



Giving Voice Toolkit

giving voice initiative

Giving Voice Initiative (GVI) fosters the creation and operation of independent choruses that bring joy, well-being, purpose and community understanding to people with Alzheimer's and their care partners. Hosting a Giving Voice Chorus in your community will bring renewed purpose, learning, friendships, and happiness to people living with Alzheimer's disease. It will change the attitudes of care partners, family members, friends, and community members, bringing people with dementia out of the shadows through shared music making.

“Hosting” a chorus means assessing your lead organization’s capacity and then planning and operating a chorus. A successful host is committed to delivering a high-quality choral program that inspires participants to experience their full potential, have fun, socialize, and engage with the community through public performances. GVI is a resource for your chorus, but your organization is in charge.

Take Advantage of Our Tools

In the Giving Voice toolkit we answer these questions:

- Who should host a Giving Voice Chorus?
- What’s involved in planning a chorus?
- What’s special about the Giving Voice experience?
- What’s involved in operating a chorus?
- How much will it cost and who will pay for it?

Our toolkit is based on real-life experiences.

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Initial Assessment & Planning

Is Starting a Chorus Feasible?

People who experience a Giving Voice Chorus concert or rehearsal often imagine starting a chorus in their own community. Is your community ready to develop and sustain such a chorus? If so, what organization is best equipped to host it? In this toolkit section, we identify planning considerations specific to our program. You may want to consult other free resources (<http://managementhelp.org/misc/np-program-dev-approaches.pdf>, http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_START_IsItFeasible_Art.htm) to learn more about feasibility assessments and program planning in general.

What's in a name?

“Giving Voice Chorus” is a registered trademark of Giving Voice Initiative, the nonprofit corporation. At present, Giving Voice Initiative is not authorizing other organizations to use the phrase “Giving Voice Chorus” in association with the names of their choruses.

Get the Right People on Board

If you've heard the expression about getting “the right people on the bus,” then you know this step must come before you figure out where to drive the bus. In other words, “first who, then what.” Typically, a few passionate people decide how feasible it is to start a chorus and more people join in along the way.

TIP

Be selective. Involve people who are deeply committed to building a high-quality and effective chorus program that brings joy, well-being, purpose and community understanding to people with dementia and their care partners.

Measure Community Need

Demographic data tell us that until there is a substantial breakthrough in the prevention or treatment of Alzheimer's disease, we will see a steady increase in the number of people living with dementia over the next 30 years. At Giving Voice, we've seen that many people with dementia, as well as their care partners and family members, yearn for opportunities to engage socially, have fun together, and contribute to their communities. The interest in a dementia-friendly chorus program could likely flourish in every community.

Nonetheless, circumstances particular to your community may make it more difficult—and perhaps not feasible—to develop and sustain a chorus. For example, existing programs may already provide adequate creative outlets. Or cultural biases may make it so difficult for people with dementia to be open about their disease that the community won't be ready to build a program.

We have found that we usually need at least 25 singers to create the right environment for a satisfying musical experience and good opportunities for socializing. We strongly recommend that each prospective host organization conduct a realistic, information-based assessment (http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_START_IsItFeasible_Art.htm) of the need for a local chorus. The process need not be complex or expensive,

but it should rely on input from multiple and diverse sources to provide an accurate gauge of local interest. It might be as simple as talking with leaders of local institutions, such as churches, senior centers, care partner support groups, adult day centers, aging consortiums, and Meals On Wheels programs, that have relationships with people with Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Identify the Right Host Organization

Okay, you've determined there is a lot of interest in a new chorus, so it's time to identify the organization that will "own" and operate the program. Since our launch of the first Giving Voice Chorus in 2014, we've learned a lot, including:

- **Use an established 501(c)(3) organization.** Having an established 501(c)(3) organization host the chorus will often mean the chorus program can start up more quickly and foster sustainability from the get-go. Its 501(c)(3) status allows the organization to receive tax deductible contributions and foundation grants, and it likely has accounting systems, a track record, relationships in your community, and maybe some funds to get things started.
- **Resist the temptation to use a residential care facility.** One essential objective of a Giving Voice Chorus is to provide realistic and positive opportunities for people with dementia to socialize comfortably with others. In our experience, people with dementia who live in their own homes don't have as many social opportunities as do residents of senior housing developments, assisted living facilities, and memory care residences. To reach people living outside of care facilities, we recommend that the host organization be an Alzheimer's Association, a community arts or music organization, a church, a senior center, a YMCA, or an aging or caregiver support organization (e.g., senior services, home health care, health/wellness organizations), or another type of non-residential community-based organization.
- **Commit to being inclusive.** The first Giving Voice Choruses have succeeded by understanding, honoring, and embracing all people, regardless of their abilities, their differences, their backgrounds, or their present circumstances. The host organization should reflect this attitude and be committed to nurturing it. The intent is to welcome and embrace persons early in the disease process and as long as they are able to participate.
- **Be open to collaboration.** The success of our chorus has been possible only with the assistance of numerous collaborators that have provided facilities, music and Alzheimer's expertise, access to singers and volunteers, research capabilities, and much more. The host organization should be open to collaborating with partners that build strength and sustainability.
- **Have a diverse leadership team.** Successful development and operation of a chorus requires active involvement by people from areas such as aging, health care, music, dementia, caregiving, and community engagement. Include members of multiple ethnic and cultural communities on the lead team to get essential perspectives about dementia and people touched by it.

Finding the right host organization is critical to long-term success. It can be a challenge, so we urge you to take the time to find a great host, not just an adequate host. The toolkit and other information on this site provide a solid understanding of both the work and the rewards of being a host organization.

Evaluate Available Resources

As you'd expect, planning and operating a chorus requires resources like funding and dedicated volunteers to lead the assessment and planning process, a qualified music director and accompanist, an administrative infrastructure, access to people in early and mid stage dementia and their care partners, and more volunteers to both sing and assist with rehearsal and concert logistics. You also need access to expertise about dementia and music, a place to rehearse every week, a place to perform, and financial support.

A realistic review of potential funders, volunteers, and in-kind donors is a key element of the feasibility assessment. Selecting a host organization that can readily provide operating dollars will give you a head start. In the early stages, you will most likely rely on donated services, supplies, equipment, and facilities. Over the long term, however, plan to pay for a growing portion of the personnel, facilities, and other operating costs of the program. Sample budgets provided in the Finances section of this toolkit will help you anticipate future budget needs.

Planning the Chorus Program

When you've identified the right host organization and completed the assessment process with confidence, it's time to plan the program in detail. You have already identified what resources are needed and where they might be found. But for internal management purposes, as well as fundraising and external communications, you will want to have a written business plan.

The plan should address the following:

- What are our objectives?
- How will we inspire and recruit persons with dementia to sing?
- Who has ultimate responsibility for the program?
- What geographic area do we serve?
- What personnel—paid or volunteer—will be required?
- What does the revenue and expense statement look like?
- How will we pay for the program?
- Where will we conduct the program?
- Who will handle the accounting and other administrative aspects of the program?
- How will we communicate with singers, volunteers, donors and potential donors, the media, and the general public?

There is a wealth of online information about nonprofit business planning, including this resource from the Council of Nonprofits. The remaining toolkit information is designed to help you plan key program components, particularly those unique to a chorus for people with dementia and their care partners.

FAQ

Can we use the words “Giving Voice” in the name of our chorus?

- “Giving Voice Chorus” is a registered trademark of GVI. At this time, GVI has no process in place for licensing the trademark for use by others.

How many singers must we have to move forward with starting a chorus?

- There is no magic number of voices required for a chorus. It’s important that the participants enjoy the rehearsals and concerts and they feel good about what they are creating. Don’t forget that in addition to singers with dementia and their care partners, singing volunteers are also an important part of every chorus. We recommend that you try for at least 25 singers including volunteers, care givers, and individuals with dementia. If the chorus is too small, the participants will feel too exposed in singing their parts.

What things should we consider if we want our local assisted living or nursing home to be the host organization for the chorus rehearsals and concerts?

- GVI’s priority is to meet the needs of people with Alzheimer’s who live in the community, outside of care facilities, because they generally have fewer opportunities to socialize and be creative. Please review the Toolkit’s Initial Assessment and Planning section carefully. You may determine that the nursing home is the best available host organization and offers the best available facilities.

Is GVI available to advise us as we plan our chorus? Is there a way for us to communicate with other choruses like ours, to share experiences and exchange ideas?

- Currently, GVI does not have the staff to provide consulting or advisory services to startup choruses. We developed the Toolkit to provide useful information and extend its reach via this website. Please use the Forum to exchange questions and ideas with others (<http://givingvoice.wordpress.com/start-a-chorus/faq/ask-a-question/>).

The Choral Experience

What Makes the Giving Voice Choral Experience Work?

A chorus for people with Alzheimer's and their care partners will thrive only when the singers have a great experience. Achieving this requires the right "spirit", the right facility, a talented music director, songs that connect with the singers, and a little bit of know-how.

Philosophy

Giving Voice Chorus uses the irrepressible power of singing to move people with Alzheimer's and their care partners to rediscover themselves, make new friends, laugh together, learn together, and create something unique together. In the process, the singers and their communities develop a new understanding of what life with Alzheimer's can be. Singing in the chorus is a meaningful way to engage in community life, not simply a way to occupy time.

The quality and content of the singers' experience—for the singers with dementia, the care partners, and the volunteers—are fundamental to the success of the program. For all singers, regardless of their experience or ability, Giving Voice offers a first-rate artistic process led by skilled teaching artists in an attractive and accessible music venue. Building a successful chorus program requires hard work, respect for people with dementia and their abilities, enthusiasm for collaboration, adaptability, and a deep commitment to providing a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment for all.

People with dementia are often marginalized and nearly invisible after a diagnosis. GVI's priority is to engage and embrace people with Alzheimer's who live in the community, outside of care facilities, because they generally have fewer opportunities to socialize and contribute. Similarly, their care partners often feel more isolated and alone. While many people living in care facilities could also benefit from participating in a chorus, we have chosen to direct our limited resources to where we see the greatest need.

We stand by these principles and believe they can be your guide as you build a chorus for your community.

FAQs

Why does Giving Voice choose to focus on chorus members with dementia who live in private homes?

GVI's priority is to meet the needs of people with Alzheimer's who live in the community, outside of care facilities, because they generally have fewer opportunities to socialize and be creative. Similarly, their care partners often feel isolated and alone. GVI is directing its limited resources to where it believes the greatest need exists.

How is this different than music therapy?

A Giving Voice chorus is not a music therapy program. Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-

based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

How is this different than a sing-along?

A Giving Voice chorus offers a unique depth of learning and participation. Sing-alongs use well-known songs and the participants sing only the melody. A Giving Voice chorus involves both experiential and sequential learning. Most of the songs are in SAB parts. And, like sing-alongs, fun is a big part of a Giving Voice chorus!

Facilities

At GVI, we believe that using a high-quality facility for chorus rehearsals and performance sends a strong message—to singers, care partners, families, friends, and the community at large—that the chorus is valued and respected and should experience the same environment as other quality artists.

Rehearsal Space

Look for these features in a quality rehearsal space:



- **Comfortable environment.** The facility should have a good “feel” to it. Consider whether a space designed for music rehearsal and performance might be available, or maybe a church sanctuary or school auditorium. We have observed that many people with dementia and their care partners are somewhat reluctant to attend a rehearsal at a long-term or memory care facility.
- **Transportation access.** The rehearsal facility should have convenient access for the participants, including public transportation options. Make sure there is adequate safe parking, and if necessary, room for pick-up and drop-off near the door by cars, vans or shuttles.
- **Facility size.** The space should be an appropriate size for the number of participants. If the space is too big, the chorus loses its intimacy and choral members won’t feel secure in the setting.
- **Good acoustics.** Look for a school concert hall, church sanctuary, or other space where live unamplified music is frequently performed. In spaces like a school gymnasium, it will be very difficult for the singers to hear the director and each other because the sound will reverberate and become muddy. Spaces like a carpeted banquet room will be lifeless and make it difficult for the singers to blend their sound.
- **Piano.** A good quality in-tune piano is essential.
- **Quality sound system.** The music director will often need a microphone (preferably wireless) and a quality sound system so singers can easily hear directions during rehearsal.
- **Lighting.** Singers and the director will need good lighting to read their music.
- **Interior access.** The facility should be ADA-compliant for those participants with impaired mobility or wheelchairs. Have plenty of open space in the rehearsal area so singers using walkers, canes, or wheelchairs can easily navigate the area.
- **Restrooms.** Restrooms should be close to the rehearsal area, well marked, and easily accessible.
- **Stage setup.** Each singer will need a chair and sufficient room to walk and stand in front of the chair. If risers are used, be sure they are wide enough to accommodate the chairs and any mobility devices and have room for a person to walk across the riser while other singers are seated or standing.

- **Social space.** Space for social time before and after the rehearsal should include an area where snacks and beverages may be served. Some seating should be available.
- **Climate control.** Older singers and singers with dementia may be less able to adapt to spaces that have poor heating, cooling or lighting.
- **Access to facility manager.** A person who is very familiar with the facility should be on site and available during rehearsals.
- **Music director.** The music director will likely need a sturdy music stand and may want to conduct from a low platform or “podium.”

Performance Space

Ideally, the chorus will hold public performances at the rehearsal facility. Performing in a different venue requires the singers to become acquainted with the new place, both acoustically and logistically, and disrupts their transportation routine.

In any event, the performance venue should meet all the criteria for a quality rehearsal facility, and have these additional features:

- Adequate parking, seating, restrooms, and overall accessibility for audience and choral members
- Space for a ticket table
- Space for a post-concert reception
- Offstage preparation area (“green room”) that can be locked during the performance so singers’ personal belongings can be stored securely

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are where most of the Giving Voice “magic” takes place, where singers and their care partners experience joy, social interaction, and the satisfaction of working toward a goal.

Structure

During the fall and spring sessions, our chorus rehearses two hours weekly for about 14 weeks at the same location and time on a set day of the week. The summer session includes eight weeks of rehearsal and an informal concert in week nine for family and friends.

Before Rehearsal

Each rehearsal is scheduled for a total of 2 hours, with 20-30 minutes of social time before and after the working rehearsal. The staff or volunteers greet everyone warmly upon their arrival, making sure the participants have their notebooks. (Keep extra notebooks on hand.) During social time, singers talk with other chorus members and volunteers while enjoying snacks and beverages. The sound of a soft gong or tambourine signals that social time is over and the rehearsal is beginning. Volunteer singers are assigned to singers with dementia and help them manage their printed music, follow instructions, and generally help make sure the rehearsal runs smoothly.

Typical Rehearsal Schedule

All times are approximate

- Opening ritual song and warm-up (5 minutes)
- Work repertoire (40 minutes)
- “Move & Groove” stretch break (5 minutes)
- “Music & Me” (5 minutes)
- Announcements (5 minutes)
- Closing ritual song (2 minutes)

Content

As with any choral group, regularity and structure help singers come together as an ensemble and learn the repertoire. Unlike in a sing-a-long or drop-in choir program, the music director and singers work over the course of many weeks to learn and prepare a program for public performance.

After about 45 minutes, the singers take a ten-minute break in place or “Move & Groove.” Walk-around breaks tend to be disruptive and time-consuming. The music director leads the group in basic stretches and fun movement as the pianist plays a medley of chosen music that is seasonal or topical tunes (for example, Elvis songs during his birthday month in January or Irish songs in March). Announcements follow the stretching, and then a pair of singers (care partner and person with Alzheimer’s) offer their “Music & Me” stories illustrating how music has affected their lives.

The rehearsal ends with a closing song, typically the same song each week. Our chorus has enjoyed closing each rehearsal with “Happy Trails.”

Rehearsal Planning

- Establish objectives for the session (e.g. musical growth, social interaction, singer confidence)
- Select a familiar ritual opening and closing songs
- Plan call and response warm-ups
- Identify some songs or exercises that will help you assess singers' abilities
- Identify short vocal exercises targeting anticipated challenge areas in rehearsal music
- Select instrumental music for "Move & Groove"

Tips from the Music Director

Retaining information from week to week can be a challenge for singers with dementia, but don't underestimate their abilities! The following techniques have helped Giving Voice singers retain rehearsal information and improve from week to week over the course of an entire 14-week session:

- Rehearse 4-6 songs each week as the chorus is learning
- Sing through the songs after working on specific sections
- Anticipate the passages where singers will be challenged, and work on those challenges from the beginning
- Make sure the music director's instructions are consistent from week to week
- Use a microphone so you can easily be heard. A headset mike will leave both hands free.
- Establish a system of visual and physical cues that your singers clearly understand to remain focused on the music director
- Establish an adaptive conducting style (e.g., with index fingers point the rhythmic syllabic division) and use of some exaggerated facial features
- Identify one or two main ideas that the singers can associate with each song (e.g., rhythm, the story, or dynamics) and reinforce them each week
- Encourage the use of practice CDs
- Select repertoire so at least 80% is songs that are already familiar to most of the singers

TIP
Consider what mode of learning is most appropriate for each piece. For example, a gospel piece might be best learned by ear, rather than using printed music. Be flexible!

Socializing

The opportunity for singers to socialize informally before and after rehearsals is essential to the full chorus experience. For many singers, this will be their only social time of the week, and they value it dearly.

Volunteers plan, procure, and serve refreshments served during social time.

We have found that singers with Alzheimer’s also enjoy socially appropriate physical touch—shaking hands, welcoming hugs, holding an arm for support, or a pat on the back for a job well done—things that are often lost in the isolation of dementia.

Three Stages of Chorus Development

The experience of the Minneapolis Giving Voice Chorus has been that during each 14- or 8-week session, the group evolves in three phases between the first rehearsal and the final performance

Stage 1: The singers are becoming familiar with new music, new members, and for some, a new environment. Singers need patience with each other and the music director needs flexibility and adaptability in teaching the music and maintaining a joyful atmosphere at rehearsals. Careful planning by the music director ensures a smooth rehearsal.

Stage 2: After a few weeks of rehearsal, the singers understand their musical parts. The routine of the social hour, opening song, warm-ups, singing, stretching, and the ending song are now familiar. Personal relationships are formed among singers, volunteers, and music director. Rehearsals become more relaxed as the singers begin to master songs and become accustomed to the routine.

Stage 3: Once the music is familiar, the rehearsals focus on the scheduled performance. The singers understand the balance of their parts and listen to each other, mastering the dynamics of the song. Repertoire for the next week’s rehearsal is announced so singers can practice at home. The last rehearsal before a community performance is the dress rehearsal. Songs are performed in order and are introduced by the singers.

FAQs

How do you maintain a calm, structured environment during rehearsals?

- Everyone understands the challenges singers are facing. Volunteers help singers keep track of their music books, follow the music director’s instructions, find their way to the restrooms, and generally keep things moving smoothly. The rehearsal environment is flexible, inclusive, and focused on the music, so singers can relax and simply enjoy singing.

Do rehearsals feel like “Groundhog Day,” with the chorus having to re-learn everything each week?

- Like a rehearsal with any chorus, there is some repetition from week to week, but there is also a learning process that occurs over the entire span of weeks. Most singers practice at home during the week to retain what they have learned and to be prepared.

Performances

Public performances by the chorus (for Giving Voice, it's after each 14-week or 8-week summer session) are important to the choral experience. First, they provide a goal and purpose for the chorus members. Second, they vividly demonstrate to family members, friends, and other audience members that many people with Alzheimer's can experience a sense of joy, community, and accomplishment that they never thought possible.

Preparation

Preparing for any performance requires planning and attention to detail. Don't forget these important steps:

- Determine if tickets are required for the performance
- Market the concert
- Draw the stage set-up for singers, accompanist, music director, and additional musicians
- Distribute a map of the performance site with easy-to-follow driving instructions
- Arrange for any additional musicians who will be needed
- Arrange for risers and/or acoustic shell, if needed
- Arrange for green room refreshments
- Ensure singers have access to restrooms
- Plan for facility cleanup
- Line up volunteers to assist singers and with the set-up of the performance
- Set up an informational table

Performance Day

On the day of the performance, the singers typically gather for a rehearsal one hour before the performance to get ready for the performance. Allow 30 minutes after the rehearsal to rest and regroup. At Giving Voice, morning or afternoon concert times generally work best because the singers are often fatigued by evening. Concerts are typically less than 75 minutes long, with no intermission. Schedules should be clearly communicated in writing to all singers and any ancillary musicians.

Location

Ideally, the public performance is held at the rehearsal facility. Performing in a different venue requires that the singers become acquainted with the new place, both acoustically and logistically, and disrupts the transportation routine established for rehearsals over the preceding months.

Reserve the space well in advance and inform singers of the performance date at the first rehearsal including information about directions, parking, performance attire, and refreshments.

See Facilities for more details regarding the performance space.

Format

At Giving Voice Chorus, our performances are seriously prepared, yet are in an informal, family-friendly format. A different pair of singers typically introduces each song and tells a bit about the roles of music and Alzheimer's in their lives. These introductions give voice to stories that underscore the humanity of the singers and make the performance unlike any other choral concert.

Attire

We recommend that singers follow a “dress code” for performances. Our chorus members wear black bottoms, white tops, and purple scarves around their necks.

Printed Programs

Printed programs for audience members are not only a helpful guide to the musical performance, but also provide a place to identify the chorus members, accompanist, and any other participating musicians; recognize volunteers, donors, and sponsors; invite contributions to support the chorus program; and inform potential new members about how to learn more about the chorus.

Reception

The Giving Voice performance experience includes an opportunity for singers to socialize with their families and friends at the concert venue immediately after the performance. The exchanges reinforce the value of the work each chorus member is doing and help change the stigma associated with dementia. Volunteers are responsible for providing or obtaining donations of non-alcoholic drinks, cookies or other snacks, cups, plates, and napkins, and also take care of set-up and cleanup. Each audience member leaves as a potential advocate for celebrating the potential of music to change the lives of those on the journey of Alzheimer's or other dementias.

FAQs

Why does GVI host a performance of the chorus at the conclusion of each session?

- The performance gives the participants a venue to demonstrate their achievement and joy to family members and the community at large.

Does GVI use outside musicians in the performance?

- GVI has enhanced the performance experience by hiring outside musicians to accompany the chorus. The outside musicians are optional and have included violin, guitar, drums, and mandolin.

Repertoire

Selection

The singers play a major role in the repertoire selection process. Research has shown that people usually are most emotionally attached to the music they heard between the ages of 12 and 25, and this rings true with the songs most often requested by our singers. Younger music directors will need to become familiar with music of the relevant time period and be open to suggestions from the singers. Music directors should know and become familiar with a wide range of music styles and genres. Establishing a theme for each performance (for example, “Friends & Family,” “An American Sampler,” or “Peace, Love, Joy”) will provide some structure to the program.

In addition to the factors that would guide the selection of repertoire for a typical chorus, the music director will want to consider these factors in choosing songs for a chorus that welcomes people with dementia:

- Familiarity of the song. A familiar song will be easier to learn; an unfamiliar song will challenge and inspire the singers
- Availability in desired vocal parts (typically three or fewer parts)
- Appropriate difficulty level
- Ease in adapting to meet singers’ needs (for example, transposing to a lower key or simplifying harmonies)

TIP

Try to have at least 80% of the repertoire be familiar to most of the singers. The performance repertoire is usually 8-10 songs. Each rehearsal session covers 4-6 songs during the learning phase.

Knowing how much and how often to challenge the chorus is one key skill of a successful music director. As the chorus rehearses, certain pieces may be too difficult or not work well for some other reason. In these cases, it may be necessary to delete or add pieces to the repertoire. Some singers may find it difficult to adapt, so keep changes to a minimum and try to take care of all repertoire changes within the first week of rehearsals.

Suggested music

Songs that have been popular with the Minneapolis Giving Voice Choruses are listed at right. Some arrangements were modified to make them more singer-friendly. Sheet music is available online, including a wide selection of music (http://www0.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page) you can download free of charge.

Sample Song List

“I Love the Mountains”	Traditional round
“Down by the Riverside” arr. Barham	Spiritual
“How Can I Keep From Singing” arr. Althouse	Traditional hymn
“Take Me Home Country Roads” Denver, arr. Lojeski	Popular song
“Home on the Range”	Western folk song
“Lida Rose” from The Music Man Wilson	Barbershop quartet
“Walk in the Light” arr. Thomas	Gospel hymn
“This Little Light of Mine”	Traditional spiritual
“Sunrise, Sunset” from Fiddler on the Roof Harrick and Bock, arr. Barnett	American musical
“Ma’Oz Tsur” (“Rock of Ages”) Hebrew lyrics by Mordechai English lyrics by Azstrow & Gottheil	Hebrew folk song
“Stand By Me” Leiber & Stoller, arr. King	Popular song
“Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’” from Oklahoma! Rogers & Hammerstein	American musical
“Happy Trails” Evans, Evans, & Rogers	Western folk song

Arrangements

The right mix of simple and more complex arrangements challenges the singers to reach their potential without frustrating or tiring them. Our chorus has had fun with rounds and partner songs. Simple movements can serve as memory triggers and add total body engagement. Two-part harmonies are easiest to teach, but published arrangements are not always voiced for adult men and women. When challenged to learn three-part songs (SAB), our chorus has had remarkable success. Some editing, transposing, shortening, or adaptation of an arrangement will often be necessary to fit the particular needs and skills of the chorus.

Music and Lyric Preparation

Copyright rules generally require that the chorus purchase one octavo score for each singer. It may be necessary to buy or prepare large-print versions for some singers.

Some singers will benefit from a lyrics-only version of the sheet music. Others might prefer printed music showing only their part (S, A, or B) rather than all the parts.

Music Notebooks

Each singer receives a personalized three-ring notebook of sheet music in the format that works best for that singer. The notebooks include the complete version (music and lyrics—all parts) of each song and a lyrics-only version, each marked with corresponding measure numbers, and any other specially adapted version prepared for the singer. A song index is in the front of the notebook and colored numbered tabs separate the songs. Singers take their notebooks home to practice during the week between rehearsals. *See Music/Lyric sheet example, right page.*

Practice CDs

Part-specific practice CDs can be an extremely helpful learning tool for singers. Under the direction of the music director, a male singer, a female singer and accompanist record each song and prepare separate versions emphasizing each SAB part. Each singer receives a copy appropriate for his or her section and uses it to learn and sing along at home.

Copyright

Copying sheet music, and performing or recording music of any kind composed by another person, raise questions about copyright laws. While some traditional tunes and older classical music are in the public domain and are available for use without permission, copying the printed (paper or electronic) versions or recordings of that same music usually requires permission of the copyright owner. Additional information about music copyright is available on the MTNA Copyright Guidelines for Music Teachers website (<http://www.mtna.org/member-resources/copyright-information/copyright-faqs/>). The Choral Public Domain Library (http://www0.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page) includes an extensive collection of choral works that are not subject to copyright restrictions and are available for free.

America the Beautiful

Stanley F. Smith

A Oh beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!

B America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.

Etc.

The musical score is presented in a standard format with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs). The score is divided into two main sections, A and B, with a repeat sign at the end of section B. Section A begins at measure 12 and ends at measure 17. Section B begins at measure 18 and ends at measure 21. The lyrics are placed below the vocal line, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the vocal line. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *parts* and *18* at the beginning of the second system.

Care Partners

Providing a positive and joyful experience that people with Alzheimer's and their care partners can enjoy together is a key objective of the Giving Voice program. A care partner must accompany each singer with dementia. This person is also responsible for transporting the singer to and from rehearsals and concerts. Each care partner participates in the chorus as a singer. When possible, the singer with dementia will be assigned a volunteer who assists the singer during rehearsals and concerts so the care partner may simply enjoy the chorus experience.

The care partner may or may not be the one providing daily living support to the person with Alzheimer's. In our chorus, care partners include spouses, friends, adult children or grandchildren, sisters or brothers, and any person whom the person living with dementia trusts and feels secure with.

Singer Feedback

Consider having a "listening session" involving the singers and volunteers one week after the performance, at the regular rehearsal time, to review their experiences and collect input about the program's strengths and how it might be improved.

There's room for improvement in every chorus, and having the singers participate in the improvement process will yield lots of good ideas and allow the singers to have more "ownership" of the program. The Minneapolis Giving Voice Chorus has held a 90-minute listening session, led by its co-executive directors, at the end of each of its sessions. Singers have provided input on a variety of topics, including:

- Physical set-up (risers, positioning of singers, acoustics)
- Role of volunteers
- Marketing concerts
- Attracting and retaining volunteers
- Surprises, good and bad
- Music learning aids and techniques
- Concert attire
- Number and length of performances
- Repertoire selection

Receiving input is of course only the first step in the improvement process. The input needs to be shared with the appropriate decision makers and carefully considered. Changes based on the input should be reported back to the singers, and in some cases it may be helpful to explain why the feedback did not result in a change. Comparing notes with other choruses may also be helpful.

Program Administration

What's Involved in Day-to-Day Operations of the Chorus?

In this toolkit section, learn a bit about how we operate the Twin Cities Giving Voice Chorus programs with MacPhail Center for Music, from staffing to promoting to finances and more.

Staffing

The responsibilities of the musical and administrative staff of the chorus generally fall into four functional areas: Music director, Accompanist (pianist), Program administrator and/or Administrative assistant, and Volunteer coordinator.

You might decide to divide up the responsibilities among more or fewer people, but the list of responsibilities stays the same.

A variety of less demanding roles can be filled by more casual volunteers. These include volunteer singers, providers of refreshments, concert volunteers and others.

POSITION	PAID OR VOLUNTEER POSITION
Music Director	Paid preferred
Accompanist	Paid preferred
Program Administrator	Paid or volunteer
Administrative Assistant	Paid or volunteer
Volunteer Coordinator	Volunteer

Music Director

Selecting the right music director is critical to the success of the chorus. Because of the importance of this position and the substantial investment of time and expertise required, we strongly recommend that the music director be paid for this work.

The music director's responsibilities include the following:

- Selecting the repertoire in consultation with singers and others, and planning public performances
- Planning and conducting all weekly rehearsals, additional rehearsals as needed, and all performances
- Obtaining all printed music and arranging and adapting it as needed
- Working closely with the accompanist
- Arranging for any supplemental musicians
- Overseeing the production of master recordings of program repertoire for practice CDs (S, A, and B versions)
- Working with the accompanist, chorus administrative personnel and host organization leadership

The music director's experience and skills should generally include the following:

- An undergraduate degree in music or music education
- Knowledge of choral repertoire in a wide variety of styles and genres
- At least five years of choral conducting experience, including experience working in community choral settings
- Excellent choral conducting skills
- Ability to be organized and efficient, and to attend to detail

These attributes are also extremely important:

- Patience
- Willingness to adapt
- A sense of humor
- A clear understanding of and commitment to the mission of the chorus, and a clear sense of the right balance between the artistic and wellness objectives of the chorus program
- Experience working with older singers, and a familiarity with dementia and its varied effects on behavior and communication
- Ability to establish a rapport with the singers, resulting in mutual respect
- A genuine interest in the individual circumstances of the singers
- Ability to challenge the singers to reach their full potential, but not overwhelm them
- An effective working relationship with the accompanist
- Willingness to adapt his or her conducting style and techniques to suit the needs of this chorus
- Receptiveness to new or different ideas about how best to meet the needs of the chorus

Accompanist

Typically, the accompanist will be a pianist. The accompanist's primary responsibilities are as follows:

- Accompanying the chorus in all weekly rehearsals, additional rehearsals as needed, and all performances
- Working with the music director in selecting repertoire
- Participating in the planning and recording of practice CDs for the singers

The accompanist should have these standard skills:

- Excellent piano and musical skills
- Knowledge of choral repertoire and a wide variety of styles and genres
- At least five years of piano accompaniment work with choral groups, including experience in community choral settings
- Ideally, the ability to transpose music in real time

In addition, the accompanist should share many of the attributes required of the music director, including an understanding of and commitment to the mission of the chorus, and the patience, flexibility, and sense of humor that are required for successful rehearsals and performances.

Program Administrator and/or an Assistant

The responsibilities of the program administrator role include the following:

- Developing chorus calendars for each multi-week session
- Administering the chorus enrollment process and logistics
- Securing rehearsal facilities and all necessary equipment
- Managing all business and financial affairs of the chorus program
- Ensuring compliance with all applicable copyright laws
- Developing and executing all communications strategies and obtaining necessary releases from program participants
- Maintaining a current roster of all singers and volunteers with complete contact information
- Determining performance attire and obtaining any required materials
- Creating and assembling participant notebooks with music, lyric sheets, name tags, calendars, etc.
- Handling all communications with singers and volunteers
- Maintaining current media and photography permission lists
- Developing and distributing informational handouts for participants (e.g. performance information, maps to performance location, etc.)

Volunteer Coordinator

The responsibilities of the volunteer coordinator role include the following:

- Recruiting and training volunteer singers and operations volunteers
- Assigning volunteers to singers with dementia and to other roles
- Developing and communicating job descriptions for volunteer roles
- Maintaining volunteer contact information
- Coordinating the work of all volunteers, including facilitating snacks and beverages for social events

Registration & Outreach

Registration

Before registering singers for the chorus, know what the rehearsal space can accommodate and set a chorus size limit. Knowing the number of participants will help you know how many music binders to prepare, how many volunteers to recruit, and what to forecast for operational expenses. Also determine a modest participation fee. We have seen that a modest fee encourages full engagement and discourages thinking of the chorus as a “drop-in” activity or charity-type program.

Start the registration process one to three months before you expect rehearsals to begin. During the registration process, collect each person’s name, address, emergency contact, email, and phone number. Consider confidentiality guidelines for safeguarding this information. Also have the participants complete the media and photo release form. An example of a media and photo release form is located at right.

TIP

We have found it helpful to take payment via credit card, which allows participants to call and register via the phone, or when possible, via the Internet.

Chorus Outreach/Promotion

Attracting singers is one measure of chorus success. Another is engaging the community in the unique relationship between music and memory loss, which can change the stigma of Alzheimer’s disease.

Promotion of the chorus focuses on the joy and well-being experienced by chorus members living with Alzheimer’s and their care partners and their meaningful engagement in community life. Examples of outreach include:

- Using e-mail and social media platforms to raise awareness, share impact stories, and communicate about events and performances
- Creating a chorus Facebook page that provides updates to chorus members and their families and invites interaction among the chorus and the general public
- Documenting chorus stories for media, which spreads the program’s reach and impact
- Using other social media platforms to increase awareness and invite support

The host organization for the chorus should make the program known to its local Alzheimer’s Association and other dementia and aging-related service organizations.



MEDIA RELEASE FORM

I give _____ permission to publish in print, electronic or video
(name of organization)
format my likeness or image, in any medium now known or hereafter developed, but
only in connection with activities and promotion of _____
(name of chorus)

I release all claims against _____ with respect to
(name of organization)
copyright ownership and publication, including any claim for compensation related to
the use of the materials.

Name: _____ *(signature)*

Name: _____ *(printed)*

Date: _____

Address: _____

Dementia-Friendly Environment

Creating a Dementia-Friendly Environment

Integrating people with progressive dementia into an artistic, learning environment is a challenge but well worth the time and effort. Designing purposeful singing and voice work that replaces frustration and confusion with structure and repetition is the hallmark of Giving Voice.

Singers in early and mid-stage Alzheimer's have varying cognitive strengths that can be accommodated. For example, in the early or mild stage of the disease, people may struggle to remember details, find words, or complete complex tasks. When engaging with people in this stage of dementia, it is important to speak directly, calmly, and slowly and keep instruction clear, simple, and positive. During this stage, people need reminders and permission to make errors and forget the small stuff.

In moderate stages of the disease, people experience deepening confusion and frustration, changes in mobility and coordination, mood swings and increasing difficulty with stress and change. People at this stage need to feel safe and supported. Allowing them to open up emotionally through music memory is a great way to ease anxiety and increase engagement and enjoyment.

Some additional tips and guidance from the Mayo Clinic and the Alzheimer's Association:

- Call people by name
- Respond with patience
- Take time to laugh
- Avoid correcting or arguing
- Focus on feelings, not facts
- Maintain eye contact
- Provide assurance
- Give visual clues – point, demonstrate, and touch (when given permission)
- Reintroduce yourself and others
- Take a break when agitation occurs

Mayo Clinic: Alzheimer's Disease Stages: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alzheimers-disease/in-depth/alzheimers-stages/art-20048448>

Tips for Successful Communication at All Stages of Alzheimer's: https://www.alz.org/national/documents/brochure_communication.pdf

Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Vulnerable Adults

It's important to remember that people with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia are particularly vulnerable to physical, emotional, financial, and other forms of abuse. In addition to ensuring that no employees or volunteers engage in abuse, a host organization may have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse of participants in the chorus program. You should consult with an attorney to find out more about your organization's responsibilities under applicable laws. Information is also available on the Alzheimer's Association's website (<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-elder-abuse.asp>).

Sharing of Personal Information

Be sure to create a safe, confidential environment for singers. Any information shared by singers during rehearsals or performances is considered confidential and should be safeguarded. The chorus is a place of trust and respect—consider a privacy policy that is communicated to all singers, staff and volunteers.

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to chorus life and operation. We use volunteers as singers, advisors, ambassadors, and for day-to-day operations.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Volunteer singers are a familiar, welcoming face as singers arrive for rehearsal each week. Each sings alongside a person with dementia, helping him or her follow the music and lyrics, taking instructional notes and ensuring everyone has an enjoyable experience during rehearsals and performances. Volunteers commit to attending all weekly rehearsals and performances.

Volunteers receive training on Alzheimer's and other dementias and dementia-friendly communication strategies.

Operations volunteers are the hosts and hostesses of the social time before and after rehearsals and concerts; they work as ticket takers, and ushers at concerts, and they assist with on-stage and backstage concert logistics of all kinds.

Volunteer ambassadors help spread the word about the chorus. They are well informed about the activities and plans of the chorus and make valuable connections in the community, generate enthusiasm, promote understanding of living well with Alzheimer's, and assist with donor cultivation.

Recruiting and Preparing Volunteers

The host organization is responsible for attracting qualified volunteers and training them to be effective in supporting the chorus program. Some organizations will already have volunteer management systems in place, although they may need to be adapted or adjusted to meet the chorus's needs. Others may be starting from scratch. Here are a few tips:

- Potential volunteers include family and friends of singers, medical students, university and church choir members, and recent retirees.
- GVI recommends that the host organization have a protocol for vetting new volunteers to ensure appropriate qualifications, specifically as they relate to interaction with chorus participants. Background checks and third-party references may be appropriate in certain situations.
- Well-prepared volunteers will be more effective and content in their roles. The job responsibilities should be clearly spelled out for each volunteer.

Your local Alzheimer's Association can be a good resource for training on effective interaction and communication with people with Alzheimer's and associated dementias. The Alzheimer's Association provides free web-based training on topics like Effective Communication Strategies and Understanding and Responding to Dementia Related Behaviors (<http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-care-training-certification.asp>).

A wealth of additional information about managing volunteers is available online:

<http://www.idealists.org/info/VolunteerMgmt>

<http://www.energizeinc.com/a-z>

<http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/volunteers>

Finances

Program Costs

You can use the Giving Voice Budget Calculator to get an idea of the types of costs a host organization can anticipate, and to estimate the budget for your chorus's first three years (http://givingvoice.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/GVI-Budget-Calculator.xls_.zip). Costs to operate a chorus can include staffing, sheet music, supplies (office and snacks), and rehearsal site rental. Each expense must be covered, whether by cash, in-kind donations, or volunteer services. Early on, you will most likely rely more heavily on donated services, supplies, equipment, and facilities. Over the long term, however, plan to pay for a growing portion of the personnel, facilities, and other operating costs of the program in order to make the program sustainable.

Program Revenue

Earned Revenue. Like many nonprofit programs, a chorus presents opportunities for both earned and contributed revenue. And like most nonprofit programs, the earned revenue portion will be relatively small. The Minneapolis Giving Voice Chorus chorus has two forms of earned revenue:

- **Registration fees.** Each chorus member with Alzheimer's or in the care partner role pays \$50 per 14-week session or \$25 per 8-week session. This fee covers some expenses without creating a significant burden for most participants. The fee can be waived in cases where it appears to be a participation barrier.
- **Ticket sales.** A reasonable charge for performance tickets not only helps provide some revenue, but also reflects the level of quality and commitment that the chorus seeks to project. (Make sure any required copyright licenses are in place). The amount will of course depend on the community and other factors. Minneapolis Giving Voice Chorus general admission concert tickets are \$12 each.

Contributed Revenue. Contributions of cash, materials, and services are essential to program success. An existing host organization will already have some systems in place for fundraising, and will need to consider how to incorporate the new chorus program into its existing messaging and procedures. Unless the host organization has a policy to the contrary, donors may designate that their gifts be used specifically for the chorus program.

In-kind contributions or loans of facilities (rehearsal and performance spaces), equipment (sound system, piano), and supplies (notebooks, CDs, sheet music, refreshments) can be very important to the program, particularly in the early months and years.

Volunteer hours will almost certainly be a major resource for the program, particularly for roles not requiring special skills. GVI strongly recommends, however, that the music director and accompanist be paid for their services.