

# Tips for Programming a GALA Festival Set



## Programming Tips

- 30-minute set for Choruses: includes entrance/exit time and all stage transitions.
- 15-minute sets for Ensembles
- Plan for about 23 minutes of music as a chorus, approximately 12 minutes for an ensemble; less is better than more. Applause at a GALA festival takes a measurable amount of time. Plan for it!
- Pick something familiar/comfortable to open your set to get the jitters out and help your singers relax.
- Choose programming that presents a distinctive identity for your chorus; something mission-related.
- Choose a piece that will be new to the GALA community —a commission or arrangement or newly discovered piece. However, be sure to try a new piece out at home first to make sure it “works” before bringing a new commission to Festival.
- Select the right amount of challenge – something that keeps singers on their toes but that they can ultimately perform beautifully.
- Something humorous or light.
- GALA staff will check for duplicated songs in chorus programming and will let you know if multiple choirs are performing the same song.

## Collaborations and Themed Sets

- Consider inviting another chorus to join you on stage for a song or two. Or request back-to-back sets and collaborate as a unique 60-min combined set.
- Join with 3-4 other choirs to design a “themed” concert set for an entire 2 for 2.5 hr concert block. These collaborative chorus blocks will receive special promotion at Festival. Contact Jane RM to organize a themed concert block: [AD@GalaChoruses.org](mailto:AD@GalaChoruses.org)

## Concert Flow and Staging

- Make sure there is flow, balance, interest, and a variety of emotions conveyed.
- Be attentive to the weight of the songs, text-related flow, similarities and contrasts, key colors, tempo.
- Plan some a few segues without applause.
- Keep the audience in mind: they are being deluged, their ears are overfull. Pace the set in a way that will allow them to stay tuned in. Imagine yourself as a member of the audience and design a satisfying and engaging flow.
- Consider ways you might engage the audience with participation: sing-along, body percussion, etc.
- Minimize your talking from the stage; keep it concise and premeditated.
- Give the audience a distinct sense of who you are in your presentation/visuals as well as in the programming.
- Movement should enhance the music, but not overshadow.
- Program music that works well in the [hall where you are performing](#); utilize the organ at Central Lutheran, or the side access to the audience from the MCC Stage.
- Stage set-up includes a grand piano, music stands, drum set, ample microphones, monitors. View the [stage diagrams and video guides](#) for each venue.
- Video is only available for your opening 1 min intro. We may have one video block designated. Choirs would need to arrive a day early to tech.
- Require all singers to be present for tech and final rehearsal.

## Instrumentalists and ASL

- Keep instrumentation simple; better yet, sing a cappella or only with piano.
- Rehearsal room space will be available at Festival in two-hour blocks. Reserve this in advance.
- Prepare for significant and scary unknowns in amplification/sound reinforcement.
- You may bring your own instrumentalists or work with a Minneapolis instrumentalist manager who will contract union musicians.
- A list of certified ASL interpreters will be available in March 2024. ASL interpretation is not required.

## Copyrights and Permissions to Perform and Record – due April 2024

- Be sure to attend a copyright webinar to learn about the process of submitting your song list for Festival.
- Published music: you provide title, composer, publisher and length of each song.
- Unpublished compositions: in addition to the information above you must provide documentation from the copyright holder indicating your rights to perform and record the work July 10-14, 2024.
- Start working on your permissions well before the deadline. It can take months to get copyright permissions
- A Festival Copyright handout is in the [Festival Toolkit](#). Use it!

## Festival Attitude

- Leave ego and competitiveness at home or banish it forever! Prep your chorus to come with anticipation of being blown away, not of blowing everyone away.
- Be prepared to experience the love from the audience. Their applause and appreciation will be powerful.
- Help your singers prepare for the psychological challenge of performing at Festival after listening to all the choirs ahead of you. Festival is not a contest. Challenge your singers to identify what they can learn from other choruses in terms of repertoire, programming and performance style.

## Motivating and Preparing your Singers for Festival

- Incorporate weekly stories and “testimonials” about past Festival experiences into your rehearsal to get singers excited to attend. See the [GALA Festival Toolkit](#) for video, power point and handouts you can share with your chorus.
- Festival is a tremendous external motivator; challenge singers to a high musical standard with emphasis on the basics: singing in tune and with strong vocal quality.
- Set up your rehearsal season so your singers are exceptionally well-prepared, yet not stale.
- Perform your entire set for an audience before arriving at Festival.
- Bring in a vocal coach or local director you respect for feedback on your set.
- Plan ahead to create a way for you to communicate with your chorus at Festival (text, daily email).

More questions? Drop a note to:

Kathleen Hansen, GALA 411 Artistic Advisor  
[ArtisticAdvisor@GalaChoruses.org](mailto:ArtisticAdvisor@GalaChoruses.org)

Jane Ramseyer Miller, GALA Artistic Director  
[AD@GALACHoruses.org](mailto:AD@GALACHoruses.org)