

Moravian Choir

Syllabus - Fall 2006

Course Numbers:

Moravian Choir: MUS 310 (majors), MUS 001 (elective), or MUS 011 (M6 credit)

Music Director: Dr. Paula Ring Zerkle

Office: Rm. 308, Music Building

Office Hours: M/W 2:30p-3:30p

Voicemail: 610-861-1681

Email: zerkle@moravian.edu

CHORAL OFFICERS

Becky Dries, President (strld03@moravian.edu)
Chelsea Dehner and Lisa Toth, Managers/VPs (stcad08@moravian.edu) (stlst01@moravian.edu)
Megan Greiner, Secretary (stmeg03@moravian.edu)
Josh Beri, Treasurer (stjbb09@moravian.edu)
Section leaders: to be determined

Please see “**General Information**” for goals of the choir and details on operations.

GRADING AND CREDIT

- All music majors enrolled in MU310 (Performance) at any credit level with concentrations in voice, piano, organ, guitar, or electric bass must participate in a large choral ensemble each semester for credit and a grade to fulfill the large ensemble requirement. Vocal ensembles can also serve as secondary ensembles to wind, brass, string, and percussion majors, and two semesters are required of all music education majors with an instrumental concentration.
- Grading for MU310 is based on attendance, active participation, preparation, and performance:

Attendance	40%
Active participation	40%
Preparation (including quizzes)	10%
Performance	10%

- **Credit.** All students who are non-music majors must register for one of the choir’s two other course numbers: MUS001 (elective), or MUS011 (M6 credit). These students are expected to participate in all rehearsals, performances, and tours. Students who wish to fulfill their M6 (Aesthetic Expression) requirement with choir must complete six semesters of the ensemble. In addition, each semester, those wishing M6 credit will be required to produce written program notes on works selected by the director from the semester's repertoire. For either course number, if you are properly registered each semester, a .5 unit of credit will appear on the transcript after passing four semesters, and a full unit will appear after passing 6 semesters. There will not be a charge for this credit.
- **Singer evaluation.** A rubric sheet will be filled out each week for every participant in the choir, regardless of their registration status. Anyone not taking this class for a grade is expected to follow the same attendance and participation rules as those who are receiving a grade.
- **Exams.** Periodic oral quizzes may be given during the course of a semester. These will usually consist of singing your own part either alone or with other parts.
- Anyone who accumulates three or more unexcused absences in Choir may be suspended from the ensemble. **If you miss the dress rehearsal prior to a concert, you will not be allowed to perform in the concert.**

ATTENDANCE

- **Attendance is required at all rehearsals.** At the beginning of each semester, a choir schedule will be distributed, and all singers must complete a commitment form stating any scheduling conflicts with this schedule by the end of the 2nd week of rehearsals.
- **Arrival time.** You are expected to be in your seat with music and pencil in hand and ready to go **BEFORE** the start of the rehearsal. Coming in late or even just at the start of the rehearsal disrupts everyone's energy and focus. If you do happen to be late, please stand just inside the door until the director is able to make an appropriate break in the rehearsal for you to sit. When you arrive, put your gear on the front benches and bring only your music to your seat.
- **If you are sick, you are expected to sit quietly to the side during rehearsal and mark music.**
- If you are very ill (vomiting, high temperature), you must call the music director AND email the choral secretary **prior** to the rehearsal. If you do miss a rehearsal due to illness, you must bring a doctor's excuse to the choral secretary by the next rehearsal AND fill out an absence form. Anyone not following these procedures will not be excused from the absence. The **ONLY** exception is in the case of an absolute emergency (to be determined by Choral Director and Officers).
- For every unexcused absence, 20 points are deducted from the weekly attendance grade; for excused absences, 5 points, and for each unexcused late, 10 points. An unexcused absence from a concert will subtract 20 points from the overall grade.
- Any singer with more than three unexcused absences may be subject to dismissal from the ensemble.
- **EVERYONE MUST PARTICIPATE FOR THE FULL LENGTH OF DESIGNATED DRESS REHEARSALS OR THEY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SING IN THE CONCERT** (and will have the corresponding number of points deducted).

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Everyone in the choir is expected to participate actively in all rehearsals and concerts. Naturally, we each bring a different level of musical proficiency to the choir. However, with the help of the director and other choral members, you are expected to grow as a musician. Thus, 40% of your evaluation in choir comprises your work toward improving the following musical skills:

Singing technique:

- Correct posture and breathing (both standing and sitting)
- Correct head and neck position
- Healthy tone production
- Proper diction and vowel shaping

Listening and ensemble singing skills:

- Hearing quality of your own voice and vocal section
- Hearing how your part works with the others and be able to sing against other parts
- Singing with good intonation
- Singing with proper balance and blend
- Evaluating the quality of the singing in your ensemble

Musical skills:

- Understanding rhythm and meter
- Understanding dynamic markings and articulations
- Improving sight-singing ability
- Understanding musical terms and developing a system of score markings
- Developing rudimentary understanding of form

Knowledge of historical and stylistic context of the music and aesthetic connections:

- Noting the historical background given on a piece
- Understanding the style and genre of the works
- Understanding the meaning of the text, whether in English or a foreign language
- Being aware of aesthetic elements of each piece

Appropriate rehearsal and performance behavior:

- Not talking while any part of the choir is rehearsing

- Acting responsible and attentive during rehearsals
- Demonstrating professional behavior during performances
- Being respectful of yourself, others, and the director at all times

PREPARATION

Preparation consists of two different aspects: your work in the rehearsal and your work outside the rehearsal. Singers learn music in different ways at different paces. However, everyone in this ensemble is expected to spend some time on their music outside of the rehearsal room, whether it's in reviewing notes and rhythms, working out difficult passages, refining musical nuances, or memorizing music and words. Shoot for 30-60 minutes/week of choir music study. At times you and/or your section may be called upon to demonstrate your knowledge of the music. You may also be required to perform sections of the works in a mixed quartet or small group.

PERFORMANCE

The performance is the culminating event of the semester. It brings together everything that we have worked on for the past several months. The performance also represents the college to the community. Therefore, it's important that you comport yourself with poise and professionalism. Take pride in the work you and your colleagues have accomplished. And enjoy the excitement and beauty of the music!

REHEARSAL TIPS

Just a few more things to keep in mind....

Be on time. One of the things that cuts into the productivity of a rehearsal is late arrivals. Be considerate of yourself and others and be in your seat before the rehearsal begins. Anticipate the unknowns of the new bus schedule, so you have plenty of time to get to south campus.

Be prepared. No, I'm not talking about a scout troop. I'm talking about practicing between rehearsals. You should spend at least 30-60 minutes a week going over your music using whatever method you can. Sometimes the director will give specific assignments, but most of the time you'll find that if you review your music just a little each day, rehearsals will be MUCH more productive, you'll enjoy them more, and we won't do that dreaded "backsliding" that so often happens in ensembles.

Warm up ahead of time. You can start your warm-ups early by humming or singing gently in the car, bus, or hallway on the way to rehearsal. If everyone in the choir arrives with partially warm voices, the group warm-ups can focus more on the ensemble sound and intonation drills rather than shaking the road dust out of everyone's throats.

Be aware. From the moment the rehearsal starts, use the vocal warm ups to bring your attention to yourself. Become aware of your breath, your posture, and any tension in your body. Try to loosen the tension and bring your body to an alert, but relaxed and open state.

Stay focused. Throughout the rehearsal, continue to bring your attention to the things we are working on at the time: your part, choral sound, the musical shape of the line. Seems simple, but in reality our mind tends to cruise all over the place, thinking about all sorts of things that have nothing to do with rehearsal. At the same time, try to keep in mind the important things such as your posture, breath, and vocal tone. The director will often direct your attention to a specific thing, so go with it.

Develop healthy expectations. Expect the best from yourself. Even on days when you feel tired or depleted, put your best effort forward, and you will get much more out of your time in rehearsal, than if you just slumped. And we'll get more out of you!

Respect others. When the director is working with one of the sections, it is not an excuse for you to start talking to your neighbor. That disrupts the rehearsal, shows lack of consideration for others, and makes it hard for the section that's working to learn and hear their music. If you're not singing, look over your music and try to hear your part in your head and how it fits with the other parts. It's tough to do, but if you keep working at it, you'll notice your ability to hear in the ensemble greatly improves.

Smell good. Realize you're sitting very closely next to each other, and smells affect us as well as our throats. If you smoke, realize your clothes have an odor that may be troublesome to others. And it's best to leave off strong perfume, after-shave, cologne, or other scents, since folks often have allergies to such things.

Keep these instructions in mind, and you'll be amazed at how much more productive and enjoyable your choral experience will be.

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Goals of the Choral Program at Moravian College

To provide the students at Moravian College an exciting experience of standard choral repertoire, through performance and/or concert attendance

To involve students with a broad range of musical compositions, including, but not limited to, works by women composers, world music composers, student composers, and Moravian composers

To teach musical expression and vocal production, through enhancing students' knowledge of phrase shaping, articulation, diction, posture, and correct breathing techniques

To encourage individual integrity and responsibility along with teamwork and group responsibility. Special exercises and activities during rehearsals as well as performances and tours are used to help in increasing individual self-awareness and in strengthening respect and appreciation among singers within the vocal ensembles

To integrate current repertoire with music curriculum, whenever possible

To encourage involvement from members of the Moravian community and of the Lehigh Valley community

MEMBERSHIP AND AUDITIONS

- Membership is open to all Moravian students, staff, and faculty and members of the Lehigh Valley community
- All new vocalists who wish to join the Moravian Choir must audition for the Music Director. A returning member of either group will not be asked to re-audition, unless the singer wishes to be in a group they have not been in before.
- **Auditionees** will be expected to
 - sing a prepared song of their choice (with or without accompaniment)
 - sight-read excerpts from choral repertoire
 - sing vocal exercises as led by the Choral Director
- Decisions on membership are based on the singer's performance in the audition in relationship to the balance of the ensemble. If someone wants to re-audition, it must be done within a week of the first audition.
- **Solo Auditions.** Sign up sheets for solo auditions will be available about two weeks in advance of the audition date, along with a list of expected criteria for the solo. The Choral Director and accompanist will be present during the audition. Decision for the solos will be made by the Choir Director and will be based on the level of musical preparation of audition material and on the level of performance according to the criteria expected.

REPERTOIRE

- Repertoire is chosen by the Choral Director in line with the Goals of the Choral Program.
- Other priorities considered in choosing repertoire include: works by student and faculty composers; works suggested by choral members; works that allow collaboration with others in the music department or in other departments
- **All choral members are expected to use a 1-inch black binder in good condition to hold music and will be asked to purchase a Coro-Grip hand strip and binder music holder.**

CONCERTS AND SCHEDULES

- The Moravian Choir normally participates in seven scheduled concerts in the fall (one pre-Vespers concert and six Vespers services) and a Spring Concert in the second semester. Other performances or tours may be added. In addition, the Moravian Choir is expected to perform for Baccalaureate and Graduation.
- All members of the choirs are expected to attend all scheduled rehearsals, retreats, concerts, and tours that occur during a semester. Singers will be notified of these events in a schedule handed out at the beginning of the semester. The groups usually travel abroad every 4 years or so, and locally in the U.S. in the off-years.
- **EVERYONE MUST PARTICIPATE FOR THE FULL LENGTH OF DESIGNATED DRESS REHEARSALS OR THEY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO SING IN THE CONCERT**

ATTENDANCE

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- **If a singer is sick, he or she is expected to sit quietly during rehearsal and mark music.**
- **If a singer is very ill** (vomiting, high temperature), he or she must call or email the music director AND the choral secretary prior to the rehearsal. Students who miss rehearsals due to illness must bring a **doctor's excuse** to the choral secretary by the next rehearsal AND fill out an absence form. Any singer not following these procedures will not be excused from the absence. The **ONLY** exception is in the case of an absolute emergency (to be determined by Choral Director and Officers).
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requirement. Vocal ensembles can also serve as secondary ensembles to wind, brass, string, and percussion majors, and two semesters are required of all music education majors with an instrumental concentration.

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- **Singer evaluation.** A rubric sheet will be filled out each week for each participant in the choir, regardless of their registration status.
- Anyone who accumulates three or more unexcused absences in Choir may be suspended from the ensemble. **If you miss the dress rehearsal prior to a concert, you will not be allowed to perform in the concert.**
- **Non music majors.** Anyone not taking this class for a grade is expected to follow the same attendance rules as those who are registered for it.
- **Exams.** Periodic oral quizzes may be given during the course of a semester. These will usually consist of singing your own part either alone or with other parts.
- **Credit.** All students must register for one of the choir's three course numbers: MUS310, MUS001, or MUS011. Students who wish to fulfill their M6 (Aesthetic Expression) requirement with choir must complete six semesters of the ensemble. These students are expected to participate in all rehearsals, performances, and tours. In addition, each semester, singers will be required to produce written program notes on works selected by the director from the semester's repertoire. If you are properly registered each semester for either elective or M6 credit, a .5 unit of credit will appear on the transcript after passing four semesters, and a full unit will appear after passing 6 semesters.

CONCERT ATTIRE

- Women are required to purchase a specific floor-length black dress through the College (\$80) and wear black stockings, flat black shoes, and a strand of pearls.
- Men are required to wear a tuxedo, which they may purchase through the College or from a local retailer (usually around \$200) if they do not already own one. The entire outfit includes a tux with a white shirt, black bow tie, black cummerbund, black socks, and black shoes.

CHORAL OFFICERS

- Two to three weeks before the end of the academic year, Choral Officers are elected in both vocal ensembles for the following academic year. Officers attend regular meetings (usually every week) with the Choral Director.

General duties that apply to all Officers are:

- act as liaison between choir members and the conductor and serve as models of behavior and choral decorum
- meet weekly or bi-weekly with the conductor
- arrange for rehearsal refreshments when necessary
- assist conductor in arrangements for fundraisers, tours, retreats, social events, publicity, and more, as needed
- assist conductor in guiding and facilitating choir policy, resolution of personnel conflicts, and public relations
- run elections

Duties specific to each office are:

President

- public spokesperson for choral ensemble and in charge of publicity
- in charge of overseeing the other officers and organizing choral activities inside and outside of rehearsals

Manager (Vice-President)

- responsible for logistical set up for rehearsals, concerts, and refreshments
- assists president and director in the running of the ensemble

Secretary

- in charge of daily attendance, commitment and release forms - supplies Director with accumulative list of absences each week
- choir correspondent

Treasurer

- in charge of fundraising, money collecting, ordering concert attire, music distribution, and tour money management

Section Leaders

- At the beginning of each semester section leaders will be chosen (at least one (1) from each vocal part) to be a representative and liaison to their respective voice section. These people will be part of the Choral Board and may be asked to attend occasional meetings with the Choral Officers and the Choral Director. The section leaders are also expected to be able to run occasional sectional rehearsals.

The Choral Board

- This group will be made up of the Choral Officers, Choral Director and section leaders from each choral ensemble. The Board will hold periodic meetings and will deal with issues such as tour planning, fundraising, repertoire planning, personnel conflicts etc. These meetings are not closed. Anyone from the choral groups is able to come to these meetings and express ideas and concerns.

TOURS

- The Choral Officers will assist the music director in the planning and organizing of performance tours. The Treasurer will assist in fundraising and money collection.
- For extended tours, special tasks may be assigned to various students, who will work with the Music Director in the planning and preparation of the tour. These tasks include Planning, Attendance-taking, Stage Set-up and Instrument handling, Photography, Concert Recording, among others.

EVALUATIONS

- Each semester members of the ensemble will complete **Conductor/Course Evaluation Forms**. After the ensemble grades are turned in, these forms are made available to the conductor and placed in her permanent file.
- Additional evaluations may be distributed by the Director and may consist of three parts: 1) an evaluation of yourself, including a review of your attendance, attitude, contributions to the group, and personal experience, 2) an evaluation of the Officers and how you perceive their accomplishments, and 3) an additional evaluation of the conductor that does not become an official school document. These forms may be signed or left anonymous and are returned to the Choral Officers. As with the Conductor/Course Evaluation Forms, the Director may not read them until the course grades have been completed. These evaluations will then be reviewed by the Choral Officers and in conjunction with the Director.
- Throughout the semester, choral members are encouraged to communicate both satisfaction and discontent to the conductor, individually or in groups. If the choral member is uncomfortable approaching the Choir Director, that member may speak to a Choral Officer or a section leader.