

The Bach Choir of Bethlehem  
Protocol for audience attendance | Choir & Orchestra  
rehearsal and performance  
Original 9 May, 2020  
Revised 7 January, 2022

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, and admit live audiences into concerts and events. 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.

Since the first writing of this protocol, vaccines have been introduced which have been shown safe and effective in suppressing the spread of the COVID virus in its original and mutated forms. The use of these vaccines has taken a central role in The Choir's protocol.

**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 January 7, 2022, 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 transmitting the virus in rehearsal or performance steps must be taken to change the traditional rehearsal methods and participants must take individual responsibility to become vaccinated.
- 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 made recommendations regarding proper safety practices for choral activities. From these recommendations 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.]
- The Board has adopted a policy of requiring all employees, contractors and volunteers to be vaccinated to participate in Bach Choir activities. Exemptions from this policy for anyone eligible to be vaccinated will only be considered for employees and minors.

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**Protocol for Audience attending Performances in person**

**Audience members**

To welcome our audience members safely, we have implemented the following policies regarding attendance at all Bach Choir concerts and events, effective immediately:

**Vaccination required:** All patrons aged 12+ attending an in-person concert or event must be vaccinated and show proof of complete COVID-19 vaccination before being admitted into any indoor concert venue. Proof may be offered digitally via a smartphone, an original vaccination card, or a digital or printed copy of the card, along with a personal ID card (license or other form).

“Complete COVID-19 Vaccination” means that the patron has received the final COVID-19 vaccination dose at least 14 days prior to the concert date.

We will not accept proof of a negative COVID-19 test.

This policy is subject to change, in accordance with guidelines from the CDC and the Commonwealth of PA and will be revised as more age groups become eligible for vaccination. The Bach Choir will continue to monitor the conditions that impact our policies and modify our restrictions as needed.

**Masks required:** Mask wearing is required for all patrons. It must be placed properly, covering nose and mouth. Musicians will wear masks but may remove them to sing or play an instrument as needed.

**Compliance and Agreement:** Purchasing a ticket indicates compliance with our health protocols at all times while attending our concerts and consent to our policies. By attending, patrons assume any and all risks regarding exposure to COVID-19.

**The continued well-being of our patrons, and that of our Bach Choir community, is our priority. We suggest the following as the season unfolds:**

- Please stay home if you do not feel well.
- Do not attend a concert if you have a fever or any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Do not attend if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days or have been in contact with anyone who has tested positive or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 during that time.

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**Protocols for Rehearsals and Performances**

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*Revised, January 7, 2022*

*The following 7 updates were added to our Bach Choir Protocol on January 7, 2022.  
Point 1 is for the January Bach at Noon only; and will be revisited before our February,  
2022 Bach at Noon for possible revision.*

- Choir members, orchestra, soloists, and guest conductors will report a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of arrival or a negative at home rapid antigen test for the *Bach at Noon* project in January. Test results for the orchestra and soloists should be sent to The Bach Choir Office where a record will be kept. Test results for the choir should be sent to Choir Manager Jean Vrabel who will keep a record.
- The guest conductor will wear a mask except while conducting and rehearsing (i.e. wear a mask walking on and off stage, but may remove the mask while conducting)
- All Bach Choir volunteers including choir members and Board members and employees will be required to show proof of a booster shot for COVID-19 by February 1, 2022. Boosters will be required following the CDC recommendations - currently 5 months following the last dose of the primary series.
- The 12 and up vaccination requirement for all participants in The Bach Choir will be amended to all participants in The Bach Choir regardless of age. This means that vaccination requirements (including booster shots by Feb 1) will extend to all Bel Canto Youth Chorus choristers.
- At this time, audience vaccination and masking requirements will not change. The COVID committee will meet again to reassess in January.
- Audiences for the January *Bach at Noon* will be reduced capacity and spaced out with rows being blocked off. We will follow a similar format as in our September Bach at Noon performance, seating patrons in every other row to allow distance between groups / patrons.
- Choir members will assemble by allowing more space between each individual in Fellowship Hall for rehearsals, and at Central Moravian Church for *Bach at Noon* if possible.

**Participants**

- All volunteer, contract and staff participants must affirm that they are vaccinated in writing before being permitted to participate. Exemptions to

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this policy will only be considered for employees of The Choir and Bel Canto choristers.

- The number of participants at rehearsals and performances, either indoor or outdoor, will be limited by state and local mandates and by policies adopted by the venue's owners.
- Each participant will be recorded as being in attendance.
- 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.
- 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 participants must sign The Bach Choir COVID Vaccine Affirmation and 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 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.
- For the Bel Canto Youth Chorus
  - Limited bathroom use, please plan accordingly.
  - A hand-washing station.
  - Rehearsals will be conducted in 50 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.
- For Bel Canto Youth Chorus
  - Parents of participants under the age of 18 should remain outside of the rehearsal venue.

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- Physical distancing entering the building and performing as follows:
    - 6 feet entering and exiting the building
    - 6 feet on either side during singing
  - 12 feet in front of each participant while singing or playing a wind instrument.
  - No physical contact is allowed among participants.
  - No singing in circles, face forward.
  - No sharing of music, or pencils, or iPads.
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- Mask Wearing: Masks must be worn at rehearsals during periods of high transmission rate in Northampton and Lehigh Counties. For Bel Canto all participants must wear masks at all times during rehearsals and indoor performances, including while singing. If any person is unable to wear a mask for any reason, they will not be able to participate.
  - During performances and rehearsals, the choir members, 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.
  - 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.