

Introduction

The DC Amateur Classical Musicians' Meetup group is a collection of classical musicians interested in playing chamber music for fun. While good music is the goal, the emphasis here is on fun and enjoyment! Membership tends to hover around two hundred musicians, covering a wide variety of instruments. All musicians of all instruments, at, or above the **intermediate** skill level are welcome to join. Many who were reticent to attend, or thought they might just "sit and listen", found themselves playing at their first meeting. Nerves and feeling intimidated can be left at the doorstep. We're a collegial, congenial, non-competitive group; criticism and attitude *are not welcome*; everyone's best effort is gratefully appreciated by all. Sorry, we don't accept requests from music appreciators, this group is for musicians only.

This group is sponsored by the DC Concert Orchestra Society (DCCOS), a charitable, non-profit, 501(c)(3) tax exempt arts organization. The Society also sponsors the DC Concert Orchestra, a 70 musician orchestra, under the baton of Maestro Randall Stewart, giving high quality public performances two or three times a year. Members of this Meetup group are eligible to audition for the DCCO. If you are interested in performing in the orchestra, please refer to <http://files.meetup.com/557533/DCCO%20Members%27%20Handbook%20V1.1.pdf>

Membership Dues and Refund Policy

Prompt payment of the \$12 annual dues is expected immediately after you request membership in the group, and on your anniversary date(s) thereafter. Failure to pay or renew your dues will result in your being rolled to an inactive state, voiding any existing RSVPs, and render you unable to RSVP for events or receive e-mail regarding upcoming events. Meetup will send you reminders when your payment is due and another one when you are overdue. If you are overdue by two weeks or more, you may be removed without further notice. Again, payment of dues is expected immediately upon joining the group. **This group does not honor the Meetup offered "free trial" period; we offer a different policy.** Refunds are available to new members who, during their first six months, find nothing of interest in the group, have not participated in any events, and wish to leave the group. Request the refund before leaving the group. But we're confident you'll like the group and want to stick with us.

Membership dues are tax deductible.

Special note to new member orchestra audition candidates: In order for you to retain your audition appointment, please pay the \$12 meetup membership fee immediately. If you fail to pass the audition, or pass and choose not to participate in the orchestra or meetup group, your \$12 meetup fee will be refunded if you have participated in no events other than the audition.

Questions?

Before peppering the organizer with questions about how the group works and how you can participate, please read this "About Us" document in its entirety and explore the website thoroughly. Yes, it's a bit long, but if you e-mail me a question and the answer is in here, I'm just going to point you to this doc... You can skim for major section headings, which are underlined.

Navigating the Website

Meetup changes the website layout from time to time, and the available options and display layout vary from one device to another. Please take the time to orient yourself to all the various options and information available on the platform you use most often.

There's one VERY IMPORTANT area you should know about. It's used very often and it's only available on full screen web browsers. It's the "Files" section under the "More" option just beneath the title bar. While we increasingly rely on IMSLP.org for free copies of music in the public domain, the files section is our alternate primary repository where event hosts will put scanned copies of the music to be played. The group is largely self-serve when it comes to accessing and printing musical parts. See more under the "Files" caption below.

One more important note about the home page's display of upcoming events on full screen web browsers, it shows only the next upcoming 5 events. We often have many events scheduled months in advance. You'll need to scroll to the bottom of the upcoming event list and hit "More Meetups." The next 5 will then be displayed. It may take multiple hits on "More Meetups" to exhaust the list and see all your options. There's also an alternate view of upcoming events by calendar (2 months at a time), just above the first upcoming event listing. This limitation is generally not a problem on smart phone Meetup apps.

Types of Meetings and What to Expect

There are no fees for individual meetings. Our meetups generally fall into one of three formats:

Open Meetups: Usually held in a member's home, maximum attendance varies based on the host, lasting 2 to 4 hours. New and old members alike meet and greet. No obligation for any individual to play. Music for play or sight-reading will be provided in advance for the available instrumentalists, if possible. Food and beverages sometimes served at the option of the host; guest offerings always welcome. These are the best format meetings for new members to get introduced to the group and we recommend you attend one or two before attempting to build your own ensemble.

Note that for gatherings with a larger number of attendees, it will not be possible for everyone to play in every piece. In such cases, a round robin format is usually taken, allowing, as much as possible, everyone equal opportunities at play. Those not playing in a given piece at a given time may relax and quietly listen to your fellow musicians. Of course, some venues have multiple rooms where multiple concurrent ensembles may play, which may mitigate this somewhat.

Some open meetups may focus on a particular type of ensemble or piece(s) of music for the event. If so, please be mindful of the composition of the ensemble (you can see the program and the list of people who've already RSVP'ed) and RSVP only if appropriate. It may be necessary for hosts to decline "yes" RSVP's if the respondent plays an instrument that doesn't fit the meeting program or if the requirements for respondent's instrument have already been fulfilled.

Closed Rehearsals: As members meet and join together to form ensembles and select pieces to work on, they will set their own agendas and times for getting together to rehearse. These may be off-line to the meetup calendar or may appear on a restricted/informational basis only. While things remain casual, folks get a little more intense about the quality of music production.

Concert Orchestra: Several rehearsals per year (first two of each concert rehearsal cycle and summer "funsies") are open to all members of the Meetup. If you are interested in concert participation and wish to audition, please read <http://files.meetup.com/557533/DCCO%20Members%27%20Handbook%20V1.1.pdf> and visit www.DCConcertOrchestra.org

Feedback: After meetups, you are encouraged to respond to the Meetup generated request for feedback. This really helps out the hosts and the organizers to maintain and improve the quality of events in our meetup group. Consider throwing in an overall group review as well. These are great PR for potential new members and helps grow the group.

Event Locations: We have roughly 20 host locations, scattered throughout the metro area, from Reston, VA to Columbia, MD – some convenient to Metro, some not. Availability of pianos (or other keyboard instruments) at each meetup location is noted in the calendar event posting. Members are invited to suggest locations and/or open their homes for gatherings.

Meeting Etiquette, Food & Drink

As the opening "Welcome" blurb states, while good music is the goal, the emphasis is on fun and enjoyment. This certainly holds true for our open meetups. Things may get a little more intense in the closed rehearsals, still.... Keep it congenial, collegial and **non-competitive**, please. Sure, some folks are better at their instruments than others, but that just adds to the variety. Constructive comments and guidance are always welcome – some of our more advanced or

experienced players are professionals and teachers. Criticism, condescension or attitude are not welcome. We are all very relaxed. Come casual, and be prepared to meet some good folks. Play at any given meeting is not required (unless a closed rehearsal) but it is encouraged. We find a lot to laugh about too – mostly ourselves and our musical foibles and gaffes. Serving food and drink is at the option of the host. Offerings by guests are always welcome (for general consumption by the group, no host gifts, please). Meeting notices will generally indicate if food or drink will be served.

Hosting (yes, most everyone can!)

Really! Truly! Even new members can host! These are low pressure events -- remember, we are collegial, congenial and non-critical. No need to deep clean the home, no need to put on the dog, no need for fancy food -- chips and dip work, and even that's optional. Just open your home to friendly musicians, meet new people and make music. Given the 200+/- members of the group -- many of them newcomers eager to play -- the group can only be reasonably sustained if members open their homes. Except for orchestra rehearsals, we do not have public venues available for rehearsal space.

Looking for folks to host small (3 to 8 people) "open" gatherings. Especially appreciate hosts with pianos, but any/all hosts welcomed (... and if you are a pianist host, willing to share the piano with visiting pianists).

Hosting is incredibly easy, and the organizer can help with repertoire if that's a concern (that's particularly addressed to you newbies). Anywhere in the metro area works, although proximity to public transport and/or easy parking is always helpful.

If you are interested, please provide a specific date or two that works for you, along with a preferred time, your address and phone number, your max number of attendees, whether you have a piano, and whether you have space for concurrent ensembles (i.e. two or more sound separated spaces).

Selecting Music for Your Event

There are two ways of approaching the music program for a given open event. The host can choose one or more pieces that they are interested in sponsoring and then solicit the appropriate musicians to complete the ensemble. Just as commonly though, open events have a maximum number of attendees, and as various folks respond, one or more possible common instrument configurations start to take shape. Music can then be selected to suit the possible ensembles. There are a wide variety of sources of public domain music available (see more below at Files) from which to select. As mentioned previously, if you need assistance, your organizer or one of the more experienced members of the meetup group may be able to provide assistance.

The FILES Section

Under the MORE tab at the top of the website's home page is a section called "Files." You need to check this out. There's quite a collection of electronic scores (PDF) for a wide variety of chamber music. BUT, you will only be able to see these files if you are **logged in** to Meetup. These files are hidden from view for non-members of our group.

There are presently more than 14 page loads of listings, so it can take some time to browse the options. It is best to sort on the "Name/Description" field (simply click on that field in the column header). Files will then be sorted by composer name, opus (Deutsch, Kochel, what-have-you) number if available, title, item, and instrument part. (Some parts are wrapped up in a consolidated file of all parts). Either the collection of instrument parts, or the description for a consolidated file, tells you the ensemble mix.

Members are welcome to upload files (in PDF format only), but please follow, as best you can, the file naming convention; and make sure the file isn't already there.

Forming an Ensemble

The organizer is unable to help match up musicians to form ensembles for a given event or for a longer term group. As you might fathom from this document alone, the amount of questions and requests for support the organizer fields are substantial; and that doesn't cover all the regular organizing support and chamber music play. This meetup group exists to help you to identify musicians with whom to form ensembles. First, and most tried and true, is to attend Open Meetups and open Concert Orchestra rehearsals to meet other musicians whom you can approach about ensembles. Next is the Message Board (see below) where you can solicit for ensembles – there are several examples already out there. Lastly is by sending a broadcast request to the entire Meetup Group. See Contacting Members of the Group or the Entire Group below on how to do that.

The Message Board

Under the Discussions tab is the Message Board – a standard internet type bulletin board. Here, folks can post questions to the group, solicit for ensembles, post information, announce events, etc. Please note that, to date, this area of the website has gotten very little traffic and has not been an effective means of forming ensembles.

Contacting Members of the Group or the Entire Group

Meetup provides a private messaging system through which members can contact other members of meetup groups. Either on the Members page(s), or anywhere

you see a member's name, you can click on their name. This will bring up their profile. There's a "message" button on each member's profile through which you can send them an e-mail. This service does not reveal your private e-mail (unless you choose to provide it directly).

If you have a general question, a concert announcement, ticket offers, performance opportunities, etc. for the entire group, you may address your mail to DC-Chamber-Music-List@Meetup.com. (We welcome and encourage news items about such opportunities – our goal is to foster interest in chamber music and performing arts, in general.) This goes to a listserv moderated by your organizer. The organizer can only choose to release the e-mail as is, or decline it. Personal e-mails and inappropriate content will be deleted without release. The organizer cannot edit the content, so please word the e-mail as though it were addressed to the entire group, not the organizer.

Privacy Issues

As privacy concerns go, Meetup is one of the better social media sites, but it is not without its concerns. The group is marked private, which means the public can only see member counts, event titles and dates, the group description, and group reviews. Only members of the group can see the addresses of events. Your organizer respects your privacy and never reveals your private contact to other members info unless you expressly authorize it. Still, a few words to the wise are in order:

- **NEVER** post your phone number, address, e-mail address or other private info to your personal profile, any member of any meetup group you are a part of can see this. There also are a couple of other privacy options here. You can choose not to reveal what other meetup groups of which you are a member and you can choose not to show your areas of interest. Do as you wish with these, but know that greetings posted to your profile by others can't be "turned off" and may reveal information you have otherwise thought was protected. You can delete these greetings.
- **For Event Hosts and Venue Information**... The standard way of dealing with this is that venues are marked private homes and info is only available to members of our meetup group (all members, not just those RSVP'ing to a given event at that venue). This has worked fairly successfully with no concerns to date. One of the reasons the organizer has reserved the event/venue creation ability to himself is that Meetup is not friendly about marking venues private; it has to be done "just so" or it leaks out in the wider Meetup as a shared venue for all Meetup groups, anyhow...
- For members who wish to keep their home address and phone contact info **even more private**, the option exists for event hosts to e-mail their contact info **ONLY** to the event attendees prior to their meetup. This can

be done by the host on the event webpage using the "E-mail attendees" option in the "tools" list above the RSVP list.

Maintaining Your Membership

- Keep current on your dues. The fee is a very minimal \$12, defrays expenses in operating the group, and discourages the "oh that sounds nice, I'll join and maybe try that out sometime (read never)" folks from joining.
- Send the organizer your e-mail address and cellphone number. This will be kept confidential. Communicating through Meetup's messaging service has serious drawbacks, the primary one being that much of the e-mail and messages from Meetup wind up in people's spam/junk folders. If you do not respond to communications through meetup and I have no other way of reaching you, you are subject to removal without notice.
- Participate actively in the group. If it's been more than a year since you've participated, please reconsider your membership in the group. Rejoin when time/interest permit active participation.
- ATTENDANCE. If you RSVP "Yes" to an event. Show up! We're not like other Meetups where attendance is optional -- no "something better came up today, or the weather is too nice" please. "No Shows" can put an awful dent in an event resulting in 1) singularly unsatisfying play of a piece absent a critical instrument, 2) collapse of one or more of the programmed pieces, and 3) sometimes collapse of an entire event. With rare exception, two "no-shows" will result in the removal of a member. Late notice is better than none. You can 1) change your RSVP or 2) e-mail or call the host – this information is available through either the venue listing or via private e-mail from the host. Cancellations less than two hours before a non-performance event usually count as "no shows." Event reminders go out a week before and one day before each event; if you have a change in plans, change your RSVP accordingly as soon as possible. **Two "no shows" may subject a member to immediate removal from the group. More particularly, except in case of serious illness or incapacity, short-term notice of cancellation for participation in a public performance may result in immediate removal from the group.** Exceptions to these rules, for certain circumstances, may be made at the sole discretion of the organizer.

Meetup Member Sponsored Events

This section pertains to events and public performances which are not initiated by, or directly sponsored by, the management of DCCOS. This is to ensure the viability of events, and protect the reputation and financial integrity of DCCOS.

Scheduling: The larger organization thrives on the membership's privately sponsored chamber music events posted on the Meetup website. As has been the case since the inception of the Meetup group, the Meetup organizer works to avoid scheduling conflicts between events. Management reserves the right to refuse to post a non-DCCO-management sponsored event if it conflicts directly or indirectly with an orchestra rehearsal or chamber music concert, or with other non-DCCO-management sponsored events.

Public Performances: Meetup and orchestra members are encouraged to take their playing skills and performances "on the road." Programs and promotional material for such performances may refer to the performers' common membership in DC Amateur Classical Musicians Meetup group and may include a hyperlink to www.meetup.com/ACM-DCCO. However, such material may **not** indicate sponsorship by the DC Amateur Classical Musicians Meetup, or reference the DC Concert Orchestra (Society) in any way, without first seeking management and board approval.

Event Charges: All member events posted to Meetup must be free of charge. Fees charged which inure to parties other than DCCOS proper create potentially serious tax consequences for DCCOS' 501(c)(3) charitable, non-profit status.

Pianists, Flutists, Clarinetists TAKE NOTE

We have a lot of you in the group and you are a lively group. You will need to be quick on the draw to find spots open for you at events, that is unless you host events. Please bear this in mind before requesting membership.

Guitarists and Vocalists, TAKE NOTE

There is very little general demand for your instruments. It is best if you can host events. Alternately, and this has worked well for some, you may join the group and privately network with members to set up your own duets, trios, etc. Please bear this in mind before requesting membership.

Final Note re Mailing List and Receiving E-mails

In your personal profile, please elect to stay on the mailing list (either per item, or by periodic digest). If you're not on the mailing list, you'll miss all announcements (events, discount ticket offers, etc.). E-mail is the primary form of communication for this meetup group!

Please add DC-Chamber-Music-announce@meetup.com (or trust the meetup.com domain) and DupontBob@StarPower.net to your address book too. This will prevent any spam or junk mail filters from sidelining announcements (it's happened to many folks). Wouldn't want you to discover weeks later an event you would like to have attended.