

# Whatcom Chorale

## **Member's Handbook**

Revised August 2008

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## History of Whatcom Chorale

### MISSION STATEMENT

Whatcom Chorale brings our community a rich heritage of music in a variety of presentations. Our purpose is to present both accompanied and *a cappella* choral music which includes sacred, classical and contemporary styles in a variety of languages. We believe that the universal voice, which speaks through these works, aids in restoring a healthy balance and a sense of connectedness in our community at deeply personal, spiritual and intellectual levels. We seek to carry forth the tradition of creative musical human experience that has existed for centuries.

We provide opportunity for people in our community to participate in music that inspires them, that they enjoy, and that offers creative growth. We seek to provide experiences for those with choral talent to sing with the most skilled and trained people among us.

We believe that when we come together under the direction of an enlightened conductor to sing or play the music of creative genius, when we allow ourselves to be touched by that creative power, we restore some of the balance necessary to our modern lives.

(Adopted by Whatcom Chorale Board of Directors, April 20, 1993)

## **General Member Information**

### **Membership**

Membership is determined through auditions held at the beginning of the fall rehearsal schedule. If auditions are needed they will be scheduled again in January and March. Former members may be asked to re-audition if they have not sung with the Chorale during the previous year.

### **Rehearsals**

The Chorale meets for rehearsal on Tuesday evenings during the concert season (September through May). There are no rehearsals during the summer. Concerts are given three or more times yearly, as determined by the artistic director and with board approval. The concert schedule for the upcoming year will typically be available to members by the end of the current year and no later than the first September rehearsal of the new season.

### **Concert Dress\***

**Women:** Black floor length dress with long or  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeve, or comparable long skirt or pants and blouse. Women's attire should match men in tuxedos for elegance and formality.

**Men:** White shirt, black tuxedo or very dark suit, red bow tie for the December concert and black bow tie for all other concerts.

**All:** Black shoes; no perfume, cologne, scented hairspray or aftershave; no watch alarms, pagers or cell phones; small earrings and rings only may be worn.

*\*Chorale members often assist one another in assembling concert attire.*

## **Tuition and Fees**

Members pay an annual fee of \$150 to sing with Whatcom Chorale. Singing is a full-season commitment, September to June. Tuition can be paid in full by September 30<sup>th</sup> or in installments, by arrangement with the registrar, over the course of the singing year. Part of this fee is used to purchase music, which becomes a part of the Chorale library and the remainder helps to fund concerts and rehearsal space, accompanist, assistant director and artistic director salaries.

Partial scholarships are available. The scholarship tuition reductions may be obtained by privately asking the registrar. The Board intends that no eligible member be turned away because of financial hardship.

Tuition of \$150 covers the entire singing season. Singers commit to the full season to assure unity of sound and balance between sections. If singing 2 quarters the tuition is \$115. Single quarter singers would pay \$60, but that rate is only available for those joining the Chorale in March.

## **Responsibilities of Chorale Members**

*We are delighted that you have chosen to sing with Whatcom Chorale, whether you are a new member or a seasoned veteran of the group. Whatcom Chorale is proud of its musicianship and reputation in the community. Fulfilling the following responsibilities will help the organization continue to maintain that high standard.*

- **Commit to sing the entire concert season (September to June).**

Notify your section leader if you plan a leave of absence. Leaves of more than two terms in the three term concert season require application for re-admission to the director and may require re-auditioning.

- **Attend rehearsals regularly-**

Regular rehearsal attendance by every member is fundamental to creating choral music of exceptional quality. Absences affect not only the individual singer but also the Chorale as a whole. Every voice is important to planning, rehearsal and performance. In general, a singer should only miss rehearsal due to illness or family emergencies. In reality, life events can interfere with attendance.

There should be no more than two absences in a concert preparation period. Missing more than two rehearsals may mean that you are not sufficiently prepared to sing in the concert. If a third absence occurs, consult with your section leader. The director will determine your performance participation for the next concert.

*You should not attend rehearsals when you are ill; however if you are no longer contagious but are not yet able to sing, you are encouraged to attend the rehearsal so you can hear directions and take notes.*

As soon as you know you will be unable to sing in a concert, please inform your section leader. Music is planned for a specific number of voices. The director may need to modify part assignments when the number of voices singing the concert does not match the plan.

- **Sign in on the attendance sheet each week.**  
Section leaders will check attendance sheets for accuracy and check in with members who have two or more absences.
  
- **Wear your nametag to each rehearsal.**
  
- **Practice music in preparation for rehearsals.**  
While rehearsals initially focus on learning the notes, the major focus of our rehearsal as a group is the development of artistic expression. If needed, you should spend time learning the music on your own so that rehearsals can be used to develop artistry.
  
- **Take responsibility to learn what you missed.**  
If you miss a rehearsal, check with another member of your section for music markings and other important information.

- **Participate in each year's fundraising activities.**  
Funds for the operation of the Chorale are generated through tuition, ticket sales, fundraising and donations. The annual Fall ad/donor campaign is the major fundraiser for the Chorale and its success depends on the active participation of all Chorale members. Other opportunities for Chorale members to help raise funds occur throughout the year.
  
- **Communicate with your section leader.**  
Section leaders are your communication conduit for many important issues including absences, leaves of absence, rehearsal issues, and sectional rehearsals. Let your section leader know about any absences from rehearsals, in advance if possible.
  
- **Mark music judiciously and return music promptly when asked.** Use a #2 pencil to lightly mark music. Erase excessive markings before turning in music to the music librarian.

*NOTE: Our diverse membership meets weekly to enjoy singing and to provide a quality musical experience for our community and ourselves. To ensure the best possible experience for all of us, please leave personal politics, religion and business ventures out of Chorale activities.*

## **Responsibilities of Whatcom Chorale to Members**

- **Provide an artistic director/ conductor, accompanist and appropriate space for rehearsals.**
- **Ensure that rehearsals begin and end on time.**
- **Provide music in time to allow adequate preparation for performances.**
- **Provide practice CDs or other resources for home practice.**
- **Communicate clearly about rehearsal and concert schedules.**
- **Plan and provide for concerts that showcase the talents of the ensemble in appropriate venues.**
- **Organize yearly fundraising campaigns.**
- **Communicate about Chorale business with all Chorale members.**
- **Provide opportunities for members to be involved in the operation of the Chorale.**

*Note: Chorale-sponsored communication in weekly announcements, Chorale Notes or other e-mail are for Chorale business only. Other music-related information can be communicated with posters or hand-outs available during rehearsal breaks.*

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

In 1988, a Board of Directors was established to conduct the business of the Chorale. This Board, elected by Chorale members, sets and evaluates overall Chorale policy and oversees the financial affairs of the Chorale, as well as concert publicity, fund raising, and concert planning. The Board selects the Artistic Director/Conductor. Board members commit to a three-year term and to serve as liaison to or chair of at least one major Chorale committee. Board meetings are generally held once or twice a month prior to rehearsals.

The four elected offices within the Board itself are President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. These officers constitute the executive committee for the Board. They are responsible for arranging board meetings and agendas, maintaining Director/Board relations and coordinating all other Board activities.

All board members act as the liaison between the Chorale and the Director and/or Officers. Please feel free to approach any board member with questions or concerns you may have about any aspect of the Chorale. Board members may be identified by their nametags. The complete “By-Laws of Whatcom Chorale” and “Board Procedures and Job Descriptions” are available from the Board of Directors to any interested Chorale member.

At the end of each year’s season, the Board invites nominations to fill the positions of outgoing Board members. Members of

the Chorale may nominate themselves or others. Elections are held at the annual members' meeting on the Tuesday following the last concert of the season.

## **WHATCOM CHORALE OPERATIONS**

*Chorale members are strongly encouraged to assist in the overall operation of the Chorale by participating in any of the following activities. Participation by all members is of great benefit to the Chorale; participation also contributes to an atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie within the group.*

*Below is a brief overview of the various functions fulfilled by members in order to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the Chorale. Any interested Chorale member can request a comprehensive list of all committee duties and procedures from the Board.*

### **Auditions Coordination**

An auditions coordinator works with the Artistic Director/Conductor and the Assistant Director to schedule and conduct auditions of new and returning singers.

### **Rehearsal and Concert Management**

Volunteer Rehearsal/Concert Managers oversee rehearsal and concert arrangements. In coordination with the Board, Director and Assistant Director, managers may also assist with venue selection and reservation. Managers coordinate with facility representatives for rehearsals and concerts, making arrangements for on-site logistics, including: set-up, take-down and storage, decorations, ticket sales, recording, program

distribution and site cleanup. Typically, the Accompanist has assisted the Director and Assistant Director in coordinating with Sinfonia musicians on rehearsal and concert arrangements.

## **Section Leadership**

Section leaders are appointed each year by the Board.

Interested members can nominate themselves or others for this role at any time. Section leader responsibilities include:

- Welcoming new members to the section by finding seating and introducing new singers to those seated around them.
- Assigning a “mentor” to each new member of the section.
- Monitoring attendance sheets weekly for accuracy.
- Contacting any singers who have missed two rehearsals to determine if there is a need for help or support to return to regular attendance. The section leader communicates special circumstances to the Artistic Director
- Assisting singers with concerns or problems pertaining to their Chorale membership or singing assignment.
- Acting as liaison between the section and the director, requesting sectional rehearsals or other special attention for his/her section when needed.
- Organizing the section to participate in intermission snack set-up and clean-up when the section is so assigned.

## **Music Acquisition and Distribution**

An individual or committee serves as music librarian and is responsible for purchasing or borrowing music, preparing folders for distribution, cataloguing music, collecting music at quarter's end, maintaining a history of music performed by the Chorale, and arranging for storage of the Chorale music library.

## **Registration and Membership**

A volunteer registrar is responsible for maintaining and providing accurate member lists (current and previous), maintaining attendance rosters, collecting tuition, and providing nametags.

## **Concert Management**

Volunteer Rehearsal and Concert Managers, in conjunction with the Board, oversee concert production including venue selection and arrangements, site setup and decorations, tickets, recording arrangements, program distribution, ushers, and site cleanup.

## **Concert Program Production**

Working with the Artistic Director/Conductor, volunteers prepare the program for each concert. These individuals are responsible for having the program printed and recruiting volunteers to place the programs inside the Program Wraps for distribution to concert attendees.

## **Ticket Production and Sales**

Volunteers prepare concert tickets prior to each concert, distribute them to ticket outlets, and conduct ticket sales at Chorale rehearsals prior to concerts.

## **Marketing, Advertising, and Publicity**

- **Publicity and Graphic Arts Committee**

This committee is responsible for advertising concerts and for preparing printed information that goes before the public. Activities include sending out press releases and feature articles, submitting newspaper ads, arranging radio spots, arranging for event notices in local calendars, advertising on local reader-boards, and maintaining the Chorale website ([www.whatcomchorale.org](http://www.whatcomchorale.org)). In addition, the committee is responsible for designing, editing, and printing posters, postcards, and the annual Program Wrap. The committee maintains a "graphics library" of publicity photos, logos, and other visual images.

- **Promotional Materials Distribution Committee**

This group distributes posters, electronic and mailed postcards or notices. Activities may include: maintaining mailing lists, monitoring poster distribution and preparing mailings for the post office.

## **“Care and Feeding” of Members**

- **Recognition and Support:** A “sunshine volunteer” sends cards or other appropriate remembrances to chorale members or chorale friends in special situations (e.g., accidents, bereavement, surgery, celebrations and congratulations). *Note: Please provide our volunteer with information about members in need of recognition or support.*
- **Snack Coordination Volunteer:** Each quarter, a volunteer sends around a schedule for members to sign up to bring snacks to rehearsal. He/she is also responsible for giving a reminder call each week to those bringing snacks.
- **Choir Event Planning Committee:** Volunteers arrange the traditional “end-of-year” party, plan and arrange at least one retreat each year, host receptions or dinners for guest musicians, and occasionally schedule other social events.

## **Selection of Artistic Director/Conductor**

Following the resignation of the Chorale’s artistic director/conductor, the board appoints a committee to oversee the process of selecting a new director. Members of the committee are selected by self- or other-nomination. This committee works closely with the Board and provides opportunities for the Chorale membership to provide input.

## **FINANCIAL HEALTH**

### **Financial Health Committee**

Financial health is essential for organizational and artistic success. This board is ultimately responsible for all aspects of our financial health including regular review of income and expenses in order to maintain a healthy financial balance.

Because finances are involved in almost all aspects of the organization, the Board members work closely with many other committees and individuals.

### **Fundraising Committee**

Member dues and ticket sales cover only 60% of our expenses. Therefore, successful fundraising is essential for our financial health. Annual advertising and donor campaign and special events such as the silent auction and dinner gala are at the core of our fundraising activities. Because Whatcom Chorale is a non-profit, community-based chorus, fundraising is a “grassroots” activity and is most successful when all members participate.

Chorale members assist the Fundraising Committee by soliciting advertisements for our annual Program Wrap and obtaining tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses in our annual ad/donor campaign, providing contact information and introductions for potential large donors, and working on various special events such as the silent auction and dinner gala.

Whatcom Chorale has established the following categories of donation, which are recognized in our programs:

**Friends \$25-49**  
**Donor \$50-249**  
**Sponsor \$250-499**  
**Patron \$500-999**  
**Benefactor \$1000 and above**

Concert Sponsorship and Season Underwriter recognition for businesses are also available.

## **WHATCOM CHORALE HISTORY**

The Chorale began in 1972 when a group of local singers interested in singing and performing madrigals wished to expand. The madrigal group recognized that it needed professional assistance in order to improve the polish of its performances and Dr. Robert Scandrett was asked to help. Interest in an expanded repertoire by the singers led to the formation of a community choir which could perform a broader range of music and styles. From this nucleus, the “New Whatcom Choral Society” was born.

The New Whatcom Choral Society began with 20 singers in 1972; its first performance was Bach’s *Christmas Oratorio*. Auditions were held each quarter and the group continued to expand. Its membership then, as now, was diverse. The Chorale continues to draw its members from Whatcom, Island and Skagit Counties.

In 1975, the New Whatcom Choral Society began its association with Motettenchor Stuttgart and its director,

Gunther Graulich. This relationship resulted in several exchange visits and performances between Bellingham and Germany.

The choir affiliated with Whatcom Community College from 1975 through 1993. The community college gave the choir a professional base for support services during its early years. The Mobil Foundation also provided a grant in 1975, which was used to strengthen and expand the choir to permit it to present more ambitious musical endeavors.

In 1986 the New Whatcom Choral Society joined with the Seattle Symphony Chorale in a European tour. The combined choirs performed Borodin's *Polovetzian Dances and Chorus* (from Prince Igor) at the Prince of Wales' Trust Concert in Birmingham, England. For this event, the choir joined with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. The choir continued its tour with a successful series of formal choral works and American music in Stuttgart, Germany and Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia.

When Dr. Scandrett retired from the choir in 1987, the name of the group was changed to Whatcom Chorale. Under a new name and new leadership, it continued to present major performances and play an active role in the performing arts community of Whatcom County. A task force was formed in 1987 to conduct Whatcom Chorale business and to select a director. For a year, the group matured under Jack Frymire's direction.

In 1988 the Chorale incorporated as a non-profit corporation, adopted by-laws, elected the first Board of Directors, and selected Richard Asher as Director. He introduced the choir to a wide range of musical experiences, including vocal training incorporated into rehearsals and summer voice classes. Audiences were introduced to traditions they seemed to enjoy: gifts distributed during the Christmas programs (bells, fir seeds, chestnuts, apples) and opportunities for non-members to join in a section of the concert, e.g., *Battle Hymn of the Republic* and *Hallelujah Chorus*.

When Rick Asher resigned in 1991, the decision was made to take full year to search for a permanent director. The Chorale featured a "Showcase of Conductors," with Judith Burns, Linda Scheuffele and Karen Thomas each conducting one term during the 1991-92 season. Rick Asher volunteered to remain as artistic director during this transition year.

In June 1992, Linda Scheuffele was selected as Artistic Director/Conductor. Now married to Paul Frost, Linda Scheuffele Frost has a B. A. in Music from Western Washington University and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey. Honors include *Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges (1990)* and *Manager of Westminster Symphonic Choir and Westminster Festival (1989-90)*

About 60 members of the Chorale toured Europe again in 1998, singing another program of American music. This included classical works by Bernstein, Copland, Barber and Foss, along with some hymns, folk songs and spirituals. The two-week tour began in Eisenach, Germany, J. S. Bach's

birthplace, and continued to the Czech Republic and Austria. A high point of the trip was in the small Moravian town of Jaromarice where a number of Chorale members had home stays with local families. Even though communication was often via body language and gesturing, those who stayed with families felt very welcome and at home. The concert in Jaromarice was so well received that the Chorale was asked to sing five encores—just one example of the reception of the Chorale wherever it appeared.

In 2001 Linda Frost resigned as Artistic Director of Whatcom Chorale. The board created a Director Search Committee. The committee again created a special season to audition directors. Candidate Tim Fitzgerald conducted the fall semester and Allan Cline conducted the spring semester.

In June 2002 Dr. Allan Cline was selected to serve as Artistic Director/Conductor of Whatcom Chorale. He has a Bachelor of Music Education from Western Washington University, a Master of Theological Studies from Regent College in Vancouver British Columbia, a Master of Music in music history and literature from Western Washington University and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Orchestral Conducting from Michigan State University. Dr. Cline was assisted by Debbie Brown.

Under Dr. Cline's leadership, the Whatcom Chorale created an instrumental ensemble, the Whatcom Chorale Sinfonia, to provide orchestral accompaniment for concerts. Both organizations are non-profit. Chorale and Sinfonia members, the Whatcom Chorale Board of Directors and contributions to

the Whatcom Chorale Association support them. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Following Dr. Cline's resignation in the spring of 2007, Whatcom Chorale hired Charles Peterson as interim director of both the chorale and instrumental ensembles, again assisted by Debbie Brown. Mr. Peterson has conducted choirs at the university and high school levels, as well as church choirs and community choruses.

Mr. Peterson's educational training includes a Diploma in Sacred Music, Voice – Choral, from Moody Bible Institute; a B.M.E., Indiana University School of Music; and an M.A., Western Washington University – Voice – Music History. Mr. Peterson has also had graduate studies at Roosevelt University in Chicago, the University of Washington, and Voice Apprenticeship studies in Hanover, Germany.

As a teacher of singing, Mr. Peterson taught on the voice faculties of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Western Washington University (Adjunct Faculty) in Bellingham, and St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. He directed the Concert Choir there, was director of Opera Theater and served as chair of the voice department. At present, he has a private studio of voice in Seattle.

Mr. Peterson has been an active, long-standing member of the American Choral Conductors Association, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and the Music Teachers National Association. He is a frequent adjudicator and clinician for the National Association of Teachers of Singing,

Metropolitan Opera District Auditions, American choral Directors Association, and the Music Teachers National Association.

In May 2008, Mr. Peterson expects to resign from his interim appointment, effective at the end of the 2008-2009 season. During the 2008-2009 season, the Chorale will be seeking an artistic director/conductor who will provide artistic leadership and vision, upholding the tradition of outstanding performances for which the Chorale has become known.