



PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Policy Statement

The Victoria Operatic Society (VOS) is a non-profit, volunteer-driven organization that is committed to:

- provide an inclusive environment free of discrimination, bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment,
- support the productivity, personal goals, dignity and self-respect of all its employees, and society members, and
- promote sensitivity to individual differences.

VOS will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no employee or society member is subjected to discrimination, bullying or harassment. In particular, VOS accepts responsibility to ensure that its policies, practices, work arrangements and facilities do not have unlawful discriminatory effects on those individuals protected under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

Further, VOS will not tolerate any behavior, including from independent contractors and other individuals with whom VOS does business that conflicts with the spirit or intent of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, or any other human rights laws that are applicable to our operations within or outside Canada.

This policy applies to all individuals working or volunteering within the society at any location where an official society sponsored event, rehearsal or production is taking place.

Key Principles

1. VOS will provide and sustain a safe working environment in which everyone is treated fairly and with respect. Those working or dealing with VOS must not encounter harassment, intimidation or victimisation on the basis of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, trade union membership, disability, offending background or any other personal characteristic.
2. Everyone carries a personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that their conduct is in accordance with the principles set out in this policy. In addition, each person has a responsibility to report any instance of bullying or harassment which they witness or which comes to their attention.
3. Harassment is an expression of power and superiority by one person or group over another person or group, often for reasons of sex, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, family or marital status, social or economic class, political or religious affiliation, language or improper use of power and authority inherent in their position. Harassment can also be personal in nature and unrelated to the grounds listed above.

4. Sexual Harassment means any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or in a continuous series of incidents. It may include, but is not limited to:

- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos, or taunts of a sexual nature about a person's body, clothing or gender;
- insulting gestures and practical jokes of a sexual nature which causes discomfort or embarrassment;
- display of inappropriate pictures, graffiti or other offensive material either in hard copy or electronic format;
- sexual subjective staring;
- demands for sexual favors;
- unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting or pinching;
- sexual assault.

5. Bullying is unlikely to be a single or isolated instance. It is usually, but not exclusively repeated and persistent behaviour which is offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting. Bullying includes but is not limited to:

- Conduct which is intimidating, physically abusive or threatening
- Conduct that denigrates, ridicules or humiliates an individual, especially in front of colleagues
- Humiliating an individual in front of colleagues
- Picking on one person when there is a common problem
- Shouting at an individual to get things done
- Consistently undermining someone and their ability to do the job
- "cyber bullying" i.e. bullying via e-mail.
- Setting an individual up to fail (e.g. by giving inadequate instructions or unreasonable deadlines).

PROCEDURE

6. Informal Resolution

6.1 Very often people are not aware that their behaviour is unwelcome or misunderstood and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and agreement that the behaviour will cease.

6.2 Complainants are therefore encouraged to try, if they feel able to do so, to resolve the problem informally by making it clear to the alleged harasser that his/her actions are unwanted and should not be repeated. This may be done verbally or in writing in which case the complainant should keep a copy of the documentation and, where possible, the times and dates of incidents should be recorded.

6.3 If the complainant feels unable to approach the alleged harasser, a colleague, or member of the production team or board could be asked to speak to the alleged harasser on

the complainant's behalf. A note should be made of the action taken and the matter notified to the Stage Manager or VOS Executive Member responsible for Human Resources.

- 6.4 An individual who is made aware that their behaviour is unacceptable should:
- a. Listen carefully to the complaints and the particular concerns raised;
 - b. Respect the other person's point of view: everyone has a right to work in an environment free from harassment/intimidation;
 - c. Understand and acknowledge that it is the other person's reaction/perception to another's behaviour that is important;
 - d. Agree the aspects of behaviour that will change;
 - e. Review their general conduct/behaviour at work and with workplace colleagues.

7. Formal Resolution

7.1 If the alleged harassment continues, the complainant feels unable or unwilling to deal with the matter informally, or the allegation is so serious as to prevent use of the informal procedure, a complaint should then be raised formally.

7.2 Normally, the complaint will be provided to the Stage Manager or Executive Member responsible for HR. However, if the employee or volunteer feels unable to do this they should submit the complaint in writing to the President of the Society.

7.3 When dealing with a complaint of harassment under the Formal Resolution Procedure, the individual outlined above should:

- a. Take full details of the incidents in writing from the complainant and their representative (if appropriate);
- b. Take full details from any witnesses/other complainants who come forward and may have witnessed the alleged behaviour;
- c. Inform the alleged respondent of the complaints against him/her, and invite him/her to a meeting in order that they can comment on the allegations against them and inform them that if they wish to be accompanied by someone they trust that is permissible;
- d. Keep all parties informed of expected timelines; and
- e. Inform all parties in writing of the outcome and any action that may be required.

7.4 If the complaint is upheld, there are a number of possible outcomes for the respondent, depending on the evidence presented and the circumstances. These could include, but are not limited to:

- a. Dismissal or removal from the society membership or production;

- b. A formal warning; or
- c. Making arrangements for both parties to work as separately as possible.

7.5 With any allegation, the need for a thorough and objective investigation is paramount. Consequently, if through the course of the investigation evidence demonstrates that the allegation has been made frivolously, maliciously, or for personal gain, then the individual making the complaint may also be subject to administrative action.

8. Records

8.1 Where the complaint is informal and resolved at this stage, no record will be kept on the VOS Human Resource file for Harassment and Bullying. Following formal investigation, where the complaint is not substantiated, no records will be retained.

8.2 Where a complaint is substantiated or partially substantiated but does not proceed to administrative action, a letter confirming the outcome will be retained on the Human Resource file and supporting documentation retained in a separate file for a period of 12 months.