



FAQs FOR NEW AND CONTINUING MEMBERS

Updated January 2024

CONFIDENTIAL - FOR MEMBERS ONLY

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1. What is Bytown Voices?

- Bytown Voices is a non-audition (i.e. no tests to prove your vocal competency) community choir
- Made up of more than 80 enthusiastic singers from across the national capital region (ON/QC). The choir is SATB-K: sopranos, altos, tenors, basses and kids.
- We welcome children from ages 9 (grade 4) and up
- The only requisite to join is to have a love of music and singing
- We perform two concerts per year, with additional outreach concerts at seniors' residences and long- term care facilities
- In 2024-5 Bytown Voices celebrates its 25th year of continuous singing.

What do we sing?

Bytown Voices sings a variety of repertoire from various centuries, styles, cultures, and degree of difficulty. As a non-audition and inclusive choir, our membership ranges from people singing in a choir for the first time to experienced musicians. Most importantly, many new members become long-time members dedicated to the community.

Our Director of Music, Joan Fearnley, is an engaging conductor, committed to bringing out the best in each member. Her music choices are thoughtful and varied with something for everyone and she will send you home enriched, energized and humming a tune after rehearsal. Joan is supported by our excellent pianist, Carla Klassen, our assistant conductor/pianist/soprano lead, Devon Wastle-Thivierge, and our children's mentor, Mélanie Hartshorn-Walton, as well as a dedicated volunteer executive board and volunteers from the choir.

Multigenerational choir: What does this mean?

The Bytown Voices is encouraging children from 9 up and their parents to join the choir. We wish to develop a multi- generational membership which will improve the choral health of the choir in the long term. Children sing with the adults as an integral element of the choir. We have developed appropriate protocols to ensure the safety of children who come to regular rehearsals. Six young singers joined the choir for past Fall and Spring seasons.

2. Health and well-being: what do I need to know?

Flu and Covid:

- Masks are not mandatory but do wear one if you wish
- If you have had COVID, we recommend you return to rehearsals after 5 days symptom free
- If you have a cold, you may come to choir with a mask.

Making sense of scents:

As is the case for most choirs, and in consideration of those who are sensitive to perfumes and other scented products (such as aftershaves, [perfumes](#), [colognes](#), lotions, body sprays, hair sprays), you are asked to avoid wearing scents before and during rehearsals and concerts.

3. Is there a website for Bytown Voices?

Yes. We have a web presence at bytownvoices.com where you can find general information about the choir including its origins, past concert programs and photos. On the website we also have a “For Members” password-protected section for members only.

LOGIN: bvmember

PASSWORD: stbasils4

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/BytownVoices>

Instagram: coming soon

And in addition we also make use of ZOOM for executive meetings and for rehearsals during COVID, as well as the Google suite of tools for email, forms, contacts, YouTube etc.

4. Membership fees: what happens to the money?

Membership fees are used to cover the expenses of the choir including:

- fees to the BV musical team: director of music, pianist, children’s section mentor and assistant conductor/soprano lead
- soloist performers for our concerts
- insurance and licensing fees
- rental of practice and performance space
- purchase of music
- piano tuning
- expenses related to our concerts
- you can pay your registration fees online through the website, or send an e-transfer to bytownvoices@gmail.com. or pay by cheque in person at the first rehearsal.

5. Fundraising: will I have to do any fundraising for the choir?

Our primary fundraising is through the selling of tickets to our two concerts each year. We also raise additional funds through sponsorships and “Friends of the Bytown Voices” contributions. These contributions are listed in our program and on the website. We are increasingly looking at additional ways to increase our revenue to provide extra

funds for hiring soloists, extra musicians and purchasing music - all to enhance the choir's performance and bring the joy of singing to our audiences. You will also notice there is an opportunity for choir members and the public to donate to the choir right on the website. We don't have bake sales or craft shows and fundraisers. Fundraising ideas are always welcome.

6. Music: do I get to keep the music that we use each term?

NO. The music for each term, which you receive from the music librarian, is the purchased property of the choir or borrowed from another choir. It is lent to you during each term.

This music can be very expensive to replace, so we ask that you return it in the same condition as when you received it. Please only use pencil if you need to make notes on the music, or if you prefer you may make one copy of the music to mark up keeping the originals in pristine condition and discard at the end of the term. To erase your pencil notes, the best type of eraser is plastic (e.g. Staedler) or hi-polymer (e.g. Pentel) or some similar white plastic eraser.

Copyright: How does copyright affect Bytown Voices?

We buy or borrow most music. We pay a license fee for the right to photocopy music when required. We also pay a performance fee for live performances.

Does Bytown Voices record its concerts?

Yes. Bytown Voices records its concerts. Because we do not purchase electronic distribution rights, our concert CDs and other recording files are not available for public distribution or sale.

In compliance with Canadian copyright legislation and licensing requirements, these recordings are for the archival and educational use of choir members. By listening to how we sound we become an even better choir.

7. Weekly rehearsals: What do I need to know?

Attendance: The Bytown Voices has guidelines on a choir member's attendance at rehearsals. There are a variety of reasons why a member might need to be absent.

Choral singing is a team effort. Missing rehearsals not only affects our own ability to perform but it can also affect the rest of our group. Our Attendance Guidelines try to balance individual needs with the goal of making music we can all be proud of.

Therefore:

- As a member of the choir, you are expected to attend at least two thirds of total rehearsals in a season. In a typical fall season, this represents attending a minimum

of 9 out of 13 rehearsals, and in a typical winter/spring season, 11 out of 16 rehearsals. The number of rehearsals can vary from year to year. This is presented as a guideline

- Every effort should be made to attend the last two Tuesday rehearsals and the dress rehearsal prior to a concert, as important performance information is provided by the conductor
- If you are unable to meet these expectations, please consider withdrawing from choir and signing up for the next season. Please consider offering your help at the upcoming concert. We always need an extra pair of hands.

Should I tell someone if I must miss a rehearsal?

Yes, please advise your Section contact by email if you have to miss a practice.

As of January 2024 the section contacts are:

- Altos: **Bernetta Starkey** (bernettabill@gmail.com)
- Sopranos: **Doina Popescu** (1.doina.popescu@gmail.com)
- Tenors and Basses: **Barry Craven** (bwcraven@gmail.com)
- Kids: **Mélanie Hartshorn-Walton** (lafamillehw@gmail.com)

Rehearsal Report: The Director of Music issues a weekly rehearsal report by email to help you get ready for the upcoming rehearsal. It is also posted on the For Members page on the website. You are encouraged to read it carefully.

How long are the choir rehearsals?

Choir practices take place every Tuesday starting with a warm-up at 7:30 pm. We take a short break at about 8:30 pm and finish at 9:30 pm. The children's section has a slightly different time schedule but joins the adult members during each rehearsal. As we get closer to the date of a concert we may start at 7:00 pm if extra practice time is needed. There is also a full 'dress' rehearsal scheduled one or two days before each concert e.g. Friday or Saturday before a Sunday concert. All sections usually schedule one or two extra practices during the season, as required.

What do I need to bring to rehearsal?

- Music in a binder
- Water
- Soft pencil to mark up the music
- Your name tag (supplied when you join; replacements available from the Membership Coordinator)
- During winter months, inside footwear

Weather: what happens to rehearsals in the case of a storm?

If bad weather prevents a live rehearsal, members will be notified by email around 3:30 pm on the afternoon on the day of the rehearsal.

Rehearsal Recordings:

We audio record each weekly rehearsals and post them on the FOR MEMBERS section of the website within 48 hours of the each rehearsal. These are useful if you must miss a practice, or wish to review the rehearsal.

8. How often do we perform in public?

We perform one concert at the end of each term, in December and in April/May. We also do outreach mini-concerts in local seniors' residences and long-term care facilities, usually a few days after each of our two main concerts.

9. Besides singing what else can I do to help the choir?**General:**

A list of the various volunteer opportunities is available on our website on [the Executive Leadership page](#) or you can ask one of the Executive members or your section contact.

This includes:

- Executive committee (Director of Music, President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Publicity and Marketing, Music Librarian and 2 members at large)
- Outreach Coordinator
- Archives
- Communications
- Section contacts
- Concert Coordinator
- Weekly practice support: sound system, lights, piano, lock-up and checking-for-left-behind items
- Concert Coordinator
- Posters, website, Facebook and Instagram management
- Preparation of practice files to support home practice
- Assistants for Music Librarian, Treasurer, Membership, Communications
- Seeking out concert sponsors and "Friends of Bytown Voices"

Concerts:

- Meeting and greeting of concert attendees
- Catering coordinator, presentation and cleanup for the members' post-concert potluck
- Selling and taking tickets
- Stage preparation including: risers and chairs for performance and chairs and tables for reception
- Welcoming attendees
- Sound recording and photography.

Some of these tasks are handled by our extended BV volunteer contingent including family members, choir friends or former choir members but there are still many opportunities for members to get involved.

How should I dress for the concert?

- White tops (long or $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves) and black bottoms
- Comfortable shoes
- Scarves/ties are supplied at time of concert
- A black binder to hold your music for all public performances
- Please contact your section leader if you require special accommodation
- If wearing a mask, black is best but white and blue are also acceptable.

