

Freedom Choir

CODE OF CONDUCT

Revision 1 January 2024

INTRODUCTION

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This document is crucial to our success, and is updated frequently, as we continue to learn what it takes to build and to maintain a viable organization. It is crucial that you understand it well, and know the most recent version. When it you sign it, you will be attesting that you have read this most recent version.

Our goal in Freedom Choir is to have a performing “pops” ensemble that is excellent in its musical performance, in its management, and in fostering and protecting the sort of interpersonal relationships required to make it all function well. Obviously, we want it to be enjoyable, but we recognize that there’s a large difference in what people of various personalities might enjoy. Sadly, then, we can’t please everybody at once. We understand that the policies that make us very attractive to one singer may be unattractive to a singer of another disposition. Therefore, the best we can do is to lay out what we think are the must-have *best practices* in advance, and ask for good-faith dealing from those who join.

What we’ve opted for is generally a hard-working, high-standards group, hoping to serve those in the community who would enjoy that sort of thing. We recognize that this may be disappointing to some who like the idea of joining a choir, yet do not find themselves attracted to all the ways we do things in Freedom Choir, or to the work load. And perhaps some of them would better enjoy participating in our upcoming once-a month public Singalong Party (in planning now), which is a casual, no-commitment event for those who want to have some easy musical fun.

We publish this Code of Conduct for these three purposes: 1) as an aid for those who are considering whether or not Freedom Choir is the right community chorus for them, and whether they are the right singers for Freedom Choir; and 2) as a compact between the members; and 3) as a regular reminder of our policies. (We require that every member read it anew and sign it each semester.)

WHAT WE WANT

Freedom Choir is a team that thrives as each part does its own work, and that suffers when it does not. What we want are singers who, regardless of their age (from 16 and up, with the occasional exception possible), are mature in character, in their singing skills, and in their social skills. What works best is the sort who are honest, kind-hearted, diligent, and dependable, and have a strong and obvious disposition of *willingness* to do what needs doing to make Freedom Choir succeed. We are surely in need of good singers, but we have learned that these other traits are just as important to our long-term success as are the singing skills.

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1. I understand that it is the aim of Freedom Choir to sing at or above the level of a typical college choir, where each member is responsible for the quality of every sound he or she puts out into the room.
2. By joining, I give the Director my permission to coach or correct my singing individually (if necessary to meet the standards of the choir).
3. I will be responsible for learning my part to the songs we sing, making use of the sheet music and rehearsal aids that are provided, and will do so as soon as possible after the music is issued, but *no later than four weeks afterward*.
4. I understand that teaching notes in rehearsal wears on the more advanced musicians in the group, and that any rehearsal time spent helping me to catch up is taxing to the whole organization.

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5. I understand that absences are very costly—and not just to the absent ones, but that the whole choir suffers as a result. I am committing to be regularly present, keeping absences to a bare minimum, and informing the Director or his designee in advance (where possible) when I will be absent.
6. I understand that should I miss a rehearsal, it is up to me to find out what I missed from someone reliable in my section.
7. I understand that rehearsals will start and end promptly out of respect for the team. I will be punctual, as tardiness can be highly counterproductive, disruptive, discouraging, and socially insulting.
8. At the appointed starting time for rehearsal, I will:
 - a. Be already in my seat, completely ready to go, having arrived early enough to have my head in the game, and to make it obvious to all that I'm ready. (You should know that most of us visit enthusiastically with others before rehearsal and during breaks.)
 - b. Gently help my neighbor, if necessary, to get his or her head in the game.
 - c. Be silent and attentive to the Director, upon being called to order, such that it is obvious to the Director that I'm ready to go.
 - d. Have all my sheet music at hand and ready to go.
 - e. Have at least two writing utensils in good working order.
 - f. Be ready to work hard for the duration of the rehearsal.
9. While at the rehearsal location, I will abide by any house rules and any other rules published by the Director.
10. When the Director asks for order, I will immediately come to order, silent and still, even if in mid-sentence. I will immediately look at the Director so that it is obvious to him that I'm ready to go.
11. If my neighbor is out of order, I will immediately remind him or her to come to order. I will do this by hand signals if possible, and will avoid doing it by conversation.
12. I understand that if I am a member of this chorus, I am committed to good communication, starting with submitting a valid email address upon signing up—and checking it twice a day during the semester. This applies to teens and adults, with every member being required to have his or her own personal email address, so that there's no "middle man" required in the communications process. Non-member parents are welcome to be included in the email distribution, as well, but we can't afford to have teens cut off from communications because their parents aren't diligent at it.
13. I will promptly respond to all emails with at least the phrase, "Got it." This is the minimal courteous response---unless the email calls for a more detailed response, in which case, responding with "Got it" shows that you didn't really read it very well!
14. I recognize that minors in the choir are held to the same exact standard as adult members.
15. While at the rehearsal and performance venues, I will strive to behave congenially and honorably toward all members, and in all matters, just as I would expect to be treated this way myself.
16. I will strive to protect the atmosphere of the rehearsals and other gatherings, refraining from grouchy, negative, harshly sarcastic (as opposed to humorously sarcastic—for which there is a bit of room from time to time), undermining, or overreaching words or actions.
17. I will help the Director (and my section leader, if there is one) be aware of members who are habitually not matching pitches well by telling them discretely during breaks, or before or after rehearsal. If it's pretty bad, I might ask in the rehearsal whether the Director could isolate the section to check the notes. (But please do this only for your own section, and refrain from drawing attention publicly to the performance of other sections—not that you wouldn't be right, but that it's better if the criticism comes from their own section, or from the Director.)
18. I will refrain from discussing the particulars of politics and religion while at *Sing Montana!* functions, not because such things are patently bad, but because it often ends poorly, and because it's not what *Sing Montana!* is here for, anyway. I will also use good judgment when it comes to the wearing of clothes that bear political/religious messages.
19. I understand that for Freedom Choir to thrive, it is necessary for the members to get along well with one another. I will refrain from any activity as might reasonably cause others to think that I am, or might be, engaging in sexual harassment, or any manner of predatory practices, including, but not limited to "grooming".

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20. I understand that if my behaviors should reasonably give the impression that I have joined Freedom Choir so as to recruit for other organizations, I will be asked to leave.
21. Our rehearsals are usually high in humor, by design of the Director himself, and also with the help of the occasional quip from the members. The occasional one-liner quip is generally quite welcomed---especially if it's a good one :) ---and the Director may even ask that it be repeated, because he enjoys a good one as much as anybody else---provided it seems to him a fine time to pause for a few seconds. But there is a right time and place for everything, and the Director will be the sole judge on whether there's time for it in any given instance. If you note that the Director is shutting down such discussion, or not encouraging it to go on, it's best to keep the quips to yourself until some better time. (Laughing at the Director's jokes, as edifying as it is, is always optional.) And yes, this is the longest item in this Code, showing the great importance with which humor and good order are viewed.
22. I agree that the Director has the final word in all chorus decisions, including, but not limited to, membership, conflict resolution, repertoire, musical interpretation, performance attire, who will sing what, and who will have any responsibilities beyond singing---such as section leaders, logistics managers, etc. I understand that I may freely discuss any concerns or ideas with the Director, but will do so privately, unless in a public session designated for such discussion.
23. I understand that the stylistic choice of the Director is that we will generally go on the minimal side regarding vibrato. I agree to go along with this in good faith, and I expect it to be mentioned if my vibrato is considered excessive.
24. I understand that one of the Director's jobs is to correct music errors that occur in the ensemble, and that this is usually done in general terms, in hopes that it will suffice without having to single out individuals. I promise, therefore, not to take every correction as if it were about me, but also to give good-faith consideration to the possibility that the error might have been mine.
25. I understand that since most people are horrified at the thought of auditioning, no audition is required for Freedom Choir, and that the Director also generally avoids singling out members to have them sing their parts, when in search of persistent errors. In return for this kind consideration, however, I recognize that I have some duty to be self-aware with regard to my singing, and that if it's in doubt, I should get some help from a friend, a section leader, or the Director.
26. I agree to participate enthusiastically in fundraising, publicity, and recruitment efforts---to the best of my ability, however great or small that may be.
27. I agree to treat the audience like royalty, presenting our performances as an enthusiastic service to the public, as my personal contribution to the continuance of the rich heritage of choral music and stagecraft alike.
28. We are all human and may fall short of these expectations from time to time. I understand that apologies to the choir are acceptable and welcome during appropriate times (breaks and after rehearsal) and go a long way in keeping good faith with one another, and keeping these best practices always in view.
29. I understand that in order to protect the mission and goals of Freedom Choir and *Sing Montana!*, those who habitually fall short of abiding by this Code of Conduct (whether in regard to behaviors or to the quality of singing) may be asked to leave the choir, at the sole discretion of the Director.

I certify that I have read every word of this current version of the Code of Conduct, and I give my word that it is my sincere intention to abide by it in good faith.

Member name

Member Signature

Date

Parent Signature (if member is a minor)