

ENSEMBLE HANDBOOK:

Academic Voices



ABOUT ACADEMIC VOICES

Ensemble Setup:

Academic Voices music is flexible and suitable for any number of voices of any type, and includes soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Usually music will be in three or more parts, and moving between parts is encouraged. Academic Voices is an open access choir, and no audition is required.

Skill Set:

Typically, singers in Academic Voices are keen singers, with some experience of music reading and singing in a group.

Membership Commitment:

Academic Voices members are expected to commit to all rehearsal and performances in the period of time that they are a member, to arrive punctually and prepared for the rehearsal with their sheet music. Where attendance drops below acceptable levels (normally 90%) members may be asked to leave Academic Voices, and membership fees will not be refunded. We strongly encourage members to join for the whole academic year, or at least for a term. Music at Reading will issue the schedule of rehearsals and performances for all Music at Reading Ensembles before the start of the academic year in order that members can plan ahead to accommodate their membership commitments with other activities.

Normally, Academic Voices rehearse in L29 on Thursday evenings in term time, 18.30 – 20.30. Members should arrive punctually. Additional rehearsals will be held on performances dates, to allow for sound check and dress rehearsal at the venue.

Leadership:

Members of Academic Voices are encouraged to develop a reflective attitude towards their singing in order to understand their contribution to the ensemble. Throughout rehearsals and after performances, the Director will encourage members to reflect on their progress and their contribution to the group. Singers will be given opportunities to be section leaders, and may also have solo opportunities depending on repertoire.

Musical Leaders:

In the Spring term, Music at Reading invites members to apply for the Musical Leaders scheme. This is an enrichment programme for advanced performers keen to develop their skills in solo and ensemble performance, and ensemble directing. Musical Leaders are expected to be regular performing members of Music at Reading ensembles. They may choose to take additional leadership roles in their ensemble, such as sectional leader, soloist, and assistant conductor. In Academic Voices, this could include warming up the ensemble, leading musicianship work, running sectional rehearsals, and directing the choir.

Musical leaders will model appropriate behaviours in terms of punctuality, attendance, self-organisation and personal preparation in rehearsals and performance. Being a Musical Leader can contribute towards the University RED awards.

Musicianship:

In rehearsals, musicianship training focuses on developing and refining your voice. The ensemble director will determine musicianship content related to the repertoire played, the broad outline is as follows:

Developing and Refining your Voice	Developing and refining your voice through technical exercises and physical work focused on breathing and posture to develop vocal strength and a range of different vocal tone colours. Developing pitch and tonality awareness through singing with solfa, focusing on effective intonation Understanding how to modify individual vocal sound within the choral sound for effective communication with the audience
Choral co-ordination	Refining your understanding of rhythm notation with a focus on delivering rhythmic feel in the music you're learning to sing Building two and three part hearing through group rhythm, pitch and harmony exercises and games so the individual singer may learn to work in the choral team
Repertoire	Exploring the idiosyncratic stylistic features of the choral repertoire that Academic Voices sing. Learning to sing choral repertoire by heart

PERFORMANCE DRESS CODE:

Academic Voices members should wear the following for performances, unless stated otherwise. The overall performance look for Music at Reading ensembles is black with red accents. Specific instructions for events will be included in each Performer Briefing.

Formal:

- Plain black shirt or dress; no logos or patterns. Dependent on the event, glitter or sequined dresses may be appropriate.
- All black lower half, including black socks or tights, and shoes (without patterns or logos). Please ensure that skirts are of an appropriate length when seated.

Informal:

- Music at Reading t-shirt, available to purchase from Music at Reading.
- All black lower half, including black socks or tights, and shoes (without patterns or logos), unless specified by Music at Reading.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION:

Email:

Important information will be emailed out to all ensemble members. It is your responsibility to ensure that your email address is up to date, and to let us know of any changes through the website.

Social Media:

Last minute information will be released on Facebook and Twitter; follow us and turn on notifications to stay up to date.

Go to the website for information about:

Events:

Each event throughout the year is listed, with the ability to search by key words and dates, download directly into your calendar, and display as a list or in calendar format.

Blog:

Follow our blog for behind the scenes peek at Music at Reading. Throughout the year we'll have guest blogs from our members and Musical Leaders, plus tips and advice to combat auditions, performance anxiety, and so much more.

Gallery:

Find professional photographs from our recent events.

Member Zone:

All information specific to membership of Music at Reading ensembles will be uploaded to the Member Zone of our website, found by hovering over the Home button in the menu: <http://blogs.reading.ac.uk/music/member-zone/>

Please use the online links in the member zone to report absences, update your contact information, check *Notices*, and download information, including performer briefings for specific events, rehearsal schedules, and ensemble handbooks.

See the *How To* guides if you are unsure how to use any aspect of the website.

PRACTICE ROOM ACCESS

Music practice rooms are available for all members of the local area, including students, staff, and community members, in Building L29, London Road campus.

- Eight general purpose practice rooms; suitable for up to 5 people; no booking required.
- All practice rooms have upright pianos, music stands, and mirrors
- Two studios for ensemble rehearsal; only bookable by staff and students of the University.
- Both studios have a grand piano (or two), music stands, and a drum kit.

The facility may be used for individual music practice and ensemble rehearsals, but is not available for private tuition or commercial activity.

Opening Hours:

Monday-Friday, 08.30-21.30

Weekends, 08.00-20.00.

University Closure Dates: Closed.

Access and Fees:

Practice Room Access is not included in Music at Reading membership. Access fees can be paid through our online store; these fees subsidise the cost of instrument repair, and upkeep, cleaning, and security of the building. Entry to Building L29 is controlled through your University of Reading campus card, or a guest access card.

SCHEDULE:

Academic Voices rehearsals are usually:

Autumn Term: weekly rehearsals from Thursday 4 October; final rehearsal on Thursday 4 December.

Spring Term: weekly rehearsals from Thursday 16 January; final rehearsal on Thursday 26 March.

Summer Term: weekly rehearsals from Thursday 23 April; plus Saturday 16 May, 10:00-13:00; final rehearsal on Thursday 28 May

Weekly rehearsals take place in Building L29 at the London Road campus of the University.

Doors will open at 18:15; the rehearsal will begin at 18:30, and end at 20:30.

Performances:

A Hollywood Christmas – Reading Minster – Friday 6 December

Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat – Saturday 14 March

Far Horizons – St Luke's Church – Saturday 30 May

All rehearsal and performance dates are available to download directly into your calendar from the Member Zone.

REPERTOIRE:

Repertoire will be drawn from the following:

All I Want for Christmas is You	Mariah Carey, Walter Afanasieff	A Hollywood Christmas
Winter Wonderland	Felix Bernard, arr. Michael Story	A Hollywood Christmas
Rocking Around the Christmas Tree	Ralph Blane, arr. Hugh Martin	A Hollywood Christmas
Carol of the Bells	Mykola Leontovych and Peter J. Wilhousky	A Hollywood Christmas
Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas	Ralph Blane arr. Hugh Martin	A Hollywood Christmas
Sans Day Carol	Pete Churchill	A Hollywood Christmas
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy	Tchaikovsky, arr. Dan Setter	A Hollywood Christmas
Santa Claus is Coming to Town	Frederick Coats and Haven Gillespie	A Hollywood Christmas
Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat	Andrew Lloyd Webber	Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat
No Place Like	Kerry Andrew	Far Horizons
Girl from Aleppo	Cecilia McDowall	Far Horizons
Pokarekare Ana	Traditional Maori	Far Horizons
Come from Away	Irene Sankoff and David Hein, arr. RB	Far Horizons