

Queer Cadence Member Handbook

Spring 2026

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ABOUT US

Who We Are

Tone Cluster is a multi-level choral organization for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and a prominent member of Ottawa's arts community. *Tone Cluster - quite a queer choir* is the organization's flagship ensemble, providing community and high-level choral opportunities to 50 mixed-voice singers. *Queer Cadence* is a non-auditioned choir for all genders and voice types that highlights grassroots, intersectional community engagement.

Tone Cluster's mandate is to create a queer-positive environment where singers can be themselves and work towards choral excellence, all while supporting those of varied sexual orientation, gender identity, and relationship orientation, as well as highlighting intersections between the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and other equity-seeking groups.

Leadership Team

Artistic & Managing Director, Tone Cluster Conductor: Deirdre Kellerman (she/her)

manager@tonecluster.ca

Deirdre is a conductor and music educator, originally from Nova Scotia. She has conducted a variety of Ottawa choirs including Hypatia's Voice, the Ottawa Children's Choir, Ottawa Choral Society, and the choirs at First Unitarian Congregation. With degrees in vocal performance and choral conducting, Deirdre runs DKmusic where she teaches voice, piano, theory, and conducting. When not teaching or in rehearsal, she sings with Aella, a treble vocal ensemble, and spends time with her wife, Ash, and their two dogs, Stevie & Dolly.

Queer Cadence Conductor: Émilie Versailles (they/them)

emilievmartin@gmail.com

Émilie is a queer and non-binary choral conductor and singer based in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke. They are passionate about creating inclusive, joyful spaces where everyone feels empowered to sing. They currently lead La Chorale des Intrépides, the Botanical Garden Choir, and Queer Cadence. Outside of choir life, Émilie performs in all kinds of queer and operatic projects, often with a theatrical twist. They believe singing together should be liberating, collaborative, and just the right amount of dramatic—with extra points for glitter and pastels.

Pianist: Kim Farris-Manning (they/them)

kim@farris-manning.ca

Kim is a fun-loving queer arbor-artist: composer-performer, nature educator, and arborist/forest technician. They are the founder/Artistic Director of Queer Youth Choir, and collaborative pianist for Tone Cluster and Queer Cadence. Named one of "Six Emerging Canadian Composers to

Keep an Eye On" (Ludwig van Toronto, 2022), their work has been experienced in performances worldwide. Kim is part of folk-indie duo YELLOW, and of the Paramorph Collective, who launched their debut album on Redshift Records in 2023. You can find them in drag as Kin of Chlorophyll, and talking about sea stars at the Museum of Nature.

Board of Directors

Contact them (any or all) if you are experiencing harassment, have questions about the governance of the organization, or have feedback/ideas you'd like to share.

Co-Chair: Marie-Elyse Gilbert (she/her)
marieelyse.gilbert@gmail.com

Co-Chair: Colum Grove-White (he/him)
iam@colum.ca

Treasurer: Rowan Elsdon (she/they)
rowan.elsdon@gmail.com

Secretary: Léa Desjardins (she/her)
lea.desjardins3@gmail.com

Director: Rob Bowman (he/him)
robbowman61@gmail.com

Director: Sam Greve (they/them)
samagreve@gmail.com

Director: Charlotte Stewart-Juby (she/her)
charlotteolivia.sj@gmail.com

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Rehearsal Location

Rehearsals are held at the Carleton Dominion Chalmers Centre (CDCC). Enter through the main entrance at 290 Lisgar St. and go downstairs through the door to the left.

CDCC is wheelchair accessible, with an elevator to access the lower level. There is a single stall, accessible washroom near the rehearsal room and additional washrooms upstairs.

Performances

JOY: music by queer composers with *Tone Cluster - quite a queer choir*
Saturday, May 9th at 7:30pm (Dress rehearsal Friday, May 8th from 7-9pm)
Centretown United

'Vegans Who Snack' Pride Month Market
Friday, June 22nd in the evening (exact time TBD)
Parkdale Market

More community engagements TBD!

Calendar

A full calendar of rehearsals, events, and performances can be found in two spots:

1. Google Calendar
2. On ChoirMate, our choir management app

These links will be sent to you **after** you register for the season.
The calendar is a living document and will be updated regularly.

Attendance

Please email Émilie if you can't make it and don't miss more than three rehearsals.

Choir is a team sport! Members are expected to attend all rehearsals and performances. They must advise their conductor in advance if they will be missing anything. Late arrivals and early departures will be noted.

Dress rehearsals are mandatory, and you cannot miss more than 3 rehearsals per concert cycle.

In exceptional circumstances, Émilie reserves the right to waive or modify the attendance policy at their discretion. If you are facing an unusual situation, please communicate with us as early as possible.

MEMBERSHIP

Fees

\$100 due April 6th 2026 by e-transfer (toneclustertreasurer@gmail.com), cash or cheque (Tone Cluster).

Your membership fees help pay for things like production costs, sheet music, and staff. You will receive a tax receipt.

No one is turned away due to lack of funds. Please contact manager@tonecluster.ca to discuss a subsidized rate.

Sheet Music

You will be provided with hard copies of the music, which must be returned at the end of the term in excellent condition.

You will also have access to PDFs of the scores, for those who prefer to use a tablet instead of hard copies. The PDFs should not be shared and must be deleted from your possession at the end of the term.

General rules: **pencil only** (no pen, highlighter, etc), erase your notes before you return it, no hole punching, keep it safe.

Sheet music is very expensive! We reserve the right to invoice a choir member for any unreturned or damaged music.

Volunteering

It takes many hands to run our amazing organization! We expect every singer to contribute volunteer time to the choir during the season.

Examples:

- Helping set up before rehearsals or tear down after
- Bringing a food contribution to concert receptions
- Participating with fundraisers
- Organizing social events
- Sitting on the Board or a committee

ChoirMate

ChoirMate is our choir management app. It can be used on a desktop or as an app on your phone or tablet. Everyone must register as a member of Queer Cadence/Tone Cluster, as this is how we will communicate with you. Please ask Émilie if you have any questions or problems with using ChoirMate.

It includes:

- Member profiles that you can personalize
- Chats for the whole choir, for sections... even a chat just for you and your choir bestie!
- Embedded practice tracks that you can more easily organize and control
- Calendar with reminder options

You will receive a link to join ChoirMate once you fill out the registration form.

Rehearsal Ground Rules

Please follow these guidelines to ensure our rehearsals remain efficient, fun, and respectful!

- Keep talking to a minimum, especially when transitioning between pieces or from standing to sitting.
- Questions are encouraged but keep it specific to the song and section that we're working on. If you have a question about something else, write it on the provided blank paper so you don't forget!
- Unless asked to comment, please let Émilie answer questions. Your experience and knowledge is valued, but our rehearsal time is limited. Let us know during a break if you have feedback to share!
- Do your best to arrive on time, read your emails, and let us know of absences in advance.

Health and Safety

Anti-Harassment Policy

If you experience harassment, tell someone.

Queer Cadence (as a part of the Tone Cluster organization) is committed to providing a safe space for everyone and we welcome all individuals regardless of age, race, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status. Should anyone feel harassed in any way, we want to fix it — please contact any board member.

For full details, see the Anti-Harassment pamphlet and/or the full policy here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u8r53-lc5gJy9NT5AxNV_XAhuq-bulq3/edit?usp=sharing&oid=117377907316792955584&rtpof=true&sd=true

Accessibility

Tone Cluster strives to offer accommodations to those needing them due to disabilities, chronic illness, and neurodivergence (ex. mobility aid accessible venues, fidget toy friendly rehearsals, PDF score options, memorization opt outs).

If there are accommodations that you require to ensure rehearsals and performances are safe, comfortable, and successful for you, please reach out to Émilie and/or Deirdre.

Illness

Please stay home if you are sick! We follow [Ottawa Public Health's recommendations](#) to stay home until you are fever-free AND your symptoms have been improving for 24 hours (48 for gastro symptoms).

You are welcome to wear a mask at rehearsal to ensure your own health.

Binding

Some singers may be using binders during rehearsals or performances. While binding is a gender affirming care and act of safety, it can also restrict diaphragm and rib movement, leading to vocal challenges with pitch and tone.

If you're looking for singer-friendly alternatives, TransTape (which doesn't use compression) can be one option. You might also explore binders designed for movement (like swimming or exercise), which provide more flexibility – [Origami Customs](#) makes great ones!

Vocal Modification

No one is obligated to share/disclose details about their gender or medications (including HRT) with the artistic team, the board, or other singers. However, we do ask that you inform your conductor if you expect to have a significant vocal change during a concert cycle, due to hormonal or behavioural vocal modification. Deirdre and Émilie are happy to work with you to navigate any changes in your range and voice part, including answering questions you may have about behavioural and/or hormonal vocal modification (or provide resources if we don't know the answer!).

Name and Pronoun Changes

If you would like to try out a new name and/or pronoun, blank nametags will always be available at each rehearsal. We encourage everyone to wear their nametags and take note of what's on it. Please note that Émilie can't see nametags from the front, so please let them know if you'd like to be called something new.

If you would like to change your name and/or pronoun in the Tone Cluster records, please reach out to Deirdre and Émilie.