

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem
Protocol for rehearsal and performance
Original 9 May, 2020
Revised 13 November, 2020

Introduction

The Board of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem recognizes its role in providing guidance to the Artistic and Executive Staff as they plan and carry out rehearsals and performances of the Bach Choir, Bel Canto Youth Chorus, Bach Festival Orchestra, and visiting artists during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time the Board commends the Staff for their innovative and rapid response, which unequivocally places the safety and well-being of our singers, families, volunteers, and patrons above all else, and aligns our actions with the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the CDC.

As of this writing there is no proven method to eliminate the spread of COVID virus in a choral setting. This protocol was developed based on best practices recommended by a majority of authoritative sources as most likely to reduce the chance of transmission, including participant illness checks, personal protective equipment, social distancing, good hygiene practices, proper ventilation, and limited time of exposure.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, the success of this protocol depends on each participant in an activity recognizing her or his responsibility to the others in the group and strictly adhering to the protocol. It is the firm belief of The Board that the individuals associated with The Choir have always demonstrated this sense of shared civic responsibility and community, and will continue to do so in this emergency.

This protocol will be effective as of November 13, 2020, and remain in effect until further notice.

This protocol will be reviewed and updated to reflect current conditions on the ground, or at a minimum once a month by the Executive, Artistic and Board leadership.

This protocol will be posted on The Bach Choir website and referenced with a link in our promotions for performances, recordings, and broadcasts during the pandemic.

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Objectives:

1. Provide as safe an environment as we can for all participants.
2. Conform to the directions of governmental authorities.
3. Clearly model appropriate behavior in all choir activities and all public offerings, including new video recordings.
4. Provide ongoing artistic support for our members and supporters.

Background:

- Clinical evidence has shown that traditional choral settings are ideal for the asymptomatic transmission of the Covid virus through the exhalation and inhalation of virus-laden aerosols produced in the act of breathing, coughing, sneezing, talking and singing. To reduce the opportunity for transmission of the virus in rehearsal or performance steps must be taken to change the traditional methods.
- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the PA Department of Health issues guidelines to be followed by businesses, groups and individuals in the state. These guidelines reflect the current infection rate of specific counties and cities and are changed from time to time to reflect improving or worsening conditions. The detailed guidance for the current status is modified frequently as the PA DOH responds to new data on COVID infections. The Choir will respond as needed to the changing guidance.
- National and International choral organizations, such as NATS, ECA, Chorus America, and ACDA have begun discussions regarding proper safety practices for restarting choral activities. From these discussions certain best practices have been put forward, some of which have been employed in the development of this protocol. This Protocol has been reviewed by a public health official and confirms that it meets CDC guidance.

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Protocols for Rehearsals and Performances

Participants

- The number of participants at rehearsals and performances, either indoor or outdoor, will be limited by the nature of the space: its size and ventilation system being major determining factors. The Choir will use a research-based risk model, the 2020 COVID 19 Aerosol Transmission Estimator, developed by researchers at the University of Colorado - Boulder, to determine safe numbers of participants. All remaining protocols must be followed.
- Each participant will be recorded as being in attendance.
- Each participant will verify that they have taken their temperature within the past 24 hours.
- No one who has currently tested positive for the Covid virus or is awaiting test results is permitted to participate.
- No one displaying or reporting any symptoms of the virus or of any illness is permitted to participate.
- No one who has been in contact with someone who is Covid positive or believes that they may have been exposed to the virus within 14 days prior to a rehearsal or performance is permitted to participate.
- Wind instrument players and vocal soloists, who do not wear masks in rehearsal and performance, must be tested for the Covid virus as close as possible to the first rehearsal but with sufficient time to allow the results to be communicated to the Bach Choir executive staff at least one full day before rehearsal.
- Mitigation plans must be in place in the event an attendee of a rehearsal or performance later is found to be Covid positive. The information is to be shared and appropriate steps taken by those present up to and including testing and self quarantine.
- All performers are to sign The Bach Choir Waiver form and accept the risks of rehearsing and performing.

Facilities

- Permission from the owner of the venue, inside or outside, must be obtained in advance.
- The rehearsal or performance space should either have been cleaned according to CDC and DOH guidelines or unused for 48 hours before the event, including a designated bathroom.
- The space should allow for good ventilation including:
 - Open doors (required) and windows (if possible);
 - Air exchange mechanism such as a building HVAC system or ceiling fans.
- Limited bathroom use, please plan accordingly.

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- A hand-washing station.
- Rehearsals will be conducted in 30 min segments followed by a break. When indoor spaces are being used, the length of the break will be sufficient to allow a complete air exchange in the space.
- Wipe down chairs with sanitizer, before and after rehearsal.

On-site Behavior

- No one enters the venue until a Choir staff member is present.
- Parents of participants under the age of 18 should remain outside of the rehearsal venue while following CDC social distancing guidelines.
- Physical distancing entering the building and performing as follows:
 - 6 feet entering and exiting the building
 - 10 feet on either side during singing
 - 12 feet in front of each participant while singing or playing a wind instrument.
- All participants must wear masks at all times during rehearsals and indoor performances with choristers, including while singing. If any person is unable to wear a mask for any reason, they will not be able to participate.
- During small group (e.g., eight or less) performances and rehearsals, the vocal soloists and wind instrument players may remove their masks if mutually agreed among the participants. Additional distance and careful positioning must be adopted when this occurs.
- No physical contact is allowed among participants.
- No singing in circles, face forward.
- No sharing of music, or pencils, or iPads.
- Conductors face chorus from 10 - 20 ft. away from the first row of singers. The same accommodation should be made for accompanists, instrumentalists, audio and video technicians.
- Anyone over age 70 or anyone of any age with high-risk medical problems should consider not participating.
- If you see something, say something. If you notice a participant showing signs of not feeling well, or is not following this protocol, say something to Artistic Director or Executive Staff.