



member handbook

who we are

Island Soul Choir is a community choir that specializes in the learning and performance of soul music, which includes gospel, spirituals, world music, blues, pop... basically any music that touches, moves or inspires the soul.

The choir was founded by Ron Klusmeier and Brian Tate in August 2007 under the name Vancouver Island Gospel & World Music Choir. In August 2009, the choir changed its name to Island Soul Choir as part of incorporating itself as a non-profit society and assuming responsibility for its own management.

our music director

Karla Mundy began as a co-director with Brian Tate in January 2012, and took on full responsibility for directing the choir after Brian stepped down in May 2013.

Karla is a vibrant and soulful vocalist, pianist, arranger and choir leader. In addition to her work with Island Soul Choir, she conducts 4 community choirs in Vancouver, and performs and teaches extensively with her vocal trio TriVo with Brian Tate and Dawn Pemberton. Karla specializes in world vocal traditions and rhythms and is passionate about getting music off the page and learning to embody the rhythm of the music.

becoming a choir member

The choir is open to people of all ages who reside on or near Vancouver Island and want to sing. No audition is required, and you don't need previous choir experience.

Membership in the choir is done on a session-by-session basis. We have two sessions each year:

- The Spring session goes from late January/early February to late May/early June.
- The Fall session goes from late August/early September to late November.

Registrations are accepted **online only** through the choir's website, starting usually 2 weeks before the

start of each session; a reminder email is sent out a few days ahead to all past choir members and all the people who are interested in joining, with all the details about how to register.

Before registering in any session, we ask that you make sure you are available to attend at least 3 of the 5 rehearsals, to learn and practise our music between rehearsals, and to perform in our concert. This is especially important given that we limit the size of the choir to 140 members (with separate maximums for each section), and invariably have a waiting list to join.

Once you complete the online registration, you will receive an email from the Choir Manager: it will either confirm your membership in the choir, or advise that you have been placed on the waiting list.

We are a scent-free group. We ask that you DO NOT wear any fragrance on your body, hair or clothing to any choir gatherings—not only do we rehearse and perform in scent-free facilities, we have members who are extremely allergic.

member fees

Each member is required to pay a fee each session to cover the choir's operating costs. These costs include:

- Conductor, Rehearsal Accompanist and Choir Manager fees
- Rehearsal venue rental
- BCCF membership dues and non-profit society fees
- Insurance and accounting fees
- Rehearsal tracks and CDs, concert CDs and sheet music
- General office supplies
- Website domain and hosting

Fees are \$85 per session, and are payable after your registration for the session has been confirmed. You can pay your fees either:

- **in person** at the first rehearsal by cash, credit card or cheque (payable to Island Soul Choir Society), or
- **online** any time up to 2 weeks after the first rehearsal, through the choir's website by credit card or PayPal.

To maintain your place in the choir, you must pay your member fee no later than 2 weeks after the first rehearsal; otherwise, your place in the choir will be forfeited, and you may be replaced by someone on the waiting list. This way, people coming off the waiting list can begin by the second rehearsal at the latest; these people will have until the second rehearsal to pay their member fee.

creating a payment plan

If you cannot pay your member fee on time, you will need to contact the Choir Manager to arrange an acceptable payment plan. To be “acceptable”, your plan must have specific dates and amounts identified, and your fee must be paid in full by the 5th rehearsal.

applying for a bursary

If you cannot afford to pay your member fee even through a payment plan, you may apply in writing through the Choir Manager for a bursary to help pay for your member fee. You will be expected to pay at least a portion of the fee, and you must apply before the payment deadline.

refund policy

Once paid, member fees are not refundable unless you are precluded from continuing to the end of the session due to a significant health issue or major unforeseen circumstance (either yourself or an immediate family member). In this case, we will refund the unused portion of your fees as of the date you advise us. Unused fees cannot be carried forward to a future session.

the choir’s website

The members-only page of the choir’s website, islandsoulchoir.com/members, is really your “go-to” source for all the latest information and resources. It contains, among other things:

- Sheet music, rehearsal tracks and rehearsal recordings
- Links to all e-newsletter emails issued during the session (in case you miss one), as well as newsletters issued by the BC Choral Federation
- The choir directory, this handbook, and other information about the current and future sessions
- Contact information for the Choir Manager and Directors
- Annual reports and society information

Please take the time to familiarize yourself with all the information available on the members page, and make it a practice to check it before each rehearsal and any time you have a question about anything — usually the answer is there.

This page is password-protected, and the password changes each session. So be sure to make a note of the access information when your membership is confirmed at the beginning of each session.

music

The choir performs all concerts “off book”; i.e., you have to memorize all the music and lyrics.

Sheet music is posted as pdfs on the members-only page of our website, for you to download and print; we don’t print it for you! In true gospel tradition, Karla may also teach us some songs by ear, for which only lyrics sheets will be provided.

Please remember to bring a pen or pencil to rehearsals, so that you can take notes of Karla’s instructions and any changes made to the music— don’t trust your memory!

To help you learn your music between rehearsals, you will be given a CD at the first rehearsal, with the rehearsal tracks for the part you select when you register. If you’d rather, you can opt out of getting this CD when you register, and instead, download your rehearsal tracks from the members-only page of our website. Please remember that these tracks may not necessarily reflect the final form of all songs; you must integrate what we learn at rehearsals.

We also do audio recordings of all our rehearsals. These recordings are broken into sections by song, and then posted to the website, so that you can hear everything that was sung and said during the rehearsal—an invaluable tool if you have to miss a rehearsal or need to get clarity about something.

You are always welcome to bring your own recording device to record rehearsals for your own use.

rehearsals

We have 5 rehearsals each session, on Saturday afternoons from 1pm to 4pm. A separate **rehearsal & concert schedule** is published each session to supplement this handbook, with the rehearsal and concert dates and venues, and other details about the session.

There is a 15-minute break during rehearsals, during which you can have a snack if you want to bring one — just be sure to eat it in a designated area, and be aware there may be members close by with food/nut allergies. ***Please DO NOT eat in the sanctuary! Only water may be consumed there.***

During rehearsals, we all wear lanyard-style nametags with a clever coloured star system:

- **BLUE** star = New members
- **GREEN** star = “Recycled” members who return to the choir after skipping a session or more
- **GOLD** star = “Old” members from the last session

As you mix and mingle, or go looking for a seat, we invite you all to take part in welcoming everyone.

rehearsal seating

Speaking of seating, we do not assign seating like typical choirs. We do, however, have a few guidelines that we ask you to follow:

- We sit in S-A-T-B sections, with tenors and basses sit along the sides, and sopranos and altos in the centre as shown.
- Taller people should sit towards the back and outer sides, and shorter people, closer to the front, of their section.
- If there's an empty chair beside or in front of you, move in towards the centre and front. *Do NOT leave random empty seats!* Sitting closer together lets you hear other singers in your section which helps you learn your part faster; it also helps Karla because we make a better sound together. Besides, we don't bite!
- If you have any special needs, it's best if you can come early to speak with our Stage Manager; he can help you find suitable seating before the seats fill up.
- Be flexible and helpful with others, especially our new members, as they are looking for a seat; they may need to sit beside a more experienced singer.
- Seats are reserved for members who are working in the admin room prior to the rehearsal. Other than that, we ask that you refrain from saving seats for other singers, especially when people are looking for a seat. It's actually okay to mix up your seating every so often to hear the song from a different perspective—you'll also get to meet more members!
- Wherever you sit, be sure you can see Karla when we are seated (it's a bit more challenging when we're standing). If you can't see her, move so you can. You can ask our Stage Manager for help in finding a suitable seat. Please don't just sit and grumble to yourself or others about not being able to see!

sectional rehearsals

Sectional rehearsals are not regularly scheduled, and they do not need to have a majority of section members attend—a handful of singers will do!

If you want to have a sectional rehearsal to help you learn your part, it is up to you to contact your section leader to have one organized. Or, you can just contact other members from your section who live nearby. Just check the choir directory on the members-only page of the website.

conduct during rehearsals

- With a group our size, it is **absolutely essential** for us all to be respectful of both Karla and our fellow choir members by being attentive at ALL times to the instructions being given. That means, **NO TALKING** to nearby members during rehearsals!
 - Nine times out of ten, when Karla is working with one section, she's saying things that all sections need to learn.
 - Many of us don't hear as well as we used to, and unnecessary chatter interferes with what we can hear.
 - Having to speak above the chatter simply wears Karla out. It takes a lot of extra effort for her to be heard, even with a microphone.
- Whenever Karla asks to have a particular section(s) sing their part, it is **NOT** an opportunity for you to sing your part too! She needs to hear what it is going on in that section, and fix it as necessary, and your singing an additional part makes it much more difficult for her to do so; it also slows our overall progress.
- Before you ask a question in rehearsal, make sure it is something that will have a benefit for a section or the whole group and it hasn't already been covered in the rehearsal newsletter or this handbook! If you're not sure, you can always ask your question later during the break or by email.

attendance

Regular attendance is important if we are to perform well at our concerts, especially since we have only 5 rehearsals each session—hence the request to attend 3 of the 5 rehearsals. That said, it's not a hard and fast rule. If you are confident you know your music, you can participate in the concerts.

Punctuality is also key. Please arrive early enough so that you can do all that you need to do beforehand and be in your chair, ready to go, on time. You don't want to miss out on anything!

For each rehearsal, please remember to check your name off on the attendance sheet, and pick up your nametag when you arrive, and hand in your nametag as you leave.

soloists

Our soloists come from within the choir, and solo parts require varying skill levels. Whether you are an experienced soloist, or you've been toying with the idea of giving it a try for the first time, this choir is the perfect place to "step up to the mic."

Soloist try-outs are held from 11am to 12:30pm before our second and third rehearsals each session. After the third rehearsal, Karla will make the soloist selections for the concert; the selected soloists will continue to rehearse from 11am to 12:30pm, immediately before the fourth and fifth rehearsals.

If you'd like to see what the soloist thing is all about or just want to come to sing the choir parts while the soloists do their thing (and get in some extra practice), you're more than welcome to attend the soloists' sessions.

A brief lunch break is available between the soloist and main rehearsals; anyone who comes to the soloist sessions can bring and eat a box lunch in a designated area. Please note that we do not have access to the kitchen to heat food or use dishes.

concerts

At the end of each session, we typically produce a concert at The Port Theatre in Nanaimo on a Sunday afternoon, with a dress rehearsal/sound check earlier in the day. We may also perform an additional concert in another community on the Island.

Guest musicians are regularly featured at our concerts, and professional musicians accompany the choir. We rehearse with the band one time only: at the dress rehearsal before the concert.

Concerts are recorded, and CDs are sold to members at a reasonable cost. DVDs may also be available for sale from time to time.

concert wardrobe

Our standard concert attire is a **solid, matte all-black** outfit, **from neckline to toe** — not grey or navy, not faded, and nothing shiny or glittery about it.

- Ladies can wear a dress, blouse and slacks, or skirt and blouse; there are no restrictions on sleeve or skirt/dress length.
- Men wear a dress shirt and pants; black ties are optional.
- **NO jeans or T-shirts, please!**
- Socks/pantyhose/knee-highs must also be black; **absolutely NO bare legs or toes showing, please!**

- Shoes must be black and, equally important, comfortable so that you can wear them throughout the performance. (Yes, that means we expect you to keep your shoes on, ladies!)
- Women are asked to wear "stage" makeup (bolder than normal, with bright lipstick). They may also wear jewelry to add a bit of sparkle, as long as it is consistent with our overall look.

Your black outfit is accessorized by a concert scarf in a vibrant African Kente fabric. When you join the choir, you will need to purchase a scarf for \$10. Please be sure that your scarf is freshly ironed before concerts; you can wrap it around an empty toilet-paper roll to keep it smooth while you transport it to the concert. When you leave the choir, you have the option to sell (or donate) your scarf back to the choir for the \$10 you originally paid. This way, we can reduce the number of new scarves that need to be produced each session.

lost & found

As sure as death and taxes, things get left behind after our rehearsals, especially music books and water bottles. Please put your name on **everything** you bring to rehearsal, and take a look around (including the chair seat-back pockets in front of you) before you leave for items that may have slipped from view.

Items that we find while re-setting the room can be claimed at the next rehearsal from the box on the kitchen serving shelf in the Admin Room (they are kept between rehearsals by the Stage Manager). For items we don't find, you'll have to contact St. Philip's directly (stphil@shaw.ca or 250-390-3641).

Unclaimed items at the end of the session may be donated to a local thrift shop or thrown out.

leaving the choir

If something comes up that will prevent you from completing the current session, please take a moment to let the Choir Manager know. That way, she won't continue to pester you with emails about the rest of the session, and we can better plan our concerts by knowing how many members we will be dealing with on-stage.

privacy

The personal information that we collect when you register is used to:

- Track and support your participation in the choir.
- Email you about choir activities (see our communications practices below).

- Create a member directory that's posted on the members-only page of the website, as a resource for choir members who are looking for support with learning their parts, carpooling and homestays on concert weekends.

Every effort is taken to protect the privacy of all members.

- You have the option to withhold any or all of your personal data from the member directory.
- Only the Choir Manager possesses the electronic member database.
- Other than the uses noted above, information from the database is not shared with any other person, group or organization.

Any questions about privacy should be forwarded to the Choir Manager.

communications practices

We regularly email:

- All active choir members in the current session to keep them up-to-date, as needed, about what's happening that session. Messages are kept to a minimum by sending out an e-newsletter prior to each rehearsal and concert, and posting its weblink to the members page of the website.
- All active and inactive choir members, as well as people who are interested in joining the choir, shortly before we begin to accept registrations each session, to invite them to register.
- All inactive choir members, people interested in joining the choir, and people on our patrons list:
 - when we have determined the basic details of our concerts, to "save the date".
 - when concert tickets go on sale, with instructions on how to buy their tickets.
 - within 2 weeks of our concerts, with a last-minute reminder to buy tickets.

Inactive choir members, people on our "interested" list, and patrons can unsubscribe from these mailings at any time.

choir management framework

The choir is operated by Island Soul Choir Society, a non-profit society registered under the laws of the Province of British Columbia.

The directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the society operates according to its constitution and bylaws, and the BC Societies Act.
- Providing direction for the future of the choir, including special events.
- Instituting and monitoring policies as required.

- Recommending and instituting changes to the bylaws when necessary.
- Approving the hiring and release of contracted professionals (including the conductor and Choir Manager), and participating in their evaluations, as needed.

The society's board of directors includes:

- the president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer, and
- up to 8 directors at large.

Day-to-day operational needs are handled by the Choir Manager under the direction of the board.

running for & being a director

All choir members in good standing are eligible to stand for election as a director or officer at each annual general meeting. Nominations for new board members are accepted during the month leading up to the AGM. All nominated persons must, according to the Act, provide prior written consent to their nomination, or if nominated at the AGM, be present and give verbal consent.

Being a director means that you are willing to:

- Make a difference by volunteering your knowledge, wisdom and time, and providing leadership and direction for the future success of the choir.
- Bring a positive, collaborative and common-sense attitude to the table.
- Attend director and general meetings.
- Stay informed and current on key issues.
- Serve on committees and assist where possible in getting the work of the board done.
- Support special choir and fundraising events.

Given that the Choir Manager handles all the day-to-day operational needs and provides support and guidance to directors, you don't need to have any specific skills to be a director.

term of office

Officers are elected for a term of 2 years, and all other directors are elected for a term of 1 year.

It is anticipated but not mandatory that, once an officer completes a term as vice president, he/she will then serve a term as president.

No member may serve more than 3 consecutive terms as president, vice president or secretary-treasurer.

meetings

Under our bylaws, there are 3 types of meetings:

1. An annual general meeting must be held at least once a year, to review the past year's activities and financial results, and to elect new directors. Since

our fiscal year-end is December 31, we hold our AGMs during either the 4th or 5th regular rehearsal of the Spring session.

2. General meetings are any other meeting involving members. These are held as needed during choir rehearsals.
3. Board meetings are held usually before the beginning of the session, and again with the conductor during the concert weekend; other meetings may be held as needed. Directors also conduct business by email.

role of the president

The president is responsible for:

- Providing leadership to the directors and choir.
- Managing the other directors and the Choir Manager.
- Conducting performance evaluations of directors and the conductor as needed.
- Chairing all board and general meetings, including preparing the agendas in collaboration with the Choir Manager and other directors.
- Orienting new directors, ensuring that they are familiar with the society's constitution, bylaws, policies and practices.
- Preparing a report to members, with assistance from the Choir Manager, to be included in the Annual Report each year.
- Acting as an ex-officio member of all committees that may be formed, and attending their meetings as needed.

role of the vice president

The vice president is responsible for:

- Acting as president in the absence of the president.
- Working closely with the president, providing support and counsel where possible.
- Learning the duties of the president if the vice president wants to serve a future term as president.
- Orienting the new vice president.

role of the secretary-treasurer

The secretary-treasurer is responsible for:

- Ensuring directors and members are notified of meetings.
- Taking and preparing the minutes of all director and general meetings.
- General supervision of the Choir Manager to:
 - Ensure the society's records, correspondence, and bylaws are properly maintained as required by the Societies Act.
 - Stay apprised of the society's financial activity, ensuring the society operates within its budget guidelines, maintains sound financial practices

and takes effective corrective action when required.

- Establish proposed budgets for approval by the board of directors.
 - Coordinate grant applications and fundraising activities, as needed.
- Signing official documents as required.
 - Orienting the new secretary-treasurer.

director portfolios

There are 3 portfolios that individual directors or members may either take on or be assigned to:

1. **Stage Manager:** Oversees managing the logistics of rehearsals and concerts.
2. **Concert Wardrobe:** Oversees producing and distributing concert scarves.
3. **Merchandising:** Oversees selling choir-branded merchandise, such as concert CDs and DVDs.

The work involved with each of these portfolios is completed in collaboration with the Choir Manager.

Portfolios may be created, amended and discontinued as needed by the board of directors.

role of the choir manager

Hired as an independent contractor (not an employee), the Choir Manager is the chief operational executive of the society, and receives direction from and reports to the board of directors. The Choir Manager is not a director and does not have to be a member of the society. Compensation does not include any benefits.

The Choir Manager is responsible for managing the choir's day-to-day operations, so that the society consistently achieves its purpose and financial objectives, and abides by its bylaws. Key duties within the detailed job description include:

- Act as a resource to directors day-to-day and at director meetings, and serve as their liaison with the choir and conductor, and to participate in planning and budgeting.
- Handle all banking activity, and maintain the society's bookkeeping and financial records.
- Handle all member, patron and prospective member communications to ensure all parties are kept up to date on choir activities.
- Receive incoming correspondence, and respond/redirect to directors as appropriate.
- Keep the directors and conductor fully informed on operational and financial issues.
- Establish rehearsal and concert dates, and book venues.

- Obtain sheet music and rehearsal tracks from the conductor, post them to the website, and coordinate the production and distribution of rehearsal CDs.
- Coordinate member registrations and fee payments each session.
- Purchase, store and maintain supplies and equipment.
- Maintain necessary liability insurance and memberships.
- Together with the conductor and directors:
 - establish the concert title and corresponding graphic each session, and
 - determine and invite concert guests.
- Oversee concert promotion through suitable media (such as print, radio, social media and online).
- Coordinate wardrobe and merchandising requirements and inventory.
- Develop and execute concert logistical plans, including dress rehearsal, stage set-up, and audio needs, in coordination with the Stage Manager.
- Coordinate choir photography, videography and audio recordings, and production of concert CDs and DVDs.
- Organize and manage tours, workshops and other special events in coordination with the conductor and directors.
- Keep the choir's website and social media pages up to date for both content and current practices.
- Maintain the database of members, patrons, prospective members, suppliers and session details accurately.
- Maintain the choir's electronic music library of rehearsal and concert files.
- Maintain custody of records and documents including books of account, required to comply with the BC Societies Act.

The Choir Manager is encouraged to recruit choir members and other volunteers to assist in executing tasks from time to time.

code of conduct

Directors are required to demonstrate ethical and professional conduct to maintain the confidence of the membership and the public. This commitment includes proper use of authority and appropriate actions in group and individual behaviour when acting as directors.

1. Directors must be loyal to the interest of the society's membership over and above any:
 - a) Loyalty to other advocacy or interest groups, or other boards or staffs to which they may belong.
 - b) Their own personal interest as an individual choir member.
2. Directors are trustees of public confidence and securities. They must avoid any conflict of interest.
 - a) There can be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any director and the society. Exceptions can occur only when there is openness, competitive opportunity, and equal access to information.
 - b) Directors must not use their position to obtain employment within the society for themselves or their family members.
3. Directors must not exert any individual authority over the society except as stated in the society's policies.
 - a) Individual directors may not speak on behalf of the society in interactions with the public, media and/or other entities, unless they have been granted authority to do so by the whole board of directors.
 - b) Directors must not make any judgements about the performance of other directors or the contracted professionals, unless their performance is being formally evaluated by the whole board of directors.
4. Directors must exercise fair play, ethics and straightforward communication in their dealings with outside entities or individuals, with members and contracted professionals, and with each other.