

# MEMBER HANDBOOK

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## **Mission Statement**

## Mission

Representing LGBTQ+ individuals, we strive to build community, foster compassion, and inspire activism at home and around the world through our music and message.

## Vision

We envision a world inspired and unified by the music we create.

## Values

We believe in the transformative power of music to heal, to enlighten and to foster unity.

We embrace the life-affirming changes we create within and beyond our chorus community.

We evolve society's views toward LGBTQ+ individuals through our commitment to excellence.

We honor all who came before us whose sacrifices made it possible for us to raise our voices.

#### **Basic Chorus Information**

The official name of the organization as registered with the State of South Carolina is GREENVILLE GAY MEN'S CHORUS, Inc. The Chorus recognizes the socio-political statement inherent in being an openly gay organization and, as such, we are proud representatives of the LGTBQ+ community. Beyond our concerts, we express our pride through participation in events such as Pride Festivals and events through cooperation and interaction with other gay and gay-sympathetic organizations, participation in memorial services, rallies, and similar events and through a purposeful effort to reach out to all people within our community and beyond.

Although performance is the major function of the Chorus, member participation in other activities of the organization is very important. Personal and professional schedules will dictate the amount of time members can devote. Nevertheless, all members are encouraged to contribute to the volunteer efforts of the Chorus as much as possible.

### *Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA)*

GGMC is a member of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, an international network of more than 200 choruses. GALA choruses include men's, women's and mixed ensembles of various sizes that perform in a wide variety of settings, stimulating pride within their communities. GALA provides a directory of member choruses, arranges annual conferences for music directors and chorus administrators, and addresses issues of mutual concern to the member choruses. Every four years GALA produces an international festival of member choruses which, among other things, affords many of the choruses the opportunity to perform for each other. GALA also produces smaller conferences and workshops on a yearly basis.

## **Organization of the Chorus**

#### Season

A typical GGMC season begins in late August and runs through June. The chorus performs two main events (see *Concerts*, p. 12) for holiday and spring and performs various smaller concerts throughout the season.

## Membership

Membership in the GGMC is determined through an audition process coordinated by the Artistic Director. All members must fulfill the following responsibilities to maintain their membership status:

- Uphold and abide by the Code of Conduct (see p. 17);
- Support and uphold the mission of the organization (see p. 2);
- Maintain all financial obligations (see p. 15);
- Fulfill participation requirements (see p. 11).

All candidates for membership must complete an application form. Members will be asked to update this information periodically to ensure that files are accurate. All information provided to the Chorus is held in strict confidence (see *Confidentiality*, p. 19).

#### Sections

All active singing members are assigned to one of four sections based on vocal range: Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Baritone, and Bass. Each section will have at least one Section Leader (see p. 6).

#### Chorus Buddies

To assist new members in acclimating to the organization, each may be introduced to a "Buddy" from within the Chorus. It is the Buddy's responsibility to serve as a resource to the new member, providing information, answering questions, introducing other members, and generally making the new member feel welcome. Those interested in becoming a Buddy to a new member should contact your Section Leader.

#### Section Leaders

Section Leaders serve as a communications conduit between members and administration, assist in maintaining musical excellence, and perform other functions to maintain unity with their respective sections. Section Leaders act as a liaison to the Artistic Director, informing of questions, concerns, or issues with music or choreography. They work with the Artistic Director to identify places in the music where the section may need assistance with learning the part. They also assess performance readiness for the members of their sections.

Section Leaders work with the Chorus Manager (see p. 9) to monitor rehearsal attendance and ensure that each member of their sections who is present at rehearsal has had the opportunity to mark the signin sheet.

Your Section Leader is identified on the Chorus Roster. Contact your Section Leader if you have any questions or concerns with the music or choreography. Inform them of any planned absences. If an emergency arises and you are unable to attend a rehearsal or performance, you should contact your Section Leader as soon as possible.

If a rehearsal or performance is canceled for any reason, your Section Leader will contact you.

#### Committees

The Chorus maintains a committee structure to ensure certain work is performed efficiently. All Chorus committees include a representative from the Board. The Chorus has several committees, some of which are Board committees and others are Chorus committees. Some are standing committees established by the bylaws of GGMC, Inc. while others serve on an ad hoc basis. You are encouraged to participate in any open committee to which you feel that you can contribute. For more information on serving on a committee, please contact your Section Leader, Chorus Manager or any Board Member.

## Termination of Membership

Individuals wishing to leave the Chorus are asked to notify their Section Leader. Any member who is leaving the Chorus must settle any outstanding account balances. All sheet music remains the property of the Chorus and must be returned to the Music Librarian. Failure to follow any of these procedures will jeopardize future membership in the organization.

## The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors (BOD) includes up to twelve people, both Chorus members and community members, elected to three-year terms by the Chorus members and supporters at the annual meeting or as positions need to be filled. The BOD is responsible for setting the organization's goals; overseeing budgeting and finances; establishing policy for the organization; hiring (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Artistic Director; and staffing and actively participating in the Chorus's development (fundraising) efforts. There are four officers of the BOD: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. These officers are elected annually by the Board. The Artistic Director is employed and under contract with the GGMC and is an ex-officio member of the BOD with no voting rights.

Board meetings are held regularly (usually monthly). Meetings are open to the general membership and the approved minutes of the board meetings are available for Chorus member review. On occasion, an executive board meeting may be called to discuss personnel issues. The executive board meetings are closed to the membership due to the personal privacy issues and liability.

Emails and phone numbers for board members are found in the Roster of Active Members.

## **Artistic Staff**

#### Artistic Director

The Artistic Director (AD) conducts rehearsals and performances, auditions potential singing members, works with the Board of Directors in developing the artistic goals of the organization and is responsible for moving the Chorus toward these goals. The AD is ultimately responsible for selecting repertoire; hiring and supervising artistic staff, including soloists and instrumentalists; and selecting performance venues. Another important aspect of the AD's responsibilities is to represent the organization in the arts community and to the general public.

Members are encouraged to seek out the AD for assistance with or discussion of artistic issues. The AD is willing to work with you, as the situation allows, to resolve issues and provide assistance. Questions of a general nature may be directed to your Section Leader or the Chorus Manager.

#### Accompanist

The accompanist assists the Artistic Director in preparing the Chorus for performance. In addition to accompanying, responsibilities include, but are not limited to, leading warm-ups and conducting sectionals and rehearsals.

## **Chorus Officers**

Along with the Section leaders, the Chorus Manager, Music Librarian, and Social Chair comprise the team of Chorus Officers. In addition to their individual responsibilities, this group is responsible for assisting the Artistic Director in selecting music, setting program, and listening to auditions. Each season, new officers are nominated and elected by the Chorus.

## Chorus Manager

The Chorus Manager (CM) assists the Artistic Director in many ways, primarily facilitating communication between the AD and the Chorus members. The CM tracks rehearsal attendance, collects dues from Chorus members, and is available to answer any questions Chorus members may have. The AD may assign other duties as the needs of the Chorus change.

#### Music Librarian

The Music Librarian (ML) is responsible for all music assets belonging to the chorus. The ML issues sheet music to the Chorus members at the beginning of each event and as needed throughout the rehearsal period and collects all music after the final performance. The ML is responsible for the organization of all new and returned music. The ML is also responsible for contacting any Chorus member possessing missing music.

#### Social Chair

The Social Chair (SC) is responsible for assisting with the coordination of social events outside of rehearsals and retreats. The SC will be responsible for coordinating the care and concern of the membership (i.e. birthday cards, bereavement cards, etc.). Overall, the SC will strive to help maintain a sense of community within the membership.

## **Chorus Communications**

#### Email

The official email address of the Chorus is gvlgmc@gmail.com. Email is the primary form of communication for the Artistic Director. Please provide an email address that you check on a regular basis to ensure that you receive all news and updates.

#### Chorus Roster

The roster provides the names and contact information of all singing members and the BOD. Information in the roster is updated as needed. A new roster is produced for each concert period. You should inform the Chorus Manager or Artistic Director of any address or phone number changes so that the roster can be updated accordingly. The roster is a confidential document intended solely for the use of Chorus business.

#### Social Media

The organization maintains a private Facebook group specifically for communicating to the Chorus members information pertaining to GGMC. This is one of the organization's primary means of contact. The social networking capabilities are a great marketing tool for the Chorus and spreading the word is much easier with this tool.

Please observe the following guidelines when posting on Facebook:

- Posts should be appropriate for messages of interest to the Chorus at large.
- Respect and kindness should be considered at all times.

The organization also maintains public Facebook and Instagram accounts for communicating information to the general public. All Chorus members are encouraged to invite friends to follow these accounts and periodically share items on their personal pages for additional publicity.

#### Member Website

Chorus members have access to a private website which contains contact information, music tracks, rehearsal and performance schedule, important documents, donation links, a link to pay membership dues, and more. The website is myggmc.com, and the password will be made available once membership is established. The password changes each concert period.

#### Public Website

Our website is www.greenvillegaymenschorus.com. This site is a public site where pictures and videos of Chorus performances are posted, upcoming events are advertised, donations can be made, and the Chorus can be contacted.

## **Participation**

## Performance Privilege

To maintain active singing status, all members must meet minimum performance and attendance standards set forth in this handbook.

#### Attendance Guidelines

Members with performance privileges may miss up to 4 full-chorus rehearsals during each concert period and still be eligible to perform. This may also include any mandatory sectional rehearsals or retreats. Members who exceed the specified limits need to discuss their attendance with the Artistic Director to determine their ability to perform in the concert. The decision is at the sole discretion of the Artistic Director.

#### Full-Chorus Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held weekly on Tuesday evenings from 7:00-9:00 PM or as needed as determined by the Artistic Director.

Members are encouraged to arrive early to pay dues, obtain new music, greet friends, socialize, conduct business, etc. Rehearsals begin promptly at the designated time. There is a ten-minute break approximately halfway through rehearsal. The break is for socializing and conducting Chorus business. There is a period of announcements following the break.

## Saturday Rehearsals

Most months, a rehearsal will be held on the first Saturday. These rehearsals are usually optional and often are intended to focus specifically on learning parts. Any member is welcome to attend these rehearsals and attending will replace one absence on your attendance record.

#### Sectional Rehearsals

The Artistic Director or your Section Leader may schedule sectional rehearsals periodically. These will be communicated via email and the private Facebook page.

#### Technical Rehearsals/Dress Rehearsals

Attendance by Chorus members at technical (tech) rehearsals may be required before concerts. Tech rehearsals are held at our performance venue and are primarily for the benefit of the production staff to rehearse the technical aspects of the show including lights, sound, special costumes, props and sets. During tech rehearsals, the Chorus may not actually rehearse entire music selections; frequent and irregular periods on and off the stage may occur. Cooperation by Chorus members is appreciated as tech rehearsals help to ensure that concerts run smoothly.

The dress rehearsal is the final rehearsal in the performance hall. It is intended to mimic an actual performance with full staging, lighting, sound, and instrumental accompaniment. Attendance at dress rehearsal is mandatory, and Chorus members will not be allowed to perform in the concert if the dress rehearsal is missed. Unless otherwise announced, performance attire is not required for either tech or dress rehearsals.

#### Concerts

The GGMC concert season includes two main events: a spring concert and a holiday concert. In addition to these, the Chorus performs a variety of other smaller concerts throughout the season. These include,

but are not limited to, singing at the Upstate Pride Festival, Greenville Triumph games, and Greenville County Museum of Art.

#### Chorus Reviews

The Chorus holds a review following each of the major concerts. This allows everyone to look at what went well, what could be improved, and to talk about other things that may be on the minds of members. These events include refreshment and social time as well.

#### Retreats

Each concert period, there will be a weekend retreat, typically an overnight Friday/Saturday getaway. Retreats consist of full-chorus and sectional rehearsals, language workshops, vocal training workshops, focus/discussion groups and social time. There may be a nominal fee, announced in advance, but this should not discourage participation. Financial aid is available.

#### Auditions

Auditions for new performing members are scheduled at times designated by the Artistic Director, as dictated by the yearly concert schedule. These generally occur in August and January.

## Re-Vocalizing

On occasion, the Artistic Director may call for a vocalizing rehearsal, in which current members may be called to re-evaluate their current choral voice placement.

## Additional Performances

As part of our ongoing performance goals, additional appearances of the Chorus may be scheduled at the discretion of the Artistic Director. These performances may increase our visibility, further our community outreach efforts and provide additional revenue.

#### Schedule

A master schedule of all planned rehearsal dates, retreats, concerts and other Chorus events and obligations is distributed to members early in each concert period. Every effort is made to include additional performance commitments in the master schedule so that members can plan their time with sufficient advance notice. However, because invitations or opportunities to perform are often unpredictable, it is not always possible to include them in the calendar. The responsibility for deciding whether to schedule an additional appearance lies solely with the Artistic Director. When it is not possible to include an additional performance in the distributed calendar, the request will be brought before the Chorus to determine the level of interest and member availability. A master schedule may be reissued with the updates necessary.

## Leaves of Absence

Members who are unable to maintain performance status but do not wish to relinquish privileges may take a Leave of Absence (LOA). Member taking LOA suspend performance privileges and requirements, but not other membership privileges and requirements. LOA's may be granted for a period of up to one year. Members on LOA for any concert period who have not paid the full year's dues may be relieved of their obligation to pay the portion of dues attributable to performance costs for that concert period.

#### Music

At the beginning of and during each concert period, music is distributed to singing members. Each member is assigned a number, and unless otherwise instructed, the number on your music should match. Members must provide their own 3-ring binder to keep music organized. Members should also bring a pencil to rehearsal for marking performance notes in their music. *No music should be marked in ink.* Members must return their music in good condition once the performances have been completed. Failure to do so will result in a replacement fee. When returning the music, it is helpful to erase the notes that you have made during rehearsals.

## **Public Appearances**

#### Concert Attire

Standard concert attire consists of a black tuxedo, white formal shirt with box pleated front and wing collar, black bow tie and vest, black dress shoes and black socks. Other attire is occasionally planned and will be announced in advance.

To ensure uniformity, lapel decorations of any kind are provided by the Chorus if they are to be worn on stage.

#### Stage Presence

Stage performances contribute a great deal to the spirit of concerts, heightening audience and Chorus experience of the performance. General appearance on stage should convey a sense of alertness, confidence, enjoyment and excitement about the performance.

## **Financial Obligations**

Chorus members are responsible for maintaining good financial standing in order to fully participate in Chorus activities. Good financial standing means that the member has no financial obligations to the organization or that suitable arrangements have been made for payment of financial assistance.

#### Financial Assistance

It is policy of the organization that inability to meet one's financial obligations shall not prevent any individual from becoming a member of GGMC and participating in its activities. Those members who, due to personal circumstance, are not able to meet their dues or other financial obligations should speak to the Artistic Director or Chorus Manager. Options are available, including partial or complete waiver and financial aid. All information will be kept in strict confidence.

#### Dues

Membership dues are \$25 per concert period and are due and payable within four weeks from the beginning of each period (September and January).

Dues may be paid by cash or check to the Chorus Manager or by Venmo: @chorustreasurer. If paying via Venmo, be sure to note that the payment is for Chorus dues.

Dues help defer the costs of music acquisition and other event expenses. Satisfying your financial obligations in a timely manner will help with cash flow and keep the Chorus in good standing with its creditors. Dues payments are nonrefundable.

## Member Expenses

Members are responsible for expenses relating to their performance attire, travel, and any Chorus property taken on consignment suck as tickets or promotional merchandise. Members are also responsible for taking care of their music and returning it to the Music Librarian at the end of each concert period. Your music is numbered, so be sure it is returned. Lost music will require a replacement fee (see *Music*, p. 14).

## Requirements

- A member (active or on LOA) must be in good financial standing as of program publication deadlines for his name to appear in the concert program.
- A member must be in good financial standing as of the published dues payment deadline, or that member may not participate in further events during that concert period, including rehearsals and performances.
- A member must be in good financial standing to be eligible to vote in any GGMC meeting.

## **Code of Conduct**

It is each member's responsibility to uphold the following code of conduct.

#### General 5

All members will behave in a responsible way and are to treat each other with mutual respect. This includes all forms of Chorus communication. When representing the Chorus at public events members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

#### Communications

Communications between members regarding Chorus business should be directly between the individuals involved unless they mutually agree otherwise. Do not contact another Chorus member at his place of business unless you have received prior permission to do so.

#### Rehearsals

Cell phones should always be on silent or vibrate. Texting or other use of electronics is prohibited during any rehearsal. In order to preserve an atmosphere of mutual respect, each member is expected to conduct himself in a professional and considerate manner whenever rehearsals are in progress. Talking not only distracts the person at the podium (Artistic Director, Chorus Manager, or any person making an announcement), but also interferes with other members' learning process and concentration. Disruptive or otherwise rude behavior is unacceptable. Members are encouraged to talk about disruptive behavior directly with others who are being disruptive. If this proves ineffective or if you are not comfortable doing this, you should talk to your Section Leader of Chorus Manager.

## Community

While there is certainly an important social component to our mission and Chorus members are encouraged to interact with each other toward building a stronger community, participation in GGMC is primarily for musical enjoyment and not a dating service. Our members must always feel safe and welcomed at our gatherings and should never feel awkward because of the unwanted advances of others. If any member ever feels uncomfortable regarding this matter, they are encouraged to seek out the support of a Board Member.

#### Criminal Record

In order to always present a positive public image, members may have their participation restricted or membership terminated if they have a criminal record that would jeopardize this image. Those who have their movements restricted by court order may also be subject to limits on their participation. Members falling under these categories should inform the Artistic Director. Confidentiality will be maintained in all cases.

#### Substance Abuse

Members will be asked to leave rehearsals or performances if the influence of alcohol or other drugs (whether prescribed or otherwise) interferes with their ability to perform satisfactorily with the Chorus. The Chorus is an ensemble, and erratic behavior by individuals distracts from the performance. In addition, substance abuse of any kind by members can expose the Chorus to liability in terms of insurance coverage, the ability to utilize venues, etc. Issues of apparent inability to perform due to substance abuse will be handled by the Artistic Director and the Board of Directors.

Procedures dealing with such serious matters as harassment, discipline, suspension, or expulsion are dealt with by the Board of Directors.

## Confidentiality

Members of GGMC are expected to respect each other's privacy, and the organization will make every reasonable effort to respect the confidentiality of Chorus members. While the GGMC is clear in its mission as an openly gay organization, we must all remain cognizant of others' individual situations and the degree to which they are willing and/or able to be "out" at home, in the community or in the workplace.

Violating the privacy of another is viewed as a serious infraction and could result in Board action. If you feel that your privacy has been compromised, notify a member of the Board of Directors or your Section Leader.

#### Chorus Roster

The purpose of the Chorus roster (see p. 10) is to facilitate conducting Chorus business and to enable members to be in contact with each other. The roster may not be used for any other purpose. No roster information may be disclosed to individuals or organizations outside of the Chorus unless you have received prior permission to do so.

#### Chorus Publications

Any member may request that his name or likeness not be included in Chorus publications or publicity. Such requests should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board and the Artistic Director. Every effort will be made to accommodate such requests. Any official photograph may be used for publicity purposes. It is the member's sole responsibility to remove themselves when the Chorus is being photographed. As a public performing organization, the Chorus cannot guarantee the anonymity of any individual member.

### Media Coverage

The Chorus leadership will make every reasonable effort to inform you in advance of media coverage in which the members might be photographed or recorded and will make every reasonable effort to allow concerned members to remove themselves from those media opportunities. However, please be aware that it is not always possible to predict, control or restrict the kind of media coverage the Chorus receives. Such coverage is often highly beneficial to the public profile of the organization and to the parts of our mission pertaining to being an openly and affirming organization.

The Chorus therefore reserves the right to take advantage of a media opportunity by allowing the media outlet to photograph or record during a rehearsal, performance or other occasion from which members could not remove themselves. The decision to allow media coverage will be made by the Board of Directors and the Artistic Director.

Portions of this handbook have been adapted from those of the Miami, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Gay Men's Choruses.

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