

Moravian Choir

Syllabus - Spring 2007

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

Voice: 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 (stjib09@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 not 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 PRINCIPLES

When you first get to rehearsal... 1) arrive at least 5 minutes before starting time, 2) place bags, coats etc. on benches in front, 3) take out music binder and pencil, and 4) sit down and look over your music quietly in preparation to begin rehearsal.

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 productive and enjoyable your choral experience can be.