



VOCAL ARTS ENSEMBLE MEMBERSHIP GUIDELINES 2023-2024 SEASON

Michael Ehrlich, VAE Director, FCS Artistic Director

REHEARSALS

The Vocal Arts Ensemble (VAE) season runs from September to June. During this time, VAE presents three main concerts – one in December, one in March, and one in May or early June. (An additional, shorter performance may be scheduled in conjunction with a silent auction at some point during the year.)

Singing with VAE is a full season commitment. We understand there may be conflicts on concert dates for illness or important life events. However, by registering for the season, it is with the understanding that you will fully participate barring the above circumstances.

Regular Rehearsals: VAE rehearses regularly on Tuesday evenings from 7:15pm-9:45pm between September and June. Sometimes, the date is moved to accommodate holidays and other conflicts. The ensemble benefits most when as many members as possible are present for rehearsals. We learn a great deal of music for each concert, and it is critical that we know our parts, assist each other and tune our balance for the most positive presentation of our music. It is also critical for our community to thrive that we be present.

For these reasons, VAE Members are expected to attend as many rehearsals as possible and to arrive on time. **Members are expected to attend a minimum of 75% of the regular rehearsals (not inclusive of dress rehearsals, which are mandatory), with excused absences made at Michael's discretion.** The dates and times of Rehearsals and Sectionals (see below) will be clearly listed in the calendar. You will have access to the complete schedule of rehearsals, performances, and other important dates. We ask that you mark your calendar accordingly in order to avoid conflicts.

Sectionals: For each concert, Sectionals will be hosted, usually by voice part, to fine tune parts and reinforce learning. While attendance is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged. Members can get credit for missed regular rehearsals if they attend.

Dress Rehearsals: The last three rehearsals before a concert are considered dress rehearsals. **In order to sing in the concert, you must attend these last three rehearsals unless you have been expressly excused by Michael due to an urgent unexpected issue.**

Personal Responsibility for Learning Music: As with all choirs, review and practice of VAE music in between rehearsals is essential and expected of all members. Rehearsal tracks and PDFs with all

markings are provided for each singer. Each singer is expected to mark their music, using the marked PDFs provided by the director.

Retreats: There is one retreat (Saturday rehearsal) scheduled for each concert period. These retreats are an important part of learning our music for the upcoming concert period. While attendance is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged, and Members can get credit for missed regular rehearsals if they attend. Your attendance is valuable and greatly appreciated!

ATTENDANCE

Absences: Because we strive for the best artistic product possible, VAE has implemented an attendance policy which requires attending at least 75% of the regular rehearsals during each concert period, with some exceptions at Michael's discretion. Sectional rehearsals can be used as make-up rehearsals. If you need to be absent for a rehearsal, you **MUST** email your section leader(s), and your section leader(s) **ONLY. DO NOT EMAIL MICHAEL.**

Current VAE Section Leaders:

Soprano: Regina La Valley, Loni Silva – vaesopranoleader@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

Alto/Head Section Leader: Kitty Moomjian – vaealtoleader@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

Tenor: Lonnie Bickel, Mikell Wooten – vaetenorleader@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

Bass: TBD - vaebassleader@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

Attendance Points: The attendance policy has been revised to reflect a positive points system wherein Members will earn points for attending rehearsals and engaging in other activities, like marking music and volunteering to set up or break down chairs or set up risers. We are still fleshing out the Attendance plan, however, the idea is that attendance at Regular Rehearsals and Sectionals will count as 1 point. Zoom attendance will count as 0.5 of a point. Other activities like marking music, setting up/breaking down chairs/risers will also be awarded points. There will be a minimum number of points required to participate in a concert. The details of the plan will be shared when they are available.

Zoom Participation: As we move beyond the pandemic, we want as many people as possible to attend rehearsals in person. However, we understand that occasional conflicts for work and other obligations do arise. For these reasons, we are going to continue to make a Zoom option available, however we are going to limit it to two Zoom sessions per performance period, unless an exception has been approved by Michael. **Zoom is not an option for Dress Rehearsals.** If you wish to avail yourself of the Zoom option, use the Zoom Google Form, which will be available on the main page of Chorus Connection. You must sign up for this option no later than 5:00pm on the day of the rehearsal. You must email your section leader, as well. Zoom rehearsals will count as 0.5 points toward attendance.

We will continue to monitor the pandemic and public health guidance and will make changes to our Zoom policy, as necessary.

VOLUNTEERS

VAE involves more than just music. To keep the Chorus running smoothly, we rely on members to volunteer extra time whenever possible. The majority of jobs require **relatively little time** individually, but as a whole, they are vitally important to the efficient operation of VAE. Volunteer

opportunities include but are not limited too: riser setup/tear down for concerts and dress rehearsals, uniform hemming and light alterations, help with the silent auction, participation and/or running of various fundraising efforts. Please consider helping with one or more of these support team efforts. You can earn points towards attendance for participating! Of course, volunteers not singing with the chorus are always welcome!

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

Dues for 2023-2024 season: The annual dues for VAE membership is \$260 for returning members and \$235 for new members. As a volunteer membership organization, we raise all of our own funds from membership dues, advertising, ticket sales, etc. to pay for rehearsal rental space, performance space, accompanists, additional instrumentalists and all operational expenses. Each singer will purchase their music. Average cost is \$25.00 or less per concert. (Will vary depending on how much music is being used for each concert.)

Music Binders: A plain black 3-ring binder is to be used for all performances. You may purchase the binder on your own or you may purchase a binder specifically designed for choral music through VAE. Orders are taken for this folder in the Fall and again in January. Click on this link to view the folder:

<https://www.musicfolder.com/music-folders/choir-ringbinder-with-two-expanding-pockets>

Uniform: VAE has instituted a uniform requirement (see “Performance Attire” below.) You are expected to purchase your uniform.

Financial assistance is available for those who may need it. Please speak to a VAE Officer or Michael should you need to avail yourself of such assistance. These conversations will be kept in the strictest confidence.

FUNDRAISING

Fairfax Choral Society is a non-profit organization and fundraising is an essential part of the success and continued operation of the organization. There will be several fundraising events throughout the season to raise funds for general operations and targeted accounts. All participants of Vocal Arts Ensemble are encouraged to actively participate in fundraising activities.

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

Each singer will be required to purchase a uniform. If any singer has financial concerns around the ability to purchase a uniform, please contact Michael Ehrlich, and arrangements will be made.

Tenor/Bass: Top - Black tunic top from Dance Sophisticates. Bottom - Black dress slacks with straight front (no pleats). Black dress shoes with black socks. Unacceptable attire includes: a t-shirt worn underneath your dress shirt that is white or any color other than black; jeans; chinos; moccasins; slip-on shoes; flip-flops; sneakers.

Soprano/Alto: Top - Black velvet top from Dance Sophisticates. Bottom - Choice between black velvet skirt or black velvet palazzo pants from Dance Sophisticates (see photos below). Pants will be

in velvet, not the material shown). You may purchase both if desired. Simple, solid black shoes, either flats or short heels (no more than 2"). Black socks or stockings.



If you would like a gender neutral option, please email Michael at vaedirector@fairfaxchoralsociety.org

Tenor/Bass and gender neutral concert attire:



Astor Jacket



Other guidelines for all singers:

No bracelets that jingle, jangle, or make noise.

Tasteful jewelry may be worn.

No sneakers, or boots.

No strong perfumes or colognes (but please use deodorant 😊)

Long hair, regardless of gender, should be up in a ponytail or pushed back behind the shoulders.

COVID POLICIES

COVID Vaccination: Fairfax Choral Society's policy is based on Fairfax County and CDC COVID guidelines for the general public. However, we also recognize that singing is a high risk COVID transmission activity.

Adult singers will show proof of completing a COVID vaccination program, plus proof of at least one booster shot before being allowed to join a chorus. Singers are strongly encouraged to stay up to date on all recommended boosters. Returning members do not need to show their vaccination card again.

Masks: VAE's mask policy follows Fairfax County Department of Health guidance. When the Fairfax County Community COVID level is **Red and/or an FCS concert or rehearsal venue requires masking: Masks will be required.** When the Fairfax County Community COVID level is **Green or Yellow: Masks will be optional.**

A singer may wear a mask anytime during rehearsal or a concert (plain black is required for concert performance)

If a singer contracts COVID they must notify the choir President AND their section leader(s) as soon as possible, and follow CDC quarantine guidelines before returning to FCS.

FCS reserves the right to modify its COVID policy at any time to adapt to any change in circumstance.

VAE Board:

- Michael Ehrlich - Director (vaedirector@fairfaxchoralsociety.org)
- Joanna LaMonda - President (vaechoruspresident@fairfaxchoralsociety.org)
- Lonnie Bickel (Lonaldt@gmail.com)
- Ted Donat (tdonat@gmail.com)
- Emma Jennings (ejennings88@gmail.com)
- Donna Konigsberg (dkk0407@gmail.com)
- Kitty Moomjian (kmoomjian31@gmail.com)
- Jane Rooney (jane.e.rooney@gmail.com)
- Melissa Torres (melbelt128@gmail.com)