

The William & Mary Schola Cantorum

COVID-19 Response Plan

August 2020

A central mission of the William & Mary Schola Cantorum is to perform sacred choral music in a liturgical setting in partnership with ministries on campus and in the Williamsburg community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of singing and gathering for in-person worship both face strict limitations, imposed in order to prevent airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2. Understanding the utmost importance of following all established health guidelines, the Schola is seeking to continue to provide its members with the experience of learning and singing a variety of sacred choral works while reimagining the format of rehearsals and performances.

We are shifting our focus away from in-person choral services (even live-streamed ones without congregation), and are looking to create high-quality recordings of our repertoire. The goal of recording rather than performing will grant us additional flexibility; adopting technologies such as BandLab will allow members to participate virtually, even in the event that members choose to remain at home or the university campus is prematurely closed. We intend to continue to provide seasonal musical offerings, and have worked to expand our online platforms so as to release these to the communities we serve. The Directors of the ensemble are in the process of building the necessary skills to pursue a recording-based agenda, and will seek the input of members who have relevant experience.

There can be no replacement for the bonding experience of in-person choral singing; however, we acknowledge the need to build relationships among members in the hope that such experiences can soon be restored. The Directors will prioritize direct communication with all members, through online meetings as well as in emails and on social media. Plans will be made with consideration of the opinions and comfort levels of all members.

We believe that meeting in person whenever and however possible will be important in creating a sense of community within the organization. Under the new university policies, this will involve dividing the membership into groups of fewer than ten people with additional once-monthly gatherings of the full ensemble (as individuals are comfortable). We have worked with community partners to identify well-ventilated spaces that will allow for maximum distancing between individuals. Rehearsals will be of a duration of 45 minutes or less to mitigate transmission risk. Compliance with contact tracing, mask, and social distancing mandates is obligatory for in-person attendance of any gathering, and we fully expect all members to have affirmed their compliance with William & Mary's *Healthy Together* policy. We will be communicative about our commitment to the health of everyone in the organization and the surrounding community and will not tolerate laxity among members; in-person gatherings will be treated as an optional privilege.

By maintaining communication and setting achievable, flexible goals, the William & Mary Schola Cantorum will weather the COVID-19 pandemic in a spirit of hope. Our guiding principle will be the safeguarding of the health of our members, so that we can all experience the mental, spiritual, social, and emotional benefits of singing together again in the near future.