

**5. Quality of the Visual Experience** for the audience.

Enhance the visuals, minimize the barriers/distractions.

- a. The singer's attire is colorful and interesting to look at without being gaudy or distracting and is comfortable and flattering for singers.
- b. Standing formations vary.
- c. Singers establish direct rapport with the audience through eye-contact and with minimal conducting presence or distraction.
- d. Use of singer introduced songs to better engage the audience.
- e. Lighting – to allow the performers to stand out apart from the audience and appropriate for singers using printed music.
- f. Ambiance of the venue is congruent with the theme of the concert.

**6. Quality of Themes** which explore unique aspects of experiences common to the human spirit.

- a. Themes need to be developed for depth, complexity and unique viewpoint.
- b. The concert will flow from piece to piece in a way that engages the audience intellectually and emotionally.
- c. The length of the concert will be 60-75 minutes (without intermission) to allow audiences to have energy to fully engage in the concert.

**7. Quality of Collaborators** who are engaged in the creative process, not just in appearing as guest artists.

- a. Conductors who are renown for a particular style or period of choral music
- b. Composers
- c. Poets, puppeteers, choreographers, story tellers, visual artists, dancers
- d. Soloists – both vocal and instrumental
- e. Ensembles – both vocal and instrumental



Choral ensemble

Singer Handbook  
2011-2012

# Singers in Accord

## Singer Handbook for 2011 – 2012 Season

### **ABOUT SINGERS IN ACCORD**

Beginning its third season, Singers in Accord is establishing itself as one of the most innovative adult chorale ensembles in Minnesota. *Singers in Accord* is uniquely organized as a singer-led, auditioned choral ensemble dedicated to ***exploring our humanity through culturally diverse choral music***. The organization has no paid staff so that all money raised goes directly to the concert experiences and hiring collaborators. The group collaborates with a new conductor, performing artist, or artistic ensemble in each concert to create distinctive concert experiences for its singers and audiences.

The mission of *Singers in Accord* is to enrich the cultural life of the community through outreach, education and innovative performances. In its first two seasons, *Singers in Accord* has collaborated with nationally renowned choral conductor Jerry Rubino; multi-cultural music expert, Nick Page along with three middle and high school choirs; the Minnesota Youth Symphony and the Minnesota Chorale in a performance of Mahler's Second Symphony at Orchestra Hall; German romantic music expert, Kathy Romey; and Jazz and Gospel artist, J.D. Steele and the MacPhail Community Youth Choir. As an outreach concert, *Singers in Accord* performed its unique, "The World in Six Songs" concert in Spicer, Minnesota.

*Singers in Accord* is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation.

### **THE CONCERT YEAR**

Our rehearsal and concert season is from September through May. Concerts are typically scheduled in mid-November, mid-February, and/or late April, and/or mid-May. The exact concert schedule, with dress rehearsal and concert dates, is confirmed in the summer prior to the beginning of the season.

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

The SIA calendar of events for rehearsals, concerts and other events is available on the website ([www.singersinaccord.org](http://www.singersinaccord.org)) or in printed form.

### **D. The SIA Performing Places – we look for venues which:**

1. Are affordable.
2. Provide the best acoustical ambiance for our music.
3. Provide opportunities for enhanced visual elements, including good sight lines and comfortable standing formations for singers.
4. Are consistent with and enhance the theme of each concert.
5. Provide the audience with comfort, access, and adequate parking.
6. While we will not exclude houses of worship if they best support the concert theme, we also seek non-sectarian venues which do not provide barriers to peoples of varied religions.

### **E. The SIA Programs – Elements that will make our concerts outstanding:**

1. **Quality of repertoire** – sing only "Grade A" compositions or those that really have something to say. No fillers.
2. **Quality of singing** – work not only to learn the music, but to develop vocal skills needed to best *sing* the music.
3. **Quality of music making by singers**
  - a. Music is known very well – preferably memorized – so that singers can better fully engage with the audience and collaborators.
  - b. Facial and body expression is congruent with the song.
  - c. Connecting with the text – whether English or non-English – singers understand what the text says and what the song is about.
  - d. Foreign languages are taught by people fluent in them; when needed we invite language experts to rehearsals.
4. **Quality of the Venue's Acoustics** – must be supportive of the type of music being done either by the building construction or the addition of an acoustical shell.

to provide greater singer / audience engagement.

5. We seek artistic collaboration with guest conductors, musicians, singers, composers, writers, and their audiences.

## **B. The SIA Process**

1. We believe that to produce a good product, there must be good underlying processes in place.
2. We believe in a team process and in the power of motivated people working together around a common mission.
3. We focus on continuous improvement and in authentic and regular feedback between leaders, learners, and our audience as a means for long-term growth and stability.
4. The decision making process is made by representatives elected by the singers and not made by consensus. Respect is shown by respecting decisions made by leaders. When there are disagreements, we will respectfully agree to disagree.
5. We recognize that all activities (including concerts) vie for people's time and energy and we must constantly provide value in exchange for them.

## **C. The SIA People**

1. The ensemble is volunteer led and run – a bottom-up organization – in which members will serve in roles as both leaders and learners. Singer led means singer responsible.
2. Commitment and trust are what binds the ensemble. We hold ourselves accountable to honor the commitments we make to each other.
3. Success of the choir relies on the time, ideas, skills, and energy of volunteers who share the power of the mission. Leaders will honor that commitment by giving volunteers the responsibility, clear direction, task descriptions, and authority to make decisions.
4. Everyone in the ensemble is a promoter of the ensemble's mission and a fund/resource raiser.

## **THE 2011-12 CONCERT SEASON**

Our collaborators and concert dates for this season are:

- Dr. David Mennicke, on November 12 and 13;
- J.D. Steele, on February 11 and 12 (tentative);
- Nancy Grundahl, on May 12 and 13.

## **AUDITIONING FOR SINGERS IN ACCORD**

Membership in *Singers in Accord* is by audition. Singers are experienced in choral singing and have the ability to learn music quickly and independently, and to memorize music as required.

Interested singers are asked to prepare one non-English solo selection that will demonstrate musicianship, flexibility, color, diction, sense of line, and musicality. The best selections avoid overly virtuosic music, in both the vocal part and the accompaniment. Those auditioning may bring their own accompanist or an accompanist will be provided.

In addition, singers are asked to demonstrate their sight reading skills by singing with current *Singers in Accord* members from other voice parts on two contrasting selections. The *Singers in Accord* section leaders will evaluate the audition and also conduct an interview to learn more about the singer's past experiences and areas of volunteer interest.

*Singers in Accord* reserves the right to adjust the audition process based on group or concert needs

## **SINGER COMMITMENT**

Commitment is a core value of SIA. Membership in *Singers in Accord* carries with it the expectation that participation is for the entire concert season. While SIA is a volunteer run organization, once a singer agrees to participate, it is expected that the commitment to attend rehearsal every week and to sing in all concerts will take precedent over other discretionary activities that may arise. As choral artists we each commit to take time outside rehearsal learning parts, reviewing the previous week's learning, and memorizing music as required. An appropriate amount of time each week is one to two hours. This is essential so that the ensemble can spend rehearsal time each week building on the progress of the previous rehearsal without excessive time reviewing.

## ***REHEARSALS***

Rehearsals begin in early September and are held weekly on Tuesday evenings from 7:00 – 9:30 p.m. at University Lutheran Church of Hope, 601 13th Ave SE Minneapolis, MN 55414-1437 (University of Minnesota campus near Dinkytown). Sectionals may occasionally be scheduled from 6:30 – 7:00 p.m.

## ***REHEARSAL PROTOCOLS***

Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. Singers are encouraged to arrive early enough to get themselves prepared for that rehearsal start time (i.e. fill water bottles, greet others, and take care of other personal needs).

If you can't make a rehearsal due to an illness, family emergency or work conflict, e-mail our attendance person ([attendance@singersinaccord.org](mailto:attendance@singersinaccord.org)) or call 612-597-5483.

Illness protocol: If you are ill and contagious (have fever, coughing, and sneezing) please stay home and get well. If you are not contagious, but are not able to sing you will benefit by attending rehearsal to listen and make notes in your music. General rule of thumb: if you were well enough to go to work, then please attend rehearsal.

If you do miss rehearsal, it is your responsibility to contact your section leader to find out about announcements, markings, or other items covered during rehearsal.

Cell phones are to be turned OFF during rehearsal. Texting or checking e-mail during rehearsal is not allowed; that can be done during break.

Do not leave the rehearsal room unless it is absolutely necessary. If you must leave, wait until the break between pieces.

Feedback to or questions for the rehearsalists/collaborator is best given on note cards and handed to or discussed with your section leaders at the end of rehearsal.

Each singer is required to supply their own black music folder and bring pencils and to rehearsal. Penciled rehearsal notes and markings in music is a necessity for continued progress toward each performance.

## ***SINGERS IN ACCORD STATEMENTS***

**Mission Statement:** Singers in Accord is dedicated to exploring our humanity through culturally diverse choral music. The organization strives to enrich the cultural life of the community through outreach, education, and innovative performances.

**Vision Statement:** Singers in Accord will strive to be a unique and valued asset of the local and national choral community.

**Operation Statement:** Singers in Accord is a uniquely organized, singer-led, ensemble. The group collaborates with a new conductor, performing artist, or artistic ensemble in each concert to create distinctive concert experiences for its singers and audience members. Admittance to the ensemble is by audition. The democratic structure provides an opportunity for members to participate in determining and implementing the group's operational and artistic direction.

The board of directors is comprised of elected team leaders who share ultimate responsibility for the direction of the organization. Each team leader manages a group of volunteers focused on one key area of the organization. Continuous efforts are made to solicit ongoing input from organization stakeholders like singers, audience members, the community and donors.

## ***THE MISSION OF SINGERS IN ACCORD IS GUIDED BY CORE BELIEFS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES.***

### **A. The SIA Product**

1. The ensemble is made up of singers selected by audition.
2. It is committed to producing a high-level artistic and emotional experience for both the singers and the audience.
3. Rehearsals are organized both to develop the group's repertoire and improve all singer's skills as singers and choral musicians. Rehearsals, though demanding, should leave singers feeling inspired and energized.
4. We recognize the importance of the visual experience an audience receives in our concerts and we find ways to enhance this. This includes memorizing music when possible

## **ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS**

Administration Team/Chorale President – Dan Digre

[dan.digre@singersinaccord.org](mailto:dan.digre@singersinaccord.org)

Process Team – Dana Skoglund

[dana.skoglund@singersinaccord.org](mailto:dana.skoglund@singersinaccord.org)

Artistic Team – Linda Burk

[linda.burk@singersinaccord.org](mailto:linda.burk@singersinaccord.org)

Concert Planning Team – Jan LeClair

[jan.leclair@singersinaccord.org](mailto:jan.leclair@singersinaccord.org)

Marketing Team – Penny Meier

[penny.meier@singersinaccord.org](mailto:penny.meier@singersinaccord.org)

Technology Team – Ken Williams

[ken.williams@singersinaccord.org](mailto:ken.williams@singersinaccord.org)

Financial Team – Mike Borg

[mike.borg@singersinaccord.org](mailto:mike.borg@singersinaccord.org)

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Website: [www.singersinaccord.org](http://www.singersinaccord.org)

E-mail: To schedule auditions: [auditions@singersinaccord.org](mailto:auditions@singersinaccord.org)

To contact leadership team: [leadership@singersinaccord.org](mailto:leadership@singersinaccord.org)

To notify an absence: [attendance@singersinaccord.org](mailto:attendance@singersinaccord.org)

Phone: 612-597-5483

Fax: 612-825-7010

Mailing and Office Address: Singers

in Accord

2637 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South

Minneapolis, MN 55406

## **ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS FOR 2011-12**

The work of each team should support the following organizational goals:

- To broaden the volunteer base so as to share the work load
- To increase funds and the funding base
- To expand the roles and contributions of our hired collaborators
- To increase audience size
- To increase our ensemble size
- To develop our choral skills and effectiveness of rehearsals
- To develop our succession planning and effectiveness as a 501(c)(3) organization

Do not use permanent pens or markers unless you own the music.

In order to maintain the flow of rehearsal, rehearsal time will not be spent on teaching individual passages in the music by rote. Instead, singers are encouraged to circle challenging passages during rehearsal and address them in their personal practice sessions at home. If there are passages that continue to be a challenge, singers are asked to bring them to their section leader to address.

There is a break mid-way through each rehearsal for treats and socializing. Each singer is requested to sign up for bringing treats to at least one rehearsal per year. The Treats Coordinator has this sign-up list.

## **CANCELLED REHEARSALS DUE TO WEATHER**

In the event that a rehearsal needs to be canceled due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made by 5:30 P.M. This announcement will be either posted on the Singers in Accord web site, sent by e-mail, or, by text message (if you have given your cell phone number and provider to the technology team).

## **SECTION LEADERS**

Section Leaders serve as a part of the SIA Rehearsal Team and are chosen by the Leadership Team based on musical training and leadership skills. They lead sectional rehearsals, assist conductors in structuring rehearsals and giving feedback, and deliver singer comments from note cards to conductors. Section leaders are not in charge of attendance or enforcing group norms.

## **PROCESS TEAM**

The Process Team addresses group norms or individual issues, e.g. attendance, involvement, commitment. Singers are encouraged to contact the Process Team leader, Dana Skoglund, to express concerns.

## **VISITOR POLICY**

Guests are welcome to come and quietly observe the rehearsal, but may not participate in it. If you would like to bring a guest to rehearsal, contact the Artistic Team Leader, Linda Burk.

### ***THE REPREV***

The REPREV rehearsal typically occurs on the Tuesday following a concert weekend. It is an important time to REview and give feedback on the recent concert experience and PREView the upcoming concert. As such, attendance is essential. As a tradition, the REPREV begins with a potluck dinner and a social time.

### ***CONCERT ATTIRE***

*Singers in Accord* performs in one of two different attires:

#### **Standard Attire**

Men: Black dress or tuxedo pants with a black long sleeve dress shirt with collar. An SIA colored tie can be purchased for \$10. A colored swatch for the front pocket will be provided. Black dress shoes and black stockings.

Ladies: Long black skirts (mid-calf or lower), 3/4 or long sleeve, black blouse, dark black hosiery, black closed-toe shoes, and SIA provided colored scarves.

#### **Formal Attire**

Men: Black, single breasted, short tuxedo (no tails) with a black cummerbund, white tux shirt, black bow tie and black shoes. Men are responsible for obtaining their own tuxedos.

Ladies: Same as Standard Attire, but without colored scarves.

### ***SINGER DONATIONS***

While there are no dues, members of SIA are requested to make a voluntary contribution for of \$80. This supports ongoing costs like rehearsal space rental, music purchase, and other expenses associated with administrating the ensemble. Since *Singers in Accord* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, this donation is tax deductible. It is requested these donations be made prior to September 1.

### ***FINANCIAL SUPPORT***

*Singers in Accord* conducts fund raising activities throughout the year to sustain its mission. In addition, the organization relies on outside financial support. Singers are encouraged to invite friends and family to become benefactors as well as to explore financial backing available from their employers, such as matching grants.

### ***VOLUNTEERING***

*Singers in Accord* has no paid staff, outside of our hired performing collaborators, so all activities of the organization are done by volunteers. The success of *Singers in Accord* relies on the time, ideas, and energy of volunteers who share the power of the mission. It is essential that all singers participate in some aspect of running the organization beyond being a singer.

Volunteer opportunities are available on all of the teams that run SIA: Artistic, Concert Planning, Financial, Marketing, Process, Technology, and Administration.

It is also the responsibility of each singer to help the organization raise money through either participating in fund raising events or requesting friends, family, or employers donate to the group and attend concerts.

### ***LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY***

A member who has participated in all concerts for the two previous seasons may request a leave of absence for a single concert cycle due to:

- Unavoidable work conflict

- Extended travel

- Illness or family emergency

If the leave extends beyond the concert cycle, or the singer does not qualify for a LOA, the singer will be required to re-audition and will be re-admitted pending the outcome of the audition and the availability of an opening in the singer's section. Requests for LOA are made in writing to the Chorale President or the Process Team Leader.

### ***RESIGNING PROTOCOL***

In the event that you can no longer participate in *Singers in Accord*, notify the Process Team Leader, Dana Skoglund. It is important that you are thanked for your participation, that the group understands your reasons for leaving, and receives your suggestions on how to improve the organization.

Singers interested in re-joining the ensemble in a future season will follow the standard auditioning protocol.