



Vaccination and Masking Policy

With the COVID-19 pandemic largely behind us, the Choral Society believes that, while adhering to best practices regarding vaccination and boosters, we can safely allow singers who wish to attend rehearsals and performances unmasked to do so. Inevitably, some of the risk that SCCS has sought over time to mitigate must fall back on the shoulders of our individual members, and we believe that, at this time, our endurance and growth as a musical organization depends upon that individual assumption of risk.

We understand that this policy may present concerns to some of our members, and we will continue to adhere to best practices with respect to those concerns through such accommodations as considerate placement of singers and live-streamed rehearsals. Also, especially since we anticipate that some members will no longer be masked, we will continue to encourage optimal distancing at rehearsals and performances bearing in mind the dimensional constraints of these venues.

Insofar as members choose to continue masking, we suggest that these be high-quality masks such as N95, KN95 or KF94 masks, or at minimum surgical masks, all of which are far better at preventing transmission of the COVID virus than cloth masks.

All members should be aware of the following COVID-19 symptoms and self-test should any of these manifest. Please err on the side of caution, as even mild symptoms may portend a positive test result.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

DO NOT COME TO REHEARSAL UNTIL RESULTS ARE KNOWN.

In addition, SCCS is providing the following information to its members in order to assist each individual member in determining what level of risk-mitigation is right for them.

- The U.S. may eventually enter the endemic phase of COVID, and indeed some sources indicate that it has already done so. In any case, COVID will in all probability always be with us, much like the seasonal flu. And also like the flu, COVID vaccines may become an annual recommendation.
- There are effective vaccines and boosters recommended for all age groups, as well as effective oral and IV antivirals to treat the virus. For many who contract it, it is no more virulent than a common cold.
- It is likely that a large percentage of the U.S. population has had COVID, whether or not they realize they have.
- Centre County typically fluctuates between the Moderate and Low levels of COVID activity. Those hospitalized are generally 70 years of age or older, and most diagnoses of COVID are “incidental findings” (i.e., the patient has come to the hospital for something else, and they are found to have COVID when screened for admission).
- The most recent COVID variant – EG.5, or “Eris” – is slightly more contagious than previous strains, but its symptoms are no more severe. Upcoming vaccines and boosters are expected to provide protection, and if someone nevertheless contracts COVID, currently available antivirals should work against it.

Thank you so much for your patience and cooperation.

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