

MINNESOTA CHORALE

ADA ACCESS STATEMENT AND PLAN

I. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

In 1990, the United States Congress enacted into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees equal and full access to employment and public services for people with disabilities. Since its implementation, many people have been served and hired throughout the country, and actions have been taken to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility. In keeping with the goals of the ADA, the Minnesota Chorale is committed to ensuring that its programs are accessible to the broadest range of Minnesotans with disabilities.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN

- i. The Executive Director of the Minnesota Chorale is the designated Access Coordinator.
- ii. The Minnesota Chorale's Human Resources Committee serves as an advisory body in regard to ADA and access issues. The Artistic Director will be added to the membership of this committee when the agenda calls for discussion of ADA issues. At this time there are no members with disabilities on the committee.
- iii. An access audit was conducted in December, 1998 by Camille Kolles, then the Chorale's Executive Director, and reviewed in January, 1999 by the Human Resources Committee of the Board of Directors. *Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide* was employed as a guide. This audit resulted in the actions steps listed in this document under "Accessibility Goals Yet to be Addressed and Timeline." Annual reviews of Minnesota Chorale's progress in implementing the organization's ADA policies follow each concert season.

III. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

*The Minnesota Chorale celebrates the human voice and its power to educate, enrich, unite, and inspire by performing an ever-widening repertory of choral music, at the highest artistic level, for a broad community of audiences. The Minnesota Chorale's **Bridges** community-engagement series seeks to overcome cultural, economic, and generational barriers in today's world by building musical and social bridges within our community.*

The Minnesota Chorale was founded in 1972 to meet the demand for a choir that could function on the same artistic plane as the Twin Cities' celebrated professional orchestras. The Chorale sought then, and seeks now, to perform music of all styles and periods at the highest level of artistry, and, in doing so, to harness and leverage the limitless variety and communicative power of the human voice. The Chorale's partnerships with two great orchestras have made it unique among organizations of its kind and have resulted in a range of performances and programs unsurpassed by any similar chorus in the United States. Internationally lauded conductor-educator Kathy Saltzman Romey, also a professor of music at the University of Minnesota, became the Chorale's fifth artistic director in 1995.

The Chorale is one of the foremost professional-caliber adult choruses in North America. But "Minnesota Chorale" is also an umbrella term for a growing family of choruses, including the Minneapolis Youth Chorus and the new Voices of Experience, a choir for senior adults. This is no accident. Although best

known for its traditional concerts with orchestra, the Chorale is equally dedicated to building community and advancing the choral art through industry-leading outreach and education programs, to which the organization devotes an increasing proportion of its resources.

Like professional symphonic choruses nationwide, the Chorale consists of a core of some 50 paid singers and a roster of 150 accomplished volunteers, recruited through a highly selective annual audition process. With their immediate families, the Chorale's singers constitute a community of roughly 1,000--the population of a small town. If the Chorale has enjoyed notable success in building bridges to diverse communities, this is largely because the Chorale is itself a strikingly varied community, knit together by music but rippling well beyond it.

IV. WAYS IN WHICH FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES ARE CURRENTLY ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Facilities, Programs, and Services – Orchestral Engagements: The vast majority of the Chorale's performances consist of engagements with the Minnesota Orchestra and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and hence occur in halls chosen by the orchestras (Orchestra Hall, Ordway Center, Wooddale Church, St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Cathedral of St. Paul, Basilica of St. Mary, Benson Great Hall, Temple Israel, etc). The responsibility for choosing these facilities (and thus for ensuring their ADA compliance) belongs to the engaging organization.

Facilities, Programs, and Services – Independently-Presented Concerts: The Minnesota Chorale does not currently own or operate a performance facility. The Chorale typically presents one to two concerts independently each season. Facilities for *Bridges* programs are chosen with the overriding goal of providing the greatest access for the community to which we are bridging (by being located in a place where that community regularly gathers), but accessibility for people with physical disabilities is also required. The Chorale will continue to choose sites that are equipped for access for people with physical disabilities (including access to stage, warm-up space, restrooms, etc.).

Texts of the works performed by the chorus are typically printed in the program book for use by the audience (including the deaf community or hard-of-hearing) in following along. The Chorale makes large-print program notes available at all independently presented concerts. In addition, with ten days' notice, the Chorale will either make available a person to read the notes aloud just prior to the concert or provide recorded program notes. (Pre-concert lectures may also provide an opportunity to enhance understanding of the music and texts being sung.) In the case of *Bridges* presentations addressed to minority populations, program books are bilingual to the extent feasible.

Facilities, Programs, and Services – other Ensembles: The Chorale's Minneapolis Youth Chorus is a partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), open to MPS students in grades 4-8, The chorus rehearses mainly in space made available on an in-kind basis by the Jefferson Community School, and has performed in a variety of facilities, including other schools, the Woman's Club of Minneapolis, O'Shaughnessy Auditorium, and several churches. Voices of Experience, a choir of singers aged 60 and over, rehearses at the MacPhail Center for Music, a fully accessible space. This ensemble performs in churches, community care centers, and assisted living facilities. Although primary responsibility for the accessibility of these spaces rests with their owners and operators, the Chorale remains alert to any issues of access that may arise, and works to resolve them.

Facilities, Programs, and Services – Overall: *Practice regarding volunteer and paid singers:* The Minnesota Chorale has had in its membership a singer with low vision and a singer with a physical

disability requiring the use of a wheelchair. Reasonable accommodations were made in each case, and these singers were able to perform at Orchestra Hall, at the Ordway Center, and at a variety of church spaces. The Chorale has a policy addressing the needs of singers with chemical sensitivities, i.e., singers may not wear perfumes, colognes, scented hairsprays, or aftershave lotions during rehearsals or performances.

Practice regarding staff: “The Chorale provides employment and enforces employment policies and procedures without regard to race, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, religion, creed, national origin, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law.” (Excerpt from Personnel Policies, rev. July, 2010.)

Practice regarding rehearsal space: Again, the Minnesota Chorale selects rehearsal spaces with the requirement that they be fully accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Office facility: The Chorale leases office space in the Hennepin Center for the Arts in downtown Minneapolis. The Hennepin Center is fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

V. ACCESSIBILITY GOALS STILL TO BE ADDRESSED

Independent presentations:

- Make Augmentative Listening Devices available at independently presented concerts.
- Add wording or access symbols to promotional flyers and advertisements indicating accessibility of concerts (and/or requirements of ten-day notice, etc.).
- Once access improvements are in place, add to mailing list schools and other institutions for the blind, hearing- or physically disabled to welcome them and increase awareness of opportunities now more readily accessible to them.

Minneapolis Youth Chorus:

- Cooperate with Minneapolis Public Schools to address any remaining access issues.

Orchestral engagements:

- Cooperate with Minnesota Orchestra and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra to move beyond current norms and to achieve the highest possible levels of access and comfort in connection with the Chorale’s orchestral engagements.

rev. December, 2010