

SMS Standard Concert Arrangements and Etiquette

1. Rehearsals. SMS carries out two chorus rehearsals in the Cathedral, before any concert:

a. Friday before the Concert (1930- 2100).

i. Seating Plan.

(1) At the rehearsal in SWGS immediately after half term, you will be asked to sit in the concert seating configuration, which will be indicated by voice-part colour coded cards on the appropriate seats, and you will be invited to write your name, in pencil, on a colour coded chorus seating plan.

(2) Please be very careful, if you enter on the plan the names of any other person in addition to your own, that they are actually planning to sing in the concert, that you have their explicit agreement, and that they know you have put their name down. We will have just enough seats for everyone and it causes unnecessary confusion if, through ignorance, any names end up being entered twice (once by you, and once by the other individual, unaware that their name has already been entered)!

ii. **Penultimate Rehearsal.** The final Friday night's rehearsal is the first time we locate our actual performance seats and (for the Summer concert) rehearse with the orchestra. In all other respects, the rehearsal is very similar to a normal rehearsal at SWGS. Before the start of the rehearsal, therefore, please:

(1) **Tick yourself in on the Rehearsal List**—for fire evacuation purposes.

(2) **Check your name is on the final Seating Plan**, then

(3) **Find your Concert Seat**, picking up a copy of the concert programme on the way.

b. **Saturday of the Concert (1345-1630).** This final rehearsal allows us to sing the works to be performed 'as a piece', with the orchestra, although soloist movements may be rehearsed separately, after the chorus has left.

i. **Tick yourself in on the Rehearsal List**—for fire evacuation purposes.

ii. **Seating Plan.** Please note carefully who you are sitting next to during the concert, and be careful to leave spaces for singers who are absent.

iii. **Stands and Sits.** Please make sure that by the end of the rehearsal, you have marked your music to ensure proper platform discipline during the concert itself, especially as regards standing and sitting.

iv. **Breaks.** There is always a 20 minute break in the middle of the rehearsal; the orchestra is given a hot drink in one of the Transepts, while the chorus has the opportunity to use the Cathedral Refectory. Do keep an eye on the time, however, and return to your seat in good time to restart the rehearsal.

2. The Concert Itself.

a. **Dress.** The dress for all concerts is:

i. Ladies:

(1) Full length black skirt or long black trousers.

(2) White blouse with long sleeves and shirt-style collar.

(3) Black jacket or cardigan.

(4) Black shoes and tights.

(5) No obtrusive jewellery.

b. **Gentlemen:**

(1) Black dinner jacket and trousers.

(2) White shirt.

(3) Black bow tie.

(4) Black shoes.

(5) Black socks.

3. **Bags.** The chorus may take a bag on to the staging, so long as it is:
 - a. Black.
 - b. Small.
 - c. Unobtrusive.
4. **Water Bottles.** The chorus may take water bottles on to the staging, but the contents may only be consumed while seated, during the interval.
5. **Scores.** Your score must be fitted into a black folder for the concert—unless, exceptionally, you are told otherwise, because the score is oversized. Hired copies must be returned to the Librarian by the notified time after the concert. Marks must only be made in hired copies with soft pencils. Those using hired copies are expected to rub out any marks made before returning their copy to the Librarian.
6. **Assembly.**
 - a. **Initial Assembly.** Please gather, ready in all respects to sing, at the Trinity Chapel, behind the High Altar, at 1900.
 - i. You can safely leave coats and hats in the Trinity Chapel during the concert. You are advised not to leave any valuables there; you are recommended to leave any valuables you cannot **unobtrusively** take on stage (eg in a coat, cardigan, trouser pocket or small black handbag), at home or in your locked vehicle.
 - ii. Now is a good time to turn off your mobile phone!
 - b. **Vocal Warm Up.** Our normal practice is to start with a vocal warm up, in the Trinity Chapel. This may be followed by any last minute instructions.
 - c. **Line Up.** Our usual practice is to split the choir in half and approach the staging simultaneously from the North and the South Aisles. At about 1915, we line up in our concert configuration, with our music, any water bottles and (unobtrusive) bags, in the aisles on each side of the Quire, facing inward:
 - i. The **front** 4 rows (i.e. Rows 1-4) line up in the North Chancel Aisle, with Row 1 closest to the Quire and Row 4 closest to the external North Wall of the Cathedral.
 - ii. The **back** 3 rows (i.e. Rows 5-7) line up in the South Chancel Aisle, with Row 5 closest to the Quire and Row 7 closest to the external South Wall of the Cathedral.
7. **Getting on Stage.** Getting 100 people safely and smoothly on and off the staging means that everybody has to take care and be 'switched on'. It normally takes us 5 minutes to all be seated on the staging.
 - a. The plan is for the **front** 4 rows to come on anti-clockwise down the North Aisle, with the **front** row (Row 1) leading. At the same time, the **back** 3 rows to come on clockwise down the South Aisle, with the **back** row (Row 7) leading.
 - b. The Concert Manager will stand by the Spire Crossing and give the signal for the Chorus to process to the staging. We plan to move to the staging at about 1920.
 - c. The Chorus should walk at a steady, dignified, pace. It is a universal fact that the folk at the back of any procession always seem to be trotting to catch up, however reasonable the pace set by the leaders. The watchword is, therefore, 'step short at the front'!
8. **On Stage.**
 - a. **On Arrival.** On arrival at your concert seat on the staging, you should immediately sit down. Remain seated when you applaud the entry of the Leader of the Orchestra. Remain seated to listen to the member of the clergy who introduces the concert and leads everyone in a short dedicatory prayer.
 - b. **First Half of Concert.** Taking your lead from the central, front row singers, stand when the Conductor enters with the soloists, ready to sing. Thereafter, watch the Conductor for signals to stand and sit, in accordance with the prior markings in your score. The agreed markings in your score should be followed, if the Conductor forgets to give stand or sit instructions! Again, taking your lead from the central, front row singers, sit when the Conductor leaves with the soloists at the end of the first half of the concert. You may not consume bottled water during the first half of the concert.

c. **Interval.** There is usually a 20 minute interval in the middle of our concerts—you will be told, and the programme will confirm, if there are other arrangements. It is the custom in SMS to remain seated quietly throughout the interval and not to leave the stage. Please don't draw attention to yourself by waving at, or otherwise conspicuously engaging with, members of the audience. You may consume bottled water during the interval.

d. **Second Half of Concert.** Taking your lead from the central, front row singers, stand when the Conductor re-enters with the soloists, ready to sing. You may not consume bottled water during the second half of the concert.

e. **End of Concert.** It is the custom of the SMS to applaud only when seated.

i. **Before 'Curtain Calls'.** Remain standing at the end of the concert until the Conductor leaves with the soloists - take your lead to sit from the central, front row singers.

ii. **'Curtain Calls'.** Remain seated when the Conductor and soloists return to take 'curtain calls'. Watch the Conductor for signals to stand to accept applause. Take your lead from the central, front row singers to sit if the Conductor leaves with the soloists during or at the end of the 'curtain calls'.

iii. **After 'Curtain Calls'.** Remain seated when you applaud the Leader of the Orchestra, who will leave when it is clear that the Conductor will not be taking any further 'curtain calls'.

9. Getting off Stage.

a. **When.** Taking our lead from the central, front row singers, the Chorus starts to leave the stage **as soon as** the Leader of the Orchestra has left. Be aware that some members of the Chorus leave the staging early, to hold retiring collection baskets at the Cathedral exit doors – don't switch off and blindly follow them off stage, or you will cause much confusion!

b. **How.** Remain seated until it is your row's turn to move. Very simply, the **same people who led on will lead off**, in the **same** order and in the **same** direction; **if you followed someone on, you follow them off**. Thus, if you came on from the South Aisle, in a clockwise direction, you go off after the concert into the North Aisle, **in the same clockwise direction**.

i. Rows 1-4 lead off (with the front row, Row 1, leading, as before) towards the **South** Aisle.

ii. Rows 5-7 lead off (with back row, Row 7, leading, as before) towards the **North** Aisle.

Please clear the staging as swiftly as possible and resist any urge to 'gaggle' by the steps leading off the staging. As soon as we clear the staging, it is dismantled – and time is money! **You are not 'off-stage' until you are level with the Font**—even then make sure the 30-40 people behind you can get past!

10. Health & Safety.

a. **Health.** If you feel unwell during the concert, let your neighbour know.

i. **Serious Distress.** If you are seriously unwell, your neighbours will, of course, help you. If you have to leave the staging, you will be cared for by the Concert Stewards and the Cathedral Staff.

ii. **Mild Discomfort.** If you think your discomfort will pass with rest, then simply sit down until you feel better, if you can.

b. **Safety.** Please familiarise yourself with the SMS venue evacuation procedures used at the Cathedral. In brief, they are as follows:

i. Follow the instructions of the Concert Stewards at all times.

ii. Clear the staging as swiftly as possible.

iii. Leave the Cathedral by the nearest exit, as directed. Don't attempt to collect anything left in the Trinity Chapel.

iv. Assemble by Voice Part on the grass between the West Door and the West Walk, to answer to a roll call.