



*40th Anniversary Season*

## The Mission of VocalEssence

VocalEssence champions choral music of all genres, celebrating the vocal experience through innovative concerts, commissions, and community engagement programs.

VocalEssence  
1900 Nicollet Avenue  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403  
612-547-1451

[www.vocalescence.org](http://www.vocalescence.org)

*VocalEssence is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.*



MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
FOR CHORAL MUSIC

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Dear Friends,

Our 40th anniversary season started strong and finished stronger! From the University of Minnesota Marching Band to a 90-school Minnesota High School Honors Choir to a grand finale concert with six other professional choirs, VocalEssence offered something for everyone this year. Look for many of our season highlights scattered throughout the annual report.

Rather than present a retrospective of previous successes, this season we commissioned and premiered new music for every concert. These commissions included not only American composers, but also three composers from Mexico and one from Ecuador. Our Mexican friends helped us inaugurate a groundbreaking new program – ¡Cantare! – by exploring the music and culture of Mexico and bringing it into schools and the community.

Despite the sharp economic downturn in the fourth quarter of 2008, strong audience attendance and robust ticket sales helped us end the year in a solid position. We especially want to recognize our donors — corporate, foundation and individual — who, through their generosity, have allowed us to move optimistically into the coming year. While financial gifts and ticket sales are important to the health of our organization, we also want to recognize our 200-plus volunteers who provided countless hours of support to VocalEssence throughout the year. We are proud to acknowledge ALL our supporters this year!

What a year VocalEssence has had – 40 years strong and still engaging audiences and the community in exciting ways. Here's to many, many more!

— Dorene Wernke, Board President 2008–2009



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

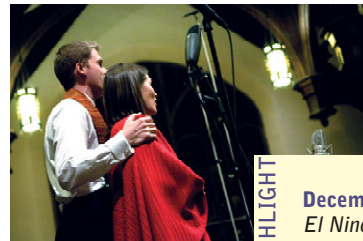
**September 14, 2008**

Garrison Keillor hosts the VocalEssence 40th Birthday Party at Orchestra Hall—including a performance by the University of Minnesota Marching Band.

SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**October 17, 2008**

Sold out days in advance, a line forms hours before the performance to purchase standing room tickets to **Musique de France** at the Cathedral of Saint Paul.



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**December 2008**

*El Nino de los Andes* (*The Child of the Andes*) by Ecuadorian composer Diego Luzuriaga premieres at **Welcome Christmas**.



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**June 2009**

The VocalEssence/Eric Whitacre weekend of events made the cover of "The Voice," Chorus America's nationally-distributed magazine.

## VocalEssence celebrates 40th anniversary with a wealth of world premieres



In 1969, VocalEssence was founded with the idea that there was so much more choral music to celebrate than just the “top 10” well-known masterpieces. Over the past 40 years, VocalEssence has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to today’s composers, commissioning an astounding 117 new works. Our audiences have made history attending first performances of music that has come to life at concerts with more than 130 world premieres to date.

In celebration of our 40th Anniversary Season, we made a special effort to commission new music, working with marvelous composers, soloists, and our friends in the choral music community in the creation of six world premieres. Kitty Brazelton, a past participant in our **Essentially Choral** program for composers wrote the jubilant “O JOY!” for the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers, which premiered at our 40th Anniversary Birthday Party with Garrison Keillor in September.



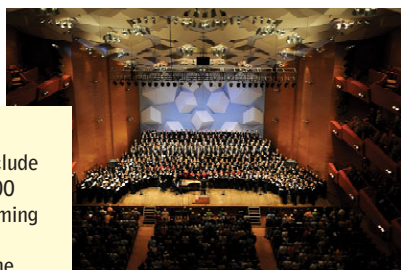
Above: Philip Brunelle conducted the world premiere of *Kaddish: Music of Remembrance and Hope*.

Below: Eric Whitacre directed the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers and The St. Olaf Choir in the premiere of his *Nox Aurumque*.

The VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers remembered the Holocaust in November with Lawrence Siegel’s uplifting *Kaddish*, utilizing the experiences of sixteen survivors interviewed for the project. The centerpiece of our **Welcome Christmas!** concerts was the world premiere of *El Niño de los Andes* (The Child of the Andes), written for VocalEssence by Ecuadorian composer Diego Luzuriaga, a past winner of the annual **Welcome Christmas! Carol Contest**. With music inspired by Andean melodies, this semi-staged Christmas cantata called for six soloists and choir with instrumental accompaniment by native Andean instruments.

In March, choral music superstar Eric Whitacre joined VocalEssence for a sold-out weekend of events, culminating with the **Eric Whitacre Extravaganza** at Orchestral Hall. The VocalEssence Ensemble Singers joined by special guests The St. Olaf Choir, performed the much anticipated world premiere of *Nox Aurumque* (Night and Gold), a companion piece to the composer’s famous *Lux Aurumque* (Light and Gold).

With over 500 voices on stage, the VocalEssence 40th Anniversary Season concluded in May with **Everybody Sing!** Our friends from Kantorei, Magnum Chorum, Minnesota Chorale, National Lutheran Choir, The Singers, and Twin Cities Gay Men’s Chorus joined the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers for the world premiere of Dominick Argento’s *The Choirmaster’s Burial*. The Minnesota native and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer was the very first composer ever commissioned by VocalEssence — with the 1974 premiere of *Jonah and the Whale*.



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

### May 3, 2009

Everybody sang to conclude the season with over 500 singers on stage performing the world premiere of Dominick Argento’s “The Choirmaster’s Burial.”

## 2008-2009 Commissions & Premieres

Kitty Brazelton	<i>O JOY!</i>
Garrison Keillor	<i>The Runaway Choir 2008</i>
Richard Rodney Bennett	<i>My Dancing Day</i>
Lawrence Siegel	<i>Kaddish: Music of Remembrance and Hope</i>
Scott Ethier	<i>A Mother's Carol</i> (Welcome Christmas Carol Contest winner)
Peter Hilliard	<i>Christ's Nativity</i> (Welcome Christmas Carol Contest winner)
Diego Luzuriaga	<i>El Niño de los Andes (The Child of the Andes)</i>
Eric Whitacre	<i>Nox Aurumque</i>
Dominick Argento	<i>The Choirmaster's Burial</i>

## ¡Cantaré! Premieres

Jorge Córdoba Valencia	<i>Aleluya!</i>
Jorge Córdoba Valencia	<i>Imágenes del Quinto Sol</i>
Jorge Córdoba Valencia	<i>Encontrarás a Dios</i>
Sabina Covarrubias	<i>La Ofrenda</i>
Sabina Covarrubias	<i>The Cloud Forest</i>
Sabina Covarrubias	<i>La Cumbia Nieve</i>
Jorge Cózatl	<i>Trabalenguas</i>
Jorge Cózatl	<i>Tu Nombre</i>
Jorge Cózatl	<i>Stiidxa Binni Zaa</i>
Jorge Cózatl	<i>Xtoles/K'ay yum K'in/Canto al Sol</i> <i>/Song to the Sun</i>

## ¡Cantaré! celebrates Mexican culture

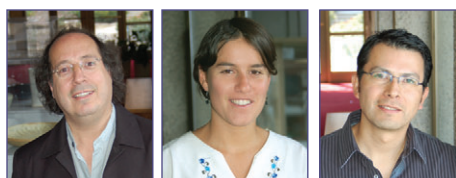
New this season, VocalEssence launched ¡Cantaré! to engage the community in the discovery, celebration, and creation of music from Mexican traditions of the past and present. During the 2008-2009 school year, Mexican composers Jorge Córdoba Valencia, Sabina Covarrubias, and Jorge Cózatl were in residence with select elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and community organizations. Each composer visited Minnesota three times, and wrote new music specifically for their choral groups. A teacher resource guide helped classroom teachers address the social, historical, and cultural contexts of Mexican choral music.

The resulting May concert at Orchestra Hall was a rousing success with nearly 600 singers on stage and 2000 community members in the audience. The Honorable Mexican Consul Ana Luisa Fajer Flores commented on the concert, "It was so wonderful; words are really not enough to express my gratitude, and Mexico's and Mexicans' gratitude to what you have accomplished." And one teacher remarked that the experience "took me to a new level of what I thought was possible. It was, by far, the most challenging thing that I have conducted."



Dominick Argento gathered with the leaders of seven choirs, who premiered his piece, *The Choirmaster's Burial*, in May 2009.

From left to right:  
Christopher Aspaas (Magnum Chorum)  
Matthew Culloton (The Singers)  
Stan Hill (Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus)  
Kathy Saltzman Romey (Minnesota Chorale)  
Axel Theimer (Kantorei)  
Dominick Argento, composer  
David Cherwien (National Lutheran Choir)  
Philip Brunelle (VocalEssence)



Jorge Córdoba Valencia, Sabina Covarrubias, and Jorge Cózatl



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**May 12, 2009**  
Composers bow to a standing-ovation crowd at the inaugural VocalEssence ¡Cantaré! Community Concert Celebration at Orchestra Hall.



## VocalEssence Ensemble Singers tour England, keep in touch with tour blog



The Ensemble Singers gather for a "photo op" in front of Big Ben.



SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**January 20, 2009**  
"Inauguration Day from the UK," the Ensemble Singers concert at St. John's Smith Square, London, airs on Minnesota Public Radio.

In January 2009, the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers embarked on a tour of England, giving six well-received public concerts in Oxford, Birmingham, London, Cambridge and Ely. The 10-day tour included an engagement in one of the world's most famous churches, King's College Chapel in Cambridge, an Inauguration Day concert at St. John's, Smith Square in London, and an in-studio collaboration with the BBC Singers honoring choral conductor Stephen Cleobury. The group kept in touch with friends and fans via the new VocalEssence blog; here are excerpts from their personal reflections on the tour as it progressed.

### Friday, January 16, 2009

Greetings from England! Tonight we had our first rehearsal at the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford, where our first concert takes place on Saturday—it was so cold inside that many of us wore our coats throughout the rehearsal. I will definitely wear thicker socks tomorrow! —*Brook Metzger, tenor*

### Saturday, January 17, 2009

Today, at the famous Bodleian Library of Oxford University, we saw Handel's original conductor's score of *Messiah*, and the scratched out hymn from the British comedy "The Vicar of Dibley."

The concert included mostly American music and was a hit—including an encore! It was a wonderful beginning to our trip.

—*Karen Wilkerson, alto*

### Sunday, January 18, 2009

With the sunlit spires of Oxford in our rearview mirror, the Ensemble Singers trundled off to Birmingham today. We sang in the Birmingham Town Hall, an acoustically bright and forgiving space that has premiered many famous works in its 175 year history, including Mendelssohn's *Elijah*—Mendelssohn was once the Town Hall organist! It was a great honor to perform there, and we are looking forward to continuing on with this wonderful tour.

—*Eric Bartlett, bass*

### Monday, January 19, 2009

Tonight some of the Ensemble Singers went with Maestro Brunelle to the BBC radio station for a live radio performance on the BBC3 classical music program "In Tune" with the ever-so-charming host Sean Rafferty. He especially loved our rendition of that old Shaker tune "Simple Gifts." —*Nick Barootian, tenor*

### Tuesday, January 20, 2009

It has been a very exciting day in London—people are really keen to celebrate President Obama's inauguration. Our all-American repertoire concert was sung beautifully by the Ensemble Singers (as they have sung throughout the tour—really extraordinary singing!) I felt this evening an extra sense of emotion in the singing as they performed this music, and thought of the events in Washington D.C.

—*Artistic Director Philip Brunelle*

### Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Didn't have time to blog yesterday; I was busy producing our VocalEssence broadcast from St. John's, Smith Square in London. This can be highly glamorous. Take, for example, the improvised recording studio in my tiny hotel room where I had to pre-record some announcements before the concert. Pillows around the microphone reduce the echo sound in the room. The toilet paper rolls just happened to stack up to the right height to place the microphone! —*Minnesota Public Radio's John Birge*



Above: An improvised recording studio in John Birge's hotel room

### Thursday, January 22, 2009

Just yesterday we had a very smart noontime concert at St. Giles Cripplegate in Central London. I think we must be generating some buzz because our audiences seem to be becoming more sizable and responsive at every concert we give. —*Anders Eckman, tenor*

### Thursday, January 22, 2009

For many of us, sitting in King's College Chapel listening to Evensong may have been a once in a lifetime evening...but tomorrow WE will have the rare and exciting opportunity to share our beautiful music there! —*Diane Fernald, alto*

### Friday, January 23, 2009

If you've never sung in King's College Chapel before, imagine touching a match to a gas stove—just one note, and our voices lit the air and blazed. The group was tight, we were high with the excitement of where we were, and Philip beamed that high-wattage grin only Philip has. When the vaulted fan ceiling finally stopped ringing, the audience erupted in whistles and cheers.

—*Anna George Meek, alto*

### Sunday, January 25, 2009

Onward to the BBC studios at Maida Vale for rehearsal and a performance with the BBC Singers, honoring the 60th birthday of Stephen Cleobury, their conductor laureate. Together the groups performed Richard Strauss's *Deutsche Motette*. With over 60 singers and four soloists performing a vocal high-wire act, the work is a veritable "wall of sound"! It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our singers and the audience! —*Mary Ann Pulk, Managing Director*

Below: King's College Chapel — "just one note, and our voices lit the air and blazed"



## WITNESS honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with Dr. Billy Taylor's *Peaceful Warrior*

SEASON HIGHLIGHT

**February 15, 2009**

Jazz legend Dr. Billy Taylor and his trio join VocalEssence to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., performing Dr. Taylor's *Peaceful Warrior*.



### 2008-2009 WITNESS Partner Schools

Bancroft Elementary  
Barton Open School  
Battle Creek  
Birch Grove Elementary  
Boys Totem Town  
Brooklyn Center Jr. High  
Buffalo Arts Magnet  
Burnsville High  
Dayton's Bluff  
Excell Academy  
Four Seasons A+ Elementary  
Franklin Music Magnet  
Fred Moore Middle  
Friends School of Minnesota  
Fowell Middle School  
Galtier Elementary  
Glen Lake Elementary  
Hancock-Hamline Magnet  
Harrison Education Center  
Jenny Lind Elementary  
Jefferson Community  
Linwood A+ Elementary  
Lyndale Community  
Maplewood Middle School  
Marion W. Savage Elementary  
Mississippi Magnet  
Partnership Academy  
Plymouth Christian Youth Center  
Ramsey International Fine Arts  
Rockford Elementary  
Sanford Middle  
Sojourner Truth Academy  
St. Peter Claver Catholic  
St. John's Catholic School  
St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic  
Stonebridge Community School  
Twin Cities Academy  
Valley View Elementary  
World Cultures Magnet  
Yinghua Academy

Through the annual WITNESS School Program, VocalEssence reached out to 45 partner schools by placing thirteen Teaching Artists in classrooms at little or no cost to the schools — impacting a total of 3,349 students in 149 classrooms! This year's program revolved around Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dedication to peaceful resistance. As the VocalEssence WITNESS concert featured jazz pianist and composer Dr. Billy Taylor, his work *Peaceful Warrior* became the centerpiece of the WITNESS School Program.

The students studied Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. Taylor's music in the classroom with the Teaching Artists, and then traveled to Ordway Center for the WITNESS Young People's Concerts. There they heard excerpts from *Peaceful Warrior* performed by Sanford Moore, a jazz trio, and the VocalEssence Chorus.

Two very talented students were selected to participate in the concerts, reciting excerpts from the text of *Peaceful Warrior*. They also spoke to employees at Travelers in Saint Paul and addressed the General Mills Annual MLK Holiday Breakfast. Another young student, Kenjin Capers, wrote such an inspiring blog that VocalEssence invited him backstage to meet Dr. Taylor in person. "The music written by Dr. Billy Taylor is truly astounding .... the way he blends the music is almost an inhuman blend of notes — it is truly transfixing to listen to."

Following the Young People's Concerts, a teacher from Hancock-Hamline Elementary School remarked, "I enjoyed the looks on students' faces when they recognized what they had learned in class while they listened to the concert."

### Talented Tenth Apprentice Program

Ten students from South High School also performed on the WITNESS concert through the VocalEssence Talented Tenth Apprentice Program. They worked closely with Teaching Artist Ginger Commodore and then participated in dress rehearsals with VocalEssence. As one student noted, "I feel that singing with VocalEssence has given me something to look forward to in my future and something to aspire to be in. My musicianship was improved by just sitting in on the rehearsal with the big group and being conducted by Mr. Brunelle!"





After blogging about how listening to *Peaceful Warrior* moved him, Kenjin Capers (a student at Birch Grove Elementary in Brooklyn Park) was invited to meet Dr. Billy Taylor in person at the WITNESS concert.

## 2008-2009 WITNESS Teaching Artists

Timothy Berry, musician  
Patricia Brown, dancer/choreographer  
Ginger Commodore, singer/songwriter  
Beverly Cottman, storyteller  
Danielle Daniel, creative writer/storyteller  
Walter Griffin, photographer  
Kelechi Jaavaid, writer/poet/actor  
Rose McGee, storyteller/poet/playwright  
Louis Porter II, memoirist/poet  
T. Mychael Rambo, singer/actor  
Anita Ruth, conductor/musical director  
Larry Sims, trumpeter  
Roxane Wallace, dancer/choreographer



Tre'ana Mullins (a student at Sanford Middle School in Minneapolis) was selected to recite words from *Peaceful Warrior* for audiences at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts and other WITNESS-related events.



Five WITNESS Teaching Artists performed a "choral reading" at a luncheon held in November 2008 introducing the annual WITNESS program to the community.

From left to right:  
Danielle Daniel  
Ginger Commodore  
Rose McGee  
Larry Sims  
Louis Porter II

## Eric Whitacre festival a highlight of the season



The Minnesota High School Honors Choir, wearing their signature festival T-shirts, rehearse with Eric Whitacre.



High school and college students sing with VocalEssence under Eric's leadership.



A full house for the Community Sing at MacPhail Center for Music

Choral superstar Eric Whitacre made an enormous impact on Minnesota high school and college students when he visited VocalEssence in March 2009 to conduct a festival of his own music, culminating in a sold-out concert at Orchestra Hall. The festival was produced by VocalEssence in partnership with The St. Olaf Choir and American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota.

One hundred sixty singers from 90 Minnesota high schools were selected to sing in Minnesota High School Honors Choir, created expressly for the festival. Over a three-day period, Eric Whitacre worked directly with these students as well as the 75-voice St. Olaf Choir and the VocalEssence Chorus & Ensemble Singers. The high school students also interacted with St. Olaf Choir conductor Anton Armstrong, VocalEssence associate conductor Sigrid Johnson, and Philip Brunelle.

Overwhelmed by the experience, many students posted comments on their performance when the video of it was uploaded to the VocalEssence YouTube Channel. One said, "I sang in this concert and I have to say it was one of the best experiences of my life. Working with Eric Whitacre all weekend was amazing. He truly is an amazing composer as well as being a genuinely nice guy." Another commented, "It was beyond anything I've ever dreamed of doing."

Eric considers working with young singers to be a calling. "As a vocation, it is essential to constantly bring young people into one of the great human experiences, singing together." While in Minnesota, he also led a Community Sing for adults in partnership with MacPhail Center for Music, further expanding the impact of the festival weekend.



**March 22, 2009**

Fans traveled from 26 states, Canada, Mexico, and Japan to attend the sold-out **Eric Whitacre Extravaganza** at Orchestra Hall.

## Technology helps VocalEssence get the word out

### Facebook page

VocalEssence joined the social media revolution this season with the creation of a Facebook “fan page.” The fan page allows VocalEssence to connect directly to fans around the world—promoting upcoming events and special offers, as well as sharing videos and photos. View the page and become a fan at:

[www.facebook.com/vocalescence](http://www.facebook.com/vocalescence).

### YouTube Channel

Launched in January 2009, the VocalEssence YouTube.com channel attracted world-wide attention in April with the world premiere performance video of Eric Whitacre’s *Nox Aurumque*. VocalEssence videos have been viewed over 75,000 times to date—helping to introduce VocalEssence to choral music lovers around the world. View all of the VocalEssence performance videos at [www.youtube.com/vocalescence](http://www.youtube.com/vocalescence).

### Flickr & Blogspot

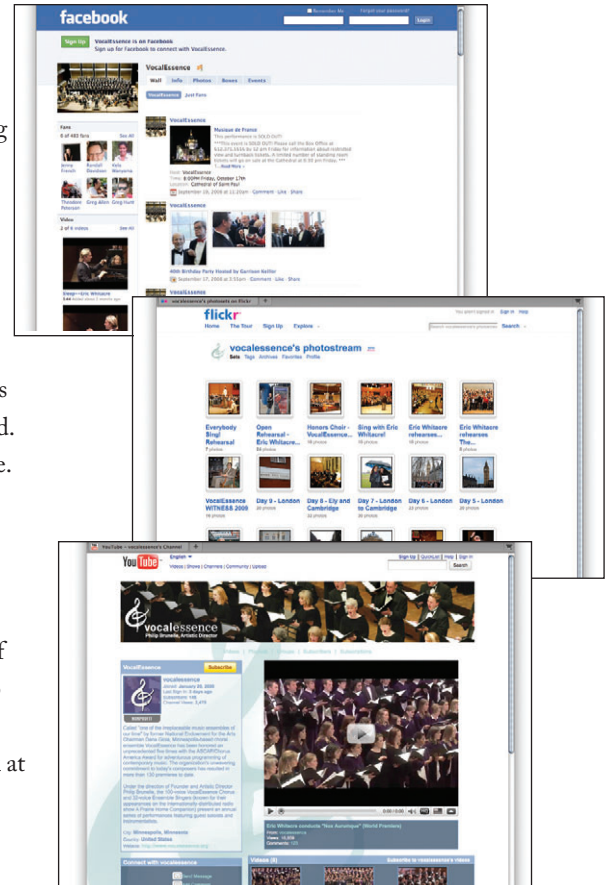
Although the VocalEssence Ensemble Singers have toured extensively in the past, the creation of a tour blog and online photo albums allowed the group to share in the excitement of the trip. With daily blog postings written by different members of the Ensemble Singers, VocalEssence fans, friends, and family members were able to virtually participate in the tour. Visit the tour blog at: [vocalescence.blogspot.com](http://vocalescence.blogspot.com). In addition, a daily photo album posted on Flickr allowed a behind-the-scenes look at the day’s adventures. View photo albums from the tour and other performances at: [www.flickr.com/photos/vocalescence](http://www.flickr.com/photos/vocalescence).

### Podcasts

For many years, VocalEssence has sent advance program notes to season ticket subscribers, allowing them to learn more about the performance they were about to see. While the advance program notes continued, this season they were supplemented with the addition of audio and visual podcasts available to all patrons on the VocalEssence website. These short segments included samples of the music as well as interviews with composers and performers about each performance.

### Eric Whitacre Extravaganza download card

For the first time ever, VocalEssence made it possible to purchase a live concert recording, available to download online only **48 hours** following the performance. Attendees of **Eric Whitacre Extravaganza** were able to purchase an online download card, giving them a unique code used to log in to the [soundtrax.com](http://soundtrax.com) website. Once logged in, the patron could download the entire performance to their computer and then could copy it to an actual CD if they chose to do so. The download cards were also made available to the general public via the VocalEssence website.





## 2008-2009 contributor circle

VocalEssence gratefully acknowledges all those who made gifts between July 1, 2008 & June 30, 2009.

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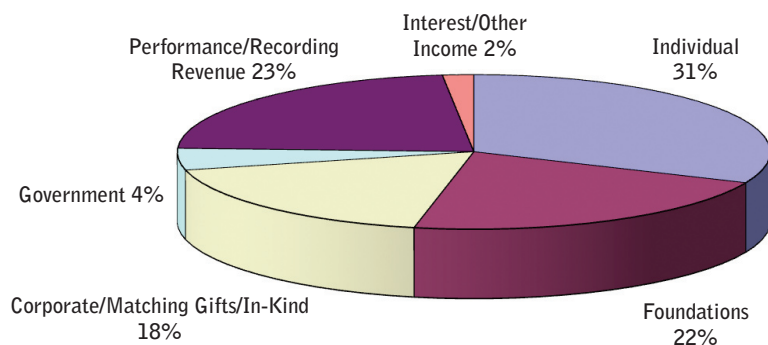
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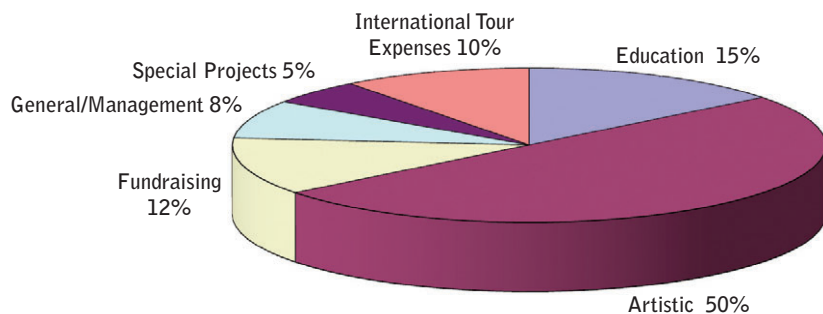
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## 2008–2009 FINANCIALS

### INCOME



### EXPENSES



VocalEssence Statement of Financial Activity for the year ending June 30, 2009. Financial statements represent audited figures from reports prepared by Carpenter Evert and Associates, Ltd.

### INCOME

#### CONTRIBUTED

Individual	\$582,519
Foundations	\$399,442
Corporations/Matching	\$284,526
Government	\$83,582
In-kind	\$46,645
Performance Income	\$416,972
Investment Loss	(\$241,220)
Interest & Dividend Income	\$30,186
Other Income	\$1,148
<b>Total Contributed Income</b>	<b>\$1,603,800</b>

#### EARNED

Performance Revenue	\$388,264
Recordings Income	\$28,708
Investment/Other income	(\$211,034)
<b>Total Earned Income</b>	<b>\$205,938</b>

**TOTAL INCOME** **\$1,809,738**

### EXPENSES

Education	\$302,985
Artistic	\$1,050,699
Development/Fundraising	\$253,053
General/Management	\$168,835
Special Projects	\$109,504
International Tour Expenses	\$216,980
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$2,102,056</b>

*Notes: VocalEssence experienced an overall net loss in 2008–2009 due to a decline in the value of our investment portfolio, a draw from our Endowment Fund to support a fundraising campaign, and a draw from our Artistic Advancement Fund to support an international tour. Operations ended the year with a surplus of \$6,872.*



## VOLUNTEER HONOR ROLL

In 2008-2009 there were 216 active volunteers supporting VocalEssence activities. Not including volunteer chorus rehearsals, volunteers served a total of 821.5 hours.

Independent Sector, a nonprofit organization, estimates the value of volunteer time for 2008 to be \$20.25 per hour, putting the total value of our volunteer time at almost \$17,000.

Steve Aggergaard\*  
AnnaLisa Anderson\*  
Barb Anderson\*  
Chris Anderson  
Marilyn Anderson  
Rolan Anderson  
Tim Anderson\*  
Erin Elizabeth Anhut\*  
Christina Arndt  
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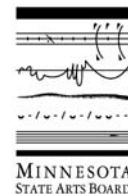
Loren Wolthoff  
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Doris Wynia  
Cynthia L. Youtz\*  
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\* Designates VocalEssence Ensemble  
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2008-2009 VocalEssence  
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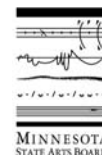


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