



The NC Baptist Singers & Orchestra is a ministry of North Carolina Baptists, comprised of church musicians from across the state.

GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERSHIP

The North Carolina Baptist Singers and Orchestra: Who are we?

The North Carolina Baptist Singers and Orchestra members are some of the finest worship leaders among N.C. Baptists. We come together to combine our gifts in worshipping God and leading the congregations we serve in worship. When we are strong, we strengthen what we represent: the physical and musical form of the Word of God, His message and His Spirit. We do that by presenting our absolute excellence in voice and instrument.

We hold ourselves to the utmost standard of best performance practice. For our choir members, we look for excellent pitch and pleasing tone, a good understanding and practice of proper breathing, a developed sense of rhythm and good diction. For instrumentalists, we look for an excellent “ear” (intonation), confident sight-reading and outstanding attention to timing and dynamics.

We expect all members to be mature Christians, growing in their faith and love for God. We seek this ministry to minister to our members and to the congregations we lead in worship. Prayer is a huge part of our ministry. We pray for each other, ourselves and those who will attend our worship concerts. We pray that God will move in those events and transform lives profoundly.

Our choir seeks not only to lead in profound times of worship, but also to model how the choir and orchestra can still be relevant today in worship in the local church. In a day when choirs and orchestras are being abolished, we believe that both can be vital in worship when made relevant to current times. The NCBSO has transitioned in the last years to be a very relevant worship-leading body of passionate worshippers.

Much attention is set on spiritual things as we grow together as a body that supports one another and ministers together throughout the year.

Who can join?

The following people from N.C. Baptist partnering churches are eligible to join, with priority given to new members in this order: (1) the primary worship leader (worship pastor, minister of music, etc.), (2) other paid worship staff, (3) denominational/college/seminary leaders, then (4) other participants in worship ministries of N.C. Baptist churches.

All applicants will submit an audition MP3 to affirm that the basic musical attributes outlined above are present. Additionally, any applicant who is not the church's primary worship leader must have a recommendation filled out by their church's primary worship leader as part of the application process; a form will be provided.

Current members who are no longer in a N.C. Baptist church, but were formerly with one, are "grandfathered" into our group as long as their membership participation continues without a lapse of time. However, all new members must be from a N.C. Baptist church.

Expectations

After meeting the above requirements and in order to maintain membership, all members are expected to:

1. New members may only **join at the beginning of the season.**
2. **All members are required to pay \$75.00 annually as membership dues.** This helps cover the cost of new music and other expenses. These dues should be paid in advance of attending the retreat. Please understand that no member will be allowed to attend the retreat or to sing in any concert unless these dues are paid.
3. **Prepare all music before the August retreat** such that all notes and rhythms are confident. Members **should not** wait until the retreat to begin learning their music. The retreat is built on the premise that everyone is familiar with the music **before** arriving. This allows for more group building and spiritual emphasis.
4. **Attend the August retreat.** The retreat is when the NCBSO has an intensive time of rehearsal and spiritual development, as well as times of fellowship and getting to know each other. The retreat is a vital part of the choir preparation to lead well throughout the year. If a member does not attend the retreat, they must have a valid reason. Reasons include an illness in the member's family, death in the family or church family, church activities over which the member has no control, and other justifiable reasons that are dealt with on an individual basis.
5. **If a member cannot attend the retreat because of one of the above reasons, they are required to be at the first concert day rehearsal** that starts mid-morning for orchestra and after lunch for the choir, and stay through the concert that evening. If neither of these events can be attended, the applicant should wait to join the choir for another year.
6. **Concert days are on Mondays. Each member is expected to attend at least four concerts during the season** (this includes times we sing at the N.C. Baptist annual meeting). A list of concert dates and locations is on NCBSO.org. Again, there are some valid excuses for being absent, and if necessary, decisions will be made on an individual basis. Poor attendance can jeopardize future membership in the group.
7. **Rehearsals take place on concert days.** Orchestra usually begins rehearsals mid-morning, and the choir begins rehearsals after lunch. Because of limited rehearsal time, members are expected to work on their music between concerts so that we are prepared to do more

precise rehearsing on the day of our concert. Also, when asked, members should come prepared to sing specified music from memory. We value singing a number of songs from memory since the presentation is so much more powerful.

8. **Be punctual to ALL rehearsals.** A continual habit of being late may affect a member's standing within the group.
9. **All members are required to wear the prescribed concert attire during concerts.** The cost is nominal. Ladies purchase a blue top, and men purchase blue and black ties. Payment is made at the time of registration, and the retreat will allow for trying on various sizes to have orders placed. The current cost is \$20 for men and \$25 for ladies. Fees are paid at the time of registration.
10. **Members should wear their issued NCBSO name tags** at the retreat and Monday rehearsals. If you don't have your nametag, you can prepare a handwritten one for that instance.
11. **Respond promptly to the participation survey.** Before each concert, an email (and text message) is sent asking for information about attendance at the concert through WorshipPlanning.com. Response to this email should not take more than a few seconds. However, we have many members who either do not reply at all or wait until the Friday before the concert to reply. Administration of a group this size and coordination with our host churches require that we have accurate numbers a couple of weeks before the worship concert. Continued failure to respond promptly can jeopardize future membership in the group.
12. **Respond promptly to meal order forms.** Lunches and dinners are provided at our concerts at a potential cost of up to \$7 for lunch and \$10 for dinner. A reservation form is sent to all members at least a couple of weeks out. Please respond quickly and submit payment for your meals within 1-2 days of receiving the form. Lack of response often adds to our admin hours and should not be necessary. Meal costs are nonrefundable if you end up not attending the concert, since the money is already committed to the caterers. If you do not order a meal, you should bring lunch/supper with you.
13. **Participants must be connected to WhatsApp Messenger** to receive important messages from the group. Additionally, participants will be users of WorshipPlanning.com and NCBSO.com, which are major messaging and information platforms for the group. Leadership will enroll participants in WorshipPlanning.com and NCBSO.com. WhatsApp must be installed on participants' phones and connected to our NCBSO group through a link shared with members.
14. **For a guest to sing or play with the group, permission is required from a choral or instrumental director in advance.** The guest must fill out the online RSVP and agree to wear concert attire that matches as closely as possible. A guest instrumentalist can play with the group a maximum of two times without joining. A guest singer may participate in no more than one concert without joining. Exceptions may be made to instrumentalists needed to fill in vital parts of the orchestration for absent members.

15. **Participants must have reasonable mobility as described here.** The final issue is a much more personal one, but no less important. In addition to the other expectations such as conducting ourselves in a Christ-honoring manner, the ability to read music, and attending rehearsals and concerts, the Convention legal team has suggested that because of liability concerns for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the host churches, we should set standards that protect all those involved. We have no control over the situations of the churches and auditoriums where we sing and play. Most were designed and built before the ADA was made law and are considered grandfathered unless some structural change is to be made. Because of that, those wishing to participate should be able to stand, climb and descend steps and navigate uneven platforms as well as staging areas and choir lofts in the venues where we are invited to sing and play. We will make provision for those who have problems standing for extended times by providing a seated position in the choir, but each member must have good mobility as described above. The NCBSO leadership reserves the right to prohibit or limit participation by any individual whose participation creates a physical hazard for themselves or others.

Any individual failing to meet the above requirements during the season may not be able to be a part of the group in the next season to allow for more committed prospects. Any appeals to allow variance in these rules for special circumstances will be taken to the choir leadership for a decision.

Retirement Considerations

It is also worthwhile to consider that as we age, our voices and breath support age with us. There are some 60-year-olds who have poor control of their vibrato and volume and some 70-year-olds who can sing as well as they did 20 years ago. Unlike the mobility issue, this is a matter for each member to consider on their own. The decision is not an easy one, but we all want to do what is best for our group as a whole. We ask that you pray about these issues and make decisions that are led by the Holy Spirit.

We are grateful for your understanding as we try to follow God's leadership in our work with each of you individually and our full choir and orchestra. Our goal is to make the best possible choices in music and to offer nothing less than our best in worship to God and for His good in our concerts. May His grace and guidance help us each to make decisions that will be glorifying and pleasing to Him.