

Manitoba Choral Association Annual General Meeting

Board Reports

President's Report

As I sit to write this report, my last as MCA's president, I find that it is difficult to put into words everything that I would like to express. The last two years have been an extremely rewarding experience, one that I am most grateful for. While my tenure as president did not go how I had initially envisioned it would, thanks in large part to the pandemic, it has been an incredible time of growth, learning, and change for MCA. We have embraced the challenges of the last two years and as a result, have learned a lot, tried many new things, had the opportunity for some serious introspection and critical thinking about who we are, and taken the first steps to expand and grow our organization in response to the needs of the community we serve.

It has been exciting to see choirs begin to perform live again, and more than that, it has been inspiring to have begun looking at how MCA can return to offering in person programming next season.

In reflecting on the past year, I cannot help but realize just how busy it has been. We have offered some inspiring workshops and sessions this past season, including a number of IDEA sessions and Kodály workshops, put together a virtual holiday concert, released our Provincial Virtual Choir 2.0 video, and we will finish this season with our first offering of the Choir 101 program in August. At the same time, the board has continued the work of looking at who we are and what we want to be, the fruits of which can be seen in our new branding, website, by-laws, and new governance structure. I have personally been consistently inspired by the work of the board and our staff team. Their dedication and commitment to the work of MCA is incredible and it has been a real pleasure and honour to serve with such wonderful leaders in our choral community.

There have been so many highlights for me this year, too many to mention. Below you will find some of the more notable things I have been involved with since the last AGM.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

- I was very excited, after over a year's worth of work and creativity, to see the launch of both MCA's new branding and website. The attention to detail and care to truly represent where MCA is at this point in our history was evident throughout the entire process. I extend my sincere thanks and congratulations to all who were involved in this project.
- I was humbled to be part of a small group of people who were tasked with looking at MCA's governance structure through the eyes of both where we are currently and how we can best

serve our membership and the wider choral community. These intense, heartfelt, and fruitful conversations led us in many directions and ultimately helped us, with input from our membership, to propose a new model of governance for MCA that will help us remain current, viable, and flexible in order to meet the ever-changing needs of our membership and organization.

- Along with the governance review, this group was also tasked with critically looking at our current by-laws and updating them to better reflect where MCA is now and the direction we are moving in. I am extremely proud of the work this group has done over the past year and would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for their time and dedication to seeing MCA continue to grow and thrive.
- I am thrilled at the organizational growth I have seen over the last year. Due to the growing needs of both our organization and community, MCA recognized the need to expand our staff in response. We have now hired Brittany to work part-time alongside Jenny, supporting the work of our programs, library, social media, and overall communications – she is doing amazing work in her role with us. We have also recently hired two summer employees to assist us with another major initiative regarding our library – we are working to digitize all of our titles. I would like to officially welcome Kathleen Murphy and Jenica Sul to our staff team this summer!
- I was also thrilled to see the completion, after many years, of our library inventory project, which included incorporating a major donation of music from Pembina Trails Voices. This was no small task and I want to extend my thanks to all who were involved in updating our holdings list. Incidentally, one of the first in-person MCA events I was able to participate in was a volunteer appreciation gathering just before Christmas to acknowledge the work of those who helped us complete this project.
- I have said this a number of times during my tenure as MCA's president, but I am continually amazed and inspired by the dedication and creativity of all those who have been tasked to “do the work” of MCA. Over the last year I have attended more meetings than I can count, but one of the things that stands out to me that is consistent no matter what meeting I attended was the depth of the conversation. Everyone that I have spoken with shares a deeply rooted desire to see MCA grow and remain vital as a strong supporter of the choral arts in this province. I have appreciated these conversations more than anyone can know and I am eternally grateful to everyone who has been part of the MCA team.
- One of the things I am most proud of over the last two years was MCA's programming response to the challenges of the pandemic. I have had the privilege of chairing the Special Pandemic Response Planning Committee over the last two years, which was tasked with finding new ways to engage our membership through the programs we offered. We successfully pivoted away from MCA's traditional programming to offering an expanded slate of programs virtually. These virtual programs saw engagement from members across the province who, under normal circumstances, would not normally be able to participate. This realization has taught us a valuable lesson and will have a lasting impact on how we offer our programs moving forward.

- It has been exciting to see the shift in our programming conversations move from discussing programs that are planned to be presented exclusively through the virtual space to now having conversations about what in-person or hybrid events can look like. Alongside those conversations have been exciting discussions regarding our traditional flagship programs and how we might update them to reflect MCA's focus to be truly provincial – I'm very excited to see where these conversations will lead us in the coming years!
- A few weeks ago, I attended, in-person, Choral Canada's national choral conference PODIUM; the first one held in four years. It was a wonderful five days of connecting with friends and colleagues from across the country, participating in important conversations regarding the state of choral music in this country, learning from knowledgeable presenters, and being inspired through the concert presentations each day, which included performances by three Manitoba choirs. On behalf of MCA, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to these choirs for not only representing themselves in such a polished and professional manner, but also for representing the amazing choral community of this province. Congratulations to Prairie Voices, The Winnipeg Boys' Choir Senior Chorus, and Dead of Winter!
- Lastly, one of the major highlights for me over the last year has been my continued work with Jenny. We have continued to meet on a semi-regular basis in order to discuss and focus on the day-to-day work of MCA. I have really appreciated our work together. Jenny is an incredibly gifted administrator, who has nothing but the best interests of MCA at heart. I have immensely enjoyed the opportunity to both dream big and deal with smaller details with her over the last two years. Thank you Jenny for everything!

FINAL THOUGHTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members of the MCA board who will not be returning to the board. These individuals have given a lot to MCA during their respective tenures and I would like to express my thanks and gratitude for their dedication, time, and commitment to the ongoing work of our organization. Thank you to: Avonlea Armstrong-Green, Maureen Britton, Edward Cloud, Carolyn Gwyer, Sharon Marshall, Kelsey Shiaro, and Sonya Williams.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Catherine for her tireless work and dedication to MCA over the last 6-7 years. You have been an inspiration to so many of us during this time. Your vision for MCA has been infectious and has, in many ways, brought us to the point we are today. On a personal note, I have appreciated your mentorship and friendship over the years. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been able to work alongside you and I thank you not only for everything you have given to MCA, but also for everything you have given to me.

It is hard to believe that my tenure as MCA's president is coming to an end. In some ways the last two years have felt extraordinarily long, while in other ways it has felt like the shortest two years of my life. In reflecting on this time, I am amazed at everything we have accomplished together, both from a programming point of view – adapting our programming to respond to the challenges of the

pandemic – and from an administration point of view – with a complete organizational rebranding and governance restructuring.

I am very excited to see the new board structure come into its own and to see how it will continue to grow and evolve as MCA grows and evolves. I encourage the new board to continue to evaluate who we are, who we want to be, and to always dream big about what MCA can be.

Thank you to the members of the board and membership for allowing me the opportunity to serve the Manitoba choral community as MCA's president. It has been an honour to give something back to a community that has given me so much since moving here in 2010.

Submitted by Dr. Stuart Sladden

Past President's Report

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Executive Committee and Governance Committee:** I am proud of the work accomplished over this past year. After critically examining our board structure, the governance committee worked at creating a streamlined board structure. This work grew out of much past discussion, and in particular, our board retreat last August. The draft of the new structure was presented to the membership and a town hall was held February 13, 2022. I believe this new structure will result in a more effective, efficient, and communicative MCA Board and will help grow our membership. It is so very exciting to be presenting updated By-laws after so many years of discussion on the topic. I appreciate the leadership the Executive has shown over the past two years and am thankful we have those who are willing to donate so much of their time to make MCA a strong organization.
- **Programming Committee:** Congratulations and thanks to Jenny, Brittany, the Programming Committee and those on PHC, ChoralFest, and IDEA Committees, and to Sharon on PD for contributing to the wealth of programming that continued throughout the year despite the lingering challenges of COVID-19 restrictions and the difficulties that omicron brought. You have continued to make us relevant in the choral community and to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement for our membership.
- **Advocacy:** In March 2021, I met with Jenny to work on advocacy letter to the government and to formulate letters for members of the public to send to MLAs—a last ditch effort to have the government respond to requests for clear singing guidelines. We were never met with much success in our efforts, but it was not for lack of trying! Thank you Jenny for all your work on this.

- **IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility) Committee:**
 - Our IDEA Corner Virtual Sessions began this year and will continue in the future. The first session was an article discussion centered on inclusion, and it was very well attended. A number of articles on provocative topics encouraged meaningful discussion amongst participants from around the province. The second session—Choir as a Gender-affirming Space—was presented on May 3 and featured two presenters: Roan Regan and Caleb Rondeau. This was an excellent presentation, and an enlightening and positive discussion followed. We look forward to continuing these essential conversations and to growing a Special Interest Group (SIG) that can explore, understand, and advance significant and relevant topics further.
 - The IDEA SIG will launch more in earnest this coming year and we will attempt to reach out across the province and involve more singers, educators, and conductors in IDEA-related conversations.
 - The committee has set the goal of hosting a symposium May 26-28, 2023 and Jenny was successful in her grant application for funding to support this venture! We have now begun planning in earnest. Invitations have been sent out to potential presenters, and a number have already agreed to participate. The conference will focus on expanding/challenging traditional choral structures and taking action toward creating inclusive choral practices. Potential topics include improvisation for inclusion, oral singing traditions, Indigenous ways of knowing and creating song, decolonizing choral rehearsal and performance, expanding our understanding of diverse cultural practices and repertoire, creating safe spaces in choir, ensuring success for neuro-divergent choral singers, and choral activism.
 - Thank you to those who have contributed to this committee. Sonya Williams, Geung Kroeker-Lee, Philip Lapatha, Jordan Bighorn, Edward Cloud, Kendra Obach, Kristel Peters, Marla Fontaine, Katrina Lengsavath, Brittany, and Jenny.
 - *Gratitude*, a song by traditional Anishinaabe drummer and singer Cory Campbell, is now published to the MCA website. The song says “thank you” in the languages of the traditional peoples of Manitoba and is a result of a U of M Creative Works Grant commission for the U of M Concert Choir.

ACTIVITIES GOING FORWARD

- Continue work with IDEA Committee and on *BEYOND Symposium 2023*

FINAL THOUGHTS

It has been quite a journey over the past six years. I cannot believe how much has been accomplished and I am incredibly proud to have been part of the work that has taken place in my time on the MCA Board. We have a strong strategic plan and have realized much of it. Jenny, your leadership and drive will guide MCA to a continued bright future—I am constantly amazed by your commitment and vision. I am excited to see what the next decade brings! Congratulations to all my fellow board members for their dedication and outstanding work!

Submitted by Catherine Robbins

Vice President's / MMEA Representative's Report

After some tumultuous years, the future is looking bright for choral singing in Manitoba and for its exponent, Manitoba Choral Association. For the past two years, MCA has sought and implemented ways to become a more indispensable resource for the practice of choral music in the province. We have added programming that seeks to be valuable for the development of all choral musicians in the province, we have advocated endlessly for the support of choral music in both our schools and communities, we have met with community members to find ways of being a much more inclusive and diverse organization, we have redesigned our website to be more useful for all our members, we have substantially increased our choral music library holdings, and we have worked hard to become a more streamlined and financially stable organization. As a result, MCA is now well-positioned to make sure that the future for choral music in Manitoba is much stronger, particularly as we come out of this long pandemic.

However, even with all the work of MCA, there are still areas of concern for the place of music in the province that we share with the Manitoba Music Educators' Association. School divisions in Winnipeg have begun cutting back on their music curriculums through slashed budgets, and the positions of divisional music consultants in three of the Winnipeg school divisions have been removed. It's a worrisome situation, but one that has thankfully not touched all corners of the province. Even so, the sense of value for music education seems to be slowly eroding. My sense is that it may soon be more important for community organizations to provide the necessary opportunities for music participation in the province, particularly for our young. Manitoba Choral Association will certainly be there to help continue and grow the place of choral music in every corner of the province of Manitoba.

MCA has an ambitious program of events scheduled for 2022, and I'm excited by the prospects for the future. Our membership has proven to be resilient over the past two years, and their tireless work has kept choral singing alive in our singing province. Here's to the future!

Submitted by David Sawatzky

Membership Chair's Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021 - 2022

Jenny and Brittney took the lead in managing the membership registrations and database entry. For the second year, due to COVID-19, choir organizations paid one registration fee, with no extra cost for additional choirs.

Working with Danessa Poiron from MMEA, TEMPO, MMEA and CMEA memberships were coordinated in the fall.

As of June 2022, membership totals were as follows:

- 136 Individual Memberships (compared to 126 in 2020-21)
- 133 Choir Memberships (compared to 121 in 2020-21)
- 5 Corporate Memberships (compared to 2 2020-21)

We are pleased that memberships have increased this year over the last. While numbers for individual and choir memberships aren't as high as pre-pandemic times, we are confident that the return to singing, combined with MCA's continued support, communication, opportunities, and professional development, will allow these numbers to grow again.

In December and March, the membership committee met to discuss the membership structure. We discussed issues such as whether or not directors who have registered a choir should automatically get an individual membership as well, if church and community choirs should be charged the same amount, if organizations should pay membership fees based on the number of choirs or number of singers, and how to make the membership process between TEMPO and MCA more seamless.

With many factors for discussion being presented in these meetings, and lots of changes already happening for MCA, it was decided that we would hold off on making any major changes to the membership structure, but that the following fees would be in place for 2022 / 2023:

- **Choirs - \$100, no additional choir fees for 2022-23**
- **Individuals - \$60**
- **Seniors/Students/Choral Enthusiasts - \$30**
- **Non-singing/Community Partners - \$100**

Jenny continued to explore many platforms for membership this year, and it was decided that Membership Works is the best fit for MCA. Registrations for the new year will be done through this platform.

We are excitedly planning an outdoor choral celebration for October 1, 2022, to be held at the Lyric Theatre. Jenny, Brittany, David, myself, and most recently Scott Reimer, have met virtually throughout the year to make plans for this festival.

ACTIVITIES GOING FORWARD

- Continue to help plan the Choral Celebration for October 1, 2022
- Volunteer for MCA in an informal way, as needed

FINAL THOUGHTS

I have enjoyed these two years being part of the MCA board and am thankful to have had the opportunity. While these two years have been challenging for the choir community and beyond, it was exciting to see how MCA continued to offer support and professional development in creative ways. It has been exciting to see how MCA has offered relevant professional development in areas such as

inclusion in the choral field. With a new website and board restructuring, MCA continues to move forward and build community across the province. Special thanks to the board for all their work and advocacy, and especially to Jenny and Brittany, who demonstrate leadership with their wonderful ideas, great organizational and technological skills, and kindness!

Submitted by Avonlea Armstrong-Green

Professional Development Chair's Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021-22

Virtual Tempo: October 22, 2021

- Three clinicians presented 2 sessions each:
 - Dinah Helgeson from Washington State - 2 sessions for Middle and Senior Years' Choral
 - Kerry March from Colorado - 2 sessions for Vocal Jazz
 - Catherine Glaser-Climie from Calgary - 2 sessions for Early Years' Choral
 - Elyssa Jansen Jones from the Conn-Selmer Institute again provided technical support
 - Sessions were again made available to MMEA participants for one month after the event

Kodaly Workshop: April 7, 2022

- Together with Jenny, Stuart and Cathy Horbas from the Kodály Society of Canada, I planned and attended a Zoom presentation entitled "Let's Sing! Strategies for Singing in Our Music Classrooms."
- This workshop presented ideas on how music teachers could utilize Kodály methodology to support students in singing again.
- Cathy Horbas worked with music teachers David Stark and Barbara Hamilton and their music classrooms to illustrate how a choral program can be enhanced within the Kodály context.
- This video presentation was for MCA members and members of the Kodály Society of Canada.
- Very well attended – 120 attendees, including 3 staff/volunteers and the 2 facilitators.

ACTIVITIES FOR 2022-2023

TEMPO - October 21, 2022

- Tempo will once more be held online for the third, and hopefully final, time.
 - Technical support will be provided by a local Winnipeg Company, LMVA Consulting.
 - MCA is allotted 6 online sessions: 2 for senior/middle years choral, 2 for vocal jazz, and 2 for early years/general choral/music.
- Clinicians have been contacted and secured for all allotted sessions:

- Early Years – Mellissa Spraggs - one session
- General Choral – Rose van der Hooft - one session
- Senior/Middle Years Choral – Charlotte Botha (from Hamilton College in Clinton, NY) - two sessions
- Vocal Jazz – Terrence Taylor from California (presented the MCA workshop on Diversity in Choirs in 2021) - two sessions

FINAL THOUGHTS

For the past 2.5 years, since September 2019, I have had the pleasure of serving as MCA's PD Chair. Unfortunately, the past 2.5 years have also been unprecedented, with the occurrence of Covid-19. Therefore, I have planned 2 Tried and True sessions, 3 Tempo conferences, and many workshops, all of which took place over Zoom. In other words, I have never had a true, in-person PD experience with MCA. Now that my time as PD Chair has come to an end, I feel that I have never had the chance to "prove my mettle." C'est la vie!

I wish MCA all the best moving forward, post-pandemic.

Submitted by Sharon Marshall

Westman Regional Representative's Report

Greetings from WestMan to all our choral friends and colleagues throughout our beautiful "singing province"! And what a joy it is to be singing again!! No one could have ever imagined that we would have been nearly silenced for eighteen months or more due to the pandemic, and it all seems like a bit of a bad dream now. I am thrilled to report that, just as the tulips are pushing through the spring earth, so are our choirs and our collective voices again. We are doing what we love to do, being able to connect and re-connect again, and flourish in our art.

I assumed the role of WestMan Rep in June 2021 from Michelle Chyzyk, who stepped down due to family commitments, and has since retired from her longtime position teaching 9-12 music and choir in Virden. While she will continue to make music and produce/direct musicals in our region, hopefully, for many, many more years to come, we do wish you well in your retirement, Michelle, and thank you for your incredible contributions to young people and your community in your work as a music educator across the decades.

Since assuming this position, I have not taken on any great initiatives, I'm sorry to say. I have just been "finding my legs" again on the board, aiming to keep up with reports such as this, and contributing where I can. We still have no regional committee in WestMan and our MCA members number approximately eleven. It seems, after all these years, that we should be in a stronger position than this, given the amount of choral activity in our region, and it is my personal goal to work toward building relationships amongst the eleven, connecting with directors and choirs who are currently not

members, developing our choral community and strengthening ties to our provincial one. There is so much potential. It is simply a matter of time, energy, and innovative ideas. I hope that, in a year's time, we will have made a few strides toward that vision.

The WestMan Youth Choir, on the other hand, continues to be a well-oiled machine after 42 years!! This past fall, Michelle Chyzuk led the way in a creative endeavour to circumvent restrictions and invite eligible singers and alumni to do a high-calibre video/audio recording project. Several songs were rigorously prepared, the footage meticulously edited, and the videos have since been widely shared via YouTube. Way to think outside the box, WMYC! The committee is now preparing for auditions for their 2022 choir which will be directed by Sarah Hall from Brandon University and Philip Lapatha from Maples Collegiate in Winnipeg. The choir will gather this fall for two weekends at Riding Mountain Conference Centre (aka Camp Wannakumbac) at Clear Lake and then perform a four-day tour in October of our region. Hats off to the WMYC Committee, which continues to run this all-important program for our teens, many of which come from communities that do not have access to a school choral music program, or any music education programming, in some cases.

Here are some other highlights from some of our member choirs in the region this year:

Brandon University Choirs, Dr. Andrée Dagenais – *In terms of last year, both my ensembles were able to perform at the end of each term. The School of Music rented the entire Western Centennial Auditorium building which allowed for appropriate distancing to perform without masks. However, each performance was under 30 minutes. Even though we could be in the auditorium, rehearsing was challenging. We kept our masks on for almost the entire length of each term. I was permitted to have students remove their masks for short periods of time for pedagogical reasons. I had to trust that my first-year choir shaped vowels properly. It was nerve-racking! I am looking forward to return to a normal format of rehearsals in the fall. Performing at the end of each term was definitely a necessary positive goal to achieve. It kept our spirit alive.*

Women in Harmony, Naomi Russell – *The barbershop chorus carried out a virtual existence since last year's MCA AGM, meeting on Zoom every two weeks to stay connected and continue learning. We FINALLY got back to in-person rehearsals on March 28 and are enjoying each other's company once again and relishing in the live sound around us.*

das Femmes, Naomi Russell – *This group has only had one outing over the past year when the members sang for the residents at the Rotary Villas at Christmas time. It was so fun to sing for one resident in particular, in that Dr. Elizabeth Grant (founder of the Brandon Conservatory Chorale) lives there. Before we began singing, we asked her if she had her adjudication sheet ready to fill out. Thankfully, she just listened and didn't critique our rusty voices at all. 😊*

Threshold Choir, Naomi Russell – *Unfortunately, the Brandon chapter of the Threshold Choir put its activities on hold as there wasn't anyone interested or available to lead the group in a director capacity. The members will keep it on the back burner and try to become active at a later date.*

Konektis, Michelle Chzyk – Konektis choir had a most unusual choral season that did somehow manage to provide a few highlights. In the fall, we limped along with very inconsistent attendance and rehearsals that were of course using masks and distancing. On November 4., we hosted a concert at Central United Church for a small group of family and friends. The repertoire dealt with many heavy topics and ended with Jocelyn Hagan's "Hands": a plea for the world and all humanity.

After this, Konektis took a short break and, when we were to resume rehearsing again in January, our challenges multiplied. With the fourth wave we cancelled, then worked online, and finally held a couple in person sectionals. Next, adverse weather and highway closures impacted our rehearsals as many Konektis choristers travel from outside the city of Brandon. Throughout the entire process, we discussed letting go of ideals, caring for each other, and giving ourselves grace to be less than perfect. So it was only in our last few weeks that we were able to create (in a small way) the special and powerful connections that Konektis is well known for, and it gave us much hope for the upcoming 2022/2023 choral season.

We were able to perform our repertoire in a Brandon concert on March 18 with the night previous being our very first time all together. After spring break, we performed a concert in the small town of Souris on April 7 at the charming Avalon Theatre. The Konektis season concluded with a busy fun-filled day in Virden on April 9 that saw us record at St Paul's United Church, quickly film for a couple music videos, enjoy some pizza, and then entertain a lovely crowd at the gorgeous Virden Auditorium Theatre.

Our concert repertoire included compositions by Thomas Hewitt Jones, Elaine Hagenberg, Corey Payette, Bruno Mars, Kim Andre Arnesen, Franz Biebl, Jeanette Gallant, Brent Wells, Reena Esmail, Jocelyn Hagan, and a Ukrainian prayer. To end our concert, we left the audience with the beautiful *Conspirare* arrangement of "I Love You/What a Wonderful World" with tenor soloist/assistant conductor Clint McLachlan. Clint was part of the Konektis musical team that included conductors Michelle Chzyk and Marla Fontaine and Danielle Guina at the piano.

Brandon Conservatory Chorale, Marla Fontaine – The Chorale was thrilled to return to singing this season. We were delighted to welcome our singers back and to have many new voices join our program. We were able to have two youth choirs and one adult choir rehearse at the Brandon University School of Music in the beautiful Lorne Watson Recital Hall. The choirs adhered to provincial and university restrictions throughout the year. It was wonderful to build community through song. We did a professional recording at Christmas, then presented our 39th annual Spring Sing to a live audience on May 6. Our founder, Elizabeth Grant, led the final number – Oscar Peterson's "Hymn To Freedom".

Our upcoming season promises to be exciting! The Eckhardt-Gramatté Conservatory of Music is offering its first ever Summer Choir Camp from July 18-22. In the fall, the Conservatory Chorale will return to one adult choir and three youth choirs. The youth choirs will be participating in ChoralFest in Winnipeg and will go on a spring tour of Western Manitoba!

Neelin Choirs, Carolyn Gwyer – As for most choirs, '21-'22 has been a recovery year. '20-'21 was the first year that our school did not have a choir since 1967, when our program began under Derek Morphy. While we were forced to wear masks for part of the year, we have been able to do two major concerts this year, two

additional concerts and a day tour with our vocal ensemble Simple Green, and were even allowed to head out on a two-day spring tour to visit five schools and my hometown, Minnedosa. We are at about 2/3 of the enrolment we were at pre-pandemic, but momentum and energy is building again, and we hope to be back at full “tempo” in the coming year.

Our division is currently restricting any travel outside of Manitoba, but we are hopeful that the pandemic will continue to wane and we can resume our plans to tour to the Yukon in spring 2023 or '24. I wish to applaud my colleagues, Clint McLachlan at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School, and Meaghan Walker at Vincent Massey, for all their hard work with their singers this year as well, and congratulations on them mounting productions of Little Shop of Horrors and You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown this spring! Neelin has held off on a show this year, but has plans to present Anastasia: The Musical in November. These projects are always great for bringing more singers into our choirs and building community within our schools.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I have very much enjoyed serving on the board this year and have undying respect for Jenny, Stuart and Catherine, who have worked so hard at leading us through the changes to the board structure and by-laws. I strongly believe that this has been vital work, done with the utmost care and intentions, and should see us walk confidently into a new chapter of our beloved MCA that fosters new initiatives, revitalizes old ones, and brings more and more singers and directors along in the wonderful art of choral music-making in Manitoba. I am excited to do my part!

Submitted by Carolyn Gwyer

Central Regional Representative's Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021-22

- The CMYC 2021 YouTube recording from our outdoor concert premiered on November 6, 2022 and has been well received and enjoyed by our online viewers! The choir met for 2 weekends last September for outdoor rehearsals and recordings. The concert was recorded at the Carmen Agricultural Fair Grounds and was directed by Marla Fontaine with accompanist Loren Hiebert.
- CMCA has met several times since the last MCA AGM this past October. CMCA meetings were held on November 22, 2021, January 10, 2022, March 14, April 25, and May 30, all via Zoom. CMCA's 2022 AGM was also held on April 25.
- CMCA hosted 'A Winter Snowcase' (showcase) virtual festival online in February 2022. This event included unit plans and resources which were provided to educators for remote music teaching as well as an opportunity for sharing via CMCA YouTube.

ACTIVITIES FOR 2021-2022

- CMCA is busy in the planning stages for CMYC 2022. Our director this year will be Kendra Obach and Loren Hiebert will be the accompanist. Auditions were held via Zoom in May. The board is hoping and planning for a “regular” year of CMYC with 2 rehearsal camp weekends in September to be held at Circle Square Ranch and a concert tour in mid-October with performances throughout the Central Region. Alternate plans are in place if changes do need to be made closer to the date, due to any public health restrictions.
- CMCA is also in the planning stages to resume hosting our October School Choral Workshops this year. These workshops are being tentatively planned for Thursday, October 13 in Morden, MB. Brochures and further information will be sent out to schools and teachers in September.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I would like to thank each of my fellow MCA board members, past and present, for the commitment and enthusiasm that you all bring to your roles being ambassadors of choral music within our province and beyond. I have enjoyed my time on the MCA board serving alongside each one of you and am grateful to have met you. I look forward to seeing MCA continue to grow and thrive as an organization in its role of supporting, strengthening and promoting the choral arts in Manitoba.

Submitted by Maureen Britton

Eastman Regional Representative’s Report

After two years on hiatus from any choral activities in the region, EMCA has begun to emerge and create choral opportunities again for the area. As the severity of the pandemic has eased over the last few months, EMCA has sought ways to re-introduce live choral music performances.

The first official performance to take place was our annual Easter Sunrise Service on April 17 at 7:00am at Grace Mennonite Church in Steinbach. The performance included the Winnipeg Brass Quintet the Blumenort School Choir and other local singers and performers. It has always been a highlight event in Steinbach, and it was wonderful to have that happen again after such a long absence.

Our Eastman Youth Choir also managed to get together after two years of being cancelled. EMYC took the initiative to get together for a spring concert. They gathered for a week of singing in May culminating in a “Concert in the Park” at KR Barkman Park in Steinbach on Tuesday, May 24th. Enthusiasm for the return of the youth is high. Forty-four singers were involved in the choir this Spring, and applications are currently being accepted for the fall EMYC event.

We’re very excited to be moving forward again with our choral events and anticipate a relatively normal season for the Fall. We look forward to hearing all our local choral ensembles once again.

Submitted by David Sawatzky

Interlake Regional Representative's Report

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021-22

- I participated in the IDEA committee of MCA.
- In the Interlake, the Quarry Choristers held their series of dinner theater evenings in 2022! Yeah!
- The Interlake Choral Association held a public choir day and youth choir day.
- ICA had an AGM and elected a new slate of officers.

ACTIVITIES FOR 2021-2022

As this position is being eliminated, I personally look forward to meeting with the Intra-provincial Communications and the IDEA Special Interest Group meetings, contributing to their moving forward.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It has been great sitting on the MCA board, and I look forward to continuing my involvement with great colleagues as a committee member.

Submitted by Edward Cloud

Executive Director's Report

It's hard to believe that this year is coming to an end already! And what a year it has been! Thanks to our amazing board, volunteer, and staff team, MCA has yet again navigated the waters of a choral world deeply impacted by the pandemic. Since our last AGM in October, we have undertaken virtual workshops and initiatives, and have focused on significant projects behind the scenes. I am both humbled and excited to be part of this great work.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021-22

Note: Many of the activities I was involved in have already been described in other reports, therefore I will highlight activities from 2021-22 that are not mentioned elsewhere.

ChoralFest (November 15-30, 2021)

Once again this year we held ChoralFest online, this time offering 4 video workshops and virtual adjudications to choirs. Choral and vocal jazz specialists Dr. Melissa Morgan (Toronto), Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt (Toronto), and Jamond McCoy (California) created four engaging video workshops for choirs of all ages, and Dr. Hilary Apfelstadt and Matt Falker (California) offered choral and vocal jazz virtual adjudications to choirs respectively. In total, 19 choirs/schools registered to access the videos (at a nominal fee), and 14 virtual adjudications took place (some choirs submitted multiple recordings for adjudications).

Virtual Holiday Sing-along Concert (December 2021)

Throughout December, member choirs from across the province were invited to record themselves singing a well-known holiday song, and we had a good response from the community. We ended up including 9 sing-along songs sung by 8 different choirs, and 5 feature choir performances. Choirs were from the Central, Interlake, Westman, and Winnipeg regions. For the full virtual concert experience, we created a PDF songbook, and encouraged people tuning in to donate to MCA. In total [the video](#) was viewed online 215 times.

Library

We completed the library inventory project in the fall and launched our new [e-commerce library platform](#) on the website in February. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers who came in over the past two years to inventory the music! The next stage is to work on digitizing the music this summer so members will be able to see a preview of the piece before they borrow music.

Respectful Workplaces in the Arts (February 2022)

Co-hosted by Choral Canada and facilitated by the Cultural Human Resources Council of Canada, MCA held a free 4-hour workshop for the Manitoba choral arts sector and community around making the workplace more respectful. The workshop covered information on provincial/territorial legislation, definitions of harassment and bullying, as well as case-studies to navigate the complexities of problematic situations. Although nine people registered, only five attended, but the group appreciated the thought-provoking discussions.

MCA Virtual Choir (February-March 2022)

MCA invited singers ages 10 and up to come together virtually again this year in the spirit of Provincial Honour Choirs. This year Dr. Jamie Hillman (University of Toronto) conducted the piece *Wide Open Spaces* by Canadian composer Sarah Quartel. Live Zoom rehearsals were held, and we hosted a live Q&A with the composer in March. We again worked with Stephen Ross to put the [final video](#) together, which was released on Music Monday as MCA's contribution to the day. In total over 100 singers from across the province participated this year!

PODIUM & National Youth Choir of Canada (May 2022)

I was excited to attend PODIUM for the first time last month, thanks to funding from Manitoba Arts Council and FCMM. It was a very worthwhile and meaningful experience to meet colleagues (finally!) from across the country in-person, attend thought-provoking sessions around intersections between the choral arts and IDEA, and experience some fantastic live choral performances by choirs from across the country. It was particularly exciting to have three choirs from Winnipeg represent our province at the festival: Dead of Winter, Winnipeg Boys' Choir Senior Chorus, and Prairie Voices.

Thanks to a grant from Manitoba Arts Council, funds from the Singers Helping Singers fund, and an emergency grant from FCMM, MCA was able to cover the full tuition for six Manitobans to attend National Youth Choir of Canada: Isabel Friesen, Zoë Gotziaman, Luke Munchinsky, Angela Myshkowsky, Katy Unruh, and Carrie Schulz. The NYCC concert was well attended, and I must say our Manitoba singers did an exceptional job of representing our Singing Province!

Website & Rebranding

After working for nearly a year with digital marketer Buffy Davey and graphic designer Roberta Landreth, we officially launched our new website, logo, and eNotes design in early February. We have received a lot of positive feedback about the rebrand to date. The website is now better positioned to serve Manitobans with our Find a Choir feature, jobs/classifieds section, events calendar, resource section, library lending platform, and more. We encourage members to peruse the site and send any suggestions you may have to improve accessibility and offerings to the choral community.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) Software

MCA will soon be moving to the CRM platform *Membership Works* to centrally manage our membership, donation, and event data. The software will save staff time and increase efficiencies by better tracking our data and payments, while allowing integrations with our website, e-newsletter, and fund management software.

Fund Development

With our Fundraising Chair position being vacant, I have worked closely with members of the Executive Committee to undertake important fund development work to keep MCA financially sustainable into the future. Much of my time is also spent researching and applying for grants. I am also exploring how to increase sponsorship opportunities for local businesses and organizations. Plans are underway to hire a fundraising professional to host a fund development workshop with the board this summer, and support us in the creation and implementation of a fund development plan.

Donors continue to be a vital component to our fundraising activities. In December we held a fundraising appeal, which brought in over \$1,000 in donations, and we have invited our membership and past donors to participate in the CanadaHelps Great Canadian Giving Challenge again this month. We have also designed our membership and event registration forms to include a custom donation field for registrants. In total, MCA supporters have given over \$8,000 to the organization since September. We are grateful to all those who have supported MCA financially this year! A complete list of donors and funders appears at the end of this report.

Staff Updates

It has been very beneficial having Brittany Mielnichuk working alongside me in the office this past year. She has contributed many great ideas and has supported work in the areas of communications, library, programs, membership, and more. We were fortunate to receive a Canada Summer Jobs grant to hire two summer employees: Kathleen Murphy and Jenica Sul will work on digitizing our music library this summer. In looking ahead to our staffing needs for next year, we are hopeful we will be able to secure funding to add an additional part-time employee in the fall. It has been invaluable having the extra support in the office and it will be critical to maintain this going forward in order for MCA to accomplish our goals in the future.

Choral Events

It has been fantastic to start attending live concerts again this year. I have attended several local choir performances, and in May I attended the PODIUM conference and festival for the first time, which

was a very impactful and valuable experience. I look forward to continuing to connect with the choral community in meaningful ways and demonstrate MCA's involvement and support for local, provincial, and national programs as I am able.

ACTIVITIES FOR 2022-2023

Next year is shaping up to be a busy one, with MCA moving back to in person activities! I will continue to focus on work behind the scenes, overseeing our programs, operations, and fundraising activities. Specifically on the horizon are the following items:

- **Programs:** Plan and implement programs and events with board, committees, and staff teams; review and improve program evaluation process
- **Fund Development:** Work with Pamela Simmons of CoreNiche consulting to review our strategic plan and develop a fundraising plan with the MCA board at our retreat
- **Funder and Donor Relations:** Focus on building and strengthening relationships with major donors, sponsors, and granting bodies
- **Strategic Planning:** Review current strategic plan and set goals to be measured
- **Policy Work:** Develop policies in the areas of finance, volunteers, IDEA, etc.
- **Human Resources:** Continue to seek ways to expand staff team and focus on volunteer management
- **Awards & Competitions:** Review criteria and strengthen application processes
- **Special Interest Groups:** Work to get the groups up and running for fall 2022

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are so many people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this year a success. I am deeply grateful to our dedicated team of board members, staff, and volunteers, who are all integral in moving MCA forward in our program and operational goals. I very much feel that I am part of a mutually supportive team, on a journey together working towards a common goal: seeing the Manitoba choral community flourish.

Our board members have stepped up in new and important ways this year, particularly in the areas of our new branding/website and our board restructuring. I want to extend a huge thank-you to Leanne Cooper-Carrier, Brittany, and Stuart for all their work on the new brand/website, making sure every detail was in place before the launch in February, and to our Governance Committee—Catherine, Naomi, David, and Stuart—for their hard work and thoughtful approach to exploring a new governance model for MCA. I would like to thank Adam for keeping us (and me) informed and on track with our finances. I have also been so grateful to work with Brittany in the office for the past year. It has been fantastic to have you coordinate MCA's music library and communications work and collaborate strategically on program planning. Having a second employee has been invaluable to the organization and we have seen that it will be crucial to continue to grow our staff team going forward.

A huge thank-you to Stuart for all the time you have devoted this year to the organization, whether that be through providing direction for the organization at our weekly meetings, offering support for the grant-writing process, being interviewed by media about our programs, or even mixing sound for a

virtual project, you have led by example and have done a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes to ensure MCA's continued success. David will have his work cut out for him, but will have a strong mentor to look to in his new role as president!

I particularly want to thank our outgoing board members who have contributed to countless discussions at board and committee meetings, wrote reports, and have supported MCA in very tangible ways. Avonlea, Carolyn, Edward, Kelsey, Maureen, Sharon, and Sonya: thank you for all you have done in your individual board roles to further MCA's vision and mission. I know that some of you will be staying on in various volunteer and portfolio capacities, so this isn't goodbye, just "see you soon"! And to those who are moving on, I hope you will not be strangers to MCA. I have so enjoyed working with all of you!

To Catherine, you have devoted a significant part of your time these past years to MCA's work and mandate. Your time on the board started well before I came on, and you have provided solid leadership for the organization through a huge amount of change and growth. I am grateful for your mentorship and guidance in my role over the past few years. MCA has benefitted in so many ways—too many to list here—from the work you have done. On behalf of MCA, I thank you for leaving a lasting legacy for our organization!

I have already said this, but I am so proud of the work we have accomplished this year, and yet I know there is still much work to do. I'm glad to take time at this meeting to pause and celebrate how far we have come. I look forward to continuing this great work with a new board and volunteer team next year!

Submitted by Jenny Steinke-Magnus

Thank You to MCA's Donors & Funders!

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