

Manitoba Choral Association History

Established in 1976, **Manitoba Choral Association** is a non-profit organization **dedicated to supporting, strengthening, and promoting the choral arts in Manitoba**. We do this by providing resources for choral singers, groups, and leaders of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities; supporting and celebrating choral musicians and contributors through awards and scholarships; advocating on behalf of the Manitoba choral community; fostering provincial, national, and international connections and cooperation; presenting high-quality artistic, cultural, and educational programs and events; promoting members' concerts and events within the Manitoba choral community; encouraging the composition of choral music by Manitoba composers; and providing opportunities for all Manitobans to experience and enjoy choral music.

Beginning in the late 1970s, **Manitoba Youth Choir** was founded and was comprised of singers aged 18 to 25 from all over the province, honing their skills in a one-week summer choir camp, followed by a provincial tour. Within a decade, regional choirs were formed – Central, Eastman, Westman, and most recently, the Interlake Youth Choir. These regional youth choirs continue to this day.

Since 1982 the **Provincial Honour Choirs** weekend has involved teenagers, and more recently adults, from across the province. Over a three-day weekend in February, three choirs of various ages (adult, senior high, and junior high) take part in an intensive choral training workshop, facilitated by accomplished and highly respected visiting and local conductors including Diane Loomer, Scott Leithead, Rollo Dilworth, Henry Engbrecht, Elroy Friesen, Derek Morphy and Millie Hildebrand, to name a few. When choosing conductors and pianists for this program, we focus on finding choral and musical experts who are professionals in their field, and pay them for their work. In the 39 years of this program's existence, it is estimated that over 10,000 singers have experienced the excitement and pleasure of singing in an Honour Choir.

ChoralFest was founded in 1987 as a non-competitive festival to provide an educational space for choirs of all ages. Held in the month of November, participating choirs have the opportunity to work with acclaimed adjudicators and expert clinicians from all over North America, with adjudicators offering recommendations for choirs to represent Manitoba at MusicFest Canada and affiliated national festivals. We always seek to engage professional artists as our adjudicators and clinicians, as their choral expertise is essential to the success of this festival. All of our adjudicators and clinicians are paid for their services as well.

Throughout its 40 years, MCA has provided professional development opportunities for choral directors and singers. MCA is associated nationally with the Association of Canadian Choral Conductors (ACCC), now known as **Choral Canada**. In 2004, in cooperation with ACCC, MCA planned and hosted a most successful national choral conference called PODIUM, with broad national and international attendance.

Biennially in conjunction with PODIUM, an auditioned quartet of Manitoba singers join other Canadian choristers as members of the **National Youth Choir of Canada (NYCC)** where they receive professional training and work under renowned Canadian conductors. Singers chosen to participate in this program are serious about their desire to pursue careers in choral music in some form or another.

Many go on to become professional artists who are involved in teaching, conducting, and performing choral music professionally.

MCA's other **professional development** activities include choral music reading sessions for conductors and choral skills workshops on a range of topics for choral singers and leaders. MCA has also facilitated the Winnipeg performances of outstanding visiting choirs such as Chanticleer (USA), Exaudi (Cuba), Drakensburg Boys Choir (Africa), The Nathaniel Dett Chorale (Canada), Rajaton (Finland), and The King's Singers (UK).

In addition to its many activities, MCA maintains a **comprehensive website** where members can access information and register for upcoming events. The association publishes the **e-newsletter eNotes** biweekly, focusing on local, national, and international choral news. For the benefit of its community, MCA retains an extensive **choral music lending library** of nearly 5,000 titles that includes an extensive collection of Canadian compositions, as well as MCA-commissioned works by Manitoba composers such as Chester Duncan, Neil Harris, Sid Robinovitch, and Andrew Balfour.

With the help of many generous private and corporate donors and sponsors, MCA has developed **awards and competitions**. These include the Bert Kroeker Scholarship, the David G.H. Waters Hymn Sing Memorial Award, the MCA Awards of Distinction, and the Frances Seaton Choral Composition Competition, which encourages the composition of new choral works. Perhaps one of the most vital projects MCA supports is the **Endowment Fund**, a matching grants program managed by The Winnipeg Foundation to ensure a reliable and continuing source of income, enabling MCA to continue to keep Manitoba singing for many years to come with our vision of **a voice for every choir, and a choir for every voice**.