

**Toronto Concert Choir** (formerly Oakham House Choir)  
at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) since 1984  
torontoconcertchoir.ca      torontoconcertchoir@gmail.com  
Music director: Matthew Jaskiewicz      Rehearsal accompanist: Alexander (Sasha) Kats

## Information for Choristers – Fall-Winter 2023

Welcome to the Toronto Concert Choir (formerly the Oakham House Choir)! We're very pleased that you have chosen our choir, and we hope you find your time with us to be a rewarding and joyful experience in this 39th year of the choir's existence.

If you have sung with a choir before, you already know how gratifying it is to work with a group of like-minded people to perform works by our culture's great composers. If you're new to the world of choral music, you'll soon discover how satisfying it is to sing these works before an appreciative audience.

There are two things we ask you to keep in mind. The first is that this is a serious commitment. The other members in your section, and the choir as a whole, depend on your punctual attendance at every practice and rehearsal. We can't possibly reach our full potential or be taken seriously as an ensemble unless every single one of us is dedicated to making it happen.

The other thing to remember is to *have fun*. Making music together as we master great works of art *should* be fun. Otherwise, what's the point? And from time to time there are opportunities to have fun outside of the rehearsal hall too, at choir social events.

We've compiled this information sheet to help answer some of the questions you may have. But if there's anything we've missed, please don't hesitate to ask a member of the board or our director, Matthew Jaskiewicz. (See contact information on page 4.)

### Membership Fee

There is no membership fee for full-time TMU students. For everyone else, the fee is \$100 per term. Fees, which are payable at the beginning of the term, can be paid by e-transfer to [torontoconcertchoir@gmail.com](mailto:torontoconcertchoir@gmail.com), or by cheque or cash. Cheques should be made payable to Toronto Concert Choir. Please note that choir members are also charged for their music. (But see "Music" below.)

### Regular Choir Practice

We practise on Mondays, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., in Kerr Hall South, 50 Gould St. -- Room KHS 251. Sometimes one section is asked to come early (i.e., at 6:30 or 6:45) for extra practice.

Please see also "Orchestra Rehearsals" on page 3.

### Music

The music for the pieces we will be singing at the concert on December 2nd will be for sale during the first few practices, or you can download the music for the short pieces free of charge from the choir website.

## Learning Music – Online Help

Those of us who aren't experts at reading music can get help from a number of websites that provide practice files in the MIDI format. These sites have most of the popular works in the choral repertoire, usually with separate recordings for each of the four vocal parts.

Most of these sites allow you to download their files free of charge. One that's worth checking out is [www.cyberbass.com](http://www.cyberbass.com), but there are plenty more – try Googling “MIDI choral music” or the name of the piece of music, followed by your voice part (soprano, alto, tenor or bass).

## Choir Practice Etiquette

It's critically important that we make the most of our practices and rehearsals. That means coming ready to work and concentrate. Please:

- Turn off your phones and wait until the break to do your e-mailing and texting.
- Bring a pencil to every practice, as we are always making notes about how certain passages should be performed.
- Refrain from chatting while Matthew is speaking or working with another section, or while announcements are being made. What Matthew says to one section is likely to be useful to every section.
- Do not tap your foot on the floor to keep time – it can be distracting for your neighbours; if you need to keep time for yourself, as most of us do, please do it silently (i.e., *inside* your shoe).
- Let a member of the board know if you have to miss a practice (see contact information on page 4).
- Be prompt, so that we can start on time – there's always lots to cover.
- Do not wear strong perfume or cologne – more and more people are sensitive or allergic to strong scents.

## Upcoming Concerts

We will give our main concert of this term on **Saturday, December 2, at 7:30 p.m.** As usual we will be accompanied by a professional orchestra, the Toronto Sinfonietta, as well as by our rehearsal accompanist, Alexander (Sasha) Kats. The main work will be Schubert's *Mass in G*; there will also be a selection of songs by John Rutter and a Christmas carol sing-along.

The concert will be held at Knox Presbyterian Church, 630 Spadina Avenue, a short distance south of Bloor St. The Harbord streetcar stop on the Spadina route is just north of the church.

## Orchestra Rehearsal – Mark Your Calendars Now

There will be a rehearsal with the orchestra at the church on **Friday, December 1.**

More details, as well as information about any other special rehearsals, will be announced at regular choir practices and in emails from the board.

Please note: **Attendance at the orchestra rehearsals is mandatory.**

## Concert Tickets

Our choir relies on the proceeds from the sale of concert tickets for its continued existence. This is especially the case now that we have lost our funding because of the provincial government's Student Choice Initiative. (Previously we received partial funding from the Palin Foundation through Oakham House.)

We need money to pay for our music director, our practice accompanist, the orchestra, soloists, church rental, programs, tickets, flyers and advertising. Every member of the choir is encouraged to sell at least five tickets.

## Dress for Concerts

As an ensemble, it's important that we all dress in the same way for our performances:

- *Women* – **Long**-sleeved, calf-length black dress, *or* black skirt and **long**-sleeved top, *or* black evening dress pants and **long**-sleeved top (i.e., black clothes **only** and no sparkles); black stockings, black shoes; discreet gold or silver jewellery only. Please, no miniskirts, high boots, leggings or bare legs.
- *Men* – Tuxedo, *or* black suit, *or* black pants and black tailored jacket; black bow tie; white dress shirt; black socks; black dress shoes.

We realize some of those things can be expensive, so if you find it hard to get any of them, please speak to any member of the board early in the term – someone will quite likely be able to lend you what you need. It may also be worth looking in thrift shops or second-hand stores such as Value Village.

## Concert Etiquette

This is when all our efforts pay off, and there are a few things to remember. A concert is a formal occasion, and we're all very visible during the performance. So, please:

- When on stage, **do not** wave to your friends in the audience, chat with your neighbours or chew gum.
- Be sure your phone or other electronic devices will not ring during the performance.
- Carry your music, with your arm straight, in the hand facing the audience as you enter and leave, and don't open it until Matthew motions for us to do so. When a soloist is performing, turn the pages silently (or not at all).
- Do not take anything on stage with you except your music.
- And as at choir practice, please remember not to wear strong scents.

## Board of Directors and Committees

As you can imagine, it takes a lot of work to make all this happen. We have a board of directors and various committees to keep things running smoothly, but there's always more to be done, from producing flyers and programs to publicizing the choir and setting up for concerts. *We can always use your help, so don't be shy!*

## History of the Choir

The Toronto Concert Choir's predecessor, the Oakham House Choir, was founded in 1984, thanks largely to the efforts of Professor Marie Dowler of the English Department and Matthew Jaskiewicz, a former conductor with the Warsaw Chamber Opera, who had recently immigrated to Canada from Poland.

In most seasons, the choir presents two main concerts – usually featuring a large work such as an oratorio or mass – together with the Toronto Sinfonietta, a professional chamber orchestra also founded and directed by Matthew. Smaller, less formal concerts are given from time to time.

In September 2014 we hosted a university choir from Germany and presented a joint concert with them. The following spring, we were invited to perform in the Luminato arts festival, and some 20 of our members took part in several performances of R. Murray Schafer's *Apocalypse*.

In January 2016 a contingent from the choir travelled to New York to sing at Carnegie Hall in a multi-choir performance of *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by the Welsh composer Karl Jenkins. That spring, we celebrated the choir's 30th concert season with a gala concert.

The following season we observed Canada's 150th anniversary with a concert featuring music by Canadian composers and music composed around the time of Confederation.

In 2018 our spring concert commemorated the centenary of the end of the First World War with a performance of Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. And that fall the chance to sing the same piece again took 20 of our members to Berlin for a world concert for peace performed by 2,000 choristers from over two dozen countries and conducted by the composer.

During the 2019–20 season, the choir lost its funding when the provincial government's Student Choice Initiative allowed university students to opt out of paying the "ancillary" fees which support campus organizations. In the spring of 2020 the choir ceased to practise and perform in person owing to the Ontario government's Covid measures, although many Zoom rehearsals were held.

In 2021 the choir was reconstituted as the Toronto Concert Choir with our long-time founder and music director, Matthew Jaskiewicz, still at the helm. We continue to be based at the university.

## Contacts for More Information

*Music director:* Matthew Jaskiewicz ([matthew.jaskiewicz@gmail.com](mailto:matthew.jaskiewicz@gmail.com))

*Board of directors:* Theresa Adams, Gillian Arnold, Shelagh Cowie, Tina de Geus, Freya Godard, Matthew Jaskiewicz, Rob Silver, Tami Strong, Nalyn Tindall ([torontoconcertchoir@gmail.com](mailto:torontoconcertchoir@gmail.com))