CANADIAN celtic choir

MEMBERS HANDBOOK

2026 - 2027



Welcome to The Canadian Celtic Choir

BIOGRAPHY:

You are part of a SATB choir of more than forty voices that was founded in 1996. Our stated purpose is to sing and promote Celtic and Canadian cultural choral music and culture in Southwestern Ontario and beyond.

The Choir's repertoire features songs primarily inspired by Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales, and the Canadian Maritimes. Our songs range from the traditional to a more contemporary style (including a few songs sung in Irish, Gaelic, Welsh, and Latin).

The Choir has provided the city of London and surrounding communities with high quality choral music for more than 25 years. The Canadian Celtic Choir (CCC) is conducted by Paul Grambo, who may also serve as our M. C. Our accompanist is Steve Holowitz.

The CCC has performed at many venues throughout Ontario and the Maritimes: A partial list includes: The Canada Summer Games, Windsor Celtic Festival, Goderich Celtic Roots Festival, Owen Sound Celtic Festival, Fergus Highland Games, Home County Music & Art Festival, Canterbury Folk Festival, Fieldcote Summer Music Series, Lighthouse Theatre, The Aeolian Hall, and Wolf Performance Hall.

We frequently sing with other Celtic groups. Among these were: The Men of The Deeps, The Irish Descendants, Lighthouse, Rant, Maggie Rant, Jeans 'n' Classics, North Sea Gas, Shane Cook and the Woodchippers, and Celtic Shift.

The choir has a relationship with a number of prominent singers who appear with us in concert on occasion. These have included: Denise Pelly, Dan Stacey, John Tesh, Kitty Donahue, John McDermott, James Gordon, as well as other well-known Celtic performers.

In April 2007, the CCC, the first choral group to be selected from outside of the Ottawa area to sing at a National Ceremony of Remembrance, was honored to sing at the 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge Service at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. That event was broadcast nationally on CBC television/radio and on CTV.

The choir has made several singing tours. In March 2008, the Choir travelled to Maui, Hawaii for our first international tour. In July 2014, we toured Scotland and England singing in several historic venues. In June of 2017, the Choir toured the Canadian Maritimes. During that tour, the choir sang for the Citizenship Ceremony at Pier 21 in Halifax as part of Canada's 150th anniversary and in several other venues in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI.

The CCC has been recognized with both awards and nominations through the years for our music. Winning the Best Classical Vocal Group category of the London Music Awards three straight years in a row was an achievement of which we can be proud. Other accomplishments we celebrate include being inducted into the London Music Awards Hall of Fame, winning and been nominated for the Most Popular Classical Choir many times as part of the Jack Richardson London Music Awards and receiving the Mayor's Award from the City of London for our cultural contributions.

The CCC is a registered Ontario non-profit organization based in London, Ontario.

MISSION:
Our mission is to delight audiences with our unique Celtic repertoire and sound through engaging, innovative, and impassioned performances and recordings.

VISION:
Our vision is for the Choir to be widely recognized and sought after because of our excellence in the performance of Celtic and Canadian cultural music.

OUR VALUES:
We value: Excellence -- Innovation -- Integrity -- Inclusivity -- Collegiality

CONDUCTOR: Paul Grambo
As a London-based baritone, conductor and educator, Paul Grambo is an active member of the local music and theatre community regularly performing with local opera and theatre companies, jazz and classical musicians and as a chorister and soloist with the Grammy and Juno nominated Elora Singers.

Originally from Brandon, Manitoba, he has had the great privilege to have extensively performed and studied across western Canada including the Banff Centre, the Edmonton Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria.

As a teacher and conductor, Paul maintains and active and vibrant vocal studio in London's Old South while acting as Conductor of the Canadian Celtic Choir, Artistic Director of the London Pro Musica Choir and Assistant-Director of the St. James Westminster Church Choir.

Paul holds a Bachelor's in Vocal Performance from Brandon University and a Master's in Music from Western University.

ACCOMPANIST: Steve Holowitz
Stephen Holowitz is Director of Music at St. James Westminster Anglican Church in London Ontario. He received his formal musical training at Lakehead University and at the University of Western Ontario. He has recently retired after teaching music at A.B. Lucas S.S. for over thirty years.

Stephen is a native of Thunder Bay where he led a number of jazz groups in the area, the most notable of which was "Occasional Jazz". He moved to London in 1983, where he completed a Bachelor of Music in Performance (Organ and Church Music) and a Bachelor of Education (Music, Dramatic Arts). He has been featured with the London Encore Concert Band, Orchestra London, Brassroots, London Pro Musica, the Karen Schussler Singers, and Herencia Latina. Along with Oliver Whitehead, he was keyboardist and co-composer for The Antler River Project a London ensemble which blended jazz, world music and contemporary composition into a unique musical experience.

Stephen can also be seen and heard performing with Denise Pelley, Paul Stevenson and the

contemporary folk group “Celtic Shift”. Stephen has recorded two CDs of original arrangements of traditional hymns and gospel music and has composed music for the Amabile Youth Choir, Project Sing, and the Grand Theatre.

Stephen became accompanist for the Canadian Celtic Choir in November 2022

WEBSITE:
The CCC is very fortunate in that we have a very informative website, put together by our Web Master. www.celticchoir.ca. Please contact, webmaster@celticchoir.ca to make sure that you can key into the “Members” section of the web site. When you do, you will gain access to the following: Choir Calendar, Choir Roster, Sectionals, our previously recorded CD’s, Choir Documents, and member photos. Please take note of the “*Choir Documents”* tab in the *“Members”* Section, as it contains information that is extremely informative and helpful to you as a member of the CCC.

APPENDIX:
Canadian Celtic Choir policies are appended at the back of this handbook.

FACEBOOK:
The Canadian Celtic Choir has a Facebook page dedicated to promoting the choir and its Celtic roots, as well as keeping fans and followers up to date with our comings and goings. Upcoming concerts and choir appearances are advertised, with 3rd party links for on-line ticket purchasing. Photos and occasionally music recordings are also shared on this page. As this page reflects the choir’s public image, it is managed by the choir’s Social Media administrator. Any potential postings on this page need to be vetted through them. Check it out and click “like” to become a follower.

For all members of the CCC, there is a member’s only (& alumni) Facebook group that you as a new member are welcome to join. This group is much more relaxed. Members are encouraged to share photos, memories, anything Celtic &/or musical that may be of interest including humour and fun, as well as news (sad or happy) of events in member’s lives so that we can support each other. To join this private group, you must “FB friend” a fellow CCC member who is in the group already or the group administrator. Just search & send the administrator a Friend Request & they will send you a group invitation.

HOW THIS CHOIR WORKS:
The Canadian Celtic Choir considers itself a “choir family”. We welcome newcomers, and endeavor to be supportive to all of our members. We contract with our conductor and accompanist, but have no employees, as such. The Choir functions because the members contribute their time and talents to make sure it does. There are many ways to help our Choir to operate in a seamless way.

Most of our members sell concert tickets to friends, family and neighbors, and after every concert we find that a large proportion of our audience came to the performance because of the actions of our Choir members.

There are other ways to help the Choir. You may want to volunteer to be on the Board of Directors, (BOD). Every year one or more positions come open on the BOD, and we welcome new and long-term members to volunteer.

There are many other volunteer positions within the Choir. These include the following: Registrar, Wardrobe Officer, Section Leaders (SATB), Steward, Librarian, Promotions Manager, Market Research Director, Ticket Manager, Safety Officer, Web Master, Equipment Manager, Assistant Treasurer, C.D. Inventory Manager, Recording Coordinator, Archivist, Communications Manager, and 50-50 Ticket Booster. Also, our Social Committee is always looking for volunteers. While most of these positions are currently filled, some of the people doing the work are ready for a break or could use some help with their jobs. If you are interested in helping out, please talk to one of the officers on the BOD.

REHEARSALS:

The usual rehearsal/performance year for the CCC is September to June. There is normally a break of about two weeks around the Christmas-New Year's holidays. Choir summer vacation is scheduled during July and August; however, schedules may be changed in order to allow the choir to participate in summer festivals and tours.

The success and reputation of the Choir depends on maintaining a high standard of performance. The aesthetic quality of the Choir's music relies on members' preparedness, and on having proper balance among parts (sections) at any given performance. **Regular, reliable attendance at rehearsal and performance is essential to both of these goals.**

The Choir rehearses Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00, in the Music Room at South Secondary School, from time to time there may be a need for extra rehearsals or longer rehearsals, to prepare for concerts and/or recording sessions. Schedule changes are announced at least one week in advance. **You are expected to attend every rehearsal on time and stay for the duration, if possible**.

It is important to come to every Choir rehearsal prepared. This means that **you must practice at home**. You may have a piano, and be able to play and sing the music, and that is a great option. However, our web master has put all of the parts for every piece we sing on the web site. *Please see "Members", "Sectionals".* You can listen to your parts and sing them along with the music using this format. We hope that you rarely, *if ever,* miss a rehearsal, but if you cannot come for some reason, please practice with the help of the Choir website. However, if you do miss rehearsals, please be aware that you will lose out on necessary instruction and guidance from the conductor. When you know you are going to miss a rehearsal it is your responsibility to notify the Registrar. If you are planning to take an extended absence (i.e., more than one month), from the Choir, a leave of absence may be arranged by speaking to the conductor and the registrar.

As necessary, brief business meetings may be conducted, or announcements made, during rehearsals so that you can be apprised of the Choir's business.

DUES

Dues are quite important in meeting the choir's financial obligations. The dues are currently $250.00 a year for members who are not students. The student fee is $75.00 a year. Please note that the dues have not increased in the previous 14 years, although expenses had increased markedly. We have been able to keep the dues this affordable because the number of concerts that the CCC does every year has increased. Please review the dues policy on our website. *See: "Members", "Choir Documents", then "Dues Policy".*

MUSIC

The Choir Librarian will provide new members with a binder and the current music. Additional music will be handed out, as needed, for rehearsals. The majority of the music that we use is subject to copyright which we take very seriously. Because of this it is unlawful to use or possess Choir music outside of the auspices of the CCC. To give choir members access to new music in advance of practices a Goggle Drive is available. It has proven to be a very efficient way to distribute music. You may choose to print it from there or wait until the practice to receive a copy. However, if you choose to print the music yourself, it should be done on letter size paper and printed on both sides ready to be used in performances.

The CCC owns the music that you use, therefore if you resign from the Choir, you must return all music to the Librarian, even the copies you have printed out yourself. Damaged music should also be returned to the Librarian.

A few days before each rehearsal, the music being rehearsed that night is posted to each member via e-mail. This gives you a heads up for practice and assures that you bring the correct music to rehearsal. Arrange your binders according to the current list, and carefully remove and store the music not being presently used. Eventually, you will build up quite a personal library.

Our entire repertoire is available in a SATB format on the CCC website. The repertoire is updated promptly when new pieces are added. *(Please go to the CCC Website and see: "Members" section and go to "Sectionals")* to find your part of each piece of music. It may be helpful to listen to your part using headphones. To emphasize how your part fits with the accompaniment and harmonies, each sectional separates the individual part in one ear, from the remaining parts in the opposite ear.

PERFORMANCES:

Each year the choir usually performs several concerts in the fall/winter session and several spring concerts. We attempt to let choir members know about proposed events and venues as soon as we are able to, however, sometimes we will not know for sure about a venue until shortly before it is scheduled. In any given choir year, we may perform in up to six ticketed concerts depending on available venues, not including tour performances.

The Registrar will poll Choir members in advance of every scheduled performance so that we know how many members will be participating. You are asked to make every effort to attend performances. Please notify the Registrar as soon as possible if there is a change in your availability or ability to perform.

The Steward is charged with organizing the Choir immediately before and during performances. Please pay attention and follow instructions from the Steward and his/her assistants during these times.

For local performances, you are usually responsible for your own transportation. For out-of-town performances, depending on the distance, a bus may be arranged by the Choir. If a bus is provided, you are expected to travel to the venue on the bus. This is important as it is vital that you arrive at the designated departure point, and at the venue at the time announced.

WARDROBE:

Review the Canadian Celtic Choir Wardrobe Policy located on our website. Please familiarize yourself with this policy as the wardrobe may vary depending on the type of venue. *(See the appendix, "Wardrobe Policy").*

CODE OF CONDUCT:

Upon joining, and after a short trial period, you will be asked to sign a "Letter of Commitment" which affirms your responsibility to attend regular rehearsals and to abide by other guidelines contained in this handbook. Failure to abide by the obligations stated in the Letter of Commitment may require action by the Executive Committee or the Conductor.

Behaviour

- All members must be familiar with the Illness Policy found appended to this handbook.
- While representing the choir you must uphold the highest standards of conduct.
- At Performances, follow the directions of the Conductor and/or Steward.
- Remain quiet and orderly during the period before, during, and after going on stage.
- There is to be no talking within the ranks during performances.
- As a member, you are an ambassador of the Canadian Celtic Choir. As such, we ask that any actions that you may take would not be in conflict with the interests of the Canadian Celtic Choir.

Attendance

- You are expected to attend every rehearsal except in the case special circumstances. Lack of attendance at rehearsals may prevent you from participating in performances.
- We do expect that if you are ill with a cough, cold or other contagious illness you stay at home to maintain the health of other choir members.
- Please advise the Registrar if you are unable to attend a performance.

Punctuality

- It is important that you arrive punctually for rehearsals. Warm up begins at 7 pm sharp.
- For performances, the Conductor will let you know what time you are expected to be at the venue, and you must arrive promptly.

Dress Code

- You must adhere to the dress code, as defined in the Wardrobe Policy.
- Please wear your name tag at rehearsals.

Property

- All music and clothing **issued** to you remains the property of the choir and is to be returned in good condition if you resign from the Choir. Obviously, any articles of clothing that you have purchased yourself belong to you.

Communication & Media

- Please direct all issues relating to choir publicity or activity to a BOD member.

Payment issues

- You are required to pay your dues as per the Dues Policy unless a rare, special arrangement has been made by the BOD.
- You will not be paid for choir performances or management roles.
- As a Choir member, you waive any right or claim to receive royalties on any audiovisual materials produced by the choir unless specifically stated and agreed upon.

Breach of Code of Conduct

- If you are found to be in breach of the code of conduct, the Conductor has the right to refuse participation in a performance.
- Any breach of the code of conduct by you will be reviewed by the BOD as soon as possible.

Dispute Procedures

- If you are unhappy with decisions made by the Conductor you have the right to appeal to the BOD.
- After the review of any breach of the code of conduct, a BOD member may consult with you, counsel you as to the inappropriateness of the conduct and support you in making changes.
- Following three warnings, if you have made no appropriate change, then the BOD has the right to ask you to leave the choir.

GOVERNANCE:

The choir is governed by a Board of Directors that must function under the Canadian Celtic Choir Bylaws, that are in accordance with the Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010. These Bylaws are approved by the membership. The BOD consists of a President, Vice President, Immediate Past President, Treasurer, Secretary, and four Directors at Large. The BOD meets regularly while the Choir is in session, and may also meet, as needed, when the Choir is on vacation during the Summer. (See: "Members, "Choir Documents", "Bylaws")

The Executive Committee of the BOD consists of the President, Vice President, Immediate Past President, and the Treasurer. The Executive Committee meets only if an emergency arises and the BOD cannot be called for a meeting. Any decisions or actions taken by them will be reviewed at the next BOD Meeting.

You are welcome to attend any BOD Meeting. The time and place of the BOD meeting will be announced. Minutes of BOD Meeting are posted on the website. (On the CCC Website, *See: "Members", "Choir Documents", "BOD Minutes").*

Your current BOD Directors are*:*

President:	Glenn Waterman	(647)966-4814,	glenn47@gmail.com
Vice-President:	Karen Toye	(519)614-2548,	karentoye@rogers.com
Past President:	Jennifer Paul O'Donnell	(226)268-7524,	jpod2153@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Robert North	(226)582-0253,	Robert.g.north149@gmail.com
Secretary:	Wendy Valhoff	(519)868-6293,	wendycdn@gmail.com

Directors at Large:

Brenda Fedorowich	(519)6578262,	brendanuttall@hotmail.com
Jane Fenwick	(519)872-0995,	jaffy07@outlook.com
Kathryn Molnar	(519)709-0544	kmolnar1514@gmail.com
Linda Marak	(519)385-2876,	lindamarak16@gmail.com

AGM AND OTHER MEETINGS:

Once a year, in October, the Choir has an Annual General Meeting (AGM). You are expected to attend this meeting, as it is very important. This forum is the cohesive gathering where choir members are invited to run for executive positions. Your willing involvement in managing the business of the Choir is fundamental to our success. During the AGM, the membership will decide who will govern the Choir for the coming two years. Also, the President, Treasurer and the Conductor will give yearly reports, and actions of the BOD will be reviewed.

Minutes of the previous AGM, along with the report from the Nominating Committee, will be sent for your review two weeks before the yearly AGM. If you wish to serve on the BOD, contact the choir President two weeks or more prior to the meeting. *(On the CCC Website, see "Members", "Choir Documents", "AGM Minutes").*

From time to time the BOD or the conductor may call a short meeting to discuss Choir business. You may be notified to come early for a rehearsal, either the week before at rehearsal or via e-mail.

Generally, twice a year a Town Hall Meeting is called to help keep communication channels open. This happens so each choir member has an opportunity to bring forward any issues they feel need to be dealt with and so the BOD can have an open discussion with all choir members about issues where the additional input is needed. When this happens, you will be asked to come early for a rehearsal. At some times this meeting could be done on Zoom.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY:

The Canadian Celtic Choir does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of age, ancestry, citizenship, color, creed, disability, gender-identity, national or ethnic origin, race, religious affiliation, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected status under the law.

RECORDINGS:

The CCC has released five CDs, *Here's to Song, Christmas Remembered* and *We Rise Again.* The two most recent CDs are: *A Celtic Noel* and *Celtic Inspiration* . From time to time the CCC may make a CD.

SOCIAL EVENTS:

The Canadian Celtic Choir is known to be a very social group, and to that end, we find ways to socialize often. Members are encouraged to bring a spouse or guest to our get-togethers, if desired.

A weekly social gathering is held at a local restaurant/pub following regular rehearsals and performances. All members, and their guests, are invited to attend these events, and to attend Choir parties.

A sample of events in held in the past include:

- an annual Christmas party;
- a Choir picnic potluck;
- a beach-side dinner;
- a round of golf.



Canadian Celtic Choir on tour, Pier 21, Halifax, NS – July 1, 2017

TOURS:

The CCC tours in order to:

- Support our vision to expand our reach and grow our musical artistry.
- Build our local, national and international reputation as ambassadors of Canada's Celtic heritage.
- Experience and enjoy, as a group, what the destination has to offer.

It is a goal of the CCC to try to tour every few years. Locations are selected by the Board of Directors with input from the Conductor and Choir members.

In selecting our touring locations, we look for anywhere our performances would be appreciated by significant audiences. We consider countries with a Celtic heritage and locations of historic significance to Canada. We may also tour within the Canadian Maritimes and elsewhere in North America. *(Review the "Tour Policy" in the appendix).*

Our tours are not limited to members only. Spouses, significant others, older children, and friends have joined us when we tour.

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