



The Guinness Choir & its Culture

Since its foundation in 1951, The Guinness Choir has enjoyed a culture of inclusivity making no distinction between class, gender, age, culture or ethnicity. This closely follows the philosophy of its founder, Victor Leeson, who was ahead of his time when his principal criteria for qualification to join the choir was that you had a good singing voice, a modicum of ability, were willing to learn and committed to attendance at rehearsal.

In addition, The Guinness Choir has developed an approach where, aside from an initial audition, there are no regular reauditions.

As a result, the choir enjoys a membership diverse in age and musical ability. In more recent times we have also benefitted from a growing diversity in terms of gender, culture and ethnicity.

Some have joined the choir in their late teens or early twenties and have remained loyal and committed members for up to forty years and more! Others take a sabbatical for family or work reasons and are welcome to re-join when circumstances allow. In such circumstances all are encouraged to keep in contact by becoming a Friend of the choir or to help with the organisation, promotion and management of concerts or other events.

On occasion, some members decide to no longer participate in concerts because of the physical demands of performing but continue to attend rehearsals regularly, thus giving us the benefit of their experience and allowing them to keep an active interest in the choir and its music as well as maintaining social contact with friends.

None of this however precludes the Musical Director, following consultation with the Chair of the Choir, on occasion respectfully discussing with a member their continuing participation, discretely and professionally.

As with all choirs, there is natural fall-off of membership for a variety of reasons, and while we are sorry to lose loyal and longstanding members who have contributed greatly to the musical life and development of the choir, this is offset by the arrival of new members.

Most members can read music to some extent. Some are good sight readers, but all are committed to attend rehearsals, working collaboratively to learn

new works or rediscover pieces previously prepared. The emphasis has always been to strive towards a performance of professional standard.

The choir's practice has been to purchase the scores of the majority of works it performs. Consequently, we enjoy an extensive library of all the major classical works and many lesser-known pieces which are housed, by special arrangement, in the Music Library of TU Dublin, Grangegorman. This ensures each member is provided with the same edition of a work, and their score, containing their personal markings, is available when it is performed again.

Membership subscriptions contribute towards the cost of music scores, the Musical Director's fee, venue hire and the promotion of concerts.

The Guinness Choir has always had an effective committee system working closely with the Musical Director to help organise concerts, venues and occasional workshops aimed at developing the choir's musical knowledge, as well as social events, which are an integral part of the choir's life. To be clear, the Musical Director selects the musical works of the choir, in consultation with the Chair of the Choir.