



Imperial Choir 2015

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Director of the Imperial Choir

For the last nine years the ladies of the Imperial Choir have heard me drone on about the importance of commitment and responsibility to an organisation like ours. I came across an article on the internet recently which included the membership details for an American choir. All members of this particular choir had to accept these rules before joining, so I thought that I would see how our ladies would shape up. Would they pass the test?

1. You must respect your fellow choir members and treat them with kindness.

Generally we succeed very well here. The ladies are very supportive of each other in times of need and rally round to help in times of trouble. They are also pretty good at celebrating happier events together.

2. Everything that the choir does is a group effort and every member plays an important role within the entire programme.

How very true this is and it is a point that I stress all of the time. If one singer is missing from a choir rehearsal or concert then we all feel her absence, both musically and personally. We are all of equal importance, be we a soloist, rank and file singer or conductor, and successful performances are based on hard work in the rehearsal room.

3. You must conduct yourself with your best manners and make responsible decisions during rehearsals and performances.

I'm sure that we all try to do our level best when in public to uphold the values of the choir and the club. At rehearsals, behind closed doors, then I admit that I have been known to snap and moan at the singers in a rather unmannerly way on occasions, although always with their best interests at heart. What about the singers themselves? I wouldn't dream of commenting on their manners. We all have our moments - enough said!

4. You are allowed 3 absences for any reason from rehearsals.

What a crazy rule! There can be very few conductors who would go along with this. Could you imagine me giving permission for singers to miss choir in order to watch TV or go to Paceville? Generally speaking, our choir members miss very few rehearsals and then absence tends to be for reasons of work, family commitments or illness. The choir is important to us all and we need full rehearsals if we are to progress as a unit.

5. You may be subject to sanctions if you are late to rehearsals and should be in your seat 5 minutes before the start of a rehearsal.

There could be quite a few singers I could name who find timekeeping a bit of a problem. I work to English time (always early) and many of the ladies work to Maltese time. (I don't need to say more than this!) I'd like to say that we're getting better in this respect but there is still room for improvement as rehearsal time is always very limited.

6. You must keep your music in a folder and bring a pencil to each rehearsal.

Bravo ladies! We are pretty good at organising our music now and some singers always have pencils. The alto section has recently discovered the benefits of coloured marker pens so their scores are works of art now.

7. Your dress should not distract or offend other singers.

What a strange rule. How could a group of ladies possibly agree on this? No chance. (There have been some particularly offensive socks I could comment on, but won't.)

8. You should help to clear up after the rehearsal.

What a great help this is for any musical director. It is one less thing for me to concern myself with and it is only fair that we should

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- all muck in as we are all equal members of the group.
9. You will behave with maturity at all times.
We are all guilty of breaking this rule in the rehearsal room. If you could be a fly on the wall you just wouldn't believe the antics of some of these singers. In public, however, butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. When the occasion demands it, the ladies behave impeccably.
 10. You should arrive at concerts fully dressed with no nail polish or unnatural hair colouring.
The ladies always do their best to arrive fully dressed but, over the last 12 months, we have had some serious uniform malfunctions, often in front of unsuspecting audiences. We have learned that it is a very good idea to try on the choir's dress a few days before the concert in order to avoid any nasty shocks! As far as trying to limit make-up and hair dyes; there is no possibility of this happening. The ladies love the chance to dress up and look glamorous and I wouldn't dream of stopping them. Feeling good about their appearance can only enhance their musical performance.
 11. You must not distract your fellow singers or musical director from achieving a productive rehearsal.

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12. You have a responsibility to yourself and to other members of the choir.

This final rule really says it all. If the singers have a responsible attitude and respect for their fellow musicians then all should be well for the choir.

As we approach the busiest time of year for the Imperial Choir, with so many musical activities and different programmes to prepare and perfect, the need for commitment couldn't be more vital. These rules were drawn up for a children's choir but many of the principles also apply to adults.

Ladies, thank you for your efforts during the past 12 months, for your support, warmth and good humour. Commitment is vital if we are to continue to improve as a group and to achieve our full potential. We all appreciate that it is often difficult to juggle the needs of family and work and yet, most of the time, we manage it. Well done and congratulations on the performances of this year so far.

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