



Phoenixsingers

Phoenix Singers (Suffolk) Choir Handbook

Chairman's Welcome

Dear Members

Welcome to our handbook - a simple, practical guide to help us sing and work well together.

Whether you've been part of the choir for years or have just joined us, you're now a valued member of a community built on enthusiasm, kindness and shared music-making. Every voice matters and every singer helps shape who we are.

Inside this handbook you'll find everything you need: rehearsal details, concert information, practical policies and the code of conduct that keeps our choir welcoming and respectful. Think of it as a toolkit rather than a rulebook - and if anything isn't clear, your Committee is always happy to help.

Thank you for the energy, commitment and good humour you bring to rehearsals and performances. What we achieve on stage is only possible because of the support we give one another off it.

So let's keep singing, keep encouraging each other and make every note count.

With warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "P. M. Cook".

Penny Cook
Chair

Music Director's Welcome

It is a profound honour to assume the role of Music Director of Phoenix Singers. As we enter our 50th anniversary season, I am deeply aware of the choir's distinguished heritage and of the many musicians, volunteers and supporters who have shaped its identity over the past half-century.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Committee and to Carolyn for their generous welcome, and I pay tribute to Geoff for his exceptional leadership. His long stewardship has left the choir in excellent musical health, as your recent performance of *Gerontius* so powerfully demonstrated.

Phoenix Singers was founded with a bold and imaginative purpose: to bring ambitious choral music to rural Suffolk, to challenge itself artistically and to foster a community united by shared endeavour. It is a privilege to inherit that legacy and I am committed to ensuring that our rehearsals and performances remain places where members feel supported, inspired and encouraged to strive for excellence.

I also wish to extend a warm welcome to all new members joining us this season. You are now part of a choir with a proud tradition of musical ambition and community spirit. I hope you will quickly feel at home among us and I look forward to supporting you as you grow in confidence and find your place within the ensemble.

This anniversary year marks both celebration and renewal. As I begin my tenure, I look forward to listening, learning and working alongside you to shape the next chapter of Phoenix Singers. Together, we will honour the past, embrace the present and look with confidence toward the future.

Tom Appleton
Music Director

About Us

Founded in 1976, Phoenix Singers (Suffolk) is an established community choir based in Framlingham, Suffolk. We perform a varied repertoire ranging from smaller-scale works to major choral projects and seasonal concerts and play an active role in the cultural life of the local community.

We are a registered charity and a member of Making Music, the UK association for voluntary music groups. Led by our Music Director and supported by a voluntary, elected Committee of trustees, our continued success is built on the shared commitment and enthusiasm of our members.

Our Committee of Trustees and Music Team

Penny Cook, Chair
Claire Heard, Vice-Chair
Marie Smith, Secretary
Nic Wright, Treasurer
Keith Barton
Gill Clare
William Glasse, Membership Secretary
Esther Mower, Press Officer & Social Secretary
Giles Pebody

Music Director: Tom Appleton
Accompanist: Carolyn Gibley
Music Librarians: Liz Barton and Paula Derwin

Members are always welcome to share feedback, questions or concerns. In the first instance, please speak to your Section Representative, who will be happy to pass matters on to the Committee, Chair or Music Director as appropriate. This helps keep communication clear and manageable for everyone. The Chair can, of course, be contacted directly if needed.

Our Section Representatives

Section Representatives are available to assist you and to collect apologies for absence from rehearsals each week. Our Section Representatives are:

Sopranos: Marie Smith Tel: 07909 906551 Email: mariesmith136@gmail.com

Altos: Susie Starke Tel: 07899 995700 Email: susie.starke@hotmail.co.uk

Tenors: Jo Rogers Tel: 01728 663462 Email: jojo.rogers@btinternet.com

Basses: Keith Barton Tel: 01728 648764 Email: keithandliz@hotmail.com

Our Guiding Principles and How We Work Together

We thrive through the shared musical and practical contributions of our members and through the goodwill and commitment of those who support our work.

The following sections reflect and expand upon our agreed Guiding Principles. By working within these Guiding Principles, we ensure the choir remains rewarding, sustainable and valued within the community it serves.

1. Our Members and Our Music

We always welcome new members and take pride in our reputation as a friendly and inclusive choir. There is no audition or formal pre-qualification for joining. An interest in choral music, together with a willingness to commit to regular rehearsals as we prepare for each concert, is essential.

Through weekly rehearsals, we aim to develop vocal and musical skills, maximise enjoyment and work together towards fulfilling public performances of a high standard.

Each of you plays an important part in the choir and every voice contributes to our overall sound. By learning our music and working to improve, we help make rehearsals and performances enjoyable, successful and of a high standard. Singing in our choir is a shared effort and we support one another.

What this means for you:

- **Rehearsals:** Members are asked to attend rehearsals regularly, arrive punctually, participate actively and contribute to a focused and supportive rehearsal atmosphere.
- **Attendance:** To maximise the benefit of membership and to support the quality of our performances, singers should aim to attend all rehearsals. It is recognised that this is not always possible. Generally, members may miss up to three rehearsals in a term and still be eligible to sing in the relevant concert. Members who need to miss more rehearsals owing to personal circumstances should inform the Music Director in writing, outlining the rehearsals missed. The Music Director will confirm eligibility for concert participation. Sectional Representatives are available to collect apologies for absence each week.
- **Concerts:** Members taking part in a concert are expected to attend the associated rehearsals and dress rehearsal and to perform fully prepared.
- **Rehearsal Etiquette:** Rehearsal time is usually shared by all sections and consideration for others is essential. When other parts are rehearsing, singers are asked to listen attentively and refrain from talking, to respect the work of others and maintain focus.
- **Score Marking:** Singers are expected to annotate their scores during rehearsals to record musical points and reminders for later rehearsals and performance. As much music is hired, all marking should be done using a soft pencil. Arrangements will be made for erasing markings after concerts.
- **Learning Parts:** Members are encouraged to practise their parts between rehearsals, making use of available resources. Online rehearsal aids may be recommended for some repertoire, including:

Choraline (<https://www.choraline.com>)

Cyberbass (<http://www.cyberbass.com>)

John Fletcher Music (<https://johnfletchermusic.org/>)

What the choir provides for you:

- Clear musical leadership and well-structured rehearsals.
- Support and guidance to aid musical development.
- An inclusive, encouraging rehearsal environment.

2. Our Place in the Community

We aim to play an active and valued role in the cultural life of Framlingham, offering performances as a contribution to the community and benefiting from mutual support and enrichment.

What this means for you:

- **Rehearsals:** Rehearsal standards reflect the choir's public role and reputation.
- **Attendance:** Reliability supports effective planning and strong relationships within the community.
- **Concerts:** Members represent the choir through appropriate dress, good stage discipline and courteous interaction with audiences, venues and partner organisations. The dress code is usually:
 - **Women:** black dress/skirt/trousers (full length), long or $\frac{3}{4}$ sleeves. No flashy jewellery.
 - **Men:** black shirt, black trousers.
 - **Concert folders:** black choir folders, which can be provided by the librarians.

What the choir provides for you:

- Regular opportunities to perform locally.
- A visible and positive presence in the community.
- Well-organised concerts and events.

3. Our Repertoire and Musical Development

Our repertoire is chosen to develop musical ability and confidence, offering variety, challenge and opportunities for expressive performance.

What this means for you:

- **Rehearsals:** Members are encouraged to approach new or challenging music with openness and commitment and to use rehearsal time efficiently.
- **Attendance:** Consistent attendance supports musical confidence and balance across the choir.
- **Concerts:** Performances reflect the choir's developing musical skills and collective preparation.

What the choir provides for you:

- Carefully chosen repertoire that balances challenge and enjoyment.
- Musical variety across styles and periods.
- Opportunities for confidence to grow over time.

4. Our Performances and Ambitions

We work towards a balanced programme of performances each year, generally in Framlingham, including a Christmas concert. Performances range from smaller-scale works to larger choral projects, with occasional collaborations.

What this means for you:

- **Rehearsals:** Rehearsal schedules reflect the scale and demands of upcoming performances.
- **Attendance:** Performance dates are communicated as early as possible. Once a member has committed to a concert, attendance at relevant rehearsals is essential.
- **Concerts:** Members are asked to commit reliably and to follow guidance from the Music Director and concert organisers.

What the choir provides for you:

- A varied and well-planned performance programme.
- Clear communication about schedules and expectations.
- Opportunities for larger-scale and collaborative projects.

5. Resources, Sustainability and Shared Responsibility

The trustees are responsible for ensuring the choir is managed in accordance with charity law and its constitution. We balance artistic ambition with responsible use of resources to ensure long-term sustainability.

What this means for you:

- **Rehearsals and Concerts:** Efficient use of rehearsal time and reliable attendance support responsible planning and financial stability.

What the choir provides for you:

- Careful financial planning and transparent governance.
- Engagement of skilled local amateur and professional musicians where appropriate, with costs proportionate to the choir's means.
- A sustainable framework for the choir's future.

6. Member Involvement in the Life of the Choir

We exist to share the joy of choral music as widely as possible, both within the choir and with our audiences. While singing together is at the heart of what we do, the choir's activities also include planning programmes season by season, assembling the musical and financial resources required and promoting our concerts.

We are a voluntary organisation funded solely by membership fees, ticket sales and fundraising. Almost all the activities which support the choir's core purpose are carried out by volunteers. Our success depends on members volunteering in ways that suit their interests, skills and availability.

What this means for you:

Members may choose to support the choir by:

- Welcoming audiences and assisting at concerts.
- Helping with publicity, including posters and local or social media.
- Volunteering for Committee roles or short-term tasks.
- Offering practical or professional skills where appropriate.

Participation beyond singing is welcomed and entirely voluntary.

What the choir provides for you:

- Clear guidance and support for volunteer roles.
- A welcoming and appreciative environment.
- Recognition of members' contributions.

We are grateful for the commitment, goodwill and musical enthusiasm of all our members. By working together within these shared principles, we ensure we remain a thriving and valued part of our community.

In addition to rehearsals and concerts, we also enjoy a range of informal social activities throughout the year. These may include coffee meet-ups, quiz nights and occasional events such as carol singing at local care homes. These events are optional but provide a valued opportunity for members to get to know one another and enjoy the social side of being part of our choir.

Practical Matters

1. Our rehearsals

Weekly rehearsals are normally held at Sir Robert Hitcham's School, Framlingham, between 7.30-9.30pm on Wednesdays in school term time, occasionally including half term. Additional rehearsals are arranged prior to concerts. Apologies for absence should normally be given to Section Representatives in advance **by midday on Tuesdays** (except in emergencies) so that the Music Director can be advised in order to plan rehearsals.

2. Our Fees and Other Payments

Membership subscriptions are currently £165 per year, payable at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

We prefer as many payments by members as possible to be made by direct bank transfer (usually by online banking). However, we do request that you change the "reference" each time to reflect what you are paying for. Common examples might be: "Subscription", "2 Christmas tickets", "Donation", "Friends", "Music Purchase", "Music Hire". We only need your name in the reference if the payment is coming from an account with a different name. If you are unable to make payment online then contact the treasurer so we can find an alternative way for you to pay.

As a registered charity, we can benefit from the Government's Gift Aid scheme. This allows us to claim an extra 25p from HMRC for every £1 of eligible subscriptions - increasing your support at no extra cost to you. When you join, we'll ask whether you would like to Gift Aid your subscriptions (if you are a UK taxpayer). You can cancel your Gift Aid declaration at any time by writing to the Treasurer.

Another easy way to support us is through **easyfundraising**. Simply shop online with over 8,000 brands and they will donate a percentage of your purchase directly to us - again at no extra cost to you. The retailer funds the donation, helping to support our concerts and activities. Sign up here: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/phoenix-singers-suffolk>

Your support, big or small, makes a real difference. Every subscription, ticket purchase, donation or fundraising activity helps us continue bringing live choral music to our community.

3. Our Key Policies

In addition to our constitution, we operate in accordance with the following policies:

- **Safeguarding**: to protect adults at risk by ensuring our activities are safe, inclusive and that concerns are handled appropriately.
- **Health & Safety**: to manage risks at our rehearsals, concerts and events so as to protect members, volunteers and the public from harm.
- **Data Protection**: to ensure personal data is handled lawfully, securely and transparently in line with UK GDPR and charity law.

The constitution and full policy documents are available to you via the choir's website and should be read alongside this handbook.

4. Our website/social media

Website: <https://www.phoenixsingers.org.uk>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/phoenixsingersfram>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/phoenixsingersframlingham>

X: <https://x.com/PhoenixSingers4>

You can support our choir by liking, sharing and following us on social media, helping our music reach more people.

21 August 2026