

Choral Concert Etiquette

Here are some guidelines about etiquette and courtesy at a choral concert. It is important to remember that attending a classical concert is very different from going to a movie or a rock concert, or of watching a movie at a theater or on television. Most of these "rules" serve to provide the best possible listening environment for the audience and for the performers on stage, and others are simply the result of traditions that have evolved through the years. The rule of thumb in classical concert etiquette is to be considerate of the performers and of other audience members, and not cause distractions that will disturb the atmosphere of the performance.

Here is a short list of common "rules" of etiquette for attending a classical concert:

1. Be on time. Don't be the last one to be seated, and if you arrive after a piece has started wait until the piece is over before finding your seat.
2. Don't talk or whisper during a performance. Remember that the performers can hear you every bit as well as you can hear them.
3. Be sure to turn off any cell phones, pagers or wristwatches that can make noises before entering a concert.
4. Stay seated except for intermission and the end of the concert, unless you are truly ill and need to leave the concert hall.
5. Don't clap until you're certain that a piece is finished. If the piece has several sections, it is usually not appropriate to clap between the sections. When in doubt, wait to see what the rest of the audience is doing; you don't have to be the first to applaud.
6. Whistling, whooping or shouting is not appropriate at a classical concert, although occasionally someone will call 'bravo' after a particularly fine performance.
7. Every concert does not automatically conclude with a standing ovation.
8. You should not eat or drink anything in the concert space, including candy, where the wrapper can make a particularly distracting noise.
9. Be discreet in the use of your program during the performance. Many people do refer to their program during a piece, especially if they are following the text of a choral piece, but be cautious that you don't drop it or make noisy page turns.
10. Above all, enjoy the music. Everybody experiences concerts in different ways; some people closely follow the printed program during a piece, some listen with their eyes closed, some follow the conductor's every gesture, some do all of these and more. The important thing is to help create and sustain an environment where everyone in the hall can totally immerse himself or herself in the beauty and magic of the live performance of fine music.