



# Cantus Vocal Ensemble

## Executive Director

### Organization

Cantus Vocal Ensemble (Cantus) gives voice to shared human experience by inspiring audiences through song and word, sparking new depths of understanding and empathy. Based in Minneapolis, Cantus is widely known for its trademark warmth and blend, innovative programming, and riveting performances. Beginning in 1995 as a group of St. Olaf College singers with a devoted following, Cantus is now a nationally recognized ensemble of eight full-time vocalists dedicated to ambitious low-voice repertoire, audience engagement, and in-depth youth education residencies.

As one of the nation's few full-time vocal ensembles, Cantus has come to prominence with its distinctive approach to creating music through its collaborative artistic structure. Working without a conductor, the members of Cantus rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing to the entirety of the artistic process, creating programs that feature diverse composers and a variety of perspectives, fulfilling its vision of giving voice to shared human experiences.

Cantus' core programs and activities feature their Hometown Series, an annual concert series with more than thirty in-person performances throughout the Twin Cities that also tours nationally. Cantus' commitment to equity and access for the community includes pay-what-you-can in-person concerts, \$5 student tickets, free community concerts, and open rehearsal.

Integral to the Cantus mission is its commitment to current and future artists by preserving and deepening music education in the schools. Cantus typically works with more than 5,000 students each year in masterclass and workshop settings across the country and has visited 31 Minnesota high schools throughout the 14-year history of its award-winning High School Residency program. Cantus also presents a Young and Emerging Composers' Competition, to encourage the creation of new repertoire through cash prizes, a performance, recording and potential publication of the winning composition.

Cantus is expanding the vocal music repertoire, actively commissioning new music, and seeking to unearth rarely performed repertoire for low voices. Cantus' non-hierarchical structure affords an inclusive perspective on commissioning and programming music of many traditions, styles, and backgrounds including historically underrepresented composers. Recent commissions include Cuban composer Yosvany Estepe, trans Latina composer Mari Esabel Valverde, Black composers Christopher H. Harris, Reginald Bowens, and Black female composers Ysaÿe Barnwell and Rosephayne Powell. In line with Cantus' ongoing commitment to fostering new works for tenors, baritones, and basses, the ensemble has partnered with composer and former Cantus bass Timothy C. Takach and Graphite Publishing on the Cantus Choral Series, distributing Cantus' signature arrangements and compositions for ensembles everywhere to perform and enjoy.

Cantus has a rich history of collaborations with performing arts organizations, including the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops, Chanticleer, Lorelei Ensemble, Theater Latté Da and the James Sewell Ballet. The ensemble is heard frequently on both classical public radio nationwide and on SiriusXM Satellite Radio. Cantus regularly engages community and artistic partners to fulfill its vision to "give voice to shared human experience". Notable engagements include a 2017 collaboration with female, Black a cappella ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock for a performance at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis. In 2022 collaborations included Cuban American jazz pianist and composer Nachito Herrera in its *Ramas y Raíces* concert; and with Esperanza United, an organization that "leverages the strengths of Latin@ communities to end gender-based violence." Cantus collaborated with students participating in Esperanza United's programming to write about their migrant experience and shared their stories in their concert *My Journey Yours*. Another recent collaboration included StreetSong-MN, a choir composed of people experiencing homelessness, their supporters, and St. Stephens Human Services.

Cantus has a 12-member Board of Directors led by Chair Brian Newhouse, and Bob Peskin serves as Interim Executive Director during the leadership transition. The staff currently consists of three full-time administrative staff, including the Development Manager and Concert & Operations Manager, and eight full-time ensemble singers, each with administrative, production, marketing, and artistic responsibilities. Total operating revenue for fiscal 2024 is anticipated to be approximately \$1.2 million with 57% in contributed revenue and 43% in earned revenue.

## Community

Minneapolis and Saint Paul comprise the Twin Cities, a multi-county metropolitan area and home to an increasingly diverse population of 3.7 million people. Highly regarded for its quality of life, economic vibrancy, and cultural ecosystem, the cost of living in the Twin Cities is just above the national average. Higher education institutions abound, with almost 50 colleges and universities within 50 miles. A range K-12 educational options includes neighborhood, public, and private schools.

The arts and culture scene in the Twin Cities rivals those of larger United States urban centers, ranking sixth on SMU DataArts' 2023 list of the "Top 40 Most Arts-Vibrant Communities in America." The cities' renowned arts and culture organizations include the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Weisman Art Museum, Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, The Guthrie Theatre, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, and myriad museums, choirs, dance troupes, and galleries.

The Twin Cities are home to 15 Fortune 500 headquarters—the highest concentration in the country—including 3M, Best Buy, Ecolab, General Mills, Land O'Lakes, Target, United Health Group, and US Bancorp. The Minneapolis Skyway System is the largest contiguously enclosed system (eight miles!) connecting downtown corporations, small businesses, shopping, and arts & culture, rerouting pedestrians and providing safer streets and more efficient automobile traffic.

Known as the "Land of 10,000 lakes" and bordering Lake Superior, the largest lake in North America, Minnesota contains national parks, beaches, waterfalls, and countless hiking trails. The Twin Cities' climate is typical of the upper Midwest with four distinct seasons. Winters are cold, with an average of 52 inches of snow per year and year-round recreation and leisure activities are plentiful. Average summer temperatures reach the mid-80s. Less than 25 miles away is Afton Alps, one of 18 ski areas in Minnesota with 300 skiable acres, 50 trails, 18 lifts, and four terrain parks. Professional sports are popular in the Twin Cities, which is home to the National Hockey League Minnesota Wild, Major League Soccer Minnesota United FC, Major League Baseball Minnesota Twins, National Basketball Association Minnesota Timberwolves, Women's National Basketball Association Minnesota Lynx, and National Football League Minnesota Vikings. Minneapolis offers a large variety of parks, great food, festivals, and more.

Sources: census.gov; culturedata.org; makeitmsp.org; minneapolis.org; nema.org; mncompass.org.

## Position Summary

The Executive Director will be a collaborative, visionary, and entrepreneurial leader who will guide the strategic vision and direction of Cantus. A business performance driver and market strategist, they will be responsible for all aspects of strategic planning, fundraising, public visibility, and financial and management oversight. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will lead a professional staff and collaborate with the eight ensemble singers who each take on a range of artistic, operating, marketing, producing, and administrative responsibilities. The Executive Director will embrace and advance Cantus' programming and inspire and guide the collective expertise of the dedicated team to identify innovative and forward-thinking opportunities to build capacity and the Cantus brand.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Strategic Vision and Collaborative Leadership

- Embrace the collaborative and nonhierarchical culture of Cantus, proactively partnering with singers, staff, and the Board.
- Expand local, national, and global audiences and build the Cantus brand by identifying and strengthening innovative digital, touring, education, and other programming opportunities.
- Develop and implement short and long-term strategies for achieving Cantus' mission, vision, and goals.
- Serve as the ambassador and voice of the organization connecting to its diverse constituencies including media, the music community, educators, and the cultural and philanthropic communities.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impact of programs and initiatives, ensuring quality, mission alignment, and stewardship of Cantus resources.
- Expand and strengthen the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through innovative programs, policy, and practice.
- Embrace other strategic vision and collaborative leadership responsibilities, as needed.

### **Organizational Leadership and Resiliency**

- Lead Cantus' day-to-day operations to meet fiscal and operational goals, ensuring an inclusive, productive, and collaborative work environment.
- Manage, mentor, and strengthen capacity across all administrative and artistic functions in partnership with the staff and the eight full-time singers.
- Pursue operational excellence, identifying workflow and process efficiencies.
- Oversee human resources, including performing annual reviews, monitoring benefits, and establishing pay scales.
- Drive fiscal accountability and organizational sustainability, developing and tracking the annual operating budget and long-term financial objectives.
- Embrace other organizational leadership and resiliency responsibilities, as needed.

### **Community Engagement and Revenue Enhancement**

- Serve as an enthusiastic spokesperson for Cantus with audience members, donors, institutional and government funders, public officials, students and families, the vocal music field, and the arts and culture industry.
- Identify and build collaborative, strategic alliances locally, nationally, and internationally that advance Cantus' mission and programs and build the Cantus brand.
- Cultivate and steward close, productive partnerships with the Board of Directors, individual donors, foundations, public agencies, and corporate funders to grow contributed revenue opportunities.
- Partner with the development manager to create effective cultivation and solicitation opportunities, including fundraising appeals, events, and solicitations, engaging the Board of Directors, Cantus singers, and staff.
- Leverage Cantus' online presence to increase touring and other innovative earned and contributed revenue streams.
- Embrace other community engagement and revenue enhancement responsibilities, as needed.

### **Governance and Board Relations**

- Facilitate the engagement of the board, structuring participatory meetings that provide the financial and strategic reporting needed to actively engage members in committee service.
- Guide board training and mentoring to ensure outstanding board governance, management, and recruiting practice in partnership with board leadership.
- Serve as ex-officio, non-voting member of the Board, including Board Executive Committee, Finance Committee, and Nominating & Governance Committee.
- Embrace other governance and board relations responsibilities, as needed.

### **Traits and Characteristics**

The ED will be a collaborative and entrepreneurial leader who values teamwork and promotes transparency with constituents, including the singers, staff, board, and external stakeholders. A passionate advocate for vocal chamber music, community engagement, and music education, the ED will foster a culture of teamwork, accountability, and collaboration through creativity, open communication, and entrepreneurial spirit.

Other key competencies include the following:

- **Diplomacy and Interpersonal Skills** – The acuity to connect with a diverse array of people and personalities, while effectively communicating, building rapport, and relating well to all kinds of people.
- **Goal Orientation and Teamwork** – The capacity to accept responsibility for actions and results, leading by example, and the ability to articulate a vision and sense of purpose, build trust, and motivate the team to complete tasks necessary to meet deadlines and achieve goals.
- **Self-Starting and Personal Accountability** – The integrity to demonstrate initiative and clarity in prioritizing and completing tasks; accountability for initiatives, decisions, and actions; and sensitivity to their impact on others.
- **Time and Priority Management** – The clarity to discern competing priorities, overcome obstacles, and maximize the use of time and resources to achieve desired goals and outcomes.

## Qualifications

Seven to ten years of increasing responsibility in nonprofit arts administration is required. A proven track record of financial leadership, budget management, strategic planning, and fundraising is essential. The ideal candidate will also possess a demonstrated commitment to and results in a collaborative leadership model and the importance of the range of activities in the creative process. Educational credentials and demonstrated professional experience supporting leadership, organizational growth, arts and culture impacts, and community engagement, are highly desired.

## Compensation and Benefits

Cantus offers competitive compensation, with an annual salary range expected to be between \$105,000 to \$125,000; a generous benefits package with medical, dental, life, and long-term disability insurances; a 403(b) retirement plan with 4% match; and generous paid time-off and holidays. This position is based in Minneapolis with hybrid, in-person, and remote work required, including weekend and evening events and programs.

## Applications and Inquiries

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click [here](#) or visit [artsconsulting.com/opensearches](https://artsconsulting.com/opensearches). For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, including the anticipated salary range, please contact:

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**Cantus is an equal opportunity employer and encourages all qualified applicants regardless of gender identification, race, ethnicity, or religion.**