

March 2018

Dear Westwinds Members:

I have received a number of questions over the last several weeks regarding Westwinds' performance Uniform Policy, (or "Dress Code", if you prefer). As we are all well aware, our performance dress is "black on black on black", including black hosiery, long sleeves, and no large pendants, jewelry, shiny baubles, etc. However, the thing that I became particularly curious about was the addition of a "group accessory", as Choral Ensemble has done, and I decided to do a bit of research into that, particularly since whatever policy or standard would govern their use pre-dates me in Westwinds.

First, let me say a word about the performance Uniform Policy itself. The key here is the word "Uniform". Black was chosen because shades of black are not an issue, as they would be with other colours, because black dress wear looks sharp, and because black dress wear is relatively easy to find and inexpensive for our members to obtain. Uniformity is also the underlying reason for a relatively consistent sleeve length, for black hosiery, and for the absence of large jewelry or individual personal accessories (massive jade pendants and the like).

So what about those group accessories? Well, after consulting documents of our policies, as well as speaking with some long-term members and past board members, here is the skinny on group accessories and how they relate to our performance Uniform Policy. It turns out that any group can add a group accessory to the standard "black on black on black" uniform, provided it meets these criteria:

1. Group accessories may only be worn in "single-family" performances (i.e. the Concert Band Concerts, the Jazz Nights, or the Choral Concerts, or performances by a single ensemble). Accessories are not to be worn for joint performances such as the Christmas concert.
2. The accessory has to be the same for everyone. For example, if any other choir wanted to obtain a large lot of identical scarves for their female members as the Choral Ensemble has done they could do that. Again, the key word here is uniformity. If the gentlemen in any ensemble wanted to purchase matching ties, they would need to be the exact same tie. "Bring a green tie from home", for example, is not acceptable.
3. The accessory should be worn uniformly. Ten members of an ensemble wearing their scarf around their neck, two wearing it as a shawl, and one as a headband would not be acceptable.

So, there you have it. If Gold Jazz North wanted to buy 20 baby blue bowler hats, and wear them to Jazz Performances, the only thing preventing that is good taste (and my very strenuous objection, since I play in that group). If Mixed Choir wanted to purchase a matching lot of scarves for their ladies, and a matching lot of neckties for the men, that too is acceptable provided they are worn within the above criteria.

I hope the above helps all of us better understand both the reason for the performance Uniform Policy, and the way that accessories fit into that policy.

Yours in music,



Bruce Robin  
President: Westwinds Music Society.