

Merrimack Valley A Cappella Chorus

Merrimack Valley A Cappella Chorus is an award-winning chorus bringing fellowship, joy, and harmony to the Merrimack Valley of Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. We are seeking a dynamic director to lead a vibrant, fun-loving community of women in their musical and artistic growth.

This document is intended to introduce MVA and how we currently operate to enhance the interview process for our new director. Please note that much of this is pre-pandemic information; obviously, many things have been suspended or altered during this time, but we intend to build upon our past success and improve our chorus both musically and administratively.

Introduction

Merrimack Valley A Cappella is an auditioned group of singers, performing in four-part barbershop style. MVA is a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, Region 1, and we participate annually in the SAI regional competition. We are one of the top performing choruses in the region.

Management Team

MVA uses the management team form of administrative governance. We have seven elected coordinators: Team (equivalent to president), Communications (equivalent to secretary), Membership, Marketing, Performance, Events, and Facilities. The Finance Coordinator (equivalent to Treasurer) is appointed, and the chorus director is the last member of the management team. According to the MVA Standing Rules:

- The Management Team has the authority and responsibility to enforce the rules and regulations necessary for the proper maintenance, control and management of the Chapter.
- The Management Team is accountable to the membership for the efficient operation of the Chapter and effective communication with members.

Note in particular that the Director is a member of the Management Team (MT) and thus is part of all decision-making in the chorus.

Directors Team

In recent years, MVA has instituted a Directors Team (DT) that is the primary musical leadership of the chorus. This team consists of the Director, Associate/Assistant Directors, Visual Performance Director, Section Leaders, and the Team Coordinator of the Management Team (in order to closely coordinate with the MT for any administrative needs, especially financial), and

others at the discretion of the director. Currently in MVA, there is a lot of overlap in these roles so the team consists of six members.

Since its inception, the team has been planning and conducting rehearsals including physical and vocal warmups, working with individual songs, considering new music, coordinating outside coaching, and generally setting the musical direction of the chorus. The Director leads this team; in the absence of a single chorus musical director, the rest of the team has continued to fulfill all of the functions. One role on this team under consideration is that of a Directors Team Coordinator, to take primary responsibility of the more administrative aspects such as making arrangements for outside coaching, etc. One member of the team is effectively filling that role now.

Music Staff

The larger Music Staff includes the Directors Team, but also the Music Librarian (responsible for obtaining and distributing new music), Audition Coordinator, Assistant Section Leaders, and the Qualification Evaluators (who are selected by the Section Leaders).

Qualification Process

In order to perform a song with the chorus, MVA requires that members meet qualification criteria. This has been primarily for vocal performance, but in recent years we have been working towards more qualification for visual performance as well.

There are two levels of vocal qualification: Performance Ready and Mastered. Mastered is required only for the two competition songs and is defined as no errors in notes, words, or chorus breaths. Performance Ready is required in order to perform all other songs, and in this case 1-5 errors is acceptable.

Each member records herself singing the song either on the risers, or at home singing with a chorus recording of the song. The member is expected to self-evaluate the recording, and if she believes it to be at least close to being Performance Ready, submits it along with her self-evaluation to our internal web site (Groupanizer). Then her assigned Qualification Evaluator (QE) listens to the recording, gives feedback, and tracks the current state of the song for that singer.

For visual qualification of the two competition songs, videos are made during chorus rehearsals and the member is expected to watch the video and provide a self-evaluation of her visual performance to a set of visual performance evaluators.

The Directors Team usually sets deadlines when the member is expected to achieve the appropriate qualification level for a song.

SAI Competition Requirements

In order to maintain Chapter status within SAI, choruses must perform for evaluation in the Regional Convention at least once every three years. A minimum score of 400 points is needed. Choruses are evaluated in four categories: Sound, Music, Expression and Visual Performance.

Chorus Activities

In a typical year, these are the activities of the chorus:

- weekly rehearsals on Thursday evening
- several Saturday coaching sessions
- one full weekend retreat for contest preparation
- one regional contest weekend
- two SAI regional education weekends
- one cabaret-style performance prior to contest
- one show in the fall
- numerous performances around the region