

# 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 Board of Directors regularly reviews this plan and ensures that the organization abides by the provisions of the plan.
- iii. An access audit was originally conducted in December, 1998 by Camille Kolles, then the Chorale's Executive Director, and reviewed in January, 1999 by the Board of Directors. *Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide* was employed as a guide. Annual reviews of the Minnesota Chorale's work in maintaining the organization's ADA policies follow each concert season.

### III. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

*The Minnesota Chorale celebrates the human voice and its power to educate, unite, enrich, 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.

While the Chorale is one of the foremost professional-caliber adult choruses in North America, it has evolved into an umbrella organization for a growing family of choruses, including the Minneapolis Youth Chorus, the Prelude Children's Choir, and the Voices of Experience, a choir for senior adults. 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 community engagement 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 200 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 majority of the Chorale's performances consist of engagements with the Minnesota Orchestra, and hence occur in halls chosen by the orchestra (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 up to four 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), or projected on a wall at the concert venue during the performance. The Chorale makes large-print program notes available at all independently presented concerts, upon request. 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.

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 3-9. The chorus rehearses mainly in space made available on an in-kind basis by Folwell Performing Arts Magnet 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 during daytime hours 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 insists that all spaces in which our family of choirs rehearse and perform are fully accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Facilities, Programs, and Services – Overall: Practice regarding volunteer and paid singers: The Minnesota Chorale singer cohort regularly includes people with low vision and those with physical disabilities requiring the use of a wheelchair or other accommodations. Such accommodations are made in every case, so that all singers are able to rehearse and perform at all venues where we do our work. The Chorale has a standing policy to protect singers with chemical sensitivities: singers are prohibited from using 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, 2016.)

*Office facility:* The Chorale leases office space Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Minneapolis. The church is fully accessible to persons with physical disabilities, and provides on-site underground parking.

**V. COMMUNICATING ABOUT ACCESSIBILITY**

Advertising and promotion for Minnesota Chorale concerts and other programs include ADA access information, including the wheelchair-accessible logo and the availability of other accommodations upon request. In past years, the Chorale promoted our concerts and programs in the VSA Minnesota newsletter and website; with the dissolution of that organization, we are seeking ways to reach the audience that had formerly been served by VSA Minnesota. We work to keep our website ADA-accessible

**VI. MAINTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY**

The Minnesota Chorale is committed to the work of accessibility, by ensuring that all our programs may be enjoyed by any person, regardless of mobility issues or other physical disabilities, and by serving as a vocal advocate in the local arts community on behalf of people with disabilities. In past years, the staff of the Chorale worked closely with the staff of VSA Minnesota, to make sure that all our work was conducted in a manner consistent with the needs of people with disabilities. We maintain a working relationship with former VSA Minnesota staff members, on a consultation-as-needed basis.

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