



UNISON

PLAY FOR SOMETHING

Guiding Principles

Purpose

Unison is a voluntary network of band musicians who believe music can strengthen civic life, elevate public events, and bring people together around shared democratic values.

Our purpose is to:

- Support causes and events that strengthen communities
- Defend democratic norms, human rights, and the rule of law
- Advocate for music education, the arts, labor dignity, environmental stewardship, and other public-interest issues
- Create a reliable, flexible network of musicians who can mobilize quickly to add meaning, beauty, and emotional power to public life
- Foster community among musicians who want to serve something larger than themselves

Core Values

1. Democracy and Human Dignity Are Non-Negotiable

We will not support events, causes, or individuals that undermine:

- Free and fair elections
- Peaceful transfer of power
- Equal protection under the law
- Fundamental human rights

- Nonviolent civic participation

This is not a partisan commitment. It is a commitment to democratic society itself.

2. Music Is Our Contribution

Our role is to contribute musically.

We exist to:

- Perform
- Inspire
- Create a sense of occasion
- Help people feel connected to one another

As a network, we do not:

- Serve as political spokespeople
- Deliver speeches
- Endorse violence or intimidation
- Act as a pressure group beyond our musical presence

Members may express their own views as private individuals, but not on behalf of the network unless specifically authorized through agreed process.

3. Broad Civic Participation

We welcome musicians from varied backgrounds and viewpoints who share our core commitments.

We believe:

- Civic engagement is healthier when it is joyful, public, and communal
- Music can lower barriers, soften divisions, and elevate discourse
- People should feel welcome participating at many levels

Organizational Model

1. Network Structure

This is a community-first network, designed to remain agile and mission-driven.

Initial structure:

- A small leadership/moderation team receives invitations and requests

- Leadership screens requests for alignment with core values and logistics
- Approved opportunities are shared with the broader network
- Members opt in event by event

2. Participation Model

Participation is flexible.

Members may:

- Participate frequently
- Join occasionally
- Support planning, logistics, or repertoire preparation

No member is expected to commit beyond what they can sustainably offer.

3. Leadership Role

Leadership exists to:

- Protect the values and mission
- Facilitate communication
- Coordinate repertoire and logistics
- Maintain artistic and professional standards
- Resolve disputes when needed

Leadership should facilitate rather than dominate.

Event Participation Principles

1. Event Eligibility

We may support:

- Music education and arts advocacy events
- Labor and worker solidarity events
- Environmental and sustainability efforts
- Civic celebrations
- Public service and community events
- Candidate or issue events, when aligned with core values

We will not support:

- Anti-democratic movements
- Hate-based causes

- Violent or threatening activity
- Events that materially conflict with our core values

2. Neutrality and Boundaries at Events

At events:

- Our official role is to perform music
- We do not serve as security, marshals, or spokespersons
- No member may speak for the network unless explicitly designated
- Members acting in personal capacities must make clear they are doing so as individuals

3. Safety and Respect

We prioritize:

- Physical safety
- Respectful treatment of all participants
- Clear communication around expectations
- The right of any member to decline participation without pressure

Artistic Standards

To maintain quality and trust:

1. Musical Preparation

- Events should have clear repertoire and instrumentation expectations
- Music should be selected to fit the occasion and message
- Members should prepare responsibly

2. Professional Conduct

Members are expected to:

- Communicate clearly
- Arrive on time
- Treat fellow musicians and hosts respectfully
- Maintain musical standards appropriate to the event

3. Flexibility

The network should be able to field:

- Small brass groups

- Pep-band style ensembles
- Ceremonial ensembles
- Larger concert-style groups when possible

Financial Principles

1. No Financial Entanglement at Launch

At the outset:

- The network does not accept payment for performances
- The network does not donate money to candidates or causes
- Participation is voluntary

2. Future Structure

If scale requires:

- The community may consider creating a formal legal structure
- Any transition should preserve mission integrity and transparency

Community Culture

We aim to build a culture that is:

- Welcoming
- Musically excellent
- Mission-driven
- Respectful of differing perspectives
- Reliable in moments of need

This network should feel like:

- A musical guild
- A civic service community
- A source of joy, solidarity, and purpose

Founding Commitment

We believe music can do more than entertain. It can dignify public life, help people feel less alone, and remind communities what they are capable of building together.

We are here to serve that possibility.

Artistic Standards and Performance Requirements

Purpose

The purpose of these standards is to ensure that every sanctioned performance reflects the musical integrity, professionalism, and collective excellence of the community.

Our goal is not exclusivity for its own sake. Our goal is to preserve trust, create meaningful musical experiences, and make sure that when this network shows up, it adds real value.

Leadership exists not to gatekeep, but to support quality, fairness, and access.

Core Principles

Our artistic standards are built on three priorities:

- Musical quality
- Reliability and professionalism
- Accessibility and community inclusion

We believe:

- Music should elevate the events we support
- Strong preparation creates freedom and joy
- High standards and broad participation can coexist
- Leadership should facilitate access, not create unnecessary barriers

Sanctioned Performance Requirements

For a performance to be officially sanctioned by the network, it must meet minimum standards in three areas:

- Instrumentation
- Performer experience and reliability
- Approved repertoire

Minimum Instrumentation Requirements

A sanctioned ensemble must include, at minimum:

- 2 flute

- 3 clarinet
- 1 alto saxophone
- 1 French horn
- 2 trumpet
- 1 trombone or euphonium
- 1 bass voice (tuba or electric bass)
- Percussion

Minimum Percussion Options

Percussion may be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- Drum set
- 1 snare, 1 bass drum, and 1 cymbal
- 1 snare with mounted cymbal and 1 bass drum

These minimums represent the lowest threshold at which the ensemble can perform with balance, energy, and musical credibility.

Preferred Instrumentation for Stronger Performances

The preferred minimum instrumentation for a fuller and more effective performance is:

- 4 flute
- 6 clarinet
- 4 alto saxophone
- 2 tenor saxophone
- 1 baritone saxophone
- 6 trumpet
- 4 French horn
- 3 trombone
- 2 euphonium
- 2 tuba or electric bass
- 2 snare drum
- 2 tenor drum
- 3 bass drum
- 1 cymbal

These numbers are the target for larger events or performances where a stronger musical impact is desired.

Experience and Player Qualification Standards

To count toward minimum instrumentation requirements, each listed part must be covered by an experienced player.

Definition of Experienced Player

An experienced player is generally someone with:

- Approximately four or more years of serious ensemble experience
- Technical and musical ability roughly equivalent to a strong undergraduate music major or better
- Reliable rhythm, tone, intonation, and sight-reading ability
- Ability to prepare independently and perform professionally

Additional players at any experience level are welcome and encouraged.

However, minimum instrumentation is only considered met when each required chair is filled by a verified experienced player.

Verified Experience Status

The network will maintain a system to identify experienced players.

This may include:

- Leadership review of musical background and experience
- Peer recommendations
- Prior performance history
- Audition, recording, or rehearsal observation when needed

The purpose of this system is:

- Quality control
- Reliability in event planning
- Clear expectations for ensemble balance

This process should be transparent, fair, and focused solely on musical readiness.

Approved Repertoire and Pep Books

All music performed at sanctioned events must be from officially approved arrangements.

Approved Music Policy

Approved music should:

- Be musically effective in flexible instrumentation
- Fit the tone and purpose of the event
- Be practical for quick preparation

- Meet basic artistic standards

Pep Books

To support consistency and rapid mobilization, the network will create and maintain shared pep books that:

- Include approved repertoire
- Provide standardized parts
- Allow musicians to prepare efficiently
- Make spontaneous participation more feasible

Leadership Responsibilities in Artistic Standards

Leadership plays a central role in maintaining artistic quality.

Leadership is responsible for:

- Approving arrangements and repertoire
- Determining when performance minimums are met
- Reviewing experienced-player status
- Supporting event coordinators with instrumentation and logistics

Leadership Standards for Decision-Making

Leadership decisions must be based only on:

- Musical quality
- Reliability
- Practical performance needs

Leadership must not base decisions on:

- Personal relationships
- Popularity
- Bias or prejudice
- Favoritism or nepotism

Inclusivity and Good Faith

While leadership is responsible for standards, the spirit of this community is openness.

In close or uncertain cases:

- Leadership should err on the side of inclusion

- Leadership should prioritize mentoring and pathway-building where possible
- Leadership should seek to expand participation rather than restrict it

The purpose of standards is not to exclude people. The purpose is to ensure that every performance honors the mission and reflects the best of what collective music-making can offer.

Founding Artistic Commitment

When this network performs, people should feel:

- The energy of collective purpose
- The discipline of preparation
- The joy of shared music-making
- The dignity of a community showing up for something meaningful

Our standards exist to protect that experience.