



Chorus Membership Handbook

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Produced by the Membership Services Committee

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Overview

Welcome to the Denver Gay Men's Chorus (DGMC). This handbook will introduce you to the Chorus, its policies, procedures and culture. We hope many of the questions you may have about the Chorus will be answered by reading this handbook. There will surely be questions this book does not address, and for those you are encouraged to talk with your buddy, section coordinator, section leader or any Chorus member or Chorus Council member. We were all new members at one time and know the feeling of being "the new kid on the block".

Being a member of the Chorus is a serious commitment of your time and talents. When you join the Chorus, you agree to a full concert season, to attend weekly rehearsals, occasional sectional rehearsals, and weekend retreats. You also agree to the financial commitments of being a member, including dues, wardrobe expenses, and optional occasional travel with the Chorus.

Membership in the Chorus is a great deal of fun and will bring you a sense of fulfillment as a member of one of the premier gay Choruses in the nation. There will be opportunities for solo singing available to you by audition as well as membership in small group Chorus ensembles also through audition. The Artistic Director will announce when these auditions are to be held.

The Denver Gay Men's Chorus is one of the most visible gay organizations in Colorado. It is important that you represent the Chorus in a professional manner at all times, on and off stage. As with any family, there will be disagreements among us. Like with any family, those disagreements need to be worked out within the group and not in public.

Again, welcome to the Denver Gay Men's Chorus. We are happy and excited to have you as a member of this organization.

History of Chorus

The Denver Gay Men's Chorus was founded by Bob "Melba" Moore in the spring of 1982 following a nation-wide tour by the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus that inspired foundation of other choruses. DGMC first performed publicly in June, 1982 at the old Aladdin Theater on Colfax and Race. Since that initial performance, the Chorus has appeared in New York City, Minneapolis, Chicago, Princeton, Portland, GALA festivals in New York, Seattle, Denver, Tampa, San Jose, Montreal and Miami, and at countless performances in the Denver metro area. There are still several founding members involved today with the Chorus.

The home of the Chorus is Christ Church United Methodist at 690 Colorado Blvd. The entire Chorus deeply appreciates Christ Church's warmth and hospitality. Chorus business offices are located at 3900 E. Mexico Avenue, Suite 700, Denver 80210 (303.325.3959).

Like the rest of the gay and lesbian community, the Chorus has been hit hard by AIDS. In each program, we remember the members of Chorus who have died from this plague as well as other causes by listing their names in our programs as Chorus Angels and by wearing red ribbons at our performances to remind us of these brothers who live on in our hearts.

Rocky Mountain Arts Association

Rocky Mountain Arts Association is the governing organization under which the Chorus operates. While we operate on a day-to-day basis as the Denver Gay Men's Chorus, all Chorus financial and management matters are carried out under the Association name, including our non-profit status and government identification. As a member of the Chorus, you are also a member of Rocky Mountain Arts Association.

All public documents for the Denver Gay Men's Chorus and Rocky Mountain Arts Association, including this handbook, can be found online. The online documents are the most current and supercede any printed documents. To access these public documents, go to the forum, (www.dgmc.org/forum) and access the sub-forum for Official Documents.

Gay Identity of the Chorus

The Chorus is proud to be a gay organization and expresses that fact in concert programs, relevant public statements, and advertisements. The Denver Gay Men's Chorus and all its agents maintain this philosophy in the conduct of all Chorus related activities.

Mission Statement and Purpose of the Chorus

The Denver Gay Men's Chorus exists to build community through music.

The members of the Chorus have joined together as a program of Rocky Mountain Arts Association for the purpose of making an artistic statement. The Chorus intends to be identified as an organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (GLBT) people and their supporters and, as it sings, provides educational, cultural and social enrichment for its members and its audience. The Chorus is actively engaged in making a positive contribution to the entire community. The Denver Gay Men's Chorus is committed to traveling from time to time to help share its strength and purpose with those outside the Denver metropolitan area.

Shared Vision

We are an outstanding musical organization that builds community through our musical excellence. People from all over the world seek out our concerts and musical expertise. We strive to be a nurturing community that effects progressive social change through our community outreach and musical expression. We strive to retain current members and to attract new members to the group. We provide a legacy of original musical compositions.

Core Values of the Chorus

There is mutual support between and among the members, Chorus Council, and staff of the Chorus. We welcome new and returning members into our community. We honor and keep our commitments. We mutually respect each other's differences. We enjoy our time together, having fun and expressing ourselves musically. We are willing to commit our personal resources (time, talent and treasure), as each is able and to show appreciation for the contributions of each member. We share responsibility in the decision-making process. We align with and contribute to a shared vision for this group. We are a community that supports and helps one another.

Non-Discrimination Policy

In all its dealings the Chorus will not discriminate based on age; ancestry; creed; color; mental or physical disability; gender, gender identity, expression or characteristics; marital status; national origin; political service or affiliation, race; religion; sex; sexual orientation; veteran status; or any other classification protected by federal, state or municipal laws.

Offensive Behavior and Harassment Policy

The DGMC, as a program of Rocky Mountain Arts Association, has a policy regarding offensive behavior and/or sexual harassment.

For further information about this policy, please consult Article 3.5 of Rocky Mountain Arts Association bylaws.

To access these bylaws, go to the forum, (www.dgmc.org/forum) and access the sub-forum for Official Documents.

GALA Choruses

The Denver Gay Men's Chorus is a proud, active and founding member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA). GALA is the world's only association committed to serving the GLBT choral movement. Over 100 member chorus and 10,000 singers look to GALA for support and leadership. GALA is dedicated to providing that support and to helping choruses be strong-artistically and professionally.

For more information about GALA Choruses, visit www.galachoruses.org.

Membership in the Chorus

There are two categories of Active Members who make up the Denver Gay Men's Chorus: Performing Members and Support Members. Performing members are members of the Chorus who have been selected by the Artistic Director(s). Performing members are asked to commit in the fall to performing in all concerts, September through June. Support members are those individuals who work on committees, projects, and day-to-day operations of the Chorus and who fulfill requirements for supporting members as established by the Chorus Council.

Although Support Members do not sing with the Chorus, they perform a wide variety of essential functions that make the singing possible. Both types of members help with stage and production issues, ticket sales, wardrobe, and a myriad of other tasks necessary for the functioning of the Chorus.

Each year general membership meetings are held to conduct business for the organization and to elect a Chorus Council. All Active members are eligible to vote at these meetings. During these meetings, goals, priorities and other topics of general interest are discussed and acted upon. In addition to these regular general meetings, members are encouraged to express concerns and discuss relevant issues at regularly scheduled meetings of the Chorus Council.

Proxy voting is not available for members unable to attend the general membership meeting or other chorus meetings.

Personal Conduct-Code of Ethics

All members of the Chorus are expected to act lawfully and ethically when representing the Chorus off-stage as well as on-stage. The discovery of any questionable, fraudulent or illegal activities involving the Chorus by a member should be reported to a member of the Chorus Council who then becomes responsible for investigating such activities together with the Chorus Council. Based on the results of this investigation, the Chorus Council may terminate or suspend membership in the Chorus, and may seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The use of drugs and/or alcohol at rehearsals or performances is not allowed nor should members come to rehearsals under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Members found to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol at performances and/or rehearsals will be asked to leave.

In a group the size of the Chorus, there will be disagreements among us. A disagreement should be dealt with at the level from which it arose, in other words between the parties involved in the disagreement. If satisfaction cannot be gained at this level, then, if the issue is musical, the disagreement should be brought to the Artistic Director, or to the Chorus Council if the issue is organizational.

Attendance

Members are expected to attend all weekly rehearsals, held on Sunday evenings, as well as extra rehearsals scheduled as needed by the Artistic Staff. The Artistic Staff also schedules sectional rehearsals from time to time. In order to sing in a given concert, members must attend a minimum of 80% of all scheduled rehearsals, and all dress rehearsals before concerts.

Chorus members exceeding this minimum will be required to meet with the Artistic Director to assure the AD of the member's ability to perform at a concert.

Members coming unexcused to rehearsal later than 30 minutes after the rehearsal begins will be considered to have missed one rehearsal. Members leaving rehearsal unexcused after the break *may* also be considered to have missed one rehearsal.

Members are expected to attend scheduled weekend retreats unless excused by the Artistic Director prior to the retreat. Members are also encouraged to participate in any travel opportunities that may arise.

Members are encouraged to talk with the Artistic Director if there are personal issues that prevent them from attending rehearsals.

If a member knows ahead of time that they will be absent, they should notify Don McMaster (303.364.4290, blotchman@hotmail.com) by 6:00pm the day of rehearsal. If a member needs to miss a rehearsal at the last minute, the member is asked to call their section coordinator prior to 6:00pm on the day of rehearsal.

Retreats

Members are responsible for attendance at all retreats scheduled by the Artistic Director. There are normally two of these retreats, one in the fall and one in the spring. These retreats are usually held out of town and run from Friday evening through mid-afternoon on Sunday. If a member is unable to attend part of or the entire retreat, the member must seek prior approval of the Artistic Director. Missing a full retreat without prior approval of the Artistic Director counts as three missed rehearsals.

Chorus members are required to pay the basic costs of these weekend retreats including lodging and meals. Each Chorus member is responsible for arranging transportation to and from the retreat.

If a member requires financial assistance for covering retreat costs, the member is required to make prior arrangements with the Treasurer of the Chorus Council for this assistance.

Finances

Dues are assessed over **12 months, August 1-July 31**, monthly, semi-annually or annually, depending on the member's decision. No member will be eligible to return to DGMC in the fall unless they are current with all financial obligations through July of that calendar year.

All members are expected to remain current with all financial obligations to the Chorus including dues, retreat expenses, and optional travel costs. Failure of any member to remain current with financial obligations will result in a member not being allowed to sing

in concerts if not current with all financial obligations through the end of the month prior to a concert performance

If a member cannot meet these financial obligations and needs financial assistance to remain in good standing, it is the responsibility of the member to fill out a financial assistance form as soon as possible, and certainly **before** falling behind. Any request for financial assistance is treated as a private matter involving only those who need to know about the request.

Any member falling two months behind on financial obligations, including those receiving financial assistance, will be contacted by a Council member to discuss how the member intends to get current. Once a payment plan is in place, failure of the member to honor that payment plan will result in a member not being allowed to sing in concerts if not current with all financial obligations through the end of the month prior to a concert performance.

Membership Roster

A membership roster, including names, telephone numbers, home addresses, email addresses and birthdays of members will be issued in the fall and spring to all members. This roster is to be used only for the convenience of members and should be treated confidentially. This roster is never to be given to other organizations for any reason, including business ventures, without the written permission of the Chorus Council. If you do not wish to be listed in the roster, please notify the chairperson of the Membership Services Committee. To maintain compliance with the laws of the State of Colorado, membership rosters are submitted to the State of Colorado for verification of persons selling raffle tickets.

Membership Privacy

The Chorus publicly acknowledges that it is a gay organization. However, the Chorus recognizes that some members may not be able to be so public. The Chorus respects this, makes no personal judgments about this decision, and will make all reasonable attempts to accommodate requests for confidentiality.

All internal Chorus publications are confidential and are not to be distributed to non-members. Members have the opportunity to exclude themselves from these publications as stated here and in the following section. Please be sure to read the following section carefully.

Filming, Reproduction, and Publicity

From time to time, the Chorus may be filmed, televised, or photographed for us in publicity releases, profiled in documentaries or news stories. Members not wishing to have their identifiable likenesses included in these opportunities are given an opportunity to not participate. Those who participate in these opportunities are considered to have given their permission for such use.

Chorus performances will normally be filmed and posted on the YouTube channel for Rocky Mountain Arts Association (<http://www.youtube.com/RockyMtnArtsAssn>). Unless prior permission is obtained, these posts will not include identifiable likenesses. Those who participate in these opportunities are considered to have given their permission for such use.

Unfortunately, while the Chorus can control what is posted to the RMAA YouTube channel, everyone singing in a concert needs to be open to the possibility of being filmed and/or photographed by individuals within our audience who may not respect the privacy desires of our members and who may post their videos or photos to a public Web site.

Leaves of Absence

A concert season is defined as the rehearsal period preceding each of the major concerts that make up a full season, September through June.

Any Performing Member may request from the Artistic Director a leave of absence for the current or upcoming concert season by filling out the Leave of Absence Form found on page 18 of this Handbook. A Performing Member wishing to return from a leave of absence is required to notify the Artistic Director and the chairperson of the Membership Services Committee prior to the first rehearsal of a concert season. A reaudition is required for any Performing Member missing two or more consecutive concerts. Any Performing Member who misses two consecutive concerts is no longer a member in-good-standing and as such will be dropped from the Membership Roster and group email distribution list.

Members not following the policies above for authorized leaves of absence will be required to re-audition to join the Chorus regardless of how many concerts have been missed.

Members may also be placed on an administrative leave of absence by the Chorus Council for the following reasons:

- being more than two months in arrears in dues and/or other financial obligations;
- missing more than the required minimum number of rehearsals in a concert season;
- just cause, prior to investigation and/or termination of membership by the Chorus Council.

Members on an administrative leave of absence are not eligible to vote in Chorus meetings. Members may return from an administrative leave of absence by paying all outstanding dues and other financial obligations, making up missed rehearsals as defined by the Artistic Director, or satisfactorily resolving just-cause issues.

Termination of Membership

The Chorus Council, by majority vote, may withdraw membership from a member for just cause without returning previously paid dues or other payments. Just cause may include but is not limited to:

- misappropriation of funds or Chorus property;
- use of alcohol, the possession of illegal drugs at any Chorus rehearsal, performance or meetings or arriving at any rehearsal, performance or meeting under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;

- conduct which is considered abusive of a fellow Chorus member, staff member or volunteer;
- unauthorized sharing of personal information such as the Membership Roster;
- conduct considered detrimental to the morale of the organization;
- violation of artistic policies as established by the Artistic Director;
- conduct that puts in jeopardy the well-being of the organization.

Members who have been terminated may not re-audition within one year of their termination. After that year re-audition requires the approval of the Chorus Council. The Council reserves the right to refuse readmission to the Chorus to any member.

Wardrobe

Members are responsible for purchasing their own concert attire.

Concert attire consists of a single breasted, notch- lapel, standard black tuxedo, a white ¼" knife pleated tuxedo shirt with a wing collar and white buttons. Colored buttons and/or studs are not permitted for concert dress. Members will also need a black bow tie, a black cummerbund, polished black shoes and black socks for performance dress. Suggestions for places to purchase wardrobe items can be gotten from the Membership Services Committee or from any member.

Formal attire includes simple, understated cufflinks and jewelry. Your accessories should blend with the group, not stand out.

Other attire may be needed for community outreach performances or other events. Members will be given as much advance notice as possible about such additional attire.

Colognes and perfumes are not to be worn during performances. On a hot, crowded stage, their use can negatively impact other Chorus members. Judicious use of deodorant is considered part of concert attire and should be worn during performance.

The Chorus Council President or Artistic Director can request removal of unacceptable accessories or clothing for performances. Failure to remove such articles will be referred to the Chorus Council for appropriate action.

Volunteering and Public Relations

All Chorus members are expected to promote the Chorus by selling tickets and making concerts known to the public. Most of our current patrons first came to a concert because of their relationships with a Chorus member.

Opportunities are constantly available for members to serve on various committees that best suit individual time and talents. All members are asked to volunteer to staff special Chorus events whenever possible.

All Chorus members are asked to help with fund raising projects throughout the year.

The Buddy Program

To a new member of the Chorus, 100 new faces and everything else about this group can be just a bit overwhelming. To help make you feel part of the Chorus and to offer extra support, not to mention giving you at least one familiar face, a veteran Chorus member will be assigned to you as a “buddy”. Your buddy will be your mentor for the first few weeks of rehearsal, being a source of help and encouragement for you as you adjust to the Chorus. Your buddy will be available to answer questions you may have and to introduce you to other members, to your section leader, section coordinator, accompanists and to members of the Chorus Council. Your buddy will also be a source of information about involving yourself in the activities and functions of the Chorus.

Being a Chorus Buddy

Becoming a Chorus Buddy is an integral part of DGMC’s mission. You will be the chorus for a new member. You should also look back at what was good and bad in your own buddy experience. Below are some things to consider doing as a DGMC Buddy.

- First, you should call your buddy between auditions and their first rehearsal.
- Find out if your buddy has any initial questions about chorus.
- Talk to your buddy about your own chorus experience, perhaps getting together during that week for coffee.

- Suggest meeting at the first rehearsal so you can help the new member with new music, dues and all the other first-night issues.

- Plan to sit with your buddy during the rehearsal. New members are often very overwhelmed with all the new music, but embarrassed to say so. Be alert for “music panic” and assure the new member we all have been in the same place.

- At the new member orientation and pot luck dinner, usually the second week of rehearsal, the new members will be given a lot of information, and it really helps to have a buddy available to help sort through it. You should plan on attending this dinner.

- Accentuate the positive aspects of singing with DGMC like the social things the Chorus does.

- Help the new member with introductions starting with your own friends in your section.

- Help the new member to set realistic expectations about making friends in the Chorus. Reassure the new member that it takes time to feel a part of this group but the time spent is well worth the results.

A few days after the first rehearsal, give your buddy a call and see how that first rehearsal went, if they have any questions. It is a good idea to do this for the first few weeks as well until the new member feels comfortable with DGMC. You might invite them to get together for coffee to see how things have gone thus far

Chorus Communications, Addresses and Phone Numbers

The RMAA and Chorus office phone number is **303.325.3959**. Our website address is www.rmarts.org. Chorus business offices are located at 3900 E. Mexico Avenue, Suite 700, Denver 80210. Phone numbers for members of the Chorus Council and/or the Chorus Executive Director can be retrieved from the membership roster.

The Chorus utilizes a web forum, www.dgmc.org/forum, as well as an online calendar to alert members of upcoming events and other important information, including announcements from the Artistic Director and leadership. *Members are expected to take personal responsibility for ensuring they receive forum communication on a weekly basis. In addition to actually visiting the forum, it's possible to receive forum communication via Atom feeds, daily/weekly digests, and notification emails that contain post content.* Please contact the forum administrator at forum@dgmc.org if you have any questions about this service.

If a Chorus member does not have email and/or chooses not to participate in this forum, the member accepts responsibility to make arrangements to receive the information sent in the posts and emails. The Chorus is not responsible for making copies of emails or newsletters for members who choose not to utilize the group service. Chorus members are responsible for letting Membership Services and/or the forum managers know of any changes or updates to roster and contact information.

The Chorus also maintains a weekly on-line newsletter used to disseminate information about the Chorus, its activities and upcoming events. Members are responsible for information printed in this newsletter as well as for information posted on the DGMC forum. Contributions to the newsletter should be given to the editor as directed one-week prior to their appearance in the newsletter.

The President of the Chorus or designated Chorus Council member makes announcements during rehearsals. Announcements should be cleared with the President or designated Chorus Council members to lessen the time taken away from rehearsals.

Artistic Director

The Artistic Director is responsible for all artistic decisions in the Chorus. This person selects the music the Chorus performs within a budget established by the Chorus Council and Rocky Mountain Arts Association. Other duties of the Artistic Director include the general management of the Chorus image and the establishment of a unity of purpose among the membership. The Artistic Director also has the responsibility for supervision, quality control, assignment and evaluation of all other artistic and production staff.

Section Leaders

The Artistic Director appoints a section leader for each of the four sections. This person is responsible for conducting sectional rehearsals and for working with the Artistic Director to ensure each section of the Chorus is prepared musically for performances. Any question pertaining to music or artistic matters should be addressed to either the Artistic Director or the section leader of the particular section.

Rehearsal Supplies

Members should always have with them their music in the black folder distributed at the beginning of the season and a BLACK #2 graphite pencil with which to mark the music as directed by the Artistic Director. All music is the property of the Chorus and is to be returned at the end of the season or if a member is unable to continue singing with the Chorus.

Rehearsal Courtesies

Please pay attention to the Artistic Director at all times. Remember your chatting may be very distracting to a neighbor struggling to learn the music.

Rehearsals and performances are held in tight quarters. Please practice good hygiene.

Cell phones should be turned off during rehearsals or put on vibrate prior to rehearsal.

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church building. Members may smoke outside but are asked to please use the trash receptacles for butts. Remember that breath mints are a good idea before returning to rehearsal.

If another member is disturbing your concentration and hindering your ability to rehearse, take the time to respectfully speak to that person. If the disturbance continues after speaking with the member, please contact your section leader or section coordinator who will ask the member to refrain from such behaviors. If the member does not comply, the behavior should be referred to the Chorus Council.

Please return promptly from breaks.

At the end of rehearsal, please be sure to clean up after yourself. Please put your trash in the trashcans and make sure that you have all personal property before leaving.

Sectionals

Sectional rehearsals for each of the four sections are scheduled from time to time. Attendance at these sectionals is very helpful for members to learn their individual parts as well as achieving a unified sound for each section. Section leaders, selected by the Artistic Director, will conduct these sectionals. If a member is having trouble with music or cannot attend a section rehearsal, please contact the section leader.

Concert Specifics

Dress Rehearsal

For each concert there are one or more dress rehearsals. Because staging is set during these dress rehearsals, attendance is mandatory. Some venues charge for rehearsal times, so it is imperative for everyone to arrive on time and use the rehearsal time wisely.

Concert Preparation

Your musical instrument is inside you. Therefore, as concerts approach, remember to rest as much as possible, both physically and vocally. If possible, take off the day of a concert. Tobacco, alcohol and drugs are detrimental to your voice and should be avoided the day before and day of a concert. Avoid any kind of abuse of your voice. You have worked long and hard to get to a performance and you want to do nothing to jeopardize your performance or that of the Chorus.

- Remember to bathe and do not use colognes or perfumes before coming to a performance.
- No sparkling jewelry should be worn on stage since bright lights make it very distracting to the audience. If you wear an earring, it should be small and unobtrusive for the performance.
- Cell phones should be turned off before performance.
- Make sure your concert attire is clean and pressed before arriving.
- Bring your music with you to study, even if everything is memorized.
- Throat lozenges and/or breath mints can be a lifesaver for your voice.

Performance Calls

- Do not bring valuables, excess money or expensive articles of clothing to concerts. Such items cannot be guarded backstage during performances and such items are brought at your own risk.
- Arrive at the venue early enough to allow yourself time to take care of business, find parking, unwind and put yourself into a performance mindset.
- Respond promptly and silently to all calls. Remember to keep backstage noise to a minimum since such noise carries into the auditorium and is distracting for the audience and other performers.
- Wait until after the concert to mingle with the audience.

During the Performance

- SMILE!! Believe it or not, the Chorus sounds better when we smile and the audience has come to see you having a good time along with them.
- If mistakes happen during a performance, keep smiling and continue as if nothing untold occurred. The audience will often not know a mistake happened unless we tell them.
- Watch the Artistic Director at all times. This helps you remain poised and integrated with the music, even if you are not singing at the moment.
- Try not to cough or audibly clear your throat during performance.
- Keep your hands away from your face so you do not distract the audience. Always keep your hands to your sides.
- If you should happen to become ill during a performance, leave the stage immediately. If you feel you cannot get off the stage, then sit down. Don't worry about appearing conspicuous—your safety comes first!
- When leaving the stage, move quickly yet gracefully. As you exit, keep moving since there are others behind you wanting to leave the stage but don't run.
- Leave your personal problems and attitudes at the stage door. The audience has paid good money to be entertained and uplifted by us.

Thank you for taking the time to read all about how DGMC operates. However, the Denver Gay Men's Chorus is more than rules and policies. The soul of this group is comprised of the people who have chosen to sing together to build a real community through our music. All of the staff, Chorus Council and members of the Denver Gay Men's Chorus are happy and excited to have you as part of our musical family.

Leaves of Absence Form

In order to take a leave of absence from the Denver Gay Men’s Chorus, this form must be filled out and discussed with the Artistic Director prior to the leave. Any leave taken without having filled out this form and discussion with the Artistic Director requires a full re-audition for the member, regardless of the number of concerts missed.

Name_____ Date_____

I request a leave of absence from the Denver Gay Men’s Chorus for the following reason(s):

I expect to return to DGMC for the _____ concert.

Member’s Signature_____

Artistic Director’s Signature_____

