

# The Siskiyou Singers Handbook

## Spring 2025 Season

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### From the Artistic Director

The spring concert is titled “Earth Song” and includes music celebrating nature along with a little bit of an admonition to protect it.

The program will begin with two rather dark pieces, “Kasar mie la gaji” — The Earth is Tired — by Alberto Grau and “Break, Break, Break,” a piece set to a sad Tennyson poem about lost love by an unknown composer, Mark Reppert. 😊 Both pieces express discouragement. But the next piece brings hope. We hear the call of “The Bluebird” (by Charles Villiers Stanford) coming out of the darkness. The first half continues with “O Lovely Night” by Johannes Brahms, the fun Renaissance madrigal “Sweet Suffolk Owl” by Thomas Vautor and a wild piece by Eric Whitacre, “Little Birds.” The final piece of the first half is the sunny “Away From the Roll of the Sea” by Allistar MacGillvray, a piece the choir sang many years ago.

The second half begins with “The Lark In the Clear Air,” an Irish folk song arranged by Andrew Carter. It is the story of a young lover who is encouraged to pursue his love by the song of the lark. Another inspiring piece on the second half is “The Prow” by the young composer Matthew Hazzard. It tells of an exhilarating day out on the wild sea. We will then travel out to the prairie with a luscious arrangement by one of our favorite arrangers, Mark Hayes, of the old, familiar “Home on the Range.”

The program ends with a warning and hope. In a clever arrangement by Matt and Adam Podd (aka The Podd Brothers) Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi” tells us that “...you don’t know what you’ve got ’til it’s gone.” But, the final piece and namesake of the concert is “Earth Song” by Frank Ticheli. He tells us, “The scorched earth cries out in vain, O war and power you blind and blur,...[but] through darkness and strife I’ll sing!”

YouTube video links for most of this music are on the website, [siskiyousingers.org](https://siskiyousingers.org), along with a great deal of useful and interesting information. The password to the members section is “Silentnight” (no quotes).

Our concerts will be **May 10 and 11** at SOU Recital Hall. Rehearsals will be held on Tuesdays at Ashland’s First United Methodist Church. Our regular rehearsals start at 7:00 PM and end at 9:30. Please be early.

### How to Practice

I repeat this little essay every term for good reason, I believe: After 55 years of leading ensembles and many years spent in a practice room and giving private lessons, I think I have something of value to say. I have edited it to make it more understandable. I hope it helps.

The reason we are doing so well as a choir is that everyone takes responsibility for learning the music. It might seem that you can hide in the group and follow someone else and it will all be OK. Unfortunately, that means you are singing a little behind the beat and with a little less energy. Your contribution is crucial, whether it seems so or not. Stand in front for a while (or in the audience) and you'll understand.

Here are some suggestions to make your practice more productive:

- During our choir rehearsal, make it a habit to circle the sections that give you difficulty so that you can refer to them during your next week of practice. Saying "I'll just circle the whole thing!" is actually a cop out (yes, I learned that phrase in the '60s). Try to be as exact about your practicing needs as possible. That also saves your time. You can read my weekly Notes to learn those spots that I believe need work, but everyone has their own spots as well! If you ask choir members, they will usually disagree as to which spots in a particular piece are the most difficult.
- The use of Bandlab, an online DAW (look it up), is a far superior way to use rehearsal recordings than the basic recordings I produced in the past and that most choirs still use. There are excellent directions for its use on the website. However, it is NOT a requirement! Many people in the choir have their own practicing routine. Be sure to use what works for you.
- Be honest with yourself as to whether you actually know a particular section. Set a goal for yourself that, if everyone else in your section were absent, you could carry the part by yourself (probably not quite as loudly). This means a level of practice beyond guesswork. If you use Bandlab, listen to various combinations of parts. Be sure to do this with the music in front of you and a pencil (or stylus if you are a cool techie using a tablet) at hand. Eventually sing while listening to all the parts EXCEPT yours. If you do not use Bandlab, record yourself. This is a brutally honest way to check your actual progress!
- Concentrate on the difficult sections. This strategy is time much better spent even though it feels much better to practice the easy sections. Also, the process of actually determining which sections are the difficult ones is helpful in itself.
- When practicing a difficult fast passage, practice slowly first until you are so accomplished with it that you are bored with it and then try it at tempo. Usually that will do the trick. I am not a believer in the "set the metronome forward two ticks" approach. I think it builds in tension. Bandlab has a feature which is perfect for this. Above the tracks, click and drag to select the passage you would like to repeat. When you start within that area of the recording, you will hear that passage *ad infinitum*. The practice recordings also have slow versions for those pieces that move along.
- Finally, sing every day--even if it is just in the shower. Your voice will be stronger and, actually, you will be happier!



Mark Reppert  
Siskiyou Singers, Director

## From the President of the Board of Directors

Welcome to all returning and new singer members for our Spring 2025 term! Thank you to everyone who participated in the production and performances of our December Family Holiday Concert and our January 2025 Winter concerts. We received lots of applause, congratulations and 5 Star comments from our audience members and even had an unsolicited request from our local Channel 5 KOB TV for an interview with our Director, Mark Reppert, including a spot on the evening news with us singing a portion of the FREE Family Holiday Concert! Impressive and such wonderful PR and advertising for the Siskiyou Singers.

This is the Siskiyou Singers' 42nd year of performing choral music since being originally founded in 1982. Please see the "History" section a bit further on in this Handbook for details.

Artistic and Music Director, Mark Reppert, has put together what promises to be another program of beautiful and fun music that we will prepare and perform for our local community.

The Siskiyou Singers Board of Directors along with its various committee and task force members are entirely voluntary. We are a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and we rely heavily on our members to participate with us.

The BOD is always hard at work behind the scenes making sure things run as smoothly and professionally as possible. We want to not only keep our Siskiyou Singers choir performing music for our community but also to provide outreach to local elementary school students in hopes they will become our future audience members and possibly member singers. The board is tasked with many jobs to perform, and we always welcome the help of our member singers as well. We may be asking some of you to join us on the board or on some of our various committees and task forces. I hope you will thoughtfully consider volunteering your time and energy to help us and the Siskiyou Singers!

I remain available for you to help in any way I can to make singing in our choir an enjoyable and fulfilling experience!

Yours In Joyful Singing,

*Steve Thomas*

Steve Thomas

Siskiyou Singers President 2025 – '26

[president@siskiyousingers.org](mailto:president@siskiyousingers.org)

## History

Siskiyou Singers was founded by Jacqueline Dougherty in 1982 as a community choir. The first name of the group was Siskiyou Chamber Singers.

The choir has long since grown beyond the size of a chamber group. Under the musical direction of Dave Marston, who led the choir from 1988 until June of 2009, the group grew to more than 200 singers, with approximately 120 singing in each concert. Mark Reppert was chosen to be the choir's Interim Artistic Director/Conductor for the Fall 2009 term. Because of his outstanding capabilities, Mark was asked to continue on a permanent basis starting January 2010.

Typically, Siskiyou Singers offers two formal programs annually to the community, as well as participating in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Feast of Will, a holiday program at Paddington Station, "preview" concerts at the Rogue Valley Manor and Mountain Meadows retirement communities, and our school outreach program.

## Mission, Vision, and Values

**Mission:** The Siskiyou Singers seeks to promote and enrich musical culture in the Rogue Valley.

**Vision:** The Siskiyou Singers is a first-class choral group that performs a wide variety of the world's music and is accessible and affordable to listeners of all ages and interests.

**Values:**

- *Excellence* – We perform choral music that is recognized as excellent in both performance quality and imaginative programming.
- *Approachability* – We provide the opportunity to enjoy choral music, either as an audience member or as a singer. We keep ticket prices and membership fees as low as our financial situation allows.
- *Hospitality* – We provide a welcoming environment for all choir members and encourage choir collegiality and sense of community.
- *Diversity* – We strive to be inclusive in the types of musical programs we offer, and in our efforts to widen the demographics of our choir membership and our audiences.
- *Sustainability* – We manage choir operations with a focus on long term choir sustainability. This includes development and execution of plans to address the imperatives of financial sustainability, choir vitality and audience development.
- *Transparency* – The Board of Directors is proactive in providing choir members with access to current information about board discussions, issues, and actions, as well as choir financial status.

## **Choir Membership**

Membership in Siskiyou Singers is by audition and is granted at the discretion of the music director.

## **Attendance**

We rely on the membership to produce the highest quality musical performance of which we are capable. Consistency of attendance is of prime importance. Once you are a member of Siskiyou Singers you may return for any term. It is, however, the director's choice to re-audition any choir member after an extended absence. If you plan to be absent for a term or longer, please let the director, president, or your section leader know. This information will assist us in planning our concerts and in ordering the correct number of musical scores.

## **Soloists and Small Groups**

Participation in small groups and solo performances are the music director's choice and may or may not involve a special audition. Soloists are often chosen from choir members, but the director may deviate from this policy as he wishes.

## Board of Directors

Siskiyou Singers is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors. Membership on the board is granted by nomination and vote of the existing board. This is a working board, composed of volunteers. The board is responsible for the financial sustainability of the choir. Board members handle all basic functions of the organization, including registration, fund-raising, publicity, concert planning and preparation, program advertising, music distribution, and print materials for the concert.

Board Member	Title / Duties
Steve Thomas*	President of the Board
Michele Kyle*	President-Elect
Laura Barlow* <sup>Δ</sup>	Treasurer, Development Chair, Grant Writer
Mary Van Wesep* <sup>Δ</sup>	Secretary
Loretta Barker	Board Member
Mary Bergstrom	Banker
Jasmin Conley	Board Member
Sean Connolly	Board Member
Andrew Klein	Board Member
Carol Lambie	Board Member
Inga Leed	Board Member
Scott L. Nelson <sup>Δ</sup>	Contracts Manager, Grant Writer
Howie Seay <sup>Δ</sup>	Database Manager, Membership Chair
Mark Reppert	Music Director (non-voting)

\* Executive Committee members

<sup>Δ</sup> Development Committee members

## Section Leaders

Each choir section has a section leader. This person is responsible for arranging sectional rehearsals as needed, taking attendance at rehearsals, and helping to implement seating charts for rehearsal and performance. The section leader is your contact person if you must miss a rehearsal.

He or she is also available to arrange for help if you are having trouble learning the music or have special needs for the performance. The section leader will convey important information to the board through the liaison board member.

## Attendance

You are expected to attend every rehearsal and to be on time. If you must be late, enter as quietly as possible. If you must miss a rehearsal due to illness or other reason, please contact your section leader. If you are absent for more than two rehearsals, you may be required to show the musical director that you know the music well enough to continue.

## Know the Music

You are required to learn the music on your own. Only you can determine how much effort or time will be required of you outside of rehearsals to do this. Rehearsals are for working on dynamics, interpretation, blend, and all the nuances that make the difference between a mediocre performance and one that truly sings! *Rehearsals are not for learning your part.* Practice recordings are available online. You may employ any other aids that you require, such as taping rehearsals, as long as fellow singers are not disrupted.

## Consideration for Other Singers

1. Please don't wear scented products. Other singers may have allergies, and we are working in close quarters.
2. Turn off cell phones and other handheld devices during rehearsals. Do not bring such devices onstage during performances.
3. Listen to the conductor during rehearsals. Avoid conversations with your fellow singers.
4. Enjoy your time with us. We pride ourselves on being a friendly group.  
Camaraderie is encouraged before and after rehearsals and during the break.

## Fees

Each member pays a \$35.00 fee per concert term (Fall or Spring). This non-refundable fee

goes to help defray the costs of producing the concerts and paying the salaries of our professional musicians.

All fees are due in full by the third rehearsal of each session. If you cannot meet this obligation, you may inquire about a scholarship to cover these fees. A limited number of scholarships are available.

## **Ticket sales**

Siskiyou Singers depends on ticket sales and members' fees to help cover the costs of preparing and performing concerts. Choir members are encouraged to help by actively promoting our concerts, posting fliers, and selling tickets to family, friends, and associates. Members are responsible for returning, before the performance, either tickets or money for tickets sold to the person in charge of ticket sales. We all want to perform to full houses. Your participation in building our audience is a critical contribution as a member of the choir.

## **Music**

All music must be in black folders for performances.

Singers have the option of borrowing or purchasing music. Borrowed music is included in the registration fee and must be returned at the end of the term. You may only mark it with erasable markings – no ink or highlighting. Some singers choose to make copies of their music so that they can use highlighters. You may choose to purchase your music for the season as a package, in which case the music is yours to mark up as you please.

## **Roster**

A roster will be produced and posted on our web site for the use of the Board and singers. Rosters are the property of the Siskiyou Singers and are not to be used for any personal or business solicitations.

## **Expenses**

All reimbursable expenditures on behalf of the Siskiyou Singers must be pre-approved by the treasurer or president. Distribution of complimentary ("comp") tickets is also not allowed without pre-approval.



## Concert Dress Guidelines



Our overall look should complement, not distract from, the music and communicate a certain level of seriousness. As you can see from the photo above, Siskiyou Singers has chosen a formal black look. It is professional and unified. That's what we're after.

Everyone is in black from head to toe (including shoes and stockings), with arms fully covered. The exception is a white dress shirt worn with a black suit jacket.

**Your concert dress options, regardless of gender, are:**

### **1. The all-black look**

- a. Black long-sleeved full-length dress (hem should touch the top [instep] of the foot)
- b. Black long-sleeved blouse/shirt with a black full-length skirt, or trousers (hems should touch the top [instep] of the foot)
- c. Black shoes and stockings
- d. Black vest is optional
- e. Black bow tie is optional

### **2. The black suit look**

- a. Black dress trousers (hem should touch the top [instep] of the foot)
- b. White or black dress shirt
- c. Black suit jacket
- d. Black bow tie
- e. Black shoes and stockings
- f. Black vest is optional

Plain black fabrics (not sparkly) are essential for a professional and unified look. Jewelry is OK if it is minimal and in keeping with this same goal.

Dress/Skirt/Slacks length and Sleeve length are extremely important to our overall appearance.

Black dress slacks/trousers should be just that; no jeans, leggings, yoga pants, or other casual pants. Use common sense.

If you have any questions or concerns about your concert dress, please speak with your section leader at least three weeks prior to the concert. He or she will assist you in any way possible.

## **Thank You**

Our sincere thanks to each and every choir member, Mark, accompanist Mikiko Petrucelli, our board of directors, committee members, and volunteers. Your full participation and support of Siskiyou Singers is appreciated. Working together, as a family, we truly make this a wonderful community of singers and friends.