts have been cultivated through strong relationships with and between choir and staff members and their friends and professional contacts. We encourage our members to be creative in their endeavors to keep Seattle Pro Musica artistically and fiscally sound.

## REHEARSALS

Unless otherwise noted, rehearsals will take place at Epiphany Parish in Madrona. Free parking is available on the street or church parking lot.

Please see the complete 2023-24 calendar for a comprehensive season schedule.

Full choir	Tuesdays, 7:00-9:30 pm, with a break at around 8:15 for announcements and socializing.
Vox - Small mixed ensemble	Tuesdays, 6:15-7:15 pm, and an occasional Monday, 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Chroma - Small SSAA ensemble	Tuesdays, 9:30-10:00 pm and an occasional Monday, 6:30 -8:00 pm
Orpheon - Small TTBB ensemble	Tuesdays, 9:30-10:00 pm and an occasional Monday, 8:00 - 9:30 pm

### Bring to Every Rehearsal:

- Your water bottle
- Your music in your own black folder. Alternately, an electronic tablet with a method of note-taking and your music downloaded.

### Music Preparation

In order to achieve excellence as a choir, it is important that every choir member comes to rehearsal fully prepared with music learned. Rehearsals will focus on building ensemble, blend, tuning, and phrasing - not on learning notes.

### REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE

Karen P. Thomas, Artistic Director, knows how she wants to spend rehearsal time. Therefore, please observe the following general guidelines for rehearsal etiquette.

-Questions about phrasing, breath, diction, or notes should be directed to your section leader or to a trusted neighbor during break or after rehearsal. Your section leader will be responsible for asking questions of the conductor at an appropriate time and reporting back - either in rehearsal, at break, or after rehearsal.

-If Karen opens the floor to questions, please feel free to ask, remembering to root your inquiry in kindness to others.

-Please avoid using your phone during rehearsal - this includes texting, emailing, etc. All ringers and noise-making devices should be turned off prior to rehearsal. Please remember that one distracted singer lowers the level of rehearsal progress for everyone.

Seattle Pro Musica rehearsals are fragrance-free. We have multiple singers who are severely allergic to scents. Please avoid all scents on rehearsal and concert days - this includes any perfumes or colognes, scented lotions or sprays, and scented hair products.

*Seattle Pro Musica is more than a community; we are a family. As with many families, not all members share the same views. Please remember to be considerate if you choose to discuss current events. In the spirit of friendship and respect for diversity of opinion, we would encourage you to avoid overt displays of political partisanship in election years and beyond.*

## **ATTENDANCE**

Generally, two absences are allowed per quarter (between concerts). If you must miss more than two rehearsals per concert period, please talk to the Conductor about whether or not it is appropriate for you to sing in the concert. If you have advance knowledge of an absence, please communicate it with the Conductor as early as possible; if you must call out sick or otherwise unavailable at the last minute, please send a message to the office (206-203-5104 or [admin@seattlepromusica.org](mailto:admin@seattlepromusica.org)). It is the responsibility of the individual singer to get all markings given at the rehearsal you missed - please be certain to connect with your choir buddy or section leader prior to the next rehearsal. Seattle Pro Musica will provide livestreams of rehearsals via YouTube whenever possible; if you are staying home due to illness or other complication such as COVID exposure, we strongly encourage you to tune in.

It is generally expected that singers will arrive early enough to pick up any new materials in advance of published call times, and will be in their seats ready to warm up at the rehearsal start time. Occasionally, circumstances or Seattle traffic make this difficult; if you are running late, please text the SPM phone number at 206-203-5104 to let us know.

**COVID-19:** In 2023-24, Seattle Pro Musica will not require masks or regular testing to sing (though masking is respected). All singers will sign a waiver stating their understanding of the risks of COVID-19, and that they will not knowingly sing unmasked in rehearsal with recent exposures or symptoms of illness. To facilitate this, we will continue to offer livestreams of rehearsal. If you have questions about your specific circumstances, please contact staff.

We will run multiple high-grade air filters in our rehearsal space, and leave the windows open for fresh air until doing so becomes prohibitively cold. Staff will continue to regularly consult with a COVID Task Force of medical professionals to refine our response to COVID-19 and any other public health threat, and SPM reserves the right to reinstate additional protective measures at any time.

**Dress rehearsals:** To sing a concert, you must attend all scheduled dress rehearsals and arrive by the scheduled call time for rehearsals and performances.

**Sabbaticals:** If you know that you will be absent for more than two rehearsals in one quarter, you may wish to schedule a sabbatical. Please discuss this with the conductor as far in advance of the quarter as possible so that they can make appropriate arrangements.

**Music:** Physical and electronic scores are provided; some belong to Seattle Pro Musica, others are borrowed. Choir members may mark physical scores with pencil. After performance, markings may be left on Seattle Pro Musica scores, but should be erased from borrowed scores. Return scores after concerts as directed. In the case of some large works, members may have the opportunity to purchase scores through SPM.

**Folders:** Each choir member must have a black choral folder or a non-shiny 3 ring binder of appropriate size. A black choral folder may be purchased at music stores or ordered from any number of online retailers such as [mymusicfolders.com](http://mymusicfolders.com) or [musicfolders.com](http://musicfolders.com). If you are unable to purchase your own folder, reach out to staff. If you use a tablet, please make sure it is in a black case or folder.

**Practice recordings:** Seattle Pro Musica provides rehearsal tracks to facilitate practice via our website or via DropBox, and in many cases part-specific MIDI files are available upon request.

**Additional Accommodations:** Please contact staff for any additional accommodations; we are happy to find solutions to facilitate your comfort and create a positive experience whenever possible.

## **INTERNAL CHORUS PUBLICATIONS**

Concert order and program notes are made available to choir members prior to each event. The Chorus Member's Handbook is updated and published at the beginning of each season. These are provided via email and are on the members' only page of the website (login is on the bottom of the home page; the password and login name are to change annually and will be distributed by email prior to the start of each season.). A directory of members, staff, and board members is updated quarterly. **Choir Announcements are distributed to all members via email and posted on the member's only page of the website each Monday.** It is important and helpful that members read them thoroughly, prior to rehearsal. Contents will include the rehearsal schedule information, member announcements, calls for solo auditions, and other operational news. A complete rehearsal calendar is printed at the beginning of each season and is also available on the members' only page of the website.

**WEBSITE:** Seattle Pro Musica maintains a website, [www.seattlepromusica.org](http://www.seattlepromusica.org), with information on the choir, the current concert season, auditions, ticket sales, CD sales, the auction, donations, and much more. There is a members' only page accessed through a log-in at the bottom of the home page; members will receive a new password annually. The members' only page has all of the season's choir announcements, board minutes, this handbook, digital copies of all music (with conductor markings), rehearsal audio downloads, and additional important information. Members looking for information and resources are requested to look on the website first!

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** SPM maintains active social media accounts (primarily YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook pages) and encourages tagging and sharing of posts/photos.

**EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:** In the rare event that there is a change in rehearsal due to severe weather or other unforeseeable events, members will be notified via email as soon as possible. The staff will also post information on the members' only page of the website. However, given the size of the choir and the logistics involved in major scheduling changes, it is ultimately each member's individual responsibility to check with the staff regarding possible scheduling changes in the event of severe weather or other natural disasters.

## **GENERAL CONCERT SCHEDULE INFORMATION**

For complete current schedule information please refer to the published schedule for each season. Seattle Pro Musica normally has three major concert programs during the season, plus the annual auction, all of which require the participation of the membership except by prior arrangement with the Artistic Director.

In addition to our regular concert schedule, opportunities may arise for performances of the full choir or one of the small groups. Decisions to accept or refuse such opportunities will be made by the Artistic Director. In recognition of member schedules, additional engagements not included on the calendar prior to the first rehearsal will generally be voluntary. Additional performances may be scheduled throughout the year (including the summer) and participation requirements vary depending on many factors, including number of singers required, rehearsal time required, and performance needs. These include run-outs to communities around the region; educational events; and hired or contracted performances.

We are also obliged to participate in at least one mass or other event at St. James Cathedral annually. (The Cathedral provides SPM with deeply reduced costs for use of the facility; our participation in at least one annual event is required to fulfill our obligation as a Resident Ensemble.) It is not uncommon to be given little notice for our expected appearance at these events.

## UNIFORM GUIDELINES

A critical part of our commitment to community is striving to make all of our activities inclusive and accessible to all singers and audience members regardless of age, ancestry, color, class, creed, disability, gender identity or presentation, marital status, national origin, political ideology, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, use of a service animal, etc. We seek to create an environment where all feel welcome and safe. We believe that voices joining in song have a unique power to transcend differences and connect us – singers and audiences alike - to our shared humanity. Making that experience available to all is at the heart of what we do, and who we aspire to be.

**Concert Dress Policy:** In 2016, as we reflected on how we could better put these ideals into action, we realized that our traditional concert dress code may have been unintentionally making some people feel unwelcome and made revisions accordingly. The following dress code is adopted as of September 2018:

At our rehearsals and other informal choir functions, members are encouraged to wear casual attire that makes them feel most comfortable, and which reflects their preferred gender presentation. In concert settings we observe a more formal dress code, intended to present a purposeful and uniform look that is in keeping with our values of excellence and artistry. However, in an effort to increase access to a comfortable and affirming performance experience for all members of our community, our dress guidelines are no longer based on gender. Members may choose the option that is most comfortable for their preferred presentation.

**Singers should wear a uniform that is black and formal, and should generally reserve this uniform specifically for Seattle Pro Musica performances. This uniform will be either a full-length black dress or a full-length skirt/pants with a black long-sleeved top or jacket.** Please observe the following guidelines:

- Clothing should fit well and be neat, clean, scent-free, and pressed/ironed
- Shirt should include  $\frac{3}{4}$  length or full length sleeves; shirts with shorter sleeves may be worn under a jacket or blazer
- Black “dress shirts” (shirts with full front button closures and a collar) should be worn with a black straight tie and jacket, and without a cummerbund
- Black full-length dress/skirt (hemmed to floor length) or formal slacks
- Black formal closed-toe dress shoes
- Black nylons, socks, or tights
- Embellishments (i.e. contrasting fabrics, cutouts, straps, insets, sheer or lace panels, embroidery or applique) should be minimal or nonexistent
- Solid fabrics are preferred, and any textures should be minimal
- Wool or polyester/poly-blends are preferred; please, no shiny or plush fabrics (i.e. satin, velvet)
- Jewelry, if worn, should be understated and not highly reflective or sparkly

Visual examples of some appropriate interpretations of these guidelines are available, and some resources (including donated uniforms) may be available; please check with the staff for more information.

If the guidelines outlined above do not comfortably accommodate your gender expression, please speak privately with Karen. We intend to provide enough flexibility so that all people can feel comfortable performing with SPM, while at the same time preserving the uniform “look” of a skilled musical ensemble.



## **PUBLICITY**

Seattle Pro Musica makes a committed effort to reach new audiences and to build our subscriber base. The marketing program includes the following items, all of which are available to members for distribution:

**Season Brochure:** A full color brochure advertising the season's concert series and Seattle Pro Musica's discography is published annually and mailed to everyone on our 6,000+ mailing list. Copies are available throughout the year for distribution by members and at concerts.

**Wallet Cards:** Convenient wallet cards with the entire regular season schedule are printed and distributed with all Seattle Pro Musica mailings, in bookstores, and by members.

**Postcards:** Approximately 7,000 postcards are printed for each concert. About 5,000 of these are mailed; the remainder are posted and distributed by members and at numerous community outlets.

**Press Releases:** Seattle Pro Musica has a regular cycle of press releases for each event, sent to national publications and local media.

**Radio:** Listen to Seattle's Classical KING 98.1 FM during the week prior to each concert for concert announcements, and interviews, and during the weeks after the concert for excerpts of the concerts themselves. KING FM regularly features SPM on its evening program Northwest Focus, during the week prior to our concerts.

**Word of Mouth:** Surveys show that the most effective publicity we have is friends and members. Tell your friends, family, and co-workers – it works!

## **COMMITTEES AND CHAIRS**

All are welcome to join or audit a committee meeting. Contact the chair to join or learn more.

A standing meeting schedule will be published at the start of the season.

Auction – Kacey Shiflet, co-chair

kcshiflet@gmail.com

Development – David Horton, chair

davidhorton86@gmail.com

Education and Engagement – Meaghan Leferink, chair

meaghan.leferink@gmail.com

Membership – Robert Wade, chair

robertcwade@gmail.com

Marketing - Wes Kim, Chair

wes@weskim.com