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EXECUTIVE POSITION PROFILE

ORGANIZATION

VocalEssence

POSITION

Executive Director

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Applications will be accepted until February 21, 2024 with review of candidates beginning immediately.

We encourage and appreciate early applications.

COMPENSATION

Salary Range: \$150,000 - \$165,000

OPPORTUNITY

Called "one of the irreplaceable music ensembles of our time" by former National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Dana Gioia, Minneapolis-based choral ensemble VocalEssence has launched a national search for a new Executive Director.

VocalEssence long history of excellence, innovation and inclusiveness provides a strong foundation for a new Executive Director to contribute to its continued reimagination and reinvention with VocalEssence Artistic Director, artistic team and a dedicated and tenured board and staff. This is an exceptional leadership opportunity.

CONTACT

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VOCAL**ESSENCE**

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Singing has always been a community activity. For generations, people have come together in song to celebrate, mourn, praise, and inspire each other.

For more than half a century, VocalEssence has been dedicated to keeping that essential human expression alive. With exhilarating concert performances, ground-breaking educational programming, and tireless advocacy for choral music, VocalEssence has proven that singing together is still a relevant—and sometimes revolutionary—way to create community in today's modern world.

Learn more at <https://www.vocalescence.org/>

Accomplishments of Note:

Ensembles perform for and engage with more than 20,000 people each year.

Six-time recipient of the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for adventurous programming of contemporary music.

More than 120,000 students have participated in the VocalEssence WITNESS program since its inception.

Honored with more Chorus America awards than any other ensemble nationwide, including the once-in-an-organizational-lifetime Margaret Hillis Achievement Award for Choral Excellence.

Commissioned more than 300 new works and performed more than 500 premieres.



HISTORY

VocalEssence is based in Minneapolis and has decades of history as one of the world's premier choral music organizations. Despite its global influence, VocalEssence has kept its focus local—consistently pioneering ways to strengthen Minnesota's community through thrilling musical experiences.

The organization was founded in 1969 by Philip Brunelle as the Plymouth Music Series. The name was changed to VocalEssence in 2002.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

VocalEssence staff are seasoned, professional, collegial, high performing, and passionate about the mission of the organization.

Board members describe the culture of VocalEssence as "innovative, professional, intergenerational, creative, and adaptive".

Staff describe the culture of VocalEssence as "high performing, collaborative, resourceful, responsive, and committed to its equity, inclusion, and accessibility journey as an organization and as a staff."

VocalEssence singers describe the organization as "inclusive, progressive, excellent, community-centric, welcoming, inspiring and socially conscious."

Audience members describe the organization as "professional, innovative, embodying excellence, collaborative, inclusive, attentive, inspirational, creative, welcoming and historic."

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & ACCESSIBILITY

VocalEssence seeks to develop future singing generations in ways that are reflective of and responsive to diverse constituencies, offering inclusive and accessible artistic opportunities of the highest quality at the core of its creative engagement.

In addition to offering concerts in venues across the Twin Cities, low ticket prices, and diverse programming, VocalEssence strives to bring choral music within reach of more Minnesotans aiming to make the concert experience enjoyable and accessible for all patrons.



MISSION

VocalEssence draws upon the power of singing together to nurture community, inspire creativity, affirm the value of all persons, and expand the influence of choral music

VISION

VocalEssence seeks to be forward-thinking—a singing community where all find belonging. Aspiring to inspire, we discover, celebrate, and build lasting experiences that transform hearts and minds. We strive to create connections that honor dimensions of difference and to serve as a catalyst for change among singers, audiences, choral organizations, and communities.

VALUES

- Curiosity & Discovery
- Artistry & Creativity
- Innovation & Inspiration
- Collaboration

As a professional choral organization, we live our values in order to:

- Bridge societal difference,
- Remain open to continuous learning,
- Celebrate singing as an essential human expression



Position Profile | Executive Director, VocalEssence

Strategic Imperatives

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 1: EXPAND THE INFLUENCE OF CHORAL MUSIC

Purpose: *Emergence of mission-driven singing ensembles and new performance models introduces competition for singer recruitment/retention and audience growth.*

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 2: BRIDGE SOCIETAL DIFFERENCE

Purpose: *Conscious development of equitable opportunities in our society serves as a catalyst for new conversations about how to address disparities.*

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE 3: ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Purpose: *Respond to generational shifts in donor priorities in the areas of social justice, inclusion, access, and equity.*

Current updates available via link below:

<https://www.vocalessence.org/vocalessence-strategic-plan-2022-2025/>

VocalEssence Choirs

The **VocalEssence Chorus** is a group of talented and enthusiastic singers from many different walks of life, united by their love of singing and community. Performing a wide variety of musical styles, premiering new works, and sharing the stage with a diverse array of guest artists, the Chorus is a welcome home for singers who wish to continue making music throughout their adult lives.

The **VocalEssence Ensemble Singers** have established an international reputation because of their extensive catalog of recordings and broad range of unique repertoire. This chamber choir, whose members hail from a wide variety of professions, is bound together by their skilled artistry to create what *The Times* of London has described as a “flawless” sound.

The **VocalEssence Singers Of This Age (VESOTA)** is a community of Twin Cities high schoolers engaged in expanding what it means to be a choir and encouraging a wider circle of participation in the artform. Presenting music ranging from classical to hip-hop, they use creativity and collaboration to build an accepting community, equipped with the skills to lead social change in our society.

VocalEssence Vintage Voices is an exciting choral program that integrates the arts into the everyday lives of older adults. Guided by a desire to create a welcoming atmosphere and remove barriers for participation, these choirs sing to build community, combat loneliness and isolation, and improve physical and emotional wellbeing.



VocalEssence Programs

VocalEssence ¡Cantaré! connects Mexican composers to school choirs and community choruses to share Mexico’s vibrant music and cultural traditions and compose new Spanish language songs for each school. ¡Cantaré! connects composers to schools through in-person experiences and online resources. In addition, VocalEssence supports Chicago a cappella as they implement ¡Cantaré! in the Chicago metro area.

VocalEssence Music Press is a dynamic music publishing company that offers a select group of emerging composers the opportunity to make their music available to choirs everywhere.

Singing from the Heart: VocalEssence partners with Longfellow School, a community school for pregnant and parenting students and their children, to provide regular opportunities to sing together and connect more deeply with their children and to their culture through music.

Supporting Composers: VocalEssence seeks to expand the impact of choral music through commissioning as well as mentoring and nurturing emerging artists.

VocalEssence WITNESS celebrates the contributions of African Americans to our shared American heritage through in school and virtual workshops with teaching artists for students grades 4-12, professional development and classroom resources for teachers, and **VocalEssence WITNESS Young People’s Concerts** featuring VocalEssence singers.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, cont.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, VocalEssence developed several different online resources including **Musical Moments** hosted by Philip Brunelle and **Take 5 with GPS** hosted by G. Phillip Shultz, III to keep audiences connected and bring them joy.

Each of these resources can be viewed on our website.

In addition to the larger programs described above, VocalEssence brings together more than 5,000 community members through song at smaller, one-time programs, including:

- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute programs for older adults
- Greater Minnesota tour visits to schools, senior centers, and other community venues
- Community Sings with guest artists



Contests and Awards

- **The American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota Creative Programming Award**, sponsored by VocalEssence, upholds high standards of excellence in repertoire selection and rewards creativity in choral performance in secondary and undergraduate choral training throughout Minnesota.

Commissioning and Recording

Since 1969 VocalEssence has been championing new music and unearthed forgotten gems to continue to refresh the choral experience. Since inception, VocalEssence has commissioned more than 300 new songs and performed more than 500 premieres.



SUMMARY

The Executive Director leads VocalEssence operations, ensuring the strategic and financially sound management of all programs. In collaboration with the Artistic Director, the Executive Director works toward a common artistic and operational vision in alignment with institutional goals adopted by the Board of Directors. The Executive Director is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors. Positions reporting directly to the Executive Director are the Director of Development, the Director of Marketing and Communications, and the Director of Finance and Administration. Reporting relationships shared with the Artistic Director are the Associate Artistic Director, Director of Artistic Operations and the Executive Assistant.

ESSENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Planning and Management

- Lead the development and ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and updating of the organizational Strategic Plan.
- Collaborate with the President of the Board and Artistic Director to ensure a clear organizational vision aligned with mission.
- Oversee all aspects of VocalEssence administrative operations, including finance and budgeting, fundraising and development, marketing, and staff administration.
- Assure VocalEssence operations adhere to legal and ethical non-profit best practices.
- Represent VocalEssence in appropriate local and national forums.

Artistic support

- Participate in artistic planning.
- Finalize financial agreements with the Artistic Director and issue contracts for all guest artists and composers (artistic partners).
- Oversee all marketing, communications, and public relations, strategies to ensure visibility for VocalEssence.

Governance

- Provide administrative support to Board, Board officers, and committees.
- Participate in identifying, interviewing, and recruiting prospective board members.
- Take an active role in engaging individual Board members in the work of the organization.
- Participate in development of effective leadership succession plans for Board officers and Committee chairs.
- Present and communicate materials to the Board of Directors.

Financial Oversight and Development

- Ensure the development, monitoring, and reporting of budgets that fulfill the organization's artistic vision and mission, guided by sound fiscal policies established in partnership with the Board.
- Develop and implement individual and institutional development strategies with the Board and staff that maximize contributed income opportunities.

Audience Development and Community Engagement

- Represent VocalEssence in appropriate public settings, clearly articulating the mission, vision, programs, impact, and strategic direction of VocalEssence.
- Manage operational aspects of Community Engagement programs including financial and human resources oversight, ensuring program viability and impact in the community.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

In collaboration with the Artistic Director, the Executive Director will:

- Maintain a collegial and collaborative relationship with the Artistic Director and artistic and operational staff.
- Develop and implement strategies to ensure VocalEssence institutional, artistic, and community engagement goals are achieved, and inform the Board of actions taken in furtherance of those goals.
- Be a leader of people, engaging and motivating staff, Board, and volunteers in the pursuit of excellence.
- Provide meaningful ongoing feedback and conduct annual performance reviews of staff.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Background and experience in a field such as management, community service, political or grassroots advocacy, administration, or related.
- Preference for candidates with knowledge and understanding of the nuance of arts and culture organizations.
- Experience leading and participating in strategic planning and managing to strategic objectives.
- Experience in fundraising through an array of approaches such as individual giving, annual campaigns, capital campaigns, etc.
- Financial acumen and experience with budgeting and ongoing fiscal management.
- Experience working with and for a board of directors.
- Experience in communications; this role manages communication of all VocalEssence programs.
- Experience growing audience(s) and expanding engagement with different audience segments

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

- Strategic thinking; envisioning the future and implementing action toward it.
- Creativity and a shared vision of sustainability and growth; able to "tell the story" of VocalEssence and ideate a bright future.
- Commitment toward diversity, accessibility, equity, and inclusion and confidence in making positive changes.

- Welcoming, inclusive, participatory communication style; easily builds trust-based relationships; kind and thoughtful.
- Gracious approach with staff, donors, artists, community members, and external partners in the creation and execution of the organization's vision. Able to build and sustain relationships with a broad array of stakeholders.
- Energized by being in a dynamic organization; excited about technological change and able to see possibilities.
- Team-oriented and collaborative; known as a "people person" who brings out the best in others. Leads staff with a coaching and delegating style.
- High degree of emotional intelligence and diplomatic savvy.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is \$150,000-\$165, 000. Compensation includes participation in the comprehensive benefits plan.

TO APPLY OR SHARE NOMINATIONS

Inquiries and nominations may be directed to Lars Leafblad: lars@ballingerleafblad.com

Applications and nominations will be accepted until February 21, 2024 or until the position has been filled, which may be earlier. There will be an immediate and ongoing review of candidates, so *we encourage and appreciate early applications*. All inquiries will remain confidential.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

The Twin Cities metro area includes Minneapolis, Saint Paul and the surrounding suburban area. Making up the 14th largest metropolitan area in the country, it is a unique blend of a small town and major cosmopolitan hub. Both urban cores boast a thriving business atmosphere. Saint Paul, as the state capital, is home to state government and has a more historical vibe. Minneapolis is the larger and more commercial of the two cities.

Separated by the Mississippi River, both cities share a common root of being river towns - and the great outdoors are still a major attraction for residents and visitors alike. There are over 100,000 acres of parks, walking and bike paths, and other outdoor spaces.

Outside of the central downtowns, however, both cities have many distinct neighborhoods, and residents identify more with their individual communities than with the larger city as a whole. The area has a diverse range of neighborhoods and homes, with an atmosphere of a small town feeling with the conveniences and cultural hallmarks of a big city.

The Twin Cities offer something for everyone, from six professional sports teams to a robust theater and arts scene. There is a thriving “foodie” culture offering award-winning restaurants (several chefs have been regional James Beard Award winners). Shopping is plentiful with area malls and unique shopping districts in both cities and in the suburbs.

Nearly every weekend in the summer there are several outdoor events for participants and spectators—triathlons, biking races, marathons, boat races, water skiing competitions, golf tournaments including several PGA tournaments. Winter is also celebrated with events such as the Saint Paul Winter Carnival, the City of Lakes Loppet Winter Festival and the U.S. Pond Hockey championships. And for those who want to get away from it all, ice fishing and snowmobiling are popular Minnesota pastimes.

RESOURCES

MeetMinneapolis | <https://www.minneapolis.org/>

Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District | <https://www.mplsddid.com/>

Minneapolis Downtown Council | <https://www.mplsdowntown.com/>

Minneapolis Park & Recreation | <https://www.minneapolisparks.org/>

Saint Paul | <https://www.stpaul.gov/>

Greater MSP Partnership | www.greatermsp.org

Saint Paul Convention & Visitors Bureau | <https://www.visitsaintpaul.com/>

Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce | <https://www.stpaulchamber.com/>

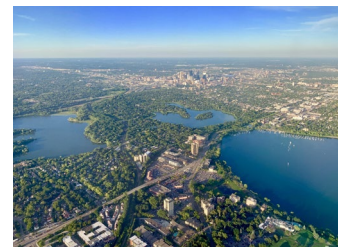
*3.6M Population of
Greater MSP Region*



60+ Museums in the Metro Area



300 Parks



1,750 Regional Lakes



1,000+ Miles of Bike Trails



*Thriving Arts & Cultural
Districts*

