

GUILDFORD PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Registered as a Charity No. 1026337

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CONCERT ETIQUETTE

The quality of a concert performance perceived by an audience can be immensely enhanced if "ensemble" can be extended to general on-stage choir discipline. The converse is also true. If all choir members follow these guidelines, we should be well on the way to stardom!

These guidelines apply unless an announcement has been made to vary them, usually during the Tutti Rehearsal, but sometimes also during the Final Piano Rehearsal.

Before the Tutti Rehearsal

1. For a Cathedral performance: Arrive in good time and assemble in voice-part groups in the Nave at least 20 minutes before the scheduled "start" time. Be alert. About 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start time, the Choir Stage Manager (CSM) will arrange the choir on the tiered staging in accordance with a prearranged plan, with some fine-tuning to accommodate last-minute drop-outs etc. Focus attention on him and do not talk, otherwise his/her instructions will not be heard and much time will be wasted. This will not give a good impression to the orchestra, soloists or visiting conductor. Normally the Basses and Tenors are seated first, then 2nd Sopranos/1st Altos, followed by 1st Sopranos/2nd Altos. Gaps are then closed, "look" and "balance" adjusted, and gangways kept as clear as possible for safety reasons. Once settled, note your position, who your neighbours are, and how many tiers up you are. The CSM will identify the "lead-on" and "lead-off" persons. If you are in a "lead-on" (centre-stage) or "lead-off" (end-of-row) position (see below), note also who the corresponding "lead-off" person is in the next tier up your side (or who the "lead-on" person is in the tier below) because you will need to know this later. Note also who the two lead-on persons are in the frontmost tier, as they will lead the "stands" and "sits" at the beginning and end of the concert.

2. For a performance in the Civic Hall: The above generally applies, except that bench positions and chairs will have been labelled with voice parts beforehand and you may take those places directly.

During the Tutti Rehearsal: Avoid chatting!

For the Concert Itself

Dress for Ladies: Black long-sleeved blouse and ankle-length black skirt. Black shoes. Ear-rings and necklaces should only be worn if they are essentially non-reflecting. Minimal (and only black) handbags.

Dress for Men: Conventional Black Dinner-Jacket & Trousers. White shirt with normal (ie not "wing") collar and black bow-tie. Black shoes.

Music: In Black GPC Music Folders (unless instructed otherwise). Do not take anything else onto the Stage, and particularly, do not take on water bottles!

Entry

Fifteen minutes before the scheduled start of the performance, assemble "off-stage" in the order in which you will "enter". In the Cathedral, this "line-up" takes place in the North and South Ambulatories, and in the Civic Hall, on the stairs and in the corridors leading to the upper and lower P & OP stage entrances. In both places, this causes much congestion, so keep noise levels down and keep a gangway clear for musicians and their instruments.

Five minutes before the start, the CSM will signal the "lead-on" to start simultaneously in single file from both sides. In the Cathedral, the topmost tier is filled first, with the two first "lead-on" persons meeting in the middle and everybody remaining standing facing the audience. Subsequent tiers are filled in the same way, working downwards, from the centre outwards. When the last two "lead-off" persons are in place on the lowest tier, the whole choir sits together, following the lead of the two frontmost tier "lead-on" persons.

If (unusually at the Cathedral) there is a long interval and the choir can leave the stage during it, "leading-off" follows the reverse procedure. "Leading-on" after the interval will commence five minutes before the end of the interval.

When leading off, follow a single file line to the stairway at the outside of your row and then use the stairway. NEVER take a short cut down the tiering in the Cathedral as one person's slip can instantly change to a "domino" type disaster.

In the Civic Hall, the procedure is similar, but as there are more variations the CSM will give more verbal instructions. Listen to him/her and remember the instructions.

Appear alert, walk with purpose and at the same pace from both sides of the stage. Once seated, stay alert, don't slouch, jostle or fidget, don't chatter, and never try to catch the attention of someone in the audience!

Stands and Sits

Stands and Sits during the performed works will either be directed by the Conductor, or will have been advised during previous rehearsals.

All Stands and Sits should be "as one body", and not like a "Mexican Wave".

Stay seated for the entrance of the Orchestra Leader.

Following the front two "lead-on" persons, stand at the start of the applause for the entrance of the Soloists and Conductor.

Never talk (or applaud) while standing.

At the end of the last work (and to a lesser degree before the interval):

Remain standing while the Conductor acknowledges the applause. He will usually also direct applause towards the Soloists, the Orchestra Leader, the Orchestra, including any key players (who will also stand to acknowledge applause) and the Choir. The Conductor will then usually leave the Podium and lead off the Soloists. The Orchestra Leader will then usually sit, at which point both the Orchestra and Choir also sit.

Assuming that the applause continues, the Conductor and Soloists will return. The Choir should remain seated, and may now applaud Soloists etc, but only while seated. The Conductor may specifically direct applause towards the Choir; in which case the Choir should stand, and remain standing until the Conductor (and Soloists) again leave, the Choir sitting only when the Leader does as before. Occasionally the applause will bring the Conductor and Soloists back for a third time, when the same pattern is followed. The pattern is finished when the Orchestra Leader also leaves, indicating that the concert is over.

The two front "lead-on" persons now stand, which is the signal for the front row (not the whole choir) to stand and lead off. This is repeated by the next higher tier until all have left the staging. The leading-off rules are very important because of the risk of "domino effect". Never take short cuts down the tiers, but always stay on your tier until reaching the steps and handrail at the end of the tier. Then descend steadily. Do not, under any circumstances, follow each other closely or try to hurry.

If you are helping to de-rig the staging in the Cathedral, wait in the South Ambulatory, the Chancel or the Nave, keeping the North Ambulatory clear for the Instrumentalists and those clearing the larger instruments. Don't go back onto the Stage until directed to do so by the Rig Supervisor.

Shrj - 20 April 1999