

ENSEMBLE HANDBOOK:

Chamber Choir



Ensemble Setup:

The choir comprises:

Soprano	First Soprano Second Soprano
Alto	First Alto Second Alto
Tenor	First Tenor Second Tenor
Bass	First Bass Second Bass

Skill Set:

Typically, singers in Chamber Choir are grade 8 or above, or the equivalent, with significant singing experience in choral ensembles, and fluent sight reading skills. Chamber Choir is a solo ensemble, where all singers will have opportunities to perform solos within the ensemble, according to their aspiration and the decision of the director.

Auditions:

As with all Music at Reading ensembles, membership is drawn from students, staff, alumni and community members. All members of Chamber Choir are auditioned at the start of each academic year. Places are awarded on merit initially, and then to students, staff, alumni and community members in that order of preference.

The audition will comprise a performance of one piece of your choice, sight reading and singing in canon, and musicianship tests based on the sight reading.

Auditions are held in the first and second weeks of the Autumn term, and rehearsals begin with the membership of the choir fixed from Week 2, drawing on successful candidates from the audition list. In the case of performers being judged as a borderline candidate after an audition, these candidates will be invited to sit in with Chamber Choir for 2-3 weeks of rehearsals. The Artistic Director and Chamber Choir Director will make a decision, as follows, on the basis of their contribution to the Chamber Choir during their trial.

(a) the performer should remain in Chamber Choir

(b) the performer should be placed on the waiting list for Chamber Choir, and directed to join Academic Voices.

Throughout the year, places are likely to open up in the Chamber Choir. Auditions will only be opened to Waiting List members who attend Academic Voices. Additional performers with suitable credentials, who apply for Chamber Choir after the Autumn term audition period, will be directed to join Academic Voices and added to the waiting list, following the same selection process.

Membership Commitment:

Chamber Choir 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 Chamber Choir, 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, Chamber Choir rehearses in L29 on Thursday evenings in term time, 18.30 - 20.30. Members should arrive by 18.20 to prepare for the rehearsal. Additional rehearsals will be held on performances dates, to allow for sound check and dress rehearsal at the venue.

Leadership:

Members of Chamber Choir are encouraged to develop a reflective attitude towards their playing in order to understand their contribution to the ensemble. Throughout rehearsals and after performances, the Director will encourage members to reflect on the following:

	What do I think of the way Chamber Choir sounds?
	What do I think of the way Chamber Choir looks and acts on stage in performance?
How are we singing as a Chamber Choir?	What do I think of the progress we are making in our musicianship skills?
	What could we do better in rehearsals, and what suggestions can I make to help us achieve this?
	How am I listening to and evaluating the sound we are making?
	What am I doing in rehearsals and performances to be a good team player?
What is my contribution to the Chamber Choir?	How can I be useful to other players in my section and the rest of the choir?
	What do I do to support my colleagues?
	What do I do to support the Director?
	How am I developing as a leader within my section and the choir?
	What is my track record with punctuality and attendance?
What is my commitment to the Chamber Choir?	What have I done to promote the choir among friends and family?
	How many people have I brought to our performances?
	Am I doing enough personal practise between group rehearsals?

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 Chamber Choir, this could include warming up the ensemble, leading technical exercises and musicianship work, running sectional rehearsals, and directing the choir. It may also include singing written and improvised solos, and making arrangements for the choir to perform.

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 refining your voice, choral coordination, and exploring repertoire. The ensemble director will determine musicianship content related to the repertoire played; the broad outline for Chamber Choir is as follows:

Refining your voice	Facilitating you to develop a range of vocal tone colours and effects through technical exercises, and physical work focused on breathing and posture to develop vocal strength and nuance Sight singing all repertoire with solfa, with effective intonation
Choral Coordination	Consolidating harmonic and rhythmic hearing and reading through group rhythm, pitch and harmony exercises and games relating to the choral music sung, including contemporary classical harmonic language
Repertoire	Learning to sing choral repertoire by heart Communicating effectively through confident stage presence the fine detail of the interpretation of each piece of music, including the idiosyncrasies of the historical style and genre.

PERFORMANCE DRESS CODE:

Chamber Choir 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.

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.

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.

SCHEDULE:

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:

University Carol Service – Great Hall – Monday 2 December

A Hollywood Christmas – Reading Minster – Friday 6 December

Brandenburg Festival – London – Friday 20 March

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

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

Community Festival

Chamber Choir members are invited to take part in the Community Festival performance of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat on Saturday 14 March 2020.

Auditions for solo roles will take place on Tuesday 19 and Wednesday 20 November, with soloist rehearsals taking place on Monday evenings throughout the Spring term. There are many solo roles available, including the Narrator, Joseph, Potiphar, and Pharaoh. All casting will be gender-blind.

Participation of the Community Festival is included in your Music at Reading membership. See the Festival Voices handbook for more information about Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.

REPERTOIRE:

Repertoire will be drawn from the following:

Jesus Christ the Apple Tree	Elizabeth Poston	Carol Service
O Radix Jesse	Rihards Dubra	Carol Service
A Nativity	John Tavener	Carol Service
Riu, Riu, Chiu	Traditional Spanish	Carol Service
E la don don	Traditional Spanish	Carol Service
Bogoroditse Devo	Arvo Part	Carol Service
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
Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy	Tchaikovsky, arr. Dan Setter	A Hollywood Christmas
Santa Claus is Coming to Town	Frederick Coots and Haven Gillespie	A Hollywood Christmas
Gloria	Francis Poulenc	Brandenburg Festival
Requiem	Gabriel Faure	Brandenburg Festival
No Place Like	Kerry Andrew	Far Horizons
Stars	Eriks Essenvalds	Far Horizons
Long Road	Eriks Essenvalds	Far Horizons
Pokarekare Ana	Traditional Maori	Far Horizons
Balleilakka	A H Rahman, Arr Ethan Sperry	Far Horizons
Come from Away	Irene Sankoff and David Hein, arr. RB	Far Horizons