

Arizona Masterworks Chorale Annual Members Meeting

May 13, 2024

Meeting called to order at: 6:59PM at Ascension Lutheran Church

Members Present: Karla Allingham, Bob Altizer, Eleanor Baker, Anastasia Bannikova, Nicole Barrett, Aaron Budge, Cheryl Burton, Mary Chard, Deborah DeSimone, Anne Diamos, Sheryl Guernsey, Ed Hoag, Grace Johnson, Steven O'Donnell, Kim Schaller, Patricia Sieckman, Doug Thomas, Janus Torres, Brian White, and Kathy Yoder. Due to a last-minute issue, Sarah Costanzo could not attend.

Additional Attendees: Scott Youngs

Attendance constituted a quorum.

Meeting Agenda and Slides

Bob handed out a hard copy of the meeting agenda and all the slides in his presentation, including some details that are summarized in these minutes. The slide deck is also on the Chorister News & Info page on the AMC website.

Finance Report

Fiscal Year 2024 (2023-2024 Season)

- Season Revenue to date from all sources (contributed and earned): \$36,617
(Grants: Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture: \$9,800; Arizona Commission on the Arts: \$5,850)
- Season Expenses to date: \$31,476
- Net operating revenue to date: \$5,141
- Including end of season (EOS) obligations, season ending checking is projected at about \$4,200, not including the cost of moving the music library. We will need to pay for storage of the library after our agreement with Ascension Lutheran terminates.

Fiscal Year 2025 (2024-2025 Season)

- FY25 Music staff fees, production costs, sheet music production costs are to be determined, depending on programming
- FY25 grants are unknown but expected to be much less due to government budget cuts to the arts. UPDATE: POAC expects grants will be "flat from FY24" with about the same budget (\$1.7M) and a similar number of applicants. AZ Commission funding is still unknown, depending on the state budget and any one-time allocations. It could be a 90% cut from FY24.
- To support artistic growth and possible collaborations next season, and to give the organization additional financial security, the FY25 combined revenue is \$45K, about a \$10K increase.

Music Librarian's Report – Cheryl Burton

Cheryl is searching for storage units in Mesa. Rental fees will be approximately \$80 per month. She suggested that AMC hire someone to take down the current shelving (which belongs to AMC) at Ascension Lutheran. Kathy Yoder mentioned a handyman who might be able to help.

Cheryl reminded everyone to return their music from this season.

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UPDATE SINCE THE MEETING: Eleanor Baker has offered the services of some friends who regularly do community service projects to carry out the move. **The target date is Saturday, June 1.** Jason Todora from Ascension Lutheran has also volunteered to lend a truck and helping hands to the move. Volunteers will be welcome, details to come.

Comments from AMC Directors

- Kathy said that the section leaders led by example and had a significant effect on the group.
- Karla has been on the board since 2016 as Secretary, President, and Treasurer. She recalled when Karen Parthun took over as Music Director following the abrupt resignation of the previous Director. Karen made the arrangements for AMC to reside at Ascension. When Covid happened, AMC cancelled all activities until the BOD redesigned the web site and hired Scott as the new Music Director. Karla will be transitioning out the Treasurer role but would like to stay on the BOD, perhaps helping with grants. She mentioned that family challenges have impacted her time, but singing helps her “stay sane,” and she wants to see AMC grow and flourish.
- Deborah mentioned that she previously sang with AMC but retired after the prior season. As a concert attendee, she gave kudos to the singers and Scott for the wonderful sound the group has developed.
- Janus said she had taken a hiatus and is happy to be back with AMC. She said she would like to do outreach as a BOD member.

Music Director’s Report –Scott Youngs

Scott feels the concert season was hugely successful and that the singers tackled difficult works. He mentioned several successful partnerships during the season. He said that the final program of the season was unique to AMC and would not be heard elsewhere. He thinks the chorale did a fantastic job. His goal had been to grow the choir with the addition of staff singers, and this was partially achieved with the addition of six staff singers. He noted that four of the six will not be able to return next season as they are moving on to other development opportunities.

Key Questions

Bob asked AMC members if the Arizona Masterworks Chorale, Inc., should continue operations. He said that every member will have a chance to vote yes or no. He noted that every small organization needs to ask itself this question periodically. If AMC members vote to continue, he said that everyone must commit financially and organizationally.

Sheryl requested clarification of the point in Bob’s slide regarding whether “...Members...(are) willing to commit raising the revenue needed to grow AMC as a financially secure and sustainable artistic organization” meant.

Bob responded that it means committing to financial support as a pledge for each member to **give or get** a minimum of \$1,000 in addition to dues to reach the AMC’s revenue target of \$45K. He said this can be achieved via donation or writing a successful grant application, selling program ads, obtaining a sponsorship, etc. Some of the additional revenue would, for example, subsidize additional section leaders. He pointed out that donated services are greatly appreciated, but don’t bring in cash.

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POINT OF CLARIFICATION: “Give or get” means the combination of **giving** your own, and **getting** from someone besides yourself, a cash or cash-equivalent contribution (e.g., a general-use or targeted donation, paying out of pocket to cover AMC costs for something, leading a successful grant application effort, and so on). It does not mean strictly out of your pocket.

Bob then asked what changes to AMC’s strategy are needed to better engage and have a measurable impact on our community. For example, working with the Global Academy has had a favorable impact.

A Motion was made and seconded to table the question “Shall the Arizona Masterworks Chorale, Inc., continue operations?” The vote was unanimously in favor of tabling the motion.

Kim asked if we have a list of services that are needed in the organization. Bob responded that he does have a list that he can send to everybody.

General Topic and Member Discussion

- Bob acknowledged Eleanor, who will be leaving AMC this year to attend NAU. He reminded members of her taking on and learning the role of Amahl at the last minute as a young teen.
- Earl Simmons’ retirement tribute will be this Friday at 9:00am at Global Academy. One song (TBD) will be performed, and all are invited if they can make it. Approximately six members said that they could participate.
- Bob proposed an increase in chorus dues, to be addressed by the BOD for next season.
- Karla proposed that AMC update our wardrobe. She noted that AMC hasn’t updated the women’s blouses since 2015. She said this would require a new investment from both the men and women. Mary volunteered to lead the wardrobe committee.
- Bob mentioned updating the bylaws, with more of an emphasize of values over rules.
- Regarding the music library move - we may ask members for help or contract it out (See update above).
- The choir rehearsal venue will continue to be at All Saint’s Episcopal.
- Bob mentioned “pay to play” singing opportunities. For example, NASCAR and Phoenix Mercury asked AMC to sing (most likely, the National Anthem) before their large audiences. Bob turned them both down due to scheduling and audience demographic conflicts – for now. In both cases, the organization must pay to participate, such as committing to purchase 50 tickets. The plus would be that the events are seen by large crowds, and AMC’s logo is displayed during the event.
- Performance venues: there are no agreements yet with anyone for next season.
- Performance calendar: Should AMC perform 3 concerts a year? Should we go to a single performance per concert rather than the current two performances? TBD, depending on programming for next season.
- There are several possible events for next season, as shown on Bob’s slide. One is an opportunity to collaborate with Carolyn Eynon singers.

AMC’s Duty to Our Community

Right now, AMC typically has no more than 50 audience members in attendance. Both BOD and audience growth are lacking. It’s difficult to fulfill our mission “to inspire and enrich our community through the power of choral singing” and make a measurable impact to such a small group.

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Scott's proposal for collaboration is to turn our focus outward instead of inward and see how we all benefit. Find opportunities for community collaboration on topics such as social themes, immigration, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

Bob noted AMC needs new "products." We know how to put on a weekend choral concert with the full Chorale, but what about other events, such as outreach with schools or other organizations, that may be done with fewer Choristers and different times, including weekdays? Bob asked the members how they feel about this, and should we do this. "New product development" will be addressed by the board and Scott when planning programs and collaborations for next season.

There was a discussion on the type of music AMC performs. Some members felt we should branch out to other genres such as Broadway. There were mixed feelings about this. Newer members tended to prefer the type of music AMC has been performing, as that's what attracted them to the group in the first place. Bob mentioned opportunities outside AMC, like the Arizona Musical Theater Orchestra's production of well-known musicals open to all Valley singers.

Aaron felt that there is not much information available about AMC, and little we can provide to prospective sponsors, and we have a Marketing problem. Bob mentioned the "Run it Like a Business" meeting he will attend tomorrow that addresses this very topic. Aaron also noted that the product is great, but more than 50 people need to hear it. Even something on YouTube so people can get an idea of what we do.

Vote on question #1 "Shall the Arizona Masterworks Chorale, Inc., continue operations?" Ayes carry. As a result, decisions will need to be made on the questions raised during this meeting.

Election of Directors for FY2024

Currently AMC has only five Directors. Board growth is needed from outside the chorale, but at this time there are no named candidates. The BOD typically meets once per month via Zoom. The question was asked as to whether we are looking for specific skills, to which the answer is "yes, what can you bring?" Bob noted that he will step down as board President when his term ends June 30 but will help facilitate transition of a new President. Deborah will be stepping down from the BOD altogether.

Bob requested nominations for new board members. Kim nominated both Mary and Aaron. Both accepted the nomination. There was a unanimous vote for approval.

Bob's final slides addressed the question of how we tell the AMC story. The meeting he is attending tomorrow will cover this as well.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Deborah DeSimone
AMC Secretary