

# Return to Choir: Polaris

## 2020-2021 | Choirs for Change Association

### Overview

The presence of COVID-19 in Nova Scotian life has disrupted regular plans for the 2020-2021 choir season. The introduction of new guidelines has meant a rethinking of how Choirs for Change can present choral programming that continues to inspire participation by community members while pursuing the values and goals which are foundational to the organization's mission.

There are two primary realities of this unique season. First, is that no matter our attempts, this choral season will not be in the shape of what we regularly offer. This will be a very different kind of season, and its full detail will only be realized as we progress through the year. The second reality is that there will be a component of virtual/online programming. This will change the way the choir members approach participating in the year, and the demand placed on choir leadership.

In discovering a path forward, Polaris will remain steadfast in achieving two goals:

- Artistic work that is relevant to social justice movements
- To provide programming that connects individuals and creates community through shared experience

The Polaris team is planning to deliver these goals through programming that combines in-person and online activities. These activities will, at all times, meet the guidelines and regulations in place by public health and other leading bodies in regards to COVID-19 protocols. These activities will be creative and flexible.

### General Schedule of Activities

The Polaris season will be set into several 3-week sections defined by a different artistic focus. We will kick off the season with a virtual Nocturne project, followed by three explorations into repertoire by composers from marginalized groups. Each exploration will include a listening party, some virtual rehearsing, discussions on related social issues, and hopefully an opportunity to sing together (pandemic permitting). In-person rehearsals will be held at St. Andrew's from 6-8pm. This will bring us to the beginning of December, and we will resume activities in January. Please find below the schedule for this season's activities:

### Season Kick-Off Social Gathering

- September 12 (*in-person*)                      Picnic Gathering at the Halifax Common, 5-7pm

### **Nocturne (virtual project, posted online)**

- September 14 (*in-person/online*) 6-8pm Rehearsal, St. Andrew's United
- September 21 (*in-person/online*) 6-7pm AGM, 7-8pm Rehearsal, St. Andrew's
- September 28 (*in-person/online*) 6-8pm Rehearsal, St. Andrew's United
- final project posted online (*Nocturne is October 17*)

### **Exploring Repertoire 1 - Womxn composers**

- October 5 (*online*)
  - *Virtual rehearsal/ listening party*
- October 19 (*online*)
  - *Virtual rehearsal/ TBC*
- October 26 (*in-person*)
  - *Planned in-person rehearsal*

### **Exploring Repertoire 2 - Black composers**

- November 2 (*online*)
  - *Virtual rehearsal/ listening party*
- November 9 (*online*)
  - *Virtual rehearsal/ TBC*
- November 16 (*in-person*)
  - *Planned in-person rehearsal*

### **Exploring Repertoire 3 - Queer composers**

- November 23 (*online*)
  - *listening party*
- November 30 (*online*)
  - *Virtual rehearsal/ TBC*
- December 7 (*in-person*)
  - *Planned in-person rehearsal*

### **Policies for In-Person Gatherings**

When gathering for in-person activities, several new protocols will be mandatory for participating members:

- **Social Distancing Measures:** members will maintain a 6-foot distance at minimum between themselves and all other members
- **Mask Policy:** members will wear non-medical masks at all times, including when singing. The only time this can be waived is when singing at an in-person activity that is outside and the participants are distanced by a minimum of 10 feet.

- **Hand Washing & Sanitizing:** members will sanitize or wash their hands every time they enter a new activity space
- **Food and Drink Policy:** no food or drink will be provided by members to other members. The only food and drink permitted in rehearsal spaces will be water bottles.
- **Member Wellness:** members will not be permitted at rehearsals if they have been outside the Atlantic provinces in the previous 14 days, or if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or any other sickness.
- **Contact Tracing Information and Health Questionnaire:** members will sign an attendance sheet and complete a short questionnaire upon arrival at all rehearsals.

### **Participation Options**

Polaris will seek to hold in-person choir gatherings when it is safe and possible to do so. However, participation in each activity is optional, and a virtual option for in-person gatherings will be offered whenever possible. It is the responsibility and the choice of the member to determine if they will be safe participating in-person, and Choirs for Change will strive to offer virtual participation equally as valuable to members as in-person participation during these activities.

### **Membership Fees & Bursaries**

Polaris membership is typically \$215/season. For the 2020/21 season, a membership fee of \$20 per module will be asked of each member in order to participate in choir programming. This fee will help to cover operating costs and compensation for the choir's leadership. There will be no prorated fees for partial participation or activity during any given month.

In lieu of membership bursaries, members who cannot pay the monthly membership may write to the Polaris team requesting an exemption. The membership fee will not be a barrier to those who cannot afford to participate.

### **Flexibility**

This Return to Choir plan is a starting point for the season, and will adjust as new public health guidelines and regulations are established. Flexibility will be essential to the programming this season, and members are asked to be patient and willing to adapt as plans and programming formats change.

## Relevant Guidelines & Sources

- [Nova Scotia Choral Federation](#)
- [Nova Scotia: COVID-19 Guidelines for Musicians](#)
- [Province of Nova Scotia, Coronavirus Guidelines](#)