

**ZAMIR CHORALE OF BOSTON**  
**CHORUS MEMBERS' HANDBOOK**  
**2013-14 Edition**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Zamir Chorale of Boston is a non-profit mixed chorus whose mission is to be the premier performer of Jewish choral music. The Zamir Chorale of Boston:

- Enhances appreciation of Jewish culture and strengthens Jewish identity by heightening awareness of the variety and quality of Jewish music.
- Serves as a world-wide resource for the dissemination of Jewish choral music through concerts, recordings and publications, and by commissioning and premiering new works.
- Provides an opportunity for singers to share their passion for Jewish choral music in an environment that does not conflict with traditional Jewish observance.

**THE CHORAL PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

I understand the importance of my role in the Chorale. I am not just "another singer." I understand that the success of the Chorale depends on the talent and dedication of each and every one of its members.

I take seriously my professional commitment as a performer.

I arrive on time to rehearsals and concerts.

I do not leave in the middle of rehearsal except in the case of an emergency.

I arrive at rehearsal with all required sheet music.

I have a pencil with me and mark all instructions in my score.

During rehearsal I make every effort to maintain focus on the music and on the instructions that are being given.

I understand that a transcendent performance involves more than just "knowing the notes." I am committed to an interpretation that conveys the essence of the music at hand. I am committed to ensuring that I am on top of all the details involved in that interpretation.

**I. ACTIVITIES OF THE CHORALE**

The objectives of the Zamir Chorale of Boston will be attained through the following activities:

**A. Concerts**

The Chorale will perform as frequently as possible, given the constraints of the availability of its singers. Ten to fifteen concerts a year (excluding tours and chamber

concerts) is a general guideline. Concerts fall into the following general categories:

**Major Concerts.** The Chorale performs one or two major concerts each season. These self-produced concerts take place at a major performance center or synagogue in the greater Boston area. The chorus will attempt as much as possible to present to the audience either previously -unheard repertoire or familiar repertoire in new settings or juxtapositions. To enable the performance of this repertoire, the Chorale may be joined by professional instrumentalists and/or vocal soloists.

**Hired Performances.** The Chorale will prepare programs of Jewish music for presentation in performances at various synagogues, centers, schools, etc. All such performances shall be rendered in return for an appropriate fee. Such engagements shall be actively sought out by the management. However, these performances should not create undue hardship (in either quantity or location) for the volunteer performers.

**"Benefit" Performances.** The Chorale shall perform, where appropriate and feasible, concerts that benefit the community in some fashion. Such performances may include free or low-price concerts for children or the elderly.

**Tours.** When logistically and financially possible, the Chorale will undertake concert tours, either local, national or international.

## **B. Recordings**

The Chorale will produce audio and video recordings of repertoire for sale to the public.

## **C. Commissioning**

The Chorale will, from time to time, sponsor programs which result in the creation of new repertoire based on Jewish cultural traditions.

## **D. Publications**

The Chorale will endeavor to distribute its unique repertoire as well as information about Jewish Music to the public through the production and dissemination of material in both print and electronic formats. Such endeavors may include the publication of a newsletter, the publication of sheet music, and the maintenance of a web page.

## **II. PREREQUISITES FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in the Zamir Chorale of Boston is open, by audition only, to qualified singers who have an interest in Jewish and Israeli music. Young men and women under the age of eighteen will be admitted only under exceptional circumstances.

Membership is conferred for an entire season (September through June). Each member, once accepted, is expected to abide by the regulations of the chorus. Those who find the Chorale incompatible with their expectations or schedules should withdraw by the end of September.

Any member who is not meeting the standards of the Chorale will be given a written warning, detailing the areas of deficiency and setting goals for improvement. The musical staff will work with the member to help meet these goals. However, if, after the period set in the letter (usually about six months), sufficient improvement has not been made, the individual's membership in the Chorale will be revoked. Under

unusual circumstances, membership may be terminated immediately at any time by the Artistic Director.

New members are evaluated at the end of each of their first two semesters with the Chorale. At the end of the season the musical staff will make a determination as to which of the new members will be invited to continue with the Chorale.

All members will undergo periodic evaluation by the musical staff.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Zamir Chorale of Boston is a non-discriminatory organization, and welcomes singers of all faiths. We believe that music should unite people and bring about "*Tikkun Olam*" (healing the world); therefore membership in the Chorale is open to qualified singers without regard to religion, creed, race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. If you feel that you or someone else has been discriminated against in violation of this policy, please discuss it with the president, General Manager, Artistic Director, or Chair of the Board.

## **III. OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS**

### **A. Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are held generally on Tuesday evenings from September through June in the auditorium at the Hebrew College, 160 Herrick Road, Newton Centre.

Occasionally rehearsals are held on other days of the week and at other locations. Members should check the schedule of rehearsals carefully at the very beginning of the season to avoid potential conflicts.

Rehearsals begin promptly at 7:15 p.m. and generally end by 10:00. Members should arrive at 7:00 and be in place, ready to sing, at 7:15. A break of approximately 15 minutes is provided.

If bad weather forces cancellation of a rehearsal, the announcement will be made via email and phone tree. The rehearsal will then be rescheduled at a time that is convenient to a majority of the members.

Members are expected to devote their full attention during rehearsals to the music at hand, making all appropriate markings as directed by the conductor. Members are expected to bring all their music and a pencil to every rehearsal. The use of a small recording device can facilitate reviewing repertoire between rehearsals.

Non-members are generally welcome at rehearsals. However, they will be asked to sit quietly in the back of the hall.

### **B. Attendance Policy**

All members are expected to attend all rehearsals. Upon arrival each member must check in with his/her section leader or other person responsible for taking attendance.

Members who are somewhat ill, able to get out and around but still unable to sing, should plan to attend rehearsal as active observers. After informing their section leader they should sit in the back of the hall and follow the rehearsal at an appropriate distance from the healthy singers.

If unable to attend a rehearsal due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, members must notify their section leaders as soon as possible prior to the rehearsal.

and explain the absence.

Members who miss a rehearsal are nonetheless responsible for the material covered. Immediately after rehearsal members are expected to contact their section leaders again to find out what was learned in rehearsal, what markings were given and what announcements were made. Even so, home study is no substitute for the sense of ensemble that is generated in the rehearsal.

Lateness or early departure will be considered the equivalent of one-half of one absence. As when they are absent, members who arrive late or leave early are expected to inform their section leader, and find out what was learned in rehearsal, what markings were given and what announcements were made.

It is extremely disruptive when members leave rehearsal even for a short period of time. We ask that members remain in rehearsal except for unforeseen emergencies.

Warm-ups are a vital part of rehearsal. They prepare the voice and the intellect and imbue a sense of ensemble musicianship. Therefore, arrival after warm-ups have begun constitutes a late arrival to the rehearsal.

Certain rehearsals are designated as "dress rehearsal" or "tech rehearsal." Any member who misses such a rehearsal is considered unprepared for and cannot sing the subsequent concert. Only in rare cases of extenuating circumstance will the staff consider making an exception to this policy. Decisions will be made based on the singer's overall attendance and preparedness and the best interest of the chorus.

Anyone with a record of excessive absence or lateness is not adequately prepared to sing in concerts. Any singer with more than one absence in five consecutive rehearsals must demonstrate to the musical staff sufficient preparedness to perform. Recurring patterns of lateness or absence may be dismissed from the Chorale.

### **Withdrawal from the Chorale**

Preparation for a polished sound at concerts is based on a stable roster of singers who have been working together on a regular schedule of rehearsals. Therefore, members are expected to stay with the Chorale for an entire season.

However, occasionally outside crises can make it impossible for a member to devote sufficient time to the chorale.

Any member who withdraws from the Chorale in the middle of a season, or who informs the Artistic Director prior to the first rehearsal of the season that he/she will be unable to perform with the Chorale that season but wishes to return the following year, will be eligible to rejoin the Chorale without re-auditioning at the start of the following season. Members who have been absent for more than one season must re-audition to be admitted back into the Chorale.

Members who have temporarily withdrawn from the Chorale are encouraged to attend as many rehearsals as possible as observers (sitting in the back), so that upon their return to the Chorale they will be familiar with carry-over repertoire.

Membership in the Chorale will not be reinstated in the middle of a season, except under unusual circumstances.

Members who withdraw from the Chorale after receiving a written warning must re-audition in order to rejoin the Chorale.

## **Buddies**

Section leaders will pair each new member with a “buddy” soon after the start of the season. Buddies will meet with new members outside of rehearsal to pass on markings of carryover repertoire, answer any questions the new member may have, and spend a little time getting acquainted. In addition, buddies will check in with new members during breaks in rehearsal to help them integrate socially in the chorus.

## **C. Concerts**

Preparation for concerts requires some learning and memorization work outside of rehearsal. It is expected that each member will be adequately prepared for every concert. A singer who is not prepared for a concert may be asked not to sing that concert, regardless of his/her attendance record.

While on stage, members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Correct concert attire must be worn. Deportment should be in accordance with directions given by the conductor and the stage manager.

All members are expected to perform in all scheduled full-chorus concerts. (However, new members are generally not required to sing in performances in the first month of their first year, so that they have sufficient time to learn repertoire carried over from previous seasons.) If you anticipate a schedule conflict, you must speak to your section leader immediately. The conductor will assume that every member will sing every concert unless he is notified otherwise. Once a member has committed to perform in a concert s/he will honor that commitment. The sound of the chorus is seriously compromised when a member backs out at the last minute.

Anyone considered to be remiss about concert attendance will be dismissed from the chorus.

## **Chamber ensembles**

Those singers interested in extra performances within the context of smaller ensembles should notify the conductor that they wish to be so considered. Admission to chamber ensembles is based on musical abilities and evidence of a willingness to make a further commitment of time for extra rehearsals and concerts.

Occasionally Zamir will book a concert for which it is not practical or desirable for the entire chorus to perform. For example, the presenter may have funds to fly only thirty singers, or the presenter’s stage is large enough for only sixteen singers. In such cases a selection will be made by the musical staff based on the following criteria (not necessarily prioritized).

- Availability for the concerts and rehearsals of the gig in question
- Knowledge of music (including memorization)
- Ability to hold one’s part in mixed ensemble
- Ability to blend and interact well in a small ensemble
- Musicianship: elegant execution of phrasing and all markings
- Stage presence
- Past record of attendance at rehearsals and concerts

## **D. Professionalism**

Although its members do not get paid to perform, Zamir is a professional organization with a reputation for excellence, receiving fees for concert performances. Thus we require a professional attitude on the part of each and every member of the chorus. You must realize that you are an integral part of the organization. Therefore, take your obligations seriously. In advance of each rehearsal review the music that has been taught so far and preview the repertoire to be learned next. If music has to be memorized, take the time to master it. If a concert is approaching, make sure that you are prepared to perform. Not being prepared for a concert may be considered grounds for dismissal.

Active members are involved in a program of self-improvement. They work on sight-singing skills and Hebrew language skills. They study voice with a teacher or coach.

## **E. Financial Obligations**

The Zamir Chorale of Boston runs on a tight budget. Every member of Zamir must meet his/her financial obligations in a timely manner. Scholarships or a schedule of delayed payments are available for those who have a hardship.

### **Music**

Members buy and keep their own music, at prices that are subsidized by the Chorale. The chorus will provide one copy of each score. Lost copies will be replaced at the singer's expense.

Members are required to purchase (on their own) a black loose-leaf notebook or folder in which to hold their music. Zamir recommends this product:  
<http://www.musicfolder.com/english/usd-store/ebf.html>

### **Uniform**

Members are required to obtain the official concert uniform and maintain it in good condition. A one-time partial subsidy will be provided to new members.

The men's uniform is as follows: black tuxedo, formal white shirt, black cummerbund, black "suede" kippah, black shoes and black socks. You will purchase this outfit on your own.

The women's uniforms have been custom designed for the Zamir Chorale, and should be worn with black (formal, but comfortable) shoes. Singers will purchase the uniform through the chorus. When a singer leaves the chorus, her uniform must be returned in good condition. The departing singer will receive a partial refund for the return of the uniform.

### **Travel**

When the chorus performs outside of the Boston area, every attempt will be made to cover the costs of transportation, lodging and meals. However, when this ideal cannot be met, members will be advised of the estimated individual contribution required in order to make the tour possible.

### **Fees**

Chorus members are normally not paid a fee to perform in a concert or recording or broadcast.

### **Additional Obligations**

All members are expected to contribute some time and effort during the year to

assist in the non-musical aspects of the organization. This can include selling concert tickets, soliciting donations, and/or serving on various committees.

#### **IV. OTHER POLICIES**

##### **A. Use of Name and Assets**

The name of Zamir has achieved a reputation, not only in the community but world-wide. Unauthorized use of the name of the choir is expressly forbidden.

No subgroup of the chorus may perform as representative of Zamir before any audience without the express approval of the Artistic Director.

Exploration of concert leads is always encouraged. However no commitment may be made without approval of the Board.

No member is authorized to represent the Chorale in any business transactions, publicity or correspondence without explicit authorization from the Board or General Manager.

The Zamir roster is solely for the non-commercial use of the Chorale's membership. Any other use of the roster or the mailing list must be cleared through the Board.

No member of the chorus may spend money, commit the chorus to any expenditure or borrow any equipment belonging to the Chorale without explicit authorization from the Artistic Director, Chorus President, or Chairman of the Board.

##### **B. Copyright Policy**

The Zamir Chorale of Boston respects the importance of respecting the intellectual property of others.

All performers must own a legitimate copy of the sheet music for all pieces which we perform.

The Zamir Chorale pays performance and mechanical royalties as appropriate. Zamir purchases and/or licenses all computer software that we use. We do not republish nor post on our website or email lists copyrighted material without obtaining the necessary permissions.

##### **C. Religious Policies**

As a chorus, Zamir does not engage in any activities that would violate traditional Jewish law. Among Zamir members are many different interpretations of Jewish observance. We also welcome members of other faiths. In cases where a conflict may arise based on religious practice, members will be excused from the conflict without prejudice.

All food at official Zamir events must be certified kosher. Zamir-affiliated social events in people's homes should provide an appropriate level of kashrut. When Zamir is on tour, the Chorale will provide kosher food to the best of our ability.

Zamir does not schedule any activities that would require a violation of the Shabbat or Festivals.

## **Sefirat Ha-Omer Policy**

Zamir respects the tradition that treats *sefirat ha-omer* (the seven weeks beginning with Passover) as a period of semi-mourning. Therefore, we do not perform in public from Passover until *Lag Ba-omer*, except as noted below. From *Lag Ba-omer* until *Rosh Chodesh Sivan*, we try to avoid concerts and we excuse any performer who observes "second *sefirah*" (the period after *Lag Ba-Omer*). Lectures with musical illustrations are not considered concerts and can be scheduled throughout this period.

Exceptions to the *sefirah* period are:

- *Yom Ha-shoah* (Holocaust memorial day) -- Holocaust commemorative programs only.
- *Yom Ha-atzma'ut* (Israel independence day)
- *Rosh Chodesh Iyar*
- *Lag Ba-Omer*
- *Yom Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem reunification day)
- *Rosh Chodesh Sivan* through *Shavuot*

## **Sheymot Policy**

The holy name of God, the tetragrammaton YHWH (often written out as "Jehovah") was considered so sacred in ancient Israel that it could be pronounced only by one person (the High Priest), in one place (the innermost room of the central Sanctuary in Jerusalem), once a year (Yom Kippur -- the Day of Atonement). Therefore, Jews generally avoid pronouncing that word, substituting, instead, the alternative "Adonay," which means "my Lord." More observant Jews will even avoid pronouncing that word, and will use a euphemism for a euphemism, usually "Hashem" ("the Name") or "Adoshem" (a word which has no meaning, but incorporates elements of both words, "Adonay" and "Hashem"). The word "Adomay" was invented by choral conductors as a substitute which comes closer to the sound of "Adonay."

An additional consideration is the difference between reciting a scriptural verse containing a Name of God and reciting a *berakha* (blessing) out of context, which creates additional difficulties related to the prohibition against reciting a "*berakha levatala*," a "nullified blessing", and against responding "Amen" to such a blessing.

The choice of whether to sing "Adonay" or "Adomay" is usually left to the discretion of the individual singer within Zamir. The exception is in the context of a blessing ("Barukh Atah Adonay"), when we always substitute "Adomay." Other substitutes, such as "Adoshem," disrupt the unity of vowel sounds and are not acceptable.

Similarly, other terms for God (such as "Eyl") may be replaced by those who feel it appropriate, provided that the substitution does not result in a disruption of the choral sound. (For example, the traditional substitution of "Keyl" results in the "K" sound cutting through, which is undesirable. "Heyl" would be a more appropriate alternative.)

## **V. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The staff of the Zamir Chorale comprises both paid and volunteer positions.

### **A. Musical Staff**

#### **Artistic Director**

The Artistic Director is responsible for selection of repertoire and programming for

concerts. He is also responsible for scheduling of rehearsals and auditions and the selection of chorus members, musical staff, and other professional musicians. The Artistic Director normally also conducts all rehearsals and concerts.

### **Accompanist**

The Artistic Director shall hire an accompanist and, at his discretion, other professional musicians including, but not limited to, instrumentalists, solo singers, and guest conductors.

### **Assistant Conductors**

Assistant Conductors will be appointed by and report to the Artistic Director. They will be prepared to take over temporarily the Artistic Director's duties in the event that the Artistic Director is indisposed or unavailable. They will also assure that each singer in the chorus is adequately prepared to sing in every concert for which he/she is responsible. To that end the Assistant Conductors will work closely with the section leaders, and will from time to time schedule special coaching sessions. Assistant Conductors are expected to be present at all rehearsals and concerts. They will meet with the conductor and the section leaders approximately once a month to discuss progress and problems.

### **Section Leaders**

The Artistic Director selects one member of each section (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) to serve as section leader. Section leaders are responsible for both administrative and musical tasks within their section, including but not limited to taking attendance at rehearsals, creating personnel a list for each concert, leading sectional rehearsals, and sitting in on auditions for new singers or re-auditions of returning singers. They meet with the conductor and his assistant(s) approximately once a month to discuss progress and problems.

Section Leaders work to inculcate a positive attitude on the part of each singer. They help their section achieve a good unified sound, in which each singer can sing his/her part confidently and accurately, and which is characterized by an appropriately blended tone. They also assist all singers in their sections to feel comfortable socially within the organization. They are aware of each singer's abilities, and keep track of how well he/she is fulfilling his/her musical responsibilities to the chorus, keeping the Artistic Director and his assistant(s) informed of any problems that might arise. They take attendance, noting also late arrivals and early departures. They inform the conductor which singers are to perform in each scheduled concert. They make seating charts for each section. They make an effort to have every singer in the proper seat at the time rehearsal is to begin and after the break. They contact members who have been absent.

## **B. Non-Musical Staff**

### **Managing Director**

The Managing Director reports to the board of directors and is responsible for the overall direction and management of all aspects of the administration of the chorus. This includes management of fundraising efforts, marketing, community relations, finances, board of directors, and staffing.

### **Concert Manager**

The Concert Manager is responsible for solicitation of new concerts, and coordination

of concerts with contracted presenters.

### **Merchandise Manager**

The Merchandise Manager is responsible for maintaining inventory and aggressively promoting sales of all Zamir merchandise. The Merchandise Manager also takes and fills orders for direct sales.

### **Stage Manager**

The Stage Manager is responsible for the proper physical set-up at all rehearsals and concerts. Before each rehearsal he ensures that the chairs, piano, podium, blackboard, music stand, etc. are arranged according to the artistic director's specifications. Also, in consultation with the general manager and artistic director, he works with concert hall personnel to ensure that the proper facilities and equipment are provided for each performance. He is also responsible for the proper and safe storage and maintenance of all chorus equipment.

### **Librarian**

The Librarian maintains the chorus library, seeing that all music is ordered in a timely manner and filed properly. He also distributes copies of music to chorus members as requested by the Artistic Director. The librarian is appointed by the Artistic Director and the Chorus President.

## **B. Chorus Officers**

The members of the Chorale choose officers who administer certain chorale activities. The president and vice-president are elected by direct popular vote. All other officers of the Chorale membership are appointed by the president. Each officer, whether elected or appointed, serves a one-year term from July 1 to June 30. For details on the election or removal of chorus officers, please read the chorus bylaws.

### **President**

The President acts as the official representative of the membership to the staff and board. S/he sits as an ex-officio voting member of the Board of Directors. S/he is responsible for the internal operations of the chorus membership, including various logistical and social activities. S/he provides leadership to the Chorale, make announcements at rehearsals, and preside at chorus elections. S/he represents the interests of the membership at staff and board meetings, and in this capacity canvasses the membership as needed to ascertain their opinions.

### **Vice President**

The Vice President assists the president in the execution of the duties outlined above. S/he also sits as an ex-officio voting member of the Board of Directors. In the event of a vacancy in the office of president, the vice president assumes the position of president.

### **Ad Hoc**

The chorus president may, from time to time, appoint ad hoc committees and committee chairpersons to oversee special projects. These may include but are not limited to chorus uniforms, tour planning, retreats, and so on.

### **C. Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the Chorale's not-for-profit corporation. It is responsible for business operations and general management, including the appointment of the General Manager and Artistic Director, the approval of the annual budget, and the development of various fundraising programs to support that budget. It also functions as an important resource for the chorus, utilizing community networking and acting as a liaison between the chorus and the community.

The Board of Directors comprises a diverse membership representing various facets of the Jewish and artistic/cultural communities. Board members share a commitment to the goals of the Zamir Chorale and work towards the effective implementation of those goals. In addition to the Board of Directors, the Chorale may maintain advisory and honorary boards.