

Information for Choristers – Winter-Spring 2019

Welcome to Oakham House Choir Society! We're very pleased that you have chosen our choir, and we hope you find your time with us to be a rewarding and joyful experience in this 35th year of the choir's existence.

If you have sung with a choir before, you already know how gratifying it is to work with a group of like-minded people to perform works by our culture's great composers. If you're new to the world of choral music, you'll soon discover how satisfying it is to sing these works before an appreciative audience.

There are two things we ask you to keep in mind. The first is that this is a serious commitment. The other members in your section, and the choir as a whole, depend on your punctual attendance at every practice and rehearsal. We can't possibly reach our full potential or be taken seriously as an ensemble unless every single one of us is dedicated to making it happen.

The other thing to remember is to *have fun*. Making music together as we master great works of art *should* be fun. Otherwise, what's the point? And there are opportunities to have fun outside of the rehearsal hall too, including potluck get-togethers and pub nights.

We've compiled this information sheet to help answer some of the questions you may have. But if there's anything we've missed, please don't hesitate to ask a member of the management committee or our director, Matthew Jaskiewicz. (See contact information on page 4.)

Membership Fee

There is no membership fee for Ryerson students, either full-time or Continuing Education. For Ryerson alumni, current and retired faculty, and current and retired staff, the fee is \$10 per term. For everyone else, the fee is \$70 per term. Fees are payable at the beginning of the term. Cheques should be made payable to **Oakham House Choir**. Please note that all choir members are also charged for their music (See "Music" on page 2.)

Regular Choir Practice

We practise on Mondays, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., usually in the Oakham Lounge on the second floor of Oakham House, at the southwest corner of Gould and Church Streets. Sometimes one section is asked to come half an hour early (i.e., at 6:30) for extra practice.

Please see also "Orchestra Rehearsals" on page 3.

Saturday Intensive Workshop

A Saturday intensive is an all-day choir practice where we have a chance to work on the concert repertoire more intensively with the help of a vocal coach. A catered lunch is provided. This term the intensive will be held on **Saturday, March 23**, from 10:30 to 3:30, in the Thomas Lounge at Oakham House. There is a charge of \$10 to help pay for the lunch and the vocal coach.

Music

The music for the pieces we will be singing at the concert on April 27 will be for sale during the first few practices.

Learning Music – Online Tutorials

Those of us who aren't proficient at reading music can get help from a number of websites that provide practice files in the MIDI format. These sites have most of the popular works in the choral repertoire, usually with separate recordings for each of the four vocal parts.

Most of these sites allow you to download their files free of charge. One that's worth checking out is www.cyberbass.com, but there are plenty more – just Google "MIDI choral music". And to listen to performances of the pieces we're learning, go to www.classicalarchives.com.

Choir Practice Etiquette

It's critically important that we make the most of our practices and rehearsals. That means coming ready to work and concentrate. Please:

- Turn off your phones and wait until the break to do your e-mailing and texting.
- Bring a pencil to every practice, as we are always making notes about how certain passages should be performed.
- Refrain from chatting while Matthew is speaking or working with another section, or while announcements are being made. What Matthew says to one section is likely to be useful to every section.
- Do not tap your foot on the floor to keep time – that is the conductor's prerogative, and it can be distracting for your neighbours; if you need to keep time for yourself, as most of us do, please do it silently.
- Let your section helper or a member of the management committee know if you have to miss a practice (see contact information on page 4).
- Be prompt, so that we can start on time – there's always lots to cover.
- Do not wear strong perfume or cologne – more and more people are sensitive or allergic to strong scents.

Upcoming Concerts

We will give our main concert of the winter-spring semester on **Saturday, April 27, at 7:30 p.m.** It will be an all-Mozart programme featuring the *Requiem* and excerpts from *The Magic Flute*. As usual we will be accompanied by a professional orchestra, the Toronto Sinfonietta. We will also be joined by members of the Novi Singers and four professional soloists. The concert will take place at St. Andrew's Church, which is at the corner of King Street West and Simcoe Street. That's just east of Roy Thomson Hall and just west of the St. Andrew subway station.

Orchestra Rehearsals – Mark Your Calendars Now

There will be two rehearsals with the orchestra: one in the Tecumseh Auditorium (behind the ground floor of Oakham House) on **Monday, April 22**, and one at the church on **Friday, April 26**.

More details, as well as information about any other special rehearsals, will be available a few weeks before the concert.

Please note: **Attendance at the orchestra rehearsals is mandatory.**

Concert Tickets

Our choir relies on the proceeds from the sale of concert tickets for its continued existence. The money is used to help pay for the practice accompanist, the orchestra, soloists, church rental, programs, tickets and flyers, because those expenses always exceed what we receive from Oakham House. Tickets and flyers will be available a couple of months before the concert. Every member of the choir is encouraged to sell at least five tickets.

Dress for Concerts

As an ensemble, it's important that we all dress in the same way for our performances:

- *Women* – **Long**-sleeved, calf-length black dress, or black skirt and **long**-sleeved top, or black evening dress pants and **long**-sleeved top (i.e., black clothes **only** and no sparkles); black stockings, black shoes; gold or silver jewellery only. Please, no miniskirts, high boots, leggings or bare legs.
- *Men* – Tuxedo, or black suit, or black pants and black tailored jacket; black bow tie; white dress shirt; black socks; black dress shoes.

We realize some of those things can be expensive, so if you find it hard to get any of them, please speak to any member of the choir management committee early in the term – someone will quite likely be able to lend you what you need. It may also be worth looking in thrift shops or second-hand stores such as Value Village.

Concert Etiquette

This is when all our efforts pay off, and there are a few things to remember. A concert is a formal occasion, and we're all very visible during the performance. So, please:

- When on stage, **do not** wave to your friends in the audience, chat with your neighbours or chew gum.
- Be sure your phone or other electronic devices will not ring during the performance.
- Carry your music, with your arm straight, in the hand facing the audience as you enter and leave, and don't open it until Matthew motions for us to do so. When a soloist is performing, turn the pages silently (or not at all).

- Do not take anything on stage with you except your music.
- And as at choir practice, please remember not to wear strong scents.

Choir Executive and Committees

As you can imagine, it takes a lot of work to make all this happen. We have a student executive, which is elected every year by Ryerson-community members, and a management committee to keep things running smoothly, but there's always more to be done, from producing flyers and programs to publicizing the choir and setting up for concerts. *We can always use your help, so don't be shy!*

History of the Choir

Oakham House Choir was founded in 1984, thanks largely to the efforts of Professor Marie Dowler of the English Department and Matthew Jaskiewicz, a former conductor with the Warsaw Chamber Opera, who had recently immigrated to Canada from Poland.

In most seasons, the choir presents two main concerts – usually featuring a large work such as an oratorio or mass – together with the Toronto Sinfonietta, a professional chamber orchestra also founded and directed by Matthew. Smaller concerts are given from time to time.

In September 2014 we hosted a university choir from Germany and presented a joint concert with them. The following spring, we were invited to perform in the Luminato arts festival, and some 20 of our members took part in several performances of R. Murray Schafer's *Apocalypse*.

In January 2016 a contingent from the choir travelled to New York to sing at Carnegie Hall in a multi-choir performance of *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by the Welsh composer Karl Jenkins. That spring, we celebrated the choir's 30th concert season with a gala concert.

The following season we observed Canada's 150th anniversary with a concert featuring music by Canadian composers and music composed around the time of Confederation.

Last season our spring concert commemorated the centenary of the end of the First World War with a performance of Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. And last fall the chance to sing the same piece again took 20 of our members to Berlin for a world concert for peace performed by 2,000 choristers from over two dozen countries and conducted by the composer.

Contacts for More Information

Music director: Matthew Jaskiewicz – jaskiewicz@sympatico.ca

President: Jordan Kilfoy – jordan.kilfoy@ryerson.ca

Manager and treasurer: Susie Fung – susie.syfung@gmail.com

Management committee and executive – oakhamhousechoir1@gmail.com

Rae Chang, Elsa Chau, Freya Godard, Joyce Fu, Susie Fung, Jason Dasco, Nobue Khan, Jordan Kilfoy, William Lee, Kenny McDonald, Tami Strong, Rebecca Williams, Sayna Zarifi

Section helpers: Sayna (sop. 1), Eleanor (sop. 2), Tami (alto 1), Nobue (alto 2), Jordan (tenors), William (basses)