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## What is The Arizona Masterworks Chorale?

*The English word **Chorus** comes from the Ancient Greek root verb “χορός,” meaning “to express in unison another person's words, or a particular sentiment,” as done by a group of persons: a chorus or choir. **Chorale**, first used in 1841, derives from Martin Luther's translation of sacred hymns into the vernacular and the practice of “Choralgesang”; it refers to the songs themselves or the group of persons singing them together.*

The Arizona Masterworks Chorale (AMC) exists to bring the pleasure of voices joined together in song to our community through exhilarating and inspiring performances of the finest choral music. We'll do it in a distinctive way to delight both the audiences who hear us and ourselves, the musicians who perform.

During the pandemic hiatus that wiped out rehearsals and concerts in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons, the 43-year-old Arizona Masterworks Chorale began reinventing itself. We elected new directors, appointed new officers, significantly updated our back-office operations, and engaged a new Music Director and Collaborative Pianist, preparing for a successful return to the stage in November 2021.

Now at the end of the 2021-2022 season we're defining and publishing the strategy that we think will carry us forward for the next three seasons, through 2024-2025.

We'll move into new artistic territory, with greater level of musical challenge and virtuosity—and a higher level of satisfaction and reward—than we've ever had. The new AMC will be a joint effort of all our artists, staff, board, and volunteers, working together in an atmosphere of community, congeniality, and professionalism, delivering the finest possible musical experience to our patrons, supporters, and the community in which we live and work.

### **The AMC Experience: The Sheer Beauty of Sound and Poetry**

The key to our future is building, and consistently delivering, a distinctive “**Arizona Masterworks Chorale Experience**” that is unique among all other choral groups in the greater Phoenix metro area. In the words of our Music Director, Scott Youngs:

Choral sound is everchanging, and astonishing in its complexity. It is both physical and emotional. It is an art form driven by listening first and singing second; by being keenly aware and responsive to the sounds of each singer in the group.

In the Arizona Masterworks Chorale, we believe that singers who listen intently can create a beautiful balance within the group. Singers who have been trained as soloists, as well as those from other choral backgrounds, learn to modify their timbre and production to blend in the ensemble, enhancing their individual talents and musicianship. A well-formed or combined group of voices creates a much more beautiful sound with less work or vocal strain. The whole truly is greater than the sum of its parts.

We focus on learning to sing better and listen better, week by week. We bring an attitude of joyful hard work to our rehearsals and strive to move our audiences by the sheer beauty of sound and poetry in our performances. Our repertoire varies from the miniature choral gumdrop to major works; something old, something new, something astonishing, and something to touch the heart. We find joy in being together, making music together, and in sharing this art with our audiences.

## **Our Future**

Developing the “AMC Experience” will take time and work, and is the principal long-term goal addressed in this Strategic Plan. It won’t happen without planning by AMC leadership, considering artistic and organizational goals and the needs of all our communities: our audience, donors, partners, music staff, and the volunteer choristers who make up our AMC musical family

But it goes beyond technocratic planning and execution. At the core of any effective organization is a common understanding of the subjective “WHY?” it exists. In our case it’s knowing things like: Why did you attend an AMC concert? Why would you come back? Why are you an AMC chorister? Why do you give to support AMC’s mission?

Most likely, you’re an audience or Chorale member or donor because you get a feeling by doing so that meets needs you have. You’re happy, content, moved emotionally or spiritually, rewarded, challenged artistically and intellectually, feeling accomplished, or any of a thousand other feelings that the many pleasure centers in your brain produce and you respond to. And if you’re getting something out of it, you’ll want more.

Understanding the “WHY?” is the essence of The AMC Story; it’s how we can grow in service to our members and our community. Practically, it’s seen in how we sell tickets and ads, solicit donations and sponsorships, and recruit singers. But more so, it’s understanding that what we do brings pleasure to our entire community, in a virtuous circle of mutual reward.

## **Our New Tag Line**

A tag line, like Nike’s “Just do it” or Apple’s “Think different” tells people who you are and what you stand for. Recently, AMC used this tagline to tell the world about our musical genre:

*The finest classical and contemporary choral music*

Which is true but doesn’t differentiate AMC from any other group. It’s talking to ourselves, stating what we think is important, and nothing about what others can expect from AMC.

Now it’s time to turn outward and tell the world the biggest “WHY?” there is about us, and what to expect as we work toward the strategic goals in this AMC Strategic Plan:

*Experience the sheer beauty of sound and poetry*

It’s AMC’s new business mantra, the key to engaging audiences, sponsors, and singers alike, telling them “Welcome to the new AMC and hang on for an exciting ride!”

## Our Strategic Objectives

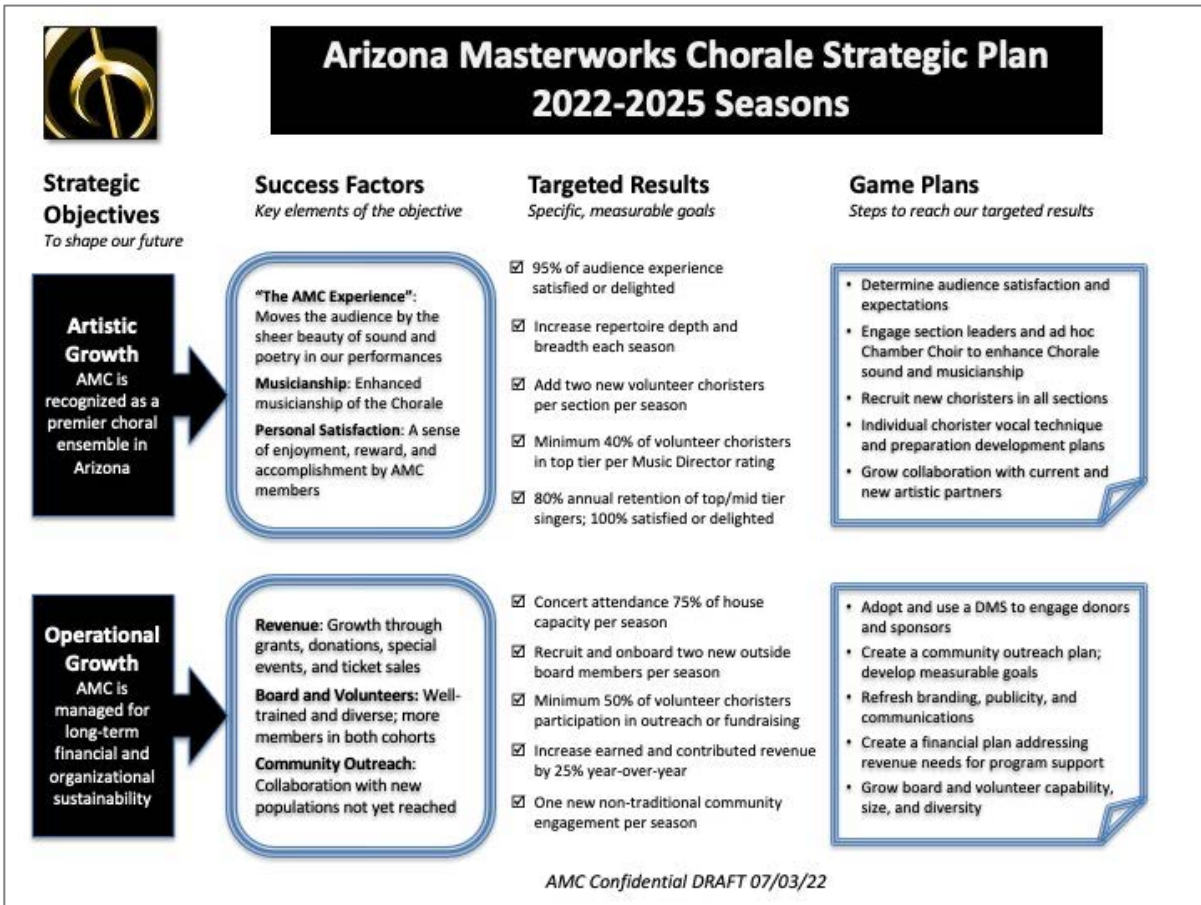
The Arizona Masterworks Chorale (AMC) identifies two strategic objectives for the next three seasons (2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25) that will shape our future:

1. **Artistic Growth:**  
AMC is recognized as a premier choral ensemble in Arizona.
2. **Operational Growth:**  
AMC is managed for long-term financial and organizational sustainability.

For each strategic objective we identify:

- Success Factors: Key elements of achieving the objective.
- Targeted Results: Measures we can use to track progress.
- Game Plans: Tactical steps we will take to reach our targeted results

Serving community needs and celebrating diversity in all our constituents – our audience, musicians, volunteers, donors, and board members – is key to AMC’s success and is addressed in each strategic objective, success factor, and targeted result.



**Objective 1 – Artistic Growth:****AMC is recognized as a premier choral ensemble in Arizona**

AMC will be ranked just below professional choirs such as the Phoenix Chorale and Arizona Opera Chorus and on a par with the finest non-professional choirs in the state, including the Phoenix Symphony, Tucson Symphony, and Arizona Musicfest Choruses. We will build wider name recognition within the Phoenix area and will vigorously reach out to spread the word about *The AMC Experience* to our community.

***Artistic Growth Success Factors***

- **“The AMC Experience”:** Audiences are moved by the sheer beauty of sound and poetry at AMC concerts. Under the leadership of our Music Director, Scott Youngs, we will create and consistently deliver a unique “AMC Experience” that differentiates us from other choirs. Audiences will be drawn by the promise of hearing AMC perform in our distinctive style, regardless of the repertoire, which will grow in depth and breadth.
- **Musicianship: Enhanced musicianship of the chorale.** We will raise the musical skills and confidence of volunteer choristers; use section leaders to serve as models of professional preparation and comportment; and recruit highly skilled volunteer choristers to enable the Chorale to sing more challenging repertoire.
- **Personal Satisfaction: A sense of enjoyment, reward, and accomplishment by AMC members.** Encourage and support a sense of community, congeniality, and professionalism within the AMC musical family, recognizing that everyone contributes to our desired high level of artistic achievement.

***Artistic Growth Targeted Results***

- **Minimum 95% of concert attendees satisfied or delighted.** AMC will use surveys and interviews with concert attendees to determine the level of satisfaction with performance and repertoire.
- **Increase repertoire depth and breadth each season.** The Music Director will program increasingly more challenging pieces for the Chorale in each season, to grow the quality of the works performed along with the quality of the ensemble and to attract singers wishing to be part of the Chorale.
- **Add two new volunteer choristers per section, per season:** The Chorale’s headcount at the end of the 2021-22 season was below optimal, requiring supplementary choristers at every season concert. Recruiting fine new singers will immediately bolster the Chorale’s sound and make possible wider repertoire choices.

- **Minimum 40% of volunteer choristers in the top tier:** The AMC Music Director identifies the contributions of volunteers in three tiers:
  - The Top Tier are singers who make significantly positive contribution to the Chorale’s sound and artistic success.
  - The Middle Tier are singers are valuable contributors whose overall performance is solid and important to the group.
  - The Bottom Tier are singers whose performance for whatever reason is substandard and need to make improvements to continue with the Chorale.

Ideally, all volunteer choristers will be in the top tier and none in the bottom tier. In practice we’re aiming for a 40%/60%/0% distribution over the course of this plan. Choristers in the bottom tier will need to make necessary improvements or consider leaving a singing role with the Chorale.

- **80% annual retention of top and middle tier singers; 100% satisfied or delighted:** Choristers’ personal satisfaction is crucial to the success of any collegial enterprise like AMC. Each season we’ll ask choristers to report whether they are delighted, satisfied, or unsatisfied with their experience in the Chorale, and act to fix any issues identified as dissatisfying or needing improvement. With high satisfaction we volunteer choristers will make membership in AMC a long-term commitment.

### *Artistic Growth Game Plans*

Practical actions to support success factors and attain the targeted results include:

- **Determine audience satisfaction and expectations.** AMC will survey and interview concert attendees and donors for their perception of the success of “The AMC Experience” and their expectations for AMC improvement.
- **Engage section leaders and an ad hoc Chamber Choir to enhance Chorale sound and musicianship.** Paid section leaders will provide musical leadership and professionalism, enable the Chorale to sing more challenging repertoire, and assist in improving musical skills and overall confidence of the volunteer choristers. An ad hoc Chamber Choir including some volunteer choristers will perform the most challenging works in concert programs, allowing others to concentrate on preparation.
- **Recruit new choristers in all sections** AMC will proactively seek out fine singers and recruit them to join the Chorale in all sections. The board will draft a plan to target specific sources, such as undergraduate and graduate vocal performance programs, while AMC will accept requests to join throughout the season.
- **Chorister vocal technique and preparation development plans:** The Music Director and Section Leaders will create vocal technique and preparation plans for each section, with plans for individuals as needed, for continued development and attention to vocal performance issues.

- **Grow collaboration with current and new artistic partners:** AMC will regularly collaborate with members of *The Arts at Ascension* to produce musical events and will leverage those relationships for artistic and operational improvement.

## Objective 2: Operational Growth

### AMC is managed for long-term financial and organizational sustainability

We will build a strategic, multi-season financial roadmap that will identify our needs and growth opportunities through 2025 in both programming and sources of earned and contributed income. We will strategically program and prudently engage artists, venues, and professional services, and conduct community outreach activities that support our mission and vision and enhance our financial security.

### *Operational Growth Success Factors*

- **Revenue:** Growth in both earned revenue through increased admission sales and contributed revenue through increased grants, donations, and sponsorships, is required for AMC to support artistic program growth and make the organization financially sustainable.
- **Board and Volunteers:** Increasing the number, capability, and effectiveness of board members, especially from outside AMC, is vital to continued organizational growth. Increased involvement in non-singing activities can promote volunteer choristers' attachment and loyalty to the Chorale.
- **Community Outreach:** We will actively seek collaboration with new populations we have not traditionally reached, in accordance with our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Representation Polity.

### *Operational Growth Targeted Results*

- Concert attendance at 75% of house capacity over the season
- Two new outside board members per season (up to AMC's limit of 15 directors)
- Minimum 50% of volunteer choristers participation in outreach or fundraising
- Increase earned and contributed revenue by at least 25% year-over-year
- One new community engagement per season

### *Organizational Growth Game Plans*

Practical actions to support success factors and attain the targeted results include:

- **Adopt and use a donor management system (DMS) to engage donors and sponsors.** Take a professional approach to donor management, fundraising campaigns, and donation and sponsorship solicitation by using a cloud based DMS to track past performance and identify opportunities for future support. AMC board members and volunteers will learn and use the DMS capabilities for optimum return.

- **Create a community outreach plan; develop measurable goals.** AMC needs effective outreach to communities beyond our traditional base and reflecting the diversity of the Phoenix metropolitan area. A 3-year strategic outreach plan will identify goals, success factors, targeted results, and game plans to accomplish this.
- **Refresh branding, publicity, and communications.** Updating AMC’s public image and perception will increase brand recognition and aid in recruiting new audience, donors, and singers. We have a new tagline; now updated identity art (i.e., logo) and more effective use of digital channels and social media will spread AMC’s message to a larger audience than we have been reaching.
- **Create a financial plan addressing revenue needs for program support.** Create a multi-year AMC Strategic Financial Roadmap to support artistic and organizational growth described in this Strategic Plan. The Financial Roadmap will include budgets and fundraising plans for each season, including earned revenue and contributed revenue from grants and giving campaigns.
- **Grow board and volunteer capability, size, and diversity.** We will actively recruit new board members from outside AMC, and volunteers for outreach, operational, and fundraising activities from the extended AMC musical family.