



POLICY DOCUMENT ON AUDITIONS AND RE-AUDITIONS

When St George's Singers (SGS) changed to being an auditioned choir the change was a traumatic one for many members. The committee wishes to ensure that the policy on auditions and re-auditions is approved and understood by all members. This document sets out the current policy on auditions and re-auditions and the principles that inform it.

Concerning the rationale for auditions, the main principle is that the audition process should reflect the overall context of the choir. It should be informed by a clear vision of the character and aspirations of SGS and what the choir expects of its members. Concerning the conduct of the process, the main principles are the need to ensure (a) sensitivity and (b) transparency. The audition process is a difficult one, both for individuals and potentially for the choir as a whole. Therefore it is vital that the process is managed in a sensitive and transparent way.

Background considerations

As a basis for discussion, the following points should be considered:

1. As a choir, SGS is strongly geared towards the raising of musical standards and levels of performance. This means that membership of SGS involves a commitment to improve as a choral singer. This commitment is reflected in the fact that in recent years the musical profile of the choir has risen, our concerts are regularly given great critical acclaim, and we have received invitations from leading orchestras and conductors.
2. The purpose of auditions, therefore, is to maintain musical standards, and to contribute towards the development and success of the choir and singers by assessing vocal performance regularly and providing guidance where necessary.
3. It is important that good personal relations are maintained within the choir and that each member feels individually valued – both as a singer and as a member of the choir community.
4. It would be surprising if the turnover in membership arising from the re-auditions process was numerically significant, bearing in mind that everyone will have passed at least one or two auditions previously and attended rehearsals regularly under the tutelage of the MD.
5. What is expected of a member of SGS?
 - a. Vocal and musical ability
 - b. Regular and **punctual** attendance at rehearsals
 - c. Watching the conductor and keeping proper records of markings in the copy
 - d. Concentration in rehearsals
 - e. Contributing to the choir community – *although this is peripheral to the re-audition process*
 - f. Singing in concerts – *although this is peripheral to the re-audition process*
6. SGS has decided to fund the services of a vocal coach to help members to identify any vocal weaknesses and provide help to overcome them. The vocal coach will attend rehearsals 4–5 times a season and do 8 x 0.25-hour sessions each time. These sessions will be made available to anyone who would like to attend and will be included in the cost of membership subscription.

Current policy

A. Principles

1. Auditions and re-auditions should be conducted in as similar a way as possible.
2. Re-auditions of the whole choir are to be held on a three-yearly cycle (in two groups: sopranos/tenors in one year, altos/basses in the next, followed by a year with no re-auditions).
3. New members who have been auditioned during the previous 12 months need not be re-auditioned, at the discretion of the MD.
4. Auditions and re-auditions are conducted by the MD, who is responsible for all musical aspects of auditions and re-auditions, including decisions regarding the success or failure of the audition or re-audition, and any other comments or recommendations made to the member.
5. The musical standard set by the MD for the re-auditions will be consistent with the aims and aspirations of SGS.
6. A member who passes the re-audition will then be a member of the choir for the next three years.

B. The re-audition process

1. About two months before the re-auditions, members will be given a calendar of available dates and times so that they can select a date and time for their re-audition. Also at this time members will be informed (or reminded) by the MD of the form the re-audition will take. All members should have an arranged re-audition appointment by one month before the first one is due, although it is acknowledged that there may need to be negotiation and re-negotiation for individuals when circumstances change.
2. At the re-audition a member of the committee (or other designated choir member) will be present to receive members as they arrive and assist in other ways, but will not be present during the re-audition itself, which involves only the MD and the individual singer.
3. The MD will give immediate feedback to each choir member at their re-audition, informing them of the outcome in a clear and unambiguous fashion. A copy of the vocal assessment feedback form will be given to each member, outlining both the outcome and potential areas for development. This will be emailed to the member shortly after the audition by the Secretary.
4. In the case of persons who pass the re-audition but who, in the judgement of the MD, are at risk of failing at the next audition in three years' time, the member will be informed about this and counselled as to the steps they need to take, for example a course of singing lessons with teacher suggested, online resources (to be sourced), sessions with the SGS vocal coach. The MD will tell the person involved, the Chair and the Secretary only. When the vocal coach is next available, these people will be invited to his/her session. There will be no formal re-audition of such members within the three year cycle; however, if the member wishes to be heard by the MD to assess their progress they may make a request to the MD, or via Chair or Secretary.
5. In the case of persons who do not pass the re-audition the MD will inform the Secretary and the Chair, who will inform the member in writing that they are welcome to sing until the end of that season, but will be asked to retire before the next season.
6. Following a set of re-auditions, the MD will report to the committee on the outcomes, the implications of the outcomes for the Choir, and any recommendations the MD might have for future re-auditions and changes to the policy and process.

Individual elements of the audition/vocal assessment

1. Solo performance. Please choose something that showcases your voice. The intention of this part of the audition/re-audition is to show musicianship, diction, phrasing and intonation. Your choice of piece should be a solo piece for your voice part, not your part of a piece written for four-part harmony, or a hymn, or a simple folk song. Sing something that shows off how well you sing. Please remember to bring a spare copy of your piece if it is not *a capella*. If you're not sure what works best for your voice your singing teacher or the SGS vocal coach will be able to help you.
2. Vocal range - this is not a test, it's just an opportunity for the MD to assess which section you should be in (in most cases this will be the one you're currently in!).
3. Vocal exercises (memory test and chords) - this section is an opportunity for the MD to assess your vocal skills and your response to coaching. It's not expected that you won't make any mistakes, but how quickly you respond to direction is important to the speed of rehearsing.
4. Sight-reading - this is not sudden death! Again, it's expected that you will make some mistakes the first time. The MD is assessing how quickly you can make progress when learning a new piece of music. Sample sight singing tests are available on the Associated Board website for you to practice <http://www.abrsm.org/exams/gradedMusicExams/mockauraltests2.html>
5. General - these are general points about your voice, and your performance as a member of SGS. If some sections of the form are blank, it means that there is nothing to worry about! However, this section might help you to work effectively with your singing teacher or the SGS vocal coach.

St George's Singers vocal assessment feedback form

Please fill in the top part and give the form to the Musical Director

Name:			
Date of assessment		Current voice part	
Title of prepared piece			
Composer			

1. Solo performance

2. Vocal range	C	C	C	X	C	C	C
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3. Vocal exercises: response to coaching

Short melody	1	2	3	4	5
Three-note chord	1	2	3	4	5
Four-note chord	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sight-reading	1	2	3	4	5

5. General:

posture

.....

breath management

.....

voice size

.....

tone / blend / colour

.....

punctual attendance
at rehearsals

.....

rehearsal discipline

.....

**You have passed your
audition/re-audition**

YES

/

NO

**Areas you need to
work on before your
next audition**