

**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 goal 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 Chair of the Human Resources Committee is the Vice President of Human Resources at the Valspar Corporation, who is familiar with ADA issues and relevant policies. 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, the Chorale's Executive Director, and reviewed in January, 1999 by the Human Resources Committee. The "Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrators 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 will follow each season, taking place annually in August, until policy implementation becomes standardized procedure.

**III. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The Minnesota Chorale serves its community of audiences by performing an ever-increasing repertory of choral music at the highest level of artistic excellence. We celebrate the human voice in its ability to educate, enrich, unite, and inspire. The Minnesota Chorale's **Bridges™** outreach series seeks to overcome cultural, economic, and generational barriers in today's world by building of musical and social bridges within our community.

The Minnesota Chorale is a nationally acclaimed 270-voice symphonic chorus offering audiences, orchestras, and singers the opportunity to participate in masterpieces of symphonic choral literature performed at the highest artistic levels. Now in its 33rd season, the Minnesota Chorale fills a key niche in the musical community, serving as the primary choral partner for the Twin Cities' major orchestras—the Minnesota Orchestra and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra—with equal dedication to supporting and building community through Bridges™, educational activities, and independently-presented symphonic choral works.

As with professional symphonic choruses nationwide, the Minnesota Chorale consists of a core of paid singers and a large roster of volunteer singers. The Chorale attracts the highest-caliber professional and avocational singers in the Twin Cities area through a highly selective audition process. All singers must re-audition annually and are required to maintain or improve their level of performance.

The Minnesota Chorale is a lean organization, with a professional staff of four employees: two full-time administrative positions (executive director and administrative manager), one part-time administrative position (development director) and one part-time artistic position (artistic director). In addition, there are three independent contractor/consultant positions: chorus personnel manager, accompanist, and education program coordinator. (An additional artistic position will be created in 2005.)

#### **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 Music Theatre, Wooddale Church, St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Cathedral of St. Paul, Basilica of St. Mary, Benson Great Hall, Temple Israel). The responsibility for choosing these facilities (and thus for ensuring their ADA compliance) belongs to the engaging organization.

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.

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 taped 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 – Full Voice Education Program: The Minnesota Chorale seeks to supplement, enhance, and, where necessary, substitute for school music programs by providing professional artists as a resource for students and teachers, primarily at urban public high schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Sites used for this program include the school itself, off-site rehearsal space (where students may attend a Chorale open rehearsal, for example), and performance facilities where mentors take their mentees to experience a wide range of vocal music and styles. Although primary responsibility for the accessibility of these spaces rests with the schools, rehearsal-site operators, and performing groups involved, the Chorale remains alert to, and will work to resolve, any issues of access that may arise.

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 who required 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 Music Theater, 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 policy and intent of the Minnesota Chorale is to provide equal employment opportunity for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, political affiliation, affectional orientation, gender identity, disability, sex, age, or status with regard to public assistance.” (Excerpt from Personnel Policy Guidelines, approved March 23, 1993.) Practice regarding rehearsal space: Again, the Minnesota Chorale currently selects rehearsal spaces with the requirement that they be fully accessible to people with physical disabilities. (In addition, the Chorale has several other requirements for rehearsal space: a good piano, good lighting, good acoustics, capacity to accommodate up to 200 singers, and free parking nearby. 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 and TIMELINE**

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 for blind, hearing, or physically disabled to welcome them and increase awareness of opportunities now more readily accessible to them.

Full Voice program:

- Cooperate with school partners 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.