

minnesota BOYCHOIR

Minnesota Boychoir Timeline Featuring Selected Performances and Events

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1959

- The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is founded.

1962

- John Glenn is the first American to orbit the earth.
- Morris N. Nilsen and Morris A. Nilsen, owners and operators of the Morris Nilsen Funeral Chapel, create the Morris Nilsen Boys Choir. The group rehearses at Woodlake Lutheran Church in Richfield, Minnesota. John Carl Ylvisaker, David S. Van Fleet, and Beatrice Speed serve as early choir directors.

1963

- The choir gives its first public performance on November 24, 1963, two days after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.
- The Minnesota Opera is founded.
- During the famous March on Washington (DC), Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives a speech that includes the famous “I have a dream . . .” passage.

1966

- The choir performs the *Seven Last Words of Christ* with Schola Cantorum, Cecilia Chorale, and Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra at the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis.

1968

- The country is shaken by the assassinations of Dr. King and Senator Robert Kennedy.
- The Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra becomes the Minnesota Orchestra.

1969

- Philip Brunelle founds the Plymouth Music Series—now VocalEssence.
- Apollo 11 lands on the moon.

1970

- Paul H. Pfeiffer is named choir director.
- The choir moves its rehearsal location to House of Prayer Lutheran Church. Paul and Virginia Pfeiffer work as a husband and wife team. William “Bill” Bailey is hired as accompanist, and choir mother Margery “Marge” Bailey designs the first middies.
- The first Earth Day is observed.

1972

- The Minnesota Chorale is founded.
- The Dale Warland Singers choir is founded; it disbands in 2004.

1973

- The Morris Nilsen Boys Choir is renamed the Minnesota Boychoir.

1975

- The Minnesota Boychoir is incorporated in the State of Minnesota as a nonprofit corporation; it eventually receives its federal 501(c)(3) designation in January 1977.

1976

- The United States celebrates its bicentennial.

1977

- The choir collaborates with the Minnesota Opera and the Dale Warland Singers on *St. Matthew Passion*, conducted by Brunelle, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

1978

- The choir tours Chicago, Illinois.

1982

- The choir sings the national anthem at the opening of the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome.
- The choir tours Austria—the only American choir invited to participate in the Eleventh International Youth and Music Festival in Vienna—and is awarded a Trophy of Honor.

1983

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday becomes a federal holiday.

1984

- The choir performs with the Plymouth Festival Chorus & Orchestra; Brunelle conducts.
- The choir performs Benjamin Britten's *The War Requiem* with the University of Minnesota Chorus and Orchestra.
- The choir tours Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- The album *Purple Rain* by Minnesota musician Prince and the movie of the same name are released. The title song wins an Academy Award.

1985

- The choir performs the Mahler *Symphony No. 3* with the Minnesota Orchestra.
- Accompanist and choir financial officer Bill Bailey passes away unexpectedly. The choir sings at his memorial service.

1986

- The choir tours the Commonwealth of Virginia.

1987

- The choir is named an official representative of the City of Minneapolis and tours sister city Ibaraki, Osaka, Japan in its twenty-fifth year.

1988

- CDs begin to outsell vinyl records. The choir begins to switch recordings of its performances from vinyl to CDs.
- Minnesota native and musician Bob Dylan is voted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

1989

- The choir tours Washington, DC, and Baltimore, Maryland.
- The Berlin Wall comes down in Germany. The televised celebration is seen around the world.
- Groundwork is laid for establishment of the World Wide Web; it becomes available to the public in 1991.

1990

- Shelly McAlpin is hired as the Minnesota Boychoir business manager.

1991

- The choir tours in Canada.
- Mark S. Johnson, a middle school choral teacher, is hired as choir accompanist.

1992

- The choir tours Czechoslovakia, performing at Smetana Hall with The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.
- The Mall of America opens in Bloomington.

1993

- Paul and Virginia Pfeiffer retire. Johnson is named director, initially serving on a part-time basis.
- The European Union is formed.

1994

- The choir's rehearsal location is moved from House of Prayer Lutheran Church to Salem Covenant Church in New Brighton.
- The choir tours France and England.
- The a cappella group Cantus is formed on the St. Olaf College campus.

1995

- The choir tours Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin.
- Denise Prosek serves as choir accompanist for the second time. She had previously worked with the choir in the early 1990s.

1996

- The choir tours Costa Rica.

1997

- Johnson becomes the executive and artistic director and the first full-time, paid director of the choir.
- The choir rents office space, giving it a permanent home in the Landmark Center in St. Paul.
- Johnson begins to expand the choir, creating an ensemble for high school boys who graduate from the younger choirs; he increases membership and doubles the repertoire.
- As part of its thirty-fifth anniversary celebration, the choir performs a concert at Bethel College (Bethel University today).
- The choir tours South Dakota.

1998

- Todd E. Price becomes choir accompanist, composer, and arranger.
- The choir tours Norway.

1999

- Sing Minnesota begins as summer camp for boys and girls, with a focus on choir recruitment.
- The choir tours Chicago, Illinois.

2000

- The turn of the millennium is celebrated around the world.
- The choir tours Seattle, Washington.
- For the third year in a row, the choir sings opening selections before the production of *A Christmas Carol* at the Guthrie Theater.

2001

- The choir tours northern Minnesota.
- On September 11, terrorists destroy the World Trade Center in New York City and damage the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Nearly 3,000 people die. In December, the choir participates in a “Peace on Earth” concert with a number of Twin Cities choirs at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

2002

- The choir premieres the 1918 Henry van Dyke poem “*America For Me*,” set to music by commissioned composer Sergey Khvoshchinsky.
- The choir performs for the St. Paul Landmark Center Centennial Celebration.
- The choir rehearsal location moves to Concordia University in St. Paul, where they rehearse today.
- The main performing ensemble is officially introduced to the public as Cantabile with the Junior Chorus and Concert Choir training choirs and Allegro—an ensemble for Cantabile graduates—remaining in place.
- The choir tours New Zealand, singing at the US Embassy in Wellington and ChristChurch Cathedral.
- Marge Bailey passes away.

2003

- AlumSing offers an opportunity for alumni to sing with the choir.
- The choir tours Washington, DC.
- Apple introduces its iTunes Music Store.

2004

- The choir performs Steve Heitzeg’s *Nobel Symphony* with VocalEssence.
- Adult Choir is formed as a choir for parents and supporters of the Minnesota Boychoir.
- The choir tours Canada (Montreal, Quebec City, Toronto, Ottawa).
- Prince is voted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

2005

- YouTube is founded; the choir begins posting excerpts from its concerts on this digital platform.
- Choir members perform in Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* with the Minnesota Orchestra.
- The choir tours Minnesota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

2006

- The choir performs *This Side of Heaven: The Passion of Jesus of Nazareth* with VocalEssence.
- The choir tours New York, New York.
- The choir performs in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy in a spectacular multimedia event with the Minnesota Orchestra and over 200 musicians.
- The choir sings with the Minnesota Orchestra and the Minnesota Opera in a performance of Giacomo Puccini’s *Tosca* at Orchestra Hall.

2007

- Celebrating its forty-fifth anniversary, the choir visits its fifth continent, touring Australia and headlining at the World Voices Australia International Choral Festival at the Sydney Opera House.
- Founder Morris A. Nilsen passes away; the choir sings at his funeral at Woodlake Lutheran Church.
- The choir performs *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* by William Bolcom, based on poems by William Blake, with the Minnesota Chorale and VocalEssence and conducted by Brunelle.
- The choir performs *BLOOM* by Rufus Wainwright, with dancers from Stephen Petronio Company.
- The choir performs in concert with Robert Robinson and the Twin Cities Community Gospel Choir.
- Choir members perform in Puccini’s *La bohème* with the Minnesota Orchestra.

2008

- Tanya Mayer is hired as part-time office coordinator. She serves until 2014.
- The Minnesota Boychoir gets a new logo; the uniform for the younger choirs changes to black polo-style shirts with the new logo sewn in below the collar on the upper-left front of the shirt, black dress pants, and black belts. High school members wear black dress shirts with ties—the color chosen by the young men each year—and black dress pants with black belts.
- With the Minnesota Orchestra led by Osmo Vänskä, Minnesota Chorale, and The Basilica of Saint Mary Cathedral Choir and Cathedral Choristers, the choir performs and records Stephen Paulus *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, an oratorio commissioned to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, sung in English, Hebrew, and German.
- The choir tours California.

2009

- Concert Choir and Junior Chorus combine to form Cantar, a single training choir for younger vocalists.
- The choir performs the Leonard Bernstein *MASS* with the Minnesota Orchestra.
- The choir tours Alaska.

2010

- The choir tours Oregon.

2011

- The choir tours Milan, Venice, Florence, and Rome and sings at a Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.
- The choir premieres *Where Beauty Comes From* by commissioned composer C. Timothy Takach and poet Julia Klatt Singer.

2012

- A second training choir, Cantando, is formed, bringing the number of Minnesota Boychoir choirs back to four.
- The choir celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, culminating with solo performances at Orchestral Hall and the Minnesota State Capitol.

2013

- The choir tours Texas.
- Singers participate in the recording of *Taloowa' Chipota* (Children's Songs) by Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate for the American Composers Forum.
- Paul Pfeiffer passes away.
- Nationally, CD sales begin to decline; vinyl records start to come back.

2014

- Anna Keyes is hired as the first full-time managing director of the choir.
- The choir tours Colorado.
- The Minnesota Orchestra wins a Grammy for best orchestral performance.

2015

- The choir tours North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

2016

- Phillip Radtke, Minnesota Boychoir alum, is hired as assistant to the artistic director and music theory teacher.
- The choir tours Kansas City, Missouri.
- Bob Dylan wins the Nobel Prize in Literature.

2017

- The choir performs *Carmina Burana* with University of Minnesota Chamber Singers and Minnesota Dance Theater.
- The choir tours Monaco, France, and Spain, singing at Santa Maria de Montserrat Abbey and La Sagrada Família in Barcelona to celebrate its fifty-fifth anniversary.

2018

- The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra wins a Grammy for best chamber music/small ensemble performance.
- The choir tours Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

2019

- Amy Driscoll is hired as the first choir development manager.
- The choir tours New Mexico and Arizona.
- Boychoir Bootcamp is founded, replacing Sing Minnesota summer camp.

2020

- The choir tour to Michigan is canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The pandemic spreads throughout the world. The choir stops all in-person rehearsals and performances and operates remotely until resuming in-person rehearsals and music education sessions, fully masked and in small groups, in September 2021.
- The Minnesota Boychoir oral history project is recorded.

2021

- Gramophone names Minnesota Orchestra the Orchestra of the Year.
- No tour is scheduled for 2021.

2022

- The choir participates in Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* ("Symphony of a Thousand")—the final concert of Maestro Vänskä's tenure as music director of the Minnesota Orchestra.
- The choir celebrates its sixtieth anniversary with a performance at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis.
- Membership in 2022 stands at 105 after COVID.
- The choir resumes touring with summer concerts in Ireland. In all, the choir has visited nineteen states and Washington, DC, fourteen countries, and five continents.
- The choir maintains its collection of thirty-one CD and vinyl recordings of its performances.

NOTES

Over the years, Minnesota Boychoir performed many of these works multiple times, as well as hundreds of others. Not all works are listed in this timeline. We provided only a brief selection of music here.

Timeline sources on file with the Minnesota Boychoir.