

Summer Sings in Queens

Q&A

What are Summer Sings?

A summer sing is an open, scratch performance of a major choral work. It is a scratch performance in that there is no prior rehearsal, anyone can join, and the performing group is made up of whoever shows up to sing that day.

Scratches became popular in Europe a few years ago, and are common now in the US as well. There are a couple of popular programs in Manhattan (<http://westvillagechorale.org/summer-sings/>) and one on Long Island (<http://www.lics.org/flyers/LICS-SummerSing-2018.pdf>). They are usually held in summer because choristers enjoy a chance to sing in what otherwise is a long break.

Summer sings always bring surprises, usually happy ones. Conductors like to try something different, have fun and be generous to their choristers, and there is always a good atmosphere. Singers rise to the challenge and usually create a rousing performance even when resources are limited or unbalanced.

How do I know if I am good enough to join?

Everyone is welcome, so come along and take part as well as you are able. You don't have to sing all the time. You can sing on a vowel rather than the words if you find that easier. You can make sure you sit next to a strong singer to lead you. And it doesn't matter much if you make lots of mistakes – no one has paid to be in the audience, and we are all only there to have fun. The choir is generally large enough that there will be plenty of room to hide and that nobody will feel exposed.

It does help to be able to follow a part from sheet music, the lines and rhythm if not the notes. We sing in sections – sopranos, altos, tenors and basses - and it helps if you can choose a part and stick to it, usually in the correct octave. We can help choose the most suitable voice part for you.

How do I buy a ticket?

There are no advanced purchase tickets for Summer Sings in Queens. The church has ample capacity. Just pay at on the night at the door, in cash or with a check to Forest Hills Choir. The fee is \$15, with no extra charge for borrowing a score.

Can I come along and just listen?

Yes, you are welcome, so long as you pay your fee, and don't expect a top class performance.

How can I practice in advance?

Scores for the Mozart Requiem and Brahms Requiem are available here. Then just find a youtube recording and try to sing along. There is also something called cyberbass where you can hear your own part on its own or sung out more strongly in a recording.

Do I need to bring my own music?

No, but if you have a score then do bring it. You can also download a score onto a tablet and sing from that. But many people will borrow one of scores that we will provide.

How does it work? What happens?

It is up to the conductor, and he or she might change their plan depending on the size and shape of the choir. Be ready to sing by the start time of 7.30pm. After some short introductions, the conductor will lead a quick vocal warm up, and then will rehearse a few spots from the work, perhaps some of the harder sections or transitions. After that, most conductors will usually just run the work from start to finish. There is a short break with light refreshments at some point, and we finish around 9.30pm.

What about solo sections? Can I sit with my friends? Do I have to stand up to sing?

Any solo sections are up to the conductor. We choose works without too many solo sections. Sometimes, some are omitted. Sometimes, soloists are on hand to perform. And sometimes, a conductor could throw a solo section open to anyone or everyone to have a go.

Usually people sit with their voice section, because that makes it easier to sing and easier for the conductor to guide us. But you are welcome to sit wherever you like, so if a group of four of you have always wanted to sing the chorus parts as a quartet, then be our guests!

The conductor might ask us to stand for certain sections, and you are always free to stand, if you are careful not to block the view of others. If standing is difficult for you, then that is fine as well, sit near the front. Our goal is to give as many people as possible as much pleasure as possible from singing, so we want to minimize the obstacles to that.

Who has organized this? Will it continue next season?

The Forest Hills Choir (www.fhchoir.org) has organized Summer Sings in Queens in partnership with the Oratorio Society of Queens (www.queensoratorio.org) and the local a capella group Schola Sine Nomine. A small steering group from the partner organizations has led the operation. The Forest Hills Choir, a non-profit 501 c 3 community choir, is bearing most of the financial risk, and will allocate any profit towards its everyday activities.

Our key principles for Summer Sings in Queens are:

- Singers love to sing! So if you come along, you'll do plenty of singing
- Inclusive. We try to make sings open to everyone
- Local. This is a Queens community initiative. Our conductors, accompanist and any soloists all live here, and most work here too.

We hope to establish and grow Summer Sings in Queens, perhaps up to four evenings per season. That depends on how popular the idea proves with local singers.