

Chorus Etiquette

Circular Keys Chorus, 2013

'Be the change you want to see in the world'
Paraphrasing MAHATMA GANDHI

Honour thy Director

She knows what she's doing

Believe that your Director knows what she's doing and restrain yourself from offering advice on how to run the chorus (or any other topic) while standing on the risers – or any time, really. Wait for her to invite your opinion,

Ten second rule

If the Director has not addressed the chorus within ten seconds, then you can talk quietly with your riser neighbour until the Director resumes. Keep your eye on the Director so you know when she has resumed, and then immediately give her your full attention.

Listen, don't correct

Often when there's a pause, chorus members try to correct their mistakes or those of their neighbours. Although this may seem important, RESIST. You will miss important comments from the Director that affect everyone in the chorus. Bear in mind that the Director fixes all the problems eventually.

Listen, don't sing along

When the Director is demonstrating how to sing a particular passage, listen. Do not sing with her. She's usually doing that to demonstrate micro-differences in pitch, nuances of vocal quality, or in some cases, notes or words. If you sing with her, you keep yourself and everyone else from hearing her, and instead, you become the example. That keeps us all from learning from the expert

Listen, don't distract

When the Director is speaking to the chorus, listen. Don't pass the time singing or reviewing your part. It makes it difficult for all of us to pay her proper attention and to learn, because we're instead paying at least some attention to you.

Listen, don't sing

When the Director is working with another section or sections, listen. Don't sneak-sing your part with them (unless she asks you to). You may think no one will notice, but it's guaranteed the Director will notice, and be distracted by it.

Listen to the pitch, don't hum

When the pitch pipe is sounding, listen. Don't hum the pitch. It keeps you and everyone else from hearing the pitch accurately.

Wait to be invited

Plan to arrive on time; but if you arrive late, or step down from the risers and are returning, simply stand on the side and wait until invited by the Director to take your place. Don't stop to do anything else on the way.

Don't cross the Director

If you need to step down for any reason, stay on the risers until there's a break in the singing, then step down and leave quietly. If you need to cross to the other side of the risers, walk behind the risers if possible or walk behind the Director instead. Under no circumstances should you ever cross in front of the Director while getting on the risers.

Wait your turn

If the Director is debriefing with Assistant Directors after rehearsal, wait until they have finished before talking to them.

Watch

Watch the Director at all times.

Honour thy Section Leaders and Management Team

Ask the right person

If you have questions about music, ask your Section Leaders. If you have questions about chorus administration, ask your Team Coordinator or the appropriate Committee member – that's what they are there for. Don't ask the Director.

Mind your own business

If you have advice for other chorus members about their singing, and you are not a Section Leader, speak to your Section Leader, not to the member concerned. Ditto for visual performance – speak to a member of the Visual Team, not the member concerned

Hand your riser recording in before it's due

Don't leave it until the last minute to submit your riser recording: you may not pass the first time around and you will need time to re-record. Don't make your Section Leader/riser checker chase you.

Before you submit it, listen to it yourself to check notes, words and breathing are correct. If you can hear errors, don't hand it in. Work on it and record it again. Review your Section Leader's feedback and work on anything she suggests before resubmitting.

Honour thy fellow chorus members

Learn the music

Learn the music and be 'off paper' by the due date, so you don't slow everyone else down

If you are still using the sheet music after the due date, stand at the side of the risers (you haven't earned your place yet!)

When there are changes to the music, record them during rehearsal and review them at home

Learn the visual interpretation

Watch and listen when the visual plan is being taught. Don't interrupt with questions: trust that if you're doing it wrong, the Visual Team will tell you sooner or later. Don't ask fellow chorus members: this distracts them from paying attention, and there's no guarantee they know the answer.

When there are changes to the visual plan, record them during rehearsal (in whatever way works for you) and review them at home

Supper is the time to share

Share your personal anecdotes at supper after rehearsal; don't take up valuable rehearsal time

Keep yourself informed

Read your emails, including Secret Chorus Business, and check the chorus website regularly (we can tell) to make sure you are informed and prepared, so you don't waste time asking questions everyone else knows the answer to

Don't be a spammer

Address emails only to the people directly concerned, don't send them to the whole chorus and clutter up their Inbox.

Workers rule

Allow the team who put the risers up and put them away, and the team who set out supper, to do their job. This takes precedence over your desire for a nice cup of tea.

Your perfume gets up my nose

Wear only unscented products – hairspray, hand lotion, etc. Don't wear any perfume on rehearsal days. Do wear deodorant, though!

Some gases weren't meant to be shared

If you need to fart, move off the risers

Some germs weren't meant to be shared

If you are suffering from something infectious – even just a cold – please stay off the risers so you don't spread your germs to the rest of the chorus

Stay safe

Carry everything you need on the risers on your body; don't place anything on the risers, so you don't cause a trip hazard for other members.

Turn your phone off

When you come to rehearsal, turn your mobile phone off or switch it to silent or vibrate. It's unlikely your ring tone is in the same key as what we're singing.

Honour thyself

We miss you

Believe that you are a valued member of the chorus and missed when you are absent. Make every effort to attend rehearsals and performance. If you are unable to attend a rehearsal, let your Section Leader know and record your absence on the chorus website

We need you

Believe that you have valuable skills you can use to help the chorus. Find a way in which you can contribute (apart from standing on the risers and singing): fundraising, costumes, setting up risers, helping with hospitality, assisting Membership and other Committees are all important ways you can help.

‘Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing’

THALES, 7 BC