

**It's an Honour: A History of the Alberta Youth Choir**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Music

Department of Music  
University of Alberta

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the history and evolution of the Alberta Youth Choir from its inception in 1982 through to 2018. It discusses the economic and political context in which the choir's sponsoring organization, Choir Alberta (then the Alberta Choral Directors' Association), was founded in 1972, as well as antecedent honour choir programs the Association established prior to designing the Youth Choir program. The formation and evolution of other provincial honour choir programs founded by Choir Alberta, both ongoing (Alberta Children's Choir) and discontinued (Alberta University and College Choir), will also be discussed. The factors contributing to the success or failure of these programs will be placed within the larger context of Choir Alberta's history, as well as the provincial government's changes in approach to arts funding.

Historical research methodology forms the foundation of this study. All documents constituting primary sources in relation to Choir Alberta's provincial youth choirs have been collected and reviewed, with emphasis on minutes of meetings and Annual Reports. Interviews with past and present Executive Directors and Board members of Choir Alberta have been the most invaluable of primary sources. These individuals who were instrumental to the formation, functioning and continued development of the AYC include Madge McCready, Karen Hudson, Kevin Heshedahl, and Brendan Lord.

Research findings indicate a number of factors that contributed to the creation of the Alberta Youth Choir in 1982. These include significant government support in the form of lottery monies, the formation of precursory honour choir programs including the All-Province Choir, and the influence of the Ontario Youth Choir. The suspension of the Alberta Youth Choir

in 1992, as well as the suspension of the Alberta Children's Choir and cancellation of the Alberta University and College Choir in 2007 was partially motivated by fiscal difficulties arising from the formation and dissolution of the provincial music conglomerate Music Alberta. Other influential factors include unfavourable reviews of guest conductors, flagging caliber and interest of participating choristers, and the evolving purposes of the Alberta Choral Federation. Research conclusions elucidate the benefits of honour choir programs to participating choristers, and attribute the persistence of the Youth and Children's Choir programs to the perseverance of organizers and the combined efforts of the musical community as a whole.

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Adam Robertson. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “It’s an Honour: The Role of the Alberta Youth Choir in Choral Advocacy”, No. Pro00059057, May 24, 2018.

### **Dedication**

Thaine and Terry, without your generosity, faith, and understanding this project would simply not have been possible.

Sam, Peter, Annie, Leah, and Eric, one day you will understand the value of the gifts you have given me. May you live to have children who trust and love you as much.

Jessica, your confidence, encouragement, and time as a “single mother” wrote these pages as surely as I did. This paper belongs to no one more than you.

### **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to David Gramit for his help defining the scope of this project, and for his valuable guidance throughout the historical research process. I am grateful for his keen observations and insights that guided my synthesis of the data towards meaningful conclusions.

My sincere appreciation to Brendan Lord, Executive Director of Choir Alberta, for his availability, and for his assistance acquiring all physical and digital documentation pertaining to the Alberta Youth Choir.

Leonard Ratzlaff has supported this project in its various forms and has been my personal advocate throughout the years. His assistance and careful review of the study are greatly appreciated.

Finally, I wish to express gratitude to Robert de Frece for his helpful feedback, and for suggesting Choir Alberta as a subject for historical research. His mentorship and confidence permitted no alternative to success.

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## **Introduction**

The broadest goal of any provincial music organization is to enrich the lives of its members and the community by promoting music and music education. This act of promotion is often referred to as advocacy. Organizations fulfill their advocative mission by implementing various programs; some of these may take the form of camps, conferences, festivals, workshops, or ensembles. Honour ensembles constitute an interesting subset of this last category.

Although festivals, camps, workshops, and other like initiatives involve members of the musical community, they may also engage members of the community at large. By contrast, honour groups are inherently insular; they operate on the participation of elite, often young individuals selected from within the musical community itself. Despite this exclusionary approach, honour ensembles remain an effective tool for music advocacy for several reasons. They increase the visibility and validity of their particular art form by presenting public concerts of exceptional quality; the community's knowledge and appreciation of the sponsoring organization is similarly augmented. Honour ensembles catalyze strong relationships between group members, which in turn broaden the network of the musical community. Finally, these ensembles invest in the future of the musical community by providing invaluable educational experiences to their young members; youth acquire abilities and enthusiasm which can motivate them to pursue musical careers.

The costs associated with operating a program that provides such benefits can be extreme. Honour ensembles require not only substantial financial resources, but a host of volunteers, numerous volunteer hours, and a continual supply of interested and capable

musicians. Such projects are seldom profitable ventures for the provincial music organizations that offer them.

The costs and benefits characteristic of honour ensembles raise two questions with regard to their maintenance:

1. Why do organizations choose to sustain costly honour programs for long periods of time?
2. Why do organizations alter, suspend, or even cancel long-running, and seemingly successful honour programs?

The Alberta Youth Choir, one of the province's choral honour ensembles, provides an apt context in which to study the relationship between these two seemingly incompatible issues.

Founded by Alberta's provincial choral organization Choir Alberta (then the Alberta Choral Federation) in 1982,<sup>1</sup> the Alberta Youth Choir (AYC) is an auditioned ensemble comprising young men and women, ages 16-23, from choirs across Alberta. Its members represent the finest choral singers in the province within this age. Under the direction of a guest conductor, the choir meets for a short time to learn a variety of choral repertoire that they then perform at Music Conference Alberta, a music conference jointly presented by several provincial musical organizations in late October. Throughout its thirty-six-year history, the program has weathered numerous challenges and undergone multiple revisions. It has been suspended, renamed, reformatted, and has inspired the creation of other provincial honour ensembles such as the Alberta University and College

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<sup>1</sup> Choir Alberta was originally founded as the Alberta Choral Directors' Association (ACDA) in 1972. The organization changed its name to the Alberta Choral Federation (ACF) in 1980, and to Choir Alberta in 2015.

Choir (AUCC), and the Alberta Children's Choir (ACC), each of which have met with varying degrees of success.

Currently, no research exists with regard to any aspect of the Alberta Youth Choir. This study will attempt to answer the above questions, as they pertain to this specific ensemble, by exploring the history and evolution of the AYC from its inception in 1982 through to 2018. It will discuss the economic and political context in which Choir Alberta (then the Alberta Choral Directors' Association) was founded in 1972, as well as antecedent honour programs the Association established before ultimately designing the Youth Choir program. The paper will investigate those factors which motivated the formation of the ensemble, changes to its structure and schedule, and challenges to its continuation as a viable program.

The context surrounding the formation and evolution of other provincial honour choir programs founded by Choir Alberta, both ongoing (ACC), and discontinued (AUCC), will also be discussed. The factors that contributed to the success or failure of these programs will be placed within the larger context of the Youth Choir's and Choir Alberta's history.

Historical research methodology forms the foundation of this study. Gay and Airasian delineate the fundamental steps of this method:

[I]dentify a question or issue to examine; review the literature or pertinent relics, documents, diaries, and other data sources; select participants if appropriate; collect data; analyze and interpret the data; and produce a verbal synthesis of the findings or interpretations.<sup>2</sup>

All documents constituting primary sources in relation to Choir Alberta's provincial youth choirs have been collected and reviewed. Examples of these sources include:

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<sup>2</sup> L. R. Gay and Peter Airasian, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc., 2003), 167.

letters, minutes of meetings, budgets, reports, receipts, brochures, membership lists, programs, pictures, and recordings. By far the most important primary sources have been past and present Executive Directors of Choir Alberta. As full-time, paid personnel responsible for the administration of all programs, these individuals were instrumental to the formation, functioning, and continued development of the AYC. Their interviews provide valuable insight into the historical context and reasoning behind changes to the honour choir programs.

A study analogous to the present discussion is Murray Smith's dissertation *The Inauguration of the Alberta Band Association: Persistence Through Time*. His considerations have been instrumental in the design and implementation of this study. As Smith points out in his dissertation, in a study of this nature the potential for external criticism (the authenticity of a document's origin) is virtually non-existent due to its sole use of primary sources. However, triangulation of data is essential to guard against internal criticism (the accuracy of data itself). This study builds on information collected from individuals whose service as employees or volunteers of Choir Alberta have overlapped, offering multiple recollections with regard to the same events. In the rare instance when these recollections have differed, aural accounts were compared with written records in an effort to best distinguish subjectivity, or simple forgetfulness, from truth.<sup>3</sup>

There are differing opinions in the literature with regard to the purposes for which historical research should be undertaken.<sup>4</sup> Cuban maintains that the value of historical

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<sup>3</sup> Murray F. A. Smith, "The Inauguration of the Alberta Band Association: Persistence Through Time" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 2010), 29–30.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 25–26.

research is intrinsic, that it need not serve the demands of the present.<sup>5</sup> Best and Kahn state that “history is used to understand the past and to try to understand the present in light of past events.... History is also used to prevent ‘reinventing the wheel’ every few years.”<sup>6</sup> While pursuing this research I have shifted from one camp to the other.

My initial intentions were to discover the rationales behind the modification or discontinuation of Choir Alberta’s various provincial honour choir programs, specifically the AUCC. As a four-time participant in that ensemble, I have personal knowledge of the program’s value. The AUCC helped develop a love of choral music, and my experiences with that group were a factor in my decision to pursue studies in choral conducting. Its suspension was of special interest to me; why would Choir Alberta discontinue such a valuable opportunity for undergraduate choristers?

Over the course of my graduate studies I have come to appreciate the efforts required of a provincial arts organization to provide and maintain programs for the choral community. Provincial honour ensembles like the AYC, AUCC, or ACC face diverse challenges to their operations, and administrators look to multiple sources (surveys, program evaluation studies, experienced individuals) to inform their decisions. I hope that the dissemination of these findings will inform and influence the administration of similar ensembles in the future.

The remainder of this study is divided into four sections, each of which corresponds to a significant period of development in the history of the Alberta Youth Choir. The first section relates the founding of the Alberta Choral Directors’ Association in the political and economic context of Peter Lougheed’s government in the early 1970s.

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<sup>5</sup> Larry Cuban, “Can Historians Help School Reformers?” *Curriculum Inquiry* 31, no. 4 (2001): 454–455.

<sup>6</sup> John W. Best and James V. Kahn, *Research in Education*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 77.

It presents historical antecedents of the AYC as well as the events and circumstances that led to the formation of the Youth Choir in 1982.

The second section of the paper presents the developments of the Youth Choir program from 1982 through 1991, as well as the rationale behind its suspension in 1992 and reinstitution in 1993. This section addresses these subjects in the context of the Alberta Choral Federation's fiscal development, as well as perceived changes in the Youth Choir's purpose by members of the Board. The first section will conclude with an examination of the honour choir program from 1993 to 1996 and its paradigm shift in operations in 1997.

The third section will discuss the separation of the Youth Choir into two separate honour ensembles: the Alberta Honour Choir (AHC), and the Alberta University and College Choir (AUCC). It will also discuss the formation of a new children's ensemble: the Alberta Children's Honour Choir (ACHC). The evolution and relative success, or failure, of these ensembles will be explored across a backdrop of changes to provincial funding and the formation of a new provincial music conglomerate: Music Alberta. This section will conclude by exploring the fiscal and philosophical reorientation of the Federation following the collapse of Music Alberta, as well as the Federation's motives behind suspending the ACHC and cancelling the AUCC in 2007.

The fourth section of this study relates the developments that caused the near collapse of the AYC between 2009 and 2012. It will then discuss changes to the governance and financial structure of the Choral Federation as they pertain to the reimagination of the Youth Choir program. The reinstitution of the Alberta Children's Choir will be addressed, along with the transition of the Youth Choir to a period of

stability from 2012 to the present. Finally, the study will conclude by exploring those factors that contributed to the persistence of the Alberta Youth Choir program over the course of thirty-six years.

## **The All Province Choir: A Precursor to the Alberta Youth Choir**

**1978-1981**

In the 1970s the provincial government of Alberta was flush with revenue from its oil industry. Peter Lougheed, premier of Alberta from 1971 to 1985 and an avid patron of the arts, was eager to use this money to fund arts and culture projects in the province.<sup>1</sup> In the year of his appointment, Lougheed established the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. Referred to simply as Alberta Culture, this branch of the government replaced the Alberta Cultural Development Branch that had been established in 1946 during Ernest Manning's term as Premier.<sup>2</sup> Lougheed's first Minister of Culture, Horst Schmid, gathered individuals with specialized knowledge in various fields to act as supervisors for Alberta Culture's different arts branches. He hired American conductor Robert (Bob) R. Cook, who had recently immigrated to Canada in May 1971, as the supervisor for Alberta Culture's music branch.<sup>3</sup> One of Cook's roles was to assist and coordinate the formation of an organization that would unite the efforts of musicians across the province, and assist them in the creation of musical programs. Once the organization had reached a point of stability, Alberta Culture's assistance would take the form of financial support.<sup>4</sup>

On Saturday, September 11, 1971, Bob Cook gathered a group of 10 choral conductors from across Alberta in what was then known as the Red Deer Centennial

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<sup>1</sup> Madge McCready, Interview by Adam B. Robertson, July 5, 2018. (hereafter cited as McCready, Interview).

<sup>2</sup> "Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism," Organizations & Movements, The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/alberta-culture-and-multiculturalism-emc/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Dean Emeritus Robert Cook Passes Away," Community, UNews, University of Lethbridge, accessed Aug 4, 2018, [https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/dean-emeritus-robert-cook-passes-away#.WvSBKy\\_MxTY](https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/dean-emeritus-robert-cook-passes-away#.WvSBKy_MxTY).

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Alberta Choral Directors' Association, 11 Sep 1971, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB (hereafter cited as Minutes, ACDA).



Library to chair the first meeting of what would later be known as the Alberta Choral Directors' Association (ACDA). The goals of this meeting were threefold: to identify and discuss the specific needs of choir conductors across the province that an association consisting of choral directors might meet; decide the form that such an association would take; and crystalize the goals of that association.

The group determined that conductors across the province primarily needed assistance with the provision of funds and materials for their various choir programs, neither of which was currently available on a provincial level. To that end, conductors also needed stronger support from school administrators. The Board also determined that many conductors' needs centred on communication; they needed a way to share their choral experiences, inspire one another, and a way to stay informed of choral events throughout the province. All of these needs were in service of what was perhaps conductors' greatest desire: to increase choral activity in Alberta.<sup>5</sup>

The specific ways in which the ACDA planned to meet these needs were not entirely settled at that meeting; they did not decide how to assist local choirs with funds, resources, or how to approach school administrations for support. Some specific ideas the Board did present materialized in different ways; their goal to establish regional libraries of choral music never took shape, but thirteen years later the Association would acquire Alberta Culture's provincial lending library of choral music.<sup>6</sup> Finally, some initiatives the Board put into action were later discontinued; regional representatives that acted as liaisons between local conductors and the Board disappeared when the Association was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Alberta Choral Federation, 26 May 1984, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB (hereafter cited as Minutes, ACF).

renamed in 1980.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the idea to form an All-Province honour choir was also presented at this first meeting.<sup>8</sup> It was, of course, impossible to predict that this program would become one of the longest running in the Association's history. Seven years would elapse before the Association established an honour choir program, but its desire to unite voices in song from across the province was manifest as early as January of the next year.

The ACDA was officially organized during a weekend conference from January 29-30, 1972 at St. Thomas Aquinas School in Red Deer. Bob Cook from Alberta Culture welcomed the 150 conductors, singers, and volunteers in attendance, and pledged the government's support of the newly-formed organization. Though the purpose of the conference was to formally organize the Association, as well as establish a workable constitution and by-laws, the weekend's activities revolved around open rehearsals and the performance of a "Workshop Choir".<sup>9</sup> This choir was conducted by American conductor Nancy Vang and comprised two of Alberta's prominent choral ensembles: the Lloyd Erickson Singers from Calgary, and the Da Camera Singers from Edmonton. Amid the rehearsals and group vocal warmups the first Executive Committee was elected. David Stocker, recent conductor of the University of Alberta Mixed Chorus (UAMC) and professor in the University of Alberta's Department of Music, was elected president of the ACDA.<sup>10</sup> Lloyd Erickson, the conductor of Calgary's Young Canadian Singers as well as the above-mentioned Lloyd Erickson Singers, was to serve as Vice President.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most significant appointment was that of Madge McCready, a church choir

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<sup>7</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes, 11 Sep 1971, ACDA.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes, 28-29 Jan 1972, ACDA.

<sup>10</sup> "History of the UAMC," University of Alberta Mixed Chorus, University of Alberta, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <https://sites.ualberta.ca/~chorus/history.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> "Lloyd Erickson," Things, The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lloyd-erickson-emc/>.

conductor in Edmonton, to the position of Corresponding Secretary. While McCready did not occupy a leadership position at this time, she would later be offered the Association's first salaried position, that of Executive Director, in 1978.<sup>12</sup> She would serve in that role for fifteen years, becoming the organizational force behind all the ACDA's programs, and, importantly, one of the key organizers and advocates of the All-Province Choir, the predecessor of the Alberta Youth Choir.

The road toward a provincial honour choir, in form if not in name, began in June 1973. It was announced at a Board meeting that Lloyd Erickson, then the president of the Association, would assemble a sixty-member provincial church choir for the ACDA's annual convention in October of that year. Erickson would contact fifteen church choirs in various towns and cities across the province, each of which would recommend a quartet to represent their choir at the convention.<sup>13</sup> Interested choristers were to inform their area representative, after which they would be sent music. The choir, as a whole, would first meet at the convention for rehearsals on Friday afternoon, culminating in a performance on Saturday morning. A similarly formed children's choir of twenty to twenty-five voices from churches across Calgary was also planned.<sup>14</sup>

These provincial church and children's choirs were a success.<sup>15</sup> At the ACDA's Annual Meeting, which was held at the conclusion of the conference, Erickson proposed that a similar provincial choir act as the foundation for a choral workshop in the spring of 1974. However, instead of church choristers, this choir would comprise high school

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<sup>12</sup> Minutes, 24 Jun 1978, ACDA.

<sup>13</sup> Edmonton, Calgary, Stettler, Three Hills, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Foremost, Grande Prairie are the cities and towns mentioned in the minutes.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, 22 June 1973, ACDA.

<sup>15</sup> McCready, Interview.

students from across the province.<sup>16</sup> The structure of the choir for the upcoming “Choral Clinic” was solidified in February.<sup>17</sup> Dr. Mussulman, of Missoula, Montana, would lead a choir of about eighty singers, consisting of balanced quartets (one each of soprano, tenor, alto, and bass) from twelve different towns or cities from across the province. To reduce the costs of the program the Board arranged billets for the choristers for both nights of the clinic (March 29-30). They also provided the youth with an additional performance opportunity by arranging for the choir to sing for worship services on Sunday, March 31.

This was not the only provincial ensemble to be formed that year. The Board adopted the pattern used for the Clinic Choir to assemble another provincial choir that would sing at the ACDA’s annual conference in October. Again, Dr. Mussulman was retained to conduct the ensemble, which was composed of high school aged singers from across the province.<sup>18</sup>

Emboldened by the success of the Clinic Choir in March, the Board had already been making plans for another Choral Clinic that would take place the following spring in 1975. However, a high-profile, and therefore high-priority, project loomed on the horizon. The Canadian Music Educators’ Association (CMEA) had invited the ACDA to provide an honour choir for its annual convention in April of that same year. The resources and organization involved in the preparation of that choir would preclude a second iteration of the clinic.<sup>19</sup>

The Board had been planning for the CMEA Convention since February of 1974, before its first Choral Clinic. Understandably, they decided to pattern this honour choir

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<sup>16</sup> Minutes, 27 Oct 1973, ACDA.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes, 15 Feb 1974, ACDA.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes, 12 Sep 1974, ACDA.

<sup>19</sup> Minutes, 26 Oct 1974, ACDA.

after the two provincial ensembles the ACDA was already organizing that year. However, this ensemble would prove to be a much larger project. Lloyd Erickson, whom the Board had selected as the conductor for the honour choir, insisted that it be an auditioned ensemble. Holding live auditions across the province would be impractical. The Association as yet had no office personnel, and there were no membership lists to coordinate the auditioning of singers from multiple centres. It would be much easier for Choristers to record their auditions on cassette and mail them to the ACDA, which at that point existed solely at Madge McCready's residence.<sup>20</sup> Erickson also proposed a longer schedule for the choir; whereas previous honour choirs had begun rehearsing only the day before the concert, this choir would hold at least five rehearsals prior to its thirty-minute performance at the convention's "All Alberta Night."<sup>21</sup> This was the last provincial choir the ACDA would organize before the formation of the All-Province Choir in 1978.

The ACDA's uncertain fiscal future stalled the formation of any provincial honour ensemble for nearly three years. There was no funding for the Association to operate consistently; all of its funding came from Alberta Culture in the form of reimbursements for projects. The absence of strong leadership also hindered the progress of the Association. Although Lloyd Erickson was enthusiastic to have been elected president of the ACDA in October 1972, according to Madge McCready he "didn't have a passion for the Association."<sup>22</sup> He was unable to unite the ACDA at the grass roots level. The Board was forced to defer the ACDA's annual October conference until February 1976; holding a second major conference in 1975 was deemed too taxing on

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<sup>20</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes, 15 Feb 1974, ACDA.

<sup>22</sup> McCready, Interview.

their membership and resources. At this conference, Larry Cook, a conductor at the University of Alberta, was elected president of the Association.<sup>23</sup>

Although an honour choir was the feature of this 1976 conference, it consisted of high school choristers from across Calgary instead of the province.<sup>24</sup> At the ACDA's annual meeting on February 7, 1976 Bob Cook indicated that the government was about to curtail Alberta Culture's financial support: while "other areas of government had been asked to budget for no more than an 11% increase, Culture had been limited to three per cent."<sup>25</sup>

This is not to say that there were no ideas for provincial ensembles during this time. Bob Cook himself suggested using the Alberta government's own summer music workshop program (Musicamrose) as the vehicle for a future honour choir. Musicamrose took place over the course of several weeks in August. From the program's beginnings in 1957, youth from across the province would come to the campus of Camrose Lutheran College in Camrose for one- or two-week-long courses in a variety of musical disciplines.<sup>26</sup> The ACDA's president, Larry Cook, and secretary, Nelda Langdon, had observed at a meeting of Alberta Culture that both the junior and senior Musicamrose choral workshop programs were in danger of failing due to lack of interest or poor turnout of male singers.<sup>27</sup> Offering a summer honour choir workshop would add a much-needed boost the Musicamrose's registrations.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes, 11 Oct 1975, ACDA.

<sup>25</sup> Minutes, 7 Feb 1976, ACDA, 2.

<sup>26</sup> "History of MusiCamp Alberta," History, MusiCamp Alberta, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://www.musicampalberta.com/history.php>.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes, 13 Mar 1976, ACDA.

Bob Cook suggested hiring a conductor of international renown to produce a major work over the course of one of the week-long workshops. Members of the Board supplied many reasons for why a project would not work. They feared that long hours of rehearsal would not interest applicants as much as a varied program including conducting sessions, the discovery of new repertoire, and group discussions. Also, a major work would likely need to involve adults instead of the youth who were currently needed to build the summer program. As a result, the length of the project would have to be shortened to a weekend, instead of a week, in order to be compatible with adults' work schedules. However, a shorter timetable would likely preclude the preparation of a larger work and render unjustifiable the expense of bringing in a conductor of international acclaim.<sup>28</sup> In the end, the Board concluded that no one individual had "the combination of time and expertise to organize and run a summer workshop."<sup>29</sup> It wasn't until a Board meeting on February 26, 1977 that the prospect of a provincial honour choir was revived.

It must have been upsetting to members of the ACDA's Board that their organization was unable to provide help to a program such as Musicamrose that needed assistance. The frustration is almost palpable in some of the minutes of the time. In her record of the minutes of a meeting on February 12, 1977, Nelda Langdon felt it necessary to record a direct quote from ACDA president Larry Cook: "We must do our utmost to further choral work in the province". Nelda also quoted Bob Cook's remarks in reference to his desire for a provincial honour choir: "everyone would enjoy such a project and gain social, esthetic, and human qualities."<sup>30</sup> It is perhaps no surprise, then, that only two

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<sup>28</sup> Minutes, 8 Feb 1976, ACDA.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes, 12 Feb 1977, ACDA, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

weeks later, on February 26, the formation of an All-Province choir was finally addressed.

ACDA had recently received an invitation from the Alberta chapter of the Canadian Band Directors' Association (CBDA) to participate in their convention that coming November.<sup>31</sup> By the time this invitation was first discussed, in the February 26 Board meeting, committees for coordinating the ACDA's participation in this event had already been organized. It was suggested that Jester Hairston, renowned African-American musician, arranger, and conductor, conduct an All-Province honour choir organized especially for the conference.<sup>32</sup> The Board accepted this project with enthusiasm and immediately published news of the upcoming choir in the ACDA's Newsletter of March 1977. The All-Province Choir (APC) is mentioned in the Editor's Note on the very first page. The second page contained the recommendation form, which choir directors, who were also members of the ACDA, could fill out in order to recommend singers for the ensemble. The Newsletter listed the due date for APC applications as June 15, but by June 18, the time of the next ACDA Board meeting, the All-Province Choir was already in trouble.

In the three months since its initial advertisement, choir directors from across the province had submitted the names of only twenty-five applicants to the APC. Teachers indicated that the end of the school year was not a good time to make choices for singers who would sing in a fall project; many would prefer to select singers after school resumed in September. Thus, the choice was made to postpone the debut of the All-Province Choir until the ACDA's own convention in February of 1978. In its place, an

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<sup>31</sup> Minutes, 26 Feb 1977, ACDA.

<sup>32</sup> "Jester Hairston Dies; Actor Overcame Race Stereotypes," Collections, Los Angeles Times, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/jan/21/local/me-56224>.



honour choir consisting of singers from select youth choirs across Calgary was featured at the combined CBDA/ACDA convention in November.<sup>33</sup>

Deferring the APC appears to have been the right choice. Much more interest in the program was generated after the school year had begun; by the beginning of October, the Board had already received thirty applications.<sup>34</sup> In November, registration was such that Bob Cook expressed hope that the fledgling program could be used to augment participation in Musicamrose. The only disruption to the Board's plans for the APC appears to have been Jester Hairston's availability; he would not be able lead the APC in February. Instead, the Board settled on Michael Kemp, a graduate of Westminster Choir College, and director of the Arlington Civic Choir in Texas.<sup>35</sup>

The All-Province Choir materialized as ACDA's conference began on Friday, February 10, 1978, with a startling membership of 110 singers. Over the course of the weekend the choir sat in nearly eleven hours of rehearsal, polishing nine pieces that would constitute a thirty-minute "demonstration" for delegates on Saturday evening.<sup>36</sup> Their performance was extremely well received.

In the ACDA's Newsletter of March 1978, Madge McCready reported:

The final concert had many moments of excitement and musical beauty unsurpassed in this area by a comparable choir in age and experience. It was surely a "mountain-top" experience for the choristers, an experience not soon to be forgotten. Each singer taking part was indeed privileged [*sic*] to have been chosen by his or her director and must surely have returned home with increased abilities and boundless enthusiasm.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes, 18 Jun 1977, ACDA.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes, 1 Oct 1977, ACDA.

<sup>35</sup> "February Convention 1978," in *Newsletter*, November 1977, Alberta Choral Directors' Association, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB (hereafter cited as *Newsletter*, ACDA).

<sup>36</sup> Madge McCready, "All Province Choir: February 1978," *Newsletter*, March 1978, ACDA.

<sup>37</sup> McCready, "All-Province Choir," 1978, 11–12.

Bob Cook also had strong feelings about the ensemble. In the Annual Meeting following the conference, he stated:

through the continuing responsibility and development of this choir, the value of ACDA's work will become visible to the public at large and prove that musical literacy is a birthright in this province.<sup>38</sup>

The APC's caliber was also reflected in comments regarding its repertoire. Michael Kemp reasoned that "the choir is capable of handling works of a more demanding and challenging nature as well as the 'immediate appeal' variety."<sup>39</sup> Madge echoed this view in her report: "I'm certain the quality of repertoire will be carefully considered prior to the choir's next function. It was felt however that this year's program was well chosen for the choir's first endeavor."<sup>40</sup> In light of these accolades it is unsurprising that the Board invited the All-Province Choir to return for the ACDA's second joint convention with the CBDA that November.

The summer of 1978 brought an important development for the ACDA: the advent of the first salaried position in the organization's history, that of Executive Director. This position would have a direct impact, not only on the administrative capabilities of the ACDA, but on the number of programs it was able to sustain. The door had been opened to the creation of this position in September of the previous year. Yvonne Goudreau, the Programme Officer for Choral Music on the Canada Council in Ottawa, contacted the Board. She expressed interest in the ACDA and proposed that they hire an executive director, for which Canada Council would offer grant money to cover the cost of an annual salary.<sup>41</sup> Less than a year later, in June of 1978, Goudreau's

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<sup>38</sup> Minutes, 11 Feb 1978, ACDA, 2.

<sup>39</sup> McCready, "All Province Choir," 1978, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes, 1 Oct 1977, ACDA.

suggestion became a reality. Madge McCready, who had volunteered for the ACDA since its inception in January 1972, was hired as the ACDA's first Executive Director.

Unfortunately, the grant money which Ms. Goudreau had apparently pledged was not forthcoming.<sup>42</sup> McCready's salary would have to form part of the operating budget of the ACDA.

Canada Council was not the only government association to deny the ACDA funds for its newly-created position. Bob Cook stated that, while Alberta Culture was willing to support conferences, workshops, and programs, it was not prepared to cover the costs of a salaried executive position.<sup>43</sup> This turn of events was not the financial disaster it could have been for the Association even one year earlier. Though it had received only a three percent increase in financial allotments from the Alberta government in 1976, Alberta Culture viewed the ACDA, and especially the All-Province Choir program, as worthwhile projects that merited continued financial support.<sup>44</sup> Enough grant money was made available to cover the costs of ACDA's programs prompting a dramatic increase in its operating budget, from only \$3,400 in 1977, to \$12,000 in 1978.<sup>45</sup> Alberta Culture's generous assistance allowed for the allocation of excess funds towards the Executive Director's salary. The ACDA's financial position would continue to improve the following year with the advent of monies from the Western Canada Lottery Foundation.<sup>46</sup> Lottery funding will be discussed in detail in the second section of this study.

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes, 4 Mar 1978, ACDA.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes, 25 Oct 1978, ACDA.

<sup>44</sup> Minutes, 4 Mar 1978, ACDA.

<sup>45</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "The First Twenty Years: 1972–1992; An Historical Outline," Box: AYC, 1982–1996, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB (hereafter cited as "First Twenty Years").

<sup>46</sup> Minutes, 15 Jun 1979, ACDA.

With the funding of the ACDA's programs assured, planning for the next APC in November of 1978 continued apace. Following the success of the 110-voice model in February, the Board aimed for a choir of 120 singers from towns and cities around the province. Collaboration would play a key part of the APC's role at the conference. The choir would share a concert with the CBDA's honour band on the conference's final night, which would conclude with a combined work featuring both honour ensembles: Sibelius' "Onward Ye Peoples." Michael Kemp was asked to lead the APC for a second time. Seeking a "better balance"<sup>47</sup> of sacred and secular repertoire than February's concert, Kemp programmed Haydn's *Missa Brevis St. Joannis de Deo* as the choir's first of only four selections.<sup>48</sup> The APC would also receive more rehearsal time with their director. Rehearsals would begin on Thursday, November 15, the day before the conference, as opposed to the Friday. Finally, in the interest of obtaining a high quality of performance, an existing choir was asked to serve as a "core" to the APC. Madge McCready asked the Centennial Singers to serve that purpose.<sup>49</sup> Founded in 1965 by the Edmonton Public School Board as a project for Canada's centennial celebrations, the Centennial Singers comprised a group of high school aged students that had continued to meet following the production of their centennial recording in 1967.<sup>50</sup>

By October, preparations for the APC were already more promising than they had been in February. Members of the APC had already received all of Michael Kemp's chosen repertoire, whereas in February only seven of the nine pieces had been delivered

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<sup>47</sup> Minutes, 13 May 1978, ACDA, 2.

<sup>48</sup> "The All-Province Choir," *Newsletter*, January 1979, ACDA.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes, 13 May 1978, ACDA.

<sup>50</sup> "The Edmonton Centennial Singers – On Tour," Discogs, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <https://www.discogs.com/The-Edmonton-Centennial-Singers-On-Tour/release/8971773>.

prior to the first rehearsal.<sup>51</sup> Enthusiasm for the program remained high throughout the province, and the Board achieved its goal of registering 120 students for the choir. Some auditioning students even had to be turned away in the interest of keeping a balanced ensemble.

Promising though these preliminary indications were, the conference revealed a problem that would continue to plague the ACDA's provincial honour choir program over the next forty years: choristers arriving unprepared. The ACDA's January Newsletter expressed this issue in no uncertain terms: "[T]he conductors who supplied the members for the All-Province Choir did not really prepare [their] students well enough."<sup>52</sup> Admittedly, there were some choristers who arrived knowing their music very well, but Michael Kemp did have to spend time teaching notes. Remarkably, the choristers' lack of preparation did not diminish the final musical product. The Board found the choir to be excellent, although they did agree that the concert would "have been a disaster with a conductor of less stature than Michael Kemp."<sup>53</sup> Despite these concerns, the Board considered the All-Province Choir that sang at the combined CBDA/ACDA convention on November 17, 1978 to be "perhaps the greatest single achievement since ACDA was formed."<sup>54</sup> As a result, Kemp was engaged to take the podium a *third* time when the APC assembled at the CBDA/ACDA's third combined conference in November of 1979.

The Board made greater efforts to ensure the preparedness of APC choristers for the program's third iteration. In March, McCready proposed that mandatory, regional

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<sup>51</sup> This was not due to disorganization on the ACDA's part, but because of mail and publisher delays.

<sup>52</sup> "The All Province Choir," *Newsletter*, January 1979, 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

preparatory rehearsals, well in advance of the November conference, be added to the choir's schedule.<sup>55</sup> By May, it was confirmed that Edmonton, Calgary, and Camrose would serve as the locations for these rehearsals. APC choristers would gather in the city closest to them for five to six hours of rehearsal across one or two days.<sup>56</sup> The Board also made greater efforts to generate enthusiasm from recommending conductors, hoping that an increase in their interest would directly correlate with choristers' preparedness. The ACDA's September Newsletter spoke to these conductors: "Please don't send your singers - bring them, stay, take part. THESE REHEARSALS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP BOTH SINGER AND DIRECTOR."<sup>57</sup>

The All-Province Choir was again a success with a membership of just over 100 singers and was renewed for 1980.<sup>58</sup> The Board even felt that the new format of the program had addressed the problem of choristers' preparedness. In an advertisement for the upcoming APC, the ACDA's Newsletter of May 1980 stated: "Last year the choir performed some very difficult music, and generally it was felt that the students came much more 'prepared' than in previous years."<sup>59</sup> It was clear to the Board that the APC was a sustainable program, popular with young singers in the province, and that the ACDA could continue to offer it in the future. However, the program would experience a host of problems that coming year: budgetary trouble, lack of interest, insufficient advertising, miscommunication between Board members, and the use of ringers to augment the All-Province Choir.

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<sup>55</sup> Minutes, 17 Mar 1979, ACDA.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes, 12 May 1979, ACDA.

<sup>57</sup> "1979 All Province Choir," *Newsletter*, September 1979, ACDA, 14 (emphasis in original).

<sup>58</sup> Minutes, 15 Jun 1979, ACDA.

<sup>59</sup> "All-Province Choir – 1980," *Newsletter*, May 1980, ACDA, 15.

The conference in November 1980, for which the APC was to perform, was to be far larger than the combined CBDA/ACDA conferences that had taken place the previous three years. In March of 1979 the CBDA informed the Board that it would host a national convention in Calgary in November the following year. That year was to be Alberta's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and the Board had already debated hosting a choral convention for all the western provinces at that time. Naturally, there were concerns regarding the logistics involved in organizing such a massive venture.<sup>60</sup> However, the situation would soon grow more complicated.

In May of 1979 the Government of Alberta established the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission.<sup>61</sup> By September, news that the Commission had set aside money for special music festivals and "large one-time-only events." had spread to Alberta's various provincial arts organizations.<sup>62</sup> By the end of the combined CBDA/ACDA conference in November 1979 seven other provincial music organizations had become involved in the November 1980 conference as well. This mass conference would bear the name Dimensions 75.<sup>63</sup> However, in January of 1980 it became clear that the Commission was running out of money. Following the Commission's repeated rejections of proposals from many of the provincial organizations involved in the conference, all but three of them withdrew: ACDA, CBDA, and the Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association (ARMTA).<sup>64</sup> This newly-formed conference adopted a different name: Counterpoint 75.

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<sup>60</sup> Minutes, 17 Mar 1979, ACDA.

<sup>61</sup> Glenbow Museum, "Alberta 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission Fonds," Archives Main Catalogue, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainSearch.aspx>.

<sup>62</sup> Minutes, 15 Sep 1979, ACDA.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes, 9 Nov 1979, ACDA.

<sup>64</sup> Minutes, 23 Feb 1980, ACDA.

The Commission's behaviour also transformed the format of the All-Province Choir. In June 1979, John Pauls, the newly-elected president of the ACDA, drafted a proposal for a very special iteration of the APC. He submitted to the Commission a proposal for a seventy-five-voice ensemble that would tour Alberta, followed by the capital city of each province. His proposal was rejected. Pauls sent the Commission another proposal for a 100-person ensemble comprising ten members from each of Canada's ten provinces. It, too, was ultimately rejected because it was more national in scope as opposed to provincial.<sup>65</sup> After four additional proposals, the Commission finally approved John Pauls's idea for a provincial chamber choir of fifty singers in June of 1980, less than five months before the November conference. There were two conditions to the approval: the APC was only allowed to meet in conjunction with Counterpoint 75; and the proposed budget was not allowed to be altered without written request to the Commission.<sup>66</sup> This created two major issues. First, the choir would not be able to tour in advance of the convention as Pauls had hoped. Second, the Commission's late approval of the project would decidedly hamper the recruitment effort. The Board had already contracted internationally acclaimed Swedish conductor Eric Ericson in February, at great expense, and was worried he would not have an ensemble of fifty singers with which to work.

The Board published news of the revised All-Province *Chamber* Choir in the June Newsletter, listing deadline for audition tapes as the end of July, less than two months away. As a measure of protection, the Board determined it would ask the senior members

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<sup>65</sup> Minutes, 26 Jan 1980, ACDA.

<sup>66</sup> Minutes, 2 Oct 1980, ACDA.



of the Musicamrose choir workshop to form the core of the APCC.<sup>67</sup> By September 6, the ACDA had received only thirteen audition tapes, only nine of which were accepted into the program. Members of the Board began calling singers in their respective communities in an effort to boost recruitment. Preparatory rehearsals, which were originally scheduled in Calgary during the Thanksgiving weekend, were moved to Edmonton during the first weekend in November. The Board informed ACDA members through personal communication that deadline for the submission of audition tapes had been extended to September 15. By September 19 the ACDA had received nine more tapes, all of which they accepted into the APCC.<sup>68</sup> With only eighteen confirmed members of the All-Province Chamber Choir, plans for a healthy membership of fifty singers had degraded to a non-negotiable membership of thirty-two. The Board had already deemed the prospect of supplementing APCC membership with handpicked local singers to be unfair to those who had auditioned, but at this late date, the ease of that solution appeared very attractive, and necessary.<sup>69</sup>

On September 22 Madge McCready received a phone call from Michel Gervais, a prominent conductor in Edmonton's choral community, who was concerned about the APCC's low numbers.<sup>70</sup> Gervais had founded three new choral ensembles in Edmonton that year: Schola Cantorum, ConSept, and Pro Coro Canada. He had also recently worked with Eric Ericson. Having studied choral conducting with Ericson in Austria at the Wiener Meisterkursen, Gervais became his assistant conductor for the Swedish Radio Choir, Orpheï Drängar, Stockholm Chamber Choir, and the Royal Academy of Music

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<sup>67</sup> Minutes, 23 Feb 1980, ACDA.

<sup>68</sup> Minutes, 2 Oct 1980, ACDA.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Choir from 1978 to 1980.<sup>71</sup> Gervais knew Ericson and how he worked, and perhaps most importantly, he knew his repertoire. He had even selected music Ericson had conducted the previous year for Pro Coro's inaugural season. Coincidentally, Pro Coro was currently working on all but one of the pieces Ericson had chosen for the APCC. Gervais volunteered to lead the preparatory rehearsal in Edmonton; members of the APCC could simply join Pro Coro for one of their rehearsals.

Gervais' suggestion was problematic because Lloyd Erickson was already engaged to direct the preparatory rehearsal in Edmonton. Although he had generously offered to lead the rehearsal without an honorarium, Erickson had insisted on bringing his own accompanist from Calgary to Edmonton, which would have altered the Budget. As mentioned earlier, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commission stated that the budget for the APCC could only be changed by way of written request. At this late date, such a change was impossible. As such, no provision for the extra expenses a Calgarian accompanist travelling to Edmonton would incur could be made. Lloyd Erickson, with good will, it must be noted, withdrew from his position as preparatory rehearsal director, and offered the position to Michel Gervais.<sup>72</sup>

This current arrangement, for Gervais to supplement the APCC with his own choir and to lead the regional preparatory rehearsal, as well as the speed with which it was made did not sit well with certain members of the Board. McCready, Gervais, and Erickson had made the arrangement as a result of numerous phone calls over the course of only three days, and while the short timeline of the APCC necessitated immediate

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<sup>71</sup> "Michel Gervais," Things, The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/michel-gervais-emc/>.

<sup>72</sup> Madge McCready, "A Report to the Board Dealing With the All Province Chamber Choir," in minutes of the Alberta Choral Directors' Association, 2 Oct 1980, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

action and decision making, one Board member made allegations questioning McCready's integrity and motives.<sup>73</sup> At a meeting on October 4, Madge answered these allegations by submitting a detailed report providing a timeline and explanation of the events just described. The Board accepted Madge's report and decided, following a visit to a Pro Coro rehearsal, to allow its members to audition for the APCC.<sup>74</sup>

Counterpoint 75 was a colossal event that brought a superficial, yet significant change to the ACDA. When the Association was first formed in 1972, the Board decided to pattern its structure of governance after the American Choral Directors' Association. In homage to it, the Board decided to adopt that Association's acronym as its own. Understanding that identical acronyms would eventually be confusing, the Board promised to change its name once the Alberta Choral Directors' Association had become a significant entity in the choral community.<sup>75</sup> The ACDA's participation in Counterpoint 75 marked that moment.

The Board first proposed changing the ACDA's name in April earlier that year. It advertised the impending change in the June Newsletter, noting that the ACDA would become the ACMA (Alberta Choral Music Association) at the conference in November. In a Board Meeting on September 6, this name was replaced with the Alberta Choral Federation, and the change was made official during the Annual Meeting at Counterpoint 75.<sup>76</sup> The ACDA would now be known as the ACF.

The ACDA's name was changed not because the goals of the organization were different (Jonathan Mohr, the president of the Association, still described the ACF's

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes, 4 Oct 1980, ACDA.

<sup>75</sup> Minutes, 11 Sep 1971, ACDA.

<sup>76</sup> Minutes, 6 Sep 1980, ACDA.

mission as “people helping other people enjoy choral music”), but because the composition of its members had evolved over time.<sup>77</sup> ACDA’s membership had long included individuals who were not choral directors. The Board wanted the name of the organization to reflect a desire to welcome individuals interested in areas of choral music outside directorship.<sup>78</sup>

The reasons behind the name change were pragmatic as well. A name that reflected an association with a broad membership base was more likely to draw corporate funding than an association that benefited too specific a group. The new name would help the organization grow and diversify its membership, allowing the ACF to have access to individuals with various areas of expertise, such as “business, professional or accounting experience,” which were growing increasingly more important as the ACF’s operations grew more ambitious.<sup>79</sup>

Despite the many challenges that had troubled the All-Province Chamber Choir, in the end the Board deemed it a success. The minutes of a meeting on January 24, 1981 indicate that the project had “a strong positive impact” on the singers involved and acknowledge that most of its problems stemmed from lack of advanced publicity. In that same meeting, the Board reflected that “this large-scale project be not attempted again within a similarly short time for organization.”<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, the ACF did not participate in another joint conference until 1982, when it reunited with the CBDA.

The All-Province Choir returned one last time for ACF’s conference in November 1981, this time with Jon Washburn at the helm. Turnout was once again healthy with a

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<sup>77</sup> Jonathan Mohr, “President’s Report,” *Newsletter*, Jan 1981, ACDA, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes, 26 Apr 1980, ACDA.

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Mohr, “President’s Corner,” *Newsletter*, Jun 1980, ACDA, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes, 24 Jan 1981, ACF, 2.

membership of 115 singers; the low membership of the APCC in 1980 prompted the Board to explore Musicamrose as a potential source of singers in 1981. However, Jonathan Mohr, the president of the ACF at that time, expressed reservations about this model and suggested the recruiting of Musicamrose choristers as core members of the APC be discontinued.<sup>81</sup> Presumably, he suggested this for two reasons. First, Musicamrose was not affiliated with the ACF. If the ACF accepted nominations from ACF member choirs only, there would be a much greater motivation for choirs across the province to become members of the ACF, as well as for recommending conductors to attend the conference in November. ACF's numbers would grow, as well as its revenue from the conference. Second, all choristers would be endorsed by choral professionals, thereby raising the chance of producing a quality product.

Maintaining the quality of its provincial honour choir would be a continual challenge for the ACF. A telling question was posed in the Board meeting of January 24, 1981 regarding the purpose of the APC, as to "whether outstanding conductors' talents are best used with a superior professional choir, or by raising the standards of a short-term non-professional choir."<sup>82</sup> In other words, which is more important, the conductor's product, or the choristers' experience? For ACF, whose primary goal was to increase musical education and enrichment opportunities across the province, the answer was to continue to provide "mountain top" experiences to students, but through the production of a quality product that reinforced Bob Cook's idea that musical literacy was Alberta's birthright. The ACF answered the question by forming the Alberta Youth Choir, an honour choir that would last thirty-six years almost without interruption.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 2.

## **The Alberta Youth Choir: The Pursuit of a Sustainable Program 1982–1996**

The revised 1977 constitution of the Alberta Choral Directors' Association listed eight purposes of its operation<sup>1</sup>:

- To foster and promote choral singing which will provide artistic/aesthetic experiences for the participants;
- To foster and promote the finest types of choral music to make these experiences possible;
- To foster and encourage rehearsal procedures conducive to attaining the highest possible level in musicianship and artistic performance;
- To foster and promote the organization and development of choral groups of all types in schools, communities, churches, and industry;
- To foster and promote the intelligent understanding of choral music as an important medium of artistic expression;
- To foster and promote significant research and composition in the field of choral music;
- To co-operate with all organizations dedicated to the development of musical culture; and
- To disseminate professional news and information about choral music.

The All-Province Choir alone achieved six of these eight purposes. By uniting young people of like interest and ability from school and church choirs across the province, the ACDA showed it could cooperate with various choral organizations (7), provide landmark choral experiences for their young singers (1), and thereby foster the development of those same organizations (4). APC choristers were exposed to repertoire to which they might not have been introduced in their home programs. They learned excellent rehearsal techniques from expert clinicians (3), and produced concerts of superior quality (2). Choristers returned to their home ensembles with improved leadership skills and a renewed interest and enthusiasm for choral music that they were eager to pass on to their fellow singers (5). In its current format, the APC was not a

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<sup>1</sup> Alberta Choral Directors' Association, "Proposed Revision to A.C.D.A. Constitution and By-Laws," in *Newsletter*, Nov 1977, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 1.

vehicle for new choral compositions (6), nor did the Board use it as a promotional tool for ACF programs (8). After redesigning its provincial honour choir program in 1982, the Federation would eventually broaden the goals of the ensemble to include these two purposes.

The success of the All-Province Choir from 1978-1981 emboldened the Board to implement a more involved honour choir program the following year. For some time, it had been the goal of the Federation to create a provincial honour choir similar in form to the Ontario Youth Choir (OYC).<sup>2</sup> Sponsored by the Ontario Choral Federation, the OYC was founded in 1971 as a summer program for young singers in the province of Ontario.<sup>3</sup> Choristers would rehearse under a guest conductor for a week in August, after which they would tour, performing for various communities throughout the province.<sup>4</sup> The ACF Board had different plans for its own honour choir; they wanted a summer retreat for the choristers, but they also wanted to feature the choir at the annual CBDA/ACF conference in the fall. The ensemble could then tour various communities in the province following the conference. To maintain cohesiveness, despite the months that separated a summer rehearsal and fall conference, the Board realized that its provincial honour choir would have to meet multiple times during the year. The specifics of the program were discussed in a Board meeting in March of 1981 and the program was announced to ACF members in the September Newsletter as the Alberta Honour Choir, “more than a revised version of the All-Province Choir.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>3</sup> “About Choirs Ontario,” Choirs Ontario, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://www.choirsontario.org/about.html>.

<sup>4</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Mohr, “The President’s Page,” in *Newsletter*, Sep 1981, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 2.

Like the Ontario Youth Choir, Alberta's new honour choir would be a chamber ensemble comprising around forty individuals between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. The Board would schedule live auditions early in the year followed by full rehearsals in the spring, summer, and early fall. By August of 1981 the Board had refined this schedule to include two rehearsal weekends prior to a week-long summer workshop in August, which culminated in a small performance.<sup>6</sup> The choir's season would then conclude with a concert for the delegates from around the province at the ACF's annual conference in late October or early November.<sup>7</sup>

The Board also decided upon a method of choosing the ensemble's conductor. David Ferguson, a prominent Calgary conductor who had served as vocal coach and assistant conductor of Musicamrose since 1978, had already been chosen as the honour choir's first director.<sup>8</sup> However, the Board agreed that a panel of three individuals would select the conductor in the future. This conductor would have to be Albertan, as well as a member of the Federation, and would need to have conducted in the province for a minimum of three years. This policy of selecting a local conductor was not only cost efficient, but also supported and promoted the very conductors the Federation was originally created to benefit.<sup>9</sup>

Enthusiasm among Board members for the new program was high; they felt the Alberta Honour Choir, or, as it would be renamed in 1983, the Alberta Youth Choir, would assist the ACF in its efforts to promote choral music across the province. It would

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<sup>6</sup> Minutes, 29 Aug 1981, ACF.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes, 21 Mar 1981, ACF.

<sup>8</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "The Alberta Honour Choir in Concert," 1982 concert program, 5 Nov 1982, 4 (hereafter cited as AHC program, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> Minutes, 29 Aug 1981, ACF.



“have a great impact on school music programs, both as a model for and an incentive to young singers.”<sup>10</sup>

The next decade, from 1982–1991 might be termed the Golden Age of the Alberta Youth Choir (AYC). During this time the choir was truly a year-round program; its members rehearsed in sessions that were held between three to five times a year, and they rehearsed enough repertoire to present a full concert at the November conference. The choir supported and promoted the careers of Alberta musicians; each year featured a prominent and respected Alberta conductor and accompanist, and in 1987 the Board expanded the AYC’s musical staff to include a vocal coach. The Board also used the honour choir program to foster and promote choral composition; on many occasions they commissioned a new work from a Canadian composer that the choir would premier during the season. The membership of the choir was stable over this time, averaging the Board’s desired membership of forty singers. However, despite all indications that it was flourishing, the program was suspended abruptly in 1992. With some difficulty the AYC resumed operation in 1993 and entered a transitional phase that would last until 1996. Over these four years the choir gradually grew in membership and financial support only to experience another major change to its operation in 1997. The balance of this section will explore the significant changes to the AYC program from year to year, why they were implemented, how these changes led to a hiatus in 1992, and why the program was dramatically restructured in 1997.

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<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Mohr, “The President’s Report,” in *1981 Annual Report* of the Alberta Choral Federation, 1981, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 1 (hereafter cited as *Annual Report*, ACF).

Evolution of the Alberta Youth Choir from 1982–1991:

The Board scheduled live auditions for the Alberta Honour Choir at the end of January in 1982. These auditions were held in four major city centres in the province: Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge. News of the upcoming Alberta Honour Choir had been disseminated to the ACF membership as early as the September Newsletter in 1981. Also, ACF members were notified of the January audition dates at the combined CBDA/ACF conference the previous November.<sup>11</sup> As a result, ninety-three individuals auditioned for the youth choir. Forty-five singers were selected, but only thirty-six attended the first rehearsal at the end of February. Of the nine absent choristers, some were released from the program, others were replaced. Ultimately, only thirty-eight singers were able to commit to the year's rigorous schedule and perform in the concert at the November conference.

The AHC began with an ambitious first season. Youth from across the province assembled on five separate occasions for weekend rehearsal sessions and concerts throughout the year. The choir first met at Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton near the end of February. Here, those individuals who had been former members of the All-Province Choir met the new members of the inaugural AHC. The intensive weekend of rehearsals promoted the sense of community that the Board was hoping for.<sup>12</sup> This was due in no small part to the choir's conductor. David Ferguson had worked as the Director of Music at Western Canada High School since 1970, as well as the conductor of the

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<sup>11</sup> McCready Interview.

<sup>12</sup> "Alberta Honour Choir," *Newsletter*, March 1982, ACF.

Mount Royal College Youth Choir in Calgary.<sup>13</sup> He was experienced with conducting singers of high school age and was loved by the choristers for working with skill and humour.<sup>14</sup>

Each of the program's remaining four sessions brought performance and professional development opportunities for the singers. When choristers met in Calgary for a second session in May, they were treated to a workshop with a different guest conductor. Rodney Eichenberger, Director of the University of Southern California Chamber Choir, rehearsed the choir on the second day of its rehearsal weekend. In addition to the workshop, the singers had the opportunity to attend a concert that evening featuring one of Eichenberger's other ensembles, the Los Angeles Chamber Choir.<sup>15</sup> The May session also brought the AHC's first performance. On Sunday morning the choir joined the senior congregation of Southminster United Church singing two pieces from Haydn's *The Creation* for their Mother's Day services.

In August the AHC met for its third session, a summer retreat in Camrose. Over the course of the four-day retreat, the choristers rehearsed both as an ensemble and as individual sections. Ferguson led nearly fifteen hours of combined rehearsal, while sectional rehearsals were led by guest clinicians, one of whom was Marilyn Perkins, a Calgary conductor whom the Board would choose to conduct the Alberta Youth Choir

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<sup>13</sup> AHC program, 1982.

<sup>14</sup> "Mount Royal Kantorei Choir: Calgary Performing Arts Photographers," Joan's Blog, Fox Foto, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://foxfoto.ca/blog/index.php/2012/03/13/mount-royal-kantorei-choir-calgary-performing-arts-photographers/>.

<sup>15</sup> "1982 Alberta Honour Choir," *1982 Annual Report*, 1982, 5.

the following year.<sup>16</sup> The end of this session culminated in an informal concert for the choristers' families as well as the Board members of the ACF.<sup>17</sup>

The first weekend of October provided two more performance opportunities for the group. Following rehearsals at Red Deer College, the choir presented its first public engagement in the form of a joint concert with the Red Deer College Concert Choir. The finale of that concert featured both ensembles in a joint performance of another selection from Haydn's *The Creation*. The AHC concluded the weekend by singing for the Innisfail United Church's services on Sunday morning. Both these performances showed signs that the ACF's new program was already a success. The choir was reaching large audiences in its efforts to promote choral music; the auditorium for the Red Deer College concert had been sold to capacity. Also, the singers demonstrated excellence in choral singing; the Innisfail congregation was so impressed by the AHC's performance that they insisted the choir sing additional selections following the service.<sup>18</sup>

The Alberta Honour Choir's season came to a close in November at the annual combined conference of the CBDA and ACF. This year's conference was held in Lethbridge, and, as had been the APC's tradition, the AHC performed with the Alberta Honour Band in a joint concert on closing night. The choir did not tour Alberta following the conference as it would in later years. Instead, it gave one additional performance in Calgary at Southminster United Church.<sup>19</sup> This concert was part of the Mount Royal

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<sup>16</sup> McCready, interview.

<sup>17</sup> "1982 Alberta Honour Choir," *1982 Annual Report*, 1982, 5.

<sup>18</sup> "1982 Alberta Honour Choir," *1982 Annual Report*, 1982, 5.

<sup>19</sup> This is now known as River Park Church (3818-14A St. SW, Calgary)

College Choral Music Series, and was arranged by Brian Trevor, a member of the ACF Board who taught at the Conservatory of Music at Mount Royal College at the time.<sup>20</sup>

The Board introduced a tour to the honour choir's schedule the following year, in 1983, but not as an event following the fall conference. Instead, the tour was a separate session scheduled for the first weekend in October. Presumably, because the tour increased the cost of the program, the Board was motivated to make significant changes to the choir's structure and schedule to reduce expenses. Lethbridge was eliminated from the list of audition locations. This eliminated some of the costs of the audition process but did not hinder recruitment; singer turnout was greater than the previous year: over 100 applicants auditioned for the program.<sup>21</sup>

Instead of meeting for five sessions over the course of the year, the choir would assemble on only three occasions.<sup>22</sup> Regional rehearsals were scheduled prior to the summer retreat so local choristers could rehearse without driving too great a distance.<sup>23</sup> The choir's final session still coincided with the ACF's combined conference with the CBDA. This year that conference would take place in Calgary from October 27–29. Unlike the previous year, the AYC would present its own concert separate from the Alberta Honour Band.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious change to the program was to the honour choir's name. Following the success of the AHC's summer session and concert in August of 1982, the

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<sup>20</sup> "Artistic Directors," Choir, The Festival Chorus, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <http://www.thefestivalchorus.com/choir/artistic-directors/>.

<sup>21</sup> "1983 Alberta Youth Choir," *1983 Annual Report*, 1983, 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>24</sup> AYC Program, 1983.

Board changed the name of the ensemble to the Alberta Youth Choir.<sup>25</sup> This new name mirrored the name of the Ontario Youth Choir, the program on which the Alberta Honour Choir was based.<sup>26</sup>

The AYC's tour consisted of concerts in Red Deer and Edmonton. This was not the tour of later seasons, which would bring the choir to smaller city centres in an effort to support and promote excellence in choral music. The Board's primary goal for this tour appears to have been increased exposure and recognition of the AYC program. As such, the choir began its weekend with a joint concert with the Red Deer College Concert Choir, the ensemble with whom it had enjoyed a large audience the previous year. Following that concert, the AYC travelled to Edmonton to perform at Concordia College.<sup>27</sup> As a major city centre, and the location of the Federation's offices, Edmonton offered the choir a high-profile performance opportunity in the choral community.

1983 was also a significant year for the AYC in that it broadened the program's objectives. The provincial honour choir had been created to provide young singers with educational and formative choral experiences, and to offer conductors greater opportunities and exposure, but by commissioning a new Canadian choral composition, the Board expanded the program's goals to include the support and promotion of composers as well.<sup>28</sup> In January of that year, Canadian composer Violet Archer agreed to write a new work for the honour choir.<sup>29</sup> *The Cat and the Moon*, a nearly five-minute

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes, 29 Aug 1982, ACF.

<sup>26</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>27</sup> "1983 Alberta Youth Choir," *1983 Annual Report*, 1983, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes, 30 Aug 1986, ACF.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes, 22 Jan 1983, ACF.

long work setting Yeats' poem of the same name, was premiered at the AYC's concert at the CBDA/ACF conference in Calgary on Saturday, October 29 at 4:00pm.<sup>30</sup>

Funding from the provincial government in the form of lottery monies played a significant role in the way the Federation structured the Alberta Youth Choir. ACF's primary sources of funding will be discussed in detail in a future section, but for now it is sufficient to say that increases in government funding allowed the Board to model the youth choir's 1984 season after the structure of its first season. Five sessions were planned, the last of which, again, coincided with the ACF's combined conference with the CBDA in the fall. This particular conference adopted a new name, the Alberta Music Conference (AMC), which it would keep until 2007.<sup>31</sup>

As the season progressed it became clear that AYC choristers had difficulty committing to five sessions of rehearsals. Following the choir's first rehearsal in February, a number of choristers informed the choir's conductor, Marilyn Perkins, that they were going to miss the next session in June. The ACF realized it needed to implement new policies if the program was to remain active. At a Board meeting in March it was decided that a detailed rehearsal schedule of all yearly sessions needed to be finalized at the beginning of the year. Choristers would receive this schedule and commit to all rehearsals at the time of their audition. As an additional measure, the Board redesigned its refund policy to be contingent on choir members' attendance.<sup>32</sup>

The choir's busy schedule was not the only element of the program that challenged attendance this year. The Board was forced to introduce a \$100 registration

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<sup>30</sup> Minutes, 30 May 1983, ACF.

<sup>31</sup> "1984 Alberta Youth Choir," *1984 Annual Report*, 1984, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes, 3 Mar 1984, ACF.

fee to offset the increasing costs of the youth choir.<sup>33</sup> Although this fee was higher than the nominal fee of previous years, it still covered less than a third of the cost of each chorister to attend the program.<sup>34</sup> The combination of the increased fee with an unfinalized rehearsal schedule led to the highest dropout rate in the AYC to date.<sup>35</sup> Fifty-two choristers had been admitted into the choir, but only forty individuals performed in the final concert at the AMC.<sup>36</sup>

1984 was also a challenging year for the Federation's Executive Director. Madge McCready had assumed primary responsibility for the organization and implementation of the Alberta Youth Choir in its first two years. However, as the ACF grew as an organization, McCready found it increasingly difficult to fulfill her obligations to both the Federation and the honour choir. The Board realized it needed to create a dedicated AYC Committee to assume the responsibility of organizing the choir's future seasons.<sup>37</sup> This committee was formed in 1985. It comprised two past conductors of the AYC (David Ferguson – 1982, and Marilyn Perkins – 1983), the AYC's current conductor (Brian Trevor), and the choir's business manager, Gerry Johnston.<sup>38</sup> In addition to event planning, the committee discussed issues with the honour choir's current format and how to best address them. Committee members did not rely only upon their own experience to answer these questions; a special report the Federation had requisitioned the previous year also provided insight.

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<sup>33</sup> Minutes, 20 Jun 1983, ACF.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes, 30 May 1983, ACF.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes, 22 Sep 1984, ACF.

<sup>36</sup> AYC Program, 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Minutes, 15 Jan 1984, ACF.

<sup>38</sup> "Alberta Youth Choir Report," *1985 Annual Report*, 1985, 11.



In March of 1984 the Alberta Choral Federation initiated the Regional Program Project, a survey of seventy choral musicians from across Alberta. One of the Program Project's goals was to identify the needs of choral conductors and programs throughout the province. The ACF could use this information to develop and maintain successful projects in the future. A number of surveyed individuals believed that "the Federation should become involved in encouraging and/or supporting the touring of Alberta choirs.... because...seeing and hearing a good choir is extremely beneficial and important for the growth and understanding of choral music."<sup>39</sup> Some of the project's insights pertained directly to the Alberta Youth Choir. Certain individuals questioned the AYC's cost effectiveness in terms of the few performance opportunities it afforded the ensemble during the year. Was the ACF "getting its monies [*sic*] worth in terms of publicity and exposure?"<sup>40</sup>

The Board took these comments to heart as they directed the AYC Committee's preparations for the Youth Choir's 1985 season. In order to increase its public profile a concert was scheduled during each of the choir's four sessions that year. As the AYC was to meet only once, in May, prior to its second session in August, the summer retreat was extended by two days and relocated to a summer camp facility. The choir moved away from the Camrose Lutheran College campus in Camrose to Camp Caroline, located outside Red Deer.<sup>41</sup>

Prioritizing the addition of concerts to the AYC schedule dramatically transformed its fourth session in October. The Committee planned a tour that would

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<sup>39</sup> Clive A. F. Padfield, *Alberta Choral Federation Regional Program Project Report*, Binder: Minutes 83–87, March 2, 1985, 9 (hereafter cited as Padfield, *Project Report*, 1985).

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> "Alberta Youth Choir Report," *1985 Annual Report*, 1985, 11.

surround the honour choir's performance at the Alberta Music Conference. The youth choir performed in Grande Prairie on October 24, followed by two performances in Edmonton on October 26 and 27. On Sunday, October 27 the choir delivered its annual performance at the AMC in Red Deer, and travelled to Lethbridge on the 28<sup>th</sup> to offer the final concert of its fourth session in Lethbridge. The AYC also assembled in December of that year. Although not on the original schedule, a fifth session was added to the 1985 season in September. The choir would reunite on Sunday, December 8 for a joint concert with the Calgary Youth Orchestra and Vancouver Youth Orchestra in Calgary.<sup>42</sup>

Concerts were not the Federation's only tool for increasing the public profile of the AYC that year. It invested more financial resources into improving the honour choir's image than it had in previous years. For the first time, the Board developed a brochure advertising the Alberta Youth Choir program. This brochure would be mailed to schools around the province well in advance of the season, urging young singers to audition for the program in January.<sup>43</sup> The Board also improved the appearance of the AYC's concert programs. In 1985, the programs were printed on thick, glossy paper and included photographs of choristers rehearsing, taken during previous sessions.

The Board's efforts to increase the AYC's profile escalated in September of 1985 with the hiring of a firm to manage the youth choir program: Performing Arts Coordination and Education Services (PACES). PACES promised to manage administration and advertising for the Alberta Youth Choir, as well as write applications to various granting bodies, for a percentage of choir's operating budget.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately,

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes, 14 Sep 1985, ACF.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes, 17 Nov, 1984, ACF.

<sup>44</sup> Minutes, 14 Sep 1985, ACF.

the Federation's contract with PACES would create problems for the AYC the following year.

In a Board meeting of January 18, 1986, some members expressed concern with regard to the amount of money the Federation had been allocating to the AYC program. Besides the Alberta Music Conference, the Alberta Youth Choir had consistently been the ACF's most expensive project. Since its establishment in 1982, the Alberta Choral Federation had allotted anywhere from 12–25% of its annual operating budget to running the AYC. It was suggested that the program be re-evaluated to discover a way to offer choristers similar experiences with a more streamlined budget. The Federation's new contract with PACES, which only increased the money it spent on the honour choir, did not help matters.

PACES attempted to increase the profile of the AYC in a few different ways. They further improved the appearance of the choir's promotional materials; the youth choir brochure in 1986 was printed on glossy paper and included the same photographs printed on the concert program the previous year. Choristers received special thank-you cards, emblazoned with the AYC logo, to give to families that billeted them during the various sessions.

The management firm also arranged three high-profile concerts for the season. In its September session, the AYC performed afternoon and evening concerts at Victoria Composite High School in Edmonton for students from fifteen high schools across the city.<sup>45</sup> The youth choir also presented a benefit concert for the Cancer Society in Calgary as the final performance of its tour following the Alberta Music Conference.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes, 30 Aug 1986, ACF.

<sup>46</sup> "Alberta Youth Choir Report," *1985 Annual Report*, 1985, 11.

Unfortunately, apart from these performance engagements and the improvements to the AYC's promotional materials, the engagement of PACES had yielded few substantive results. Since the Federation hired PACES, Madge McCready had observed that the company was unable to complete most of its assigned duties in a timely manner. This ultimately hindered the organization of the honour choir more than it helped: a rehearsal session listed on the brochure for the end of June had to be cancelled because the venue was not solidified; and the year-end tour was one day shorter than in 1985 because of a lack of performance opportunities. By September the Board moved to terminate ACF's contract with PACES.<sup>47</sup>

Inefficient governance was not the only problem the Alberta Youth Choir faced in 1986. Support from choral programs across Alberta dwindled, effectively making the youth choir an amalgam of only a few different choirs in the province. This problem was manifest at the AYC's first session at Camrose Lutheran College in May. Of the forty-four singers admitted to the choir, only twenty-eight attended the session. These singers were missing because they were all members of the same jazz choir, led by Red Deer conductor Keith Peterson, and had been scheduled to perform at Expo '86 at that time.<sup>48</sup> This systemic issue was pointedly articulated in a letter from ACF's past president Jonathan Mohr in response to the Board's request for feedback on the AYC's format:

In fact, institutional support for the choir is almost non-existent. If it weren't for Mount Royal and Keith Peterson in Red Deer, you could shut the youth choir down – if it depended on institutions. Rather, the choir is dependent on supportive families, personal initiative, and its own alumni.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Minutes, 13 Sep 1986, ACF.

<sup>48</sup> "AYC Committee Report," Minutes, 24 May 1986, ACF.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Mohr to the Board of Directors of The Alberta Choral Federation, December 12, 1986, 1 (hereafter cited as Mohr to ACF, 1986).

Some Board members had believed the format of the honour choir program itself to be responsible, that auditions favoured applicants in larger city centres while neglecting those from rural settings.<sup>50</sup> Mohr disagreed with this point of interpretation of the program:

If the Alberta Youth Choir does not support high school music programs, it is because a) there aren't very many, and b) they don't avail themselves of the opportunity to be supported...

In my view, the essential problem is that the Alberta Youth Choir accurately reflects the true situation in Alberta, and expressions of frustration with the Choir are in fact expression of frustration with the way things are. There are pockets of musical activity here and there around the province, and there are numerous individuals who participate in musical experiences by personal initiative in spite of where they live.<sup>51</sup>

This did not mean Mohr found the program without fault. In the second half of his letter he stated:

[I]t is my firmly held opinion that what the school music programs need in the way of support is not another opportunity for a mediocre experience that achieves half-results, but a truly exceptional, inspiring, educational, challenging, intensive, 'mountain-top' experience. When the present format of the AYC was adopted, this was precisely the rationale that was cited, and it is as valid today as then...

In its present format, the AYC barely approximates this goal of serving as a model of the polished performance of demanding literature. The gaps between the rehearsal weekends, the absentee rate due to conflicts..., and the pressure to provide a number of performances too early in the process mitigate against achieving quick command of the music and arrival at a unified choral sound.<sup>52</sup>

The Board took Mohr's views seriously. They recommitted to the AYC as a "mountain-top experience" in 1987 in a symbolic gesture, by publishing a full-colour brochure bearing the title: "It's an Honour: Alberta Youth Choir."<sup>53</sup> Whether by increased publicity or word of mouth, the Board managed to locate those "pockets of musical

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<sup>50</sup> Padfield, *Project Report*, 1985.

<sup>51</sup> Mohr to ACF, 1986, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2–3.

<sup>53</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "It's An Honour: Alberta Youth Choir," Brochure for the Alberta Youth Choir, 1987 (hereafter cited as Brochure).

activity” that Mohr had mentioned. Ninety-six singers from twelve communities across Alberta auditioned for the 1987 youth choir. Of those singers, fifty-seven were accepted, the highest membership for the choir yet.<sup>54</sup>

The Board took a step towards the superior choral sound Mohr had alluded to by hiring the Alberta Youth Choir’s first vocal coach in 1987, Sylvia Dyck. Dyck’s primary responsibility was to offer vocal training to the choristers individually during the six-day August retreat at Camp Caroline. Her presence was especially important to Anthony Hodgetts, the choir’s first blind chorister. Dyck spent hours of extra time with Hodgetts helping him learn repertoire, something that would not have been possible in earlier iterations of the AYC.<sup>55</sup>

The Board had begun to re-evaluate the ways in which the AYC could act as a model for other choirs even before requesting advice from Mohr. In September of 1986 the Committee decided that the youth choir could best meet this objective by performing for other high school students. It was also important that the ensemble offer concerts in smaller centres that might not normally have access to a choir of the AYC’s caliber.<sup>56</sup> As such, the Committee planned a fall tour for the 1987 season that would bring the youth choir to five smaller cities and towns in central Alberta over the course of two days. However, such a tour did not take place. Leonard Ratzlaff, the conductor of the AYC that year, stated that university students were unable to commit to the tour. They were worried about how it would conflict with their midterms.<sup>57</sup> As a compromise, the choir presented

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<sup>54</sup> “Program Report 1987,” *1987 Annual Report*, 1987, 3–10.

<sup>55</sup> Leonard Ratzlaff, “Interim Report to ACF Board: Alberta Youth Choir,” 16 Sep 1987 (hereafter cited as Ratzlaff, “Report,” 1987).

<sup>56</sup> Minutes, 13 Sep 1986, ACF.

<sup>57</sup> Minutes, 30 Jun 1987, ACF.

a single concert at All Saint's Anglican Cathedral in Edmonton on the Sunday following the Alberta Music Conference.<sup>58</sup>

The Board recommitted to using the AYC as a tool for choral advocacy the following year. In January of 1988, the Federation adopted a new mission statement:

To achieve in Alberta an understanding and appreciation of choral music as a symbolic resource which will be acknowledged and supported through public policy and active participation. Accordingly, the Alberta Choral Federation (Association) is committed to promoting choral music within the communities of Alberta.<sup>59</sup>

Crystalizing the Federation's goals in this way motivated the Board and the AYC Committee to make further changes to the youth choir program, most notably to its annual fall tour. In past seasons, that tour had lasted only two days, and, as previously mentioned, did not even occur the year before. In 1988 the AYC's tour was expanded to a four-day event. Following the Alberta Music Conference in Calgary, the choir presented five concerts across southern Alberta, three of which were for high school audiences, in Medicine Hat, Brooks, Taber, Lethbridge, and the town of Coleman in the Crowsnest Pass.

The other notable change to the AYC's 1988 season was the commission of a Canadian choral work for the second year in a row. Since Violet Archer had written the honour choir's first new choral composition in 1983, the Federation established a pattern of commissioning works every other year. Gerhard Krapf wrote a work for the choir in 1985, and Ron Hannah had written *Alleluia* in 1987. By commissioning a piece for a second year in succession, the ACF showed its commitment to the AYC as an advocate for choral composers as well as for fine choral singing. This commission was unique in

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<sup>58</sup> Ratzlaff, "Report," 1987.

<sup>59</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "Alberta Choral Federation Policy Manual," 1988, 1.

the choir's history in that it involved the creation of new text as well as music.

*Cloudpainting* was produced by two professors from the University of Lethbridge:

Martin Oordt, professor of English, and Dean Blair, professor of music. Oordt wrote poetry inspired by a painting from Michigan artist Chris Overoorde, after which Blair set the poem to music.<sup>60</sup>

In 1989 the Alberta Choral Federation furthered its advocative goals for the AYC indirectly by creating a new provincial ensemble, the All-Province High School Choir Camp (APHSCC). The idea for the camp had been introduced four years earlier, in the Regional Program Project Report in 1985:

It was suggested that there may be a place for a non-auditioned province-wide choir which would give access to the less well-trained singer who would certainly benefit from the experience.<sup>61</sup>

In his letter of December 12, 1986, Jonathon Mohr echoed this idea:

It may very well be that there is a need for a once-a-year 'quickie' experience for a large number of high school singers (non-auditioned), but this should be provided in addition to the current format [the AYC program], not as its replacement.<sup>62</sup>

The Board had begun considering implementing such a program in March of 1987 following a meeting of past-president John Pauls with the Nova Scotia Choral Federation (NSCF). In that meeting the NSCF discussed their Fall Youth Sing program, which gathered youth across the province for a weekend of singing, dancing and performing, and which was a source of revenue for its Federation.<sup>63</sup> The ACF realized that

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<sup>60</sup> Dave Mabell, "Premiere of Cloudpainting highlights concert," *The Lethbridge Herald*, November 1, 1988.

<sup>61</sup> Padfield, *Project Report*, 1985, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Mohr to ACF, 1986, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes, 7 Mar 1987, ACF.



implementing a similar program could not only add to their revenue, but also act as an introduction to the AYC for its choristers.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, the All-Province High School Choir Camp fulfilled its role as a recruitment tool for the Alberta Youth Choir the year of its inception. The ACF appointed Robert de Frece as the conductor of the first APHSCC in 1989. De Frece was also retained as the AYC's conductor that year. The Board hoped that by assigning the same conductor to both ensembles, singers in the camp would be interested in auditioning for the youth choir; they would feel safer and more welcome at the prospect of a familiar director. The camp was to take place in February. This allowed camp choristers adequate time to prepare for AYC auditions in April. However, inclement weather forced the Board to postpone the APHSCC until only days before AYC auditions.<sup>65</sup> Despite this setback, several camp choristers auditioned for the youth choir that season.<sup>66</sup>

This innovative recruitment strategy was not the only method used to increase AYC membership in 1989; the Committee changed the time of the Youth choir's auditions in an effort to reduce the loss of choristers between sessions. As previously mentioned, youth choir auditions had been scheduled for April, three months later than usual. McCready explained to the Board that singers were more likely to know their summer and fall term schedules in April than in January. Later auditions would likely increase chorister attendance at subsequent sessions.<sup>67</sup> At the AYC's second session in

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes, 19 Sep 1987, ACF.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes, 4 Mar 1989, ACF.

<sup>66</sup> Robert J. de Frece, "Report of the Conductor," Minutes, 18 Nov 1989, ACF (hereafter cited as de Frece, "Report," ACF).

<sup>67</sup> Madge McCready, "Executive Director's Report," *1988 Annual Report*, 1988, 4 (hereafter cited as McCready, "ED Report,").

September, it became clear these retention efforts were successful; for the first time in the history of the Alberta Youth Choir, every member was present.<sup>68</sup>

Delaying the month of auditions created a cascade of changes in the remainder of the AYC's schedule. Spring rehearsals were no longer possible, reducing the choir's number of sessions from four to three. The summer retreat at Camp Caroline would serve as the group's first gathering. Unwilling to sacrifice the rehearsal time lost by eliminating its spring session, the Committee nearly doubled the length of the AYC's camp.<sup>69</sup> For four years (1985–1988) the choir had spent six days at the summer retreat; for the next three years (1989–1991) the choir would remain at the camp for ten days of intensive rehearsal. The developments the AYC Committee made to the program in 1989 marked a three-year period of stability in the structure and schedule of the honour choir, the longest in its history.

The increase in rehearsal time at Camp Caroline caused the AYC's expenses to grow dramatically. A ten-day retreat was more expensive than a six-day camp and spring rehearsal weekend combined; choristers had been billeted during the spring workshop which greatly reduced costs. The Federation's Annual reports show an increase of over \$11,000 in AYC expenditures in 1989 compared to 1988. As a result, the Board was forced to raise the fee for the youth choir to \$150, its first increase in five years.<sup>70</sup> The following year, in 1990, the Board raised the AYC's fees again to \$175 in order to further offset the costs of the program.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Program Report," *1989 Annual Report*, 1989, 5–11.

<sup>69</sup> McCready, "ED Report," *1988 Annual Report*, 1988, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes, 16 Sep 1988, ACF.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes, 8 Nov 1989, ACF.

The new schedule had a positive effect on the choir's membership. In his report on the AYC program in 1989, de Frece stated that "[t]he members of the choir demonstrated good musicianship, commitment and cooperation throughout our time together."<sup>72</sup> There had been a misunderstanding in the booking of Camp Caroline that year, and the choir was forced to spend the first weekend of the retreat rehearsing at Sunnybrook United Church in the nearby city of Red Deer. This mistake turned out to be fortuitous as it provided the choir with an additional performance opportunity at the Sunday morning services of that same church. The "adrenaline rush,"<sup>73</sup> as de Frece described it, of having to prepare to sing only two days after first assembling "seemed to contribute to an early feeling of cohesiveness and sense of purpose for the choir." De Frece believed this cohesiveness, as opposed to scheduling changes, motivated perfect attendance at the September session: "This can probably be attributed to the fact that the members of the choir now knew each other well and were anxious to get together again."<sup>74</sup>

The AYC continued to operate successfully for the next two years. In 1990 David Ferguson returned to conduct the choir, which had its second highest membership since the program's inception at fifty-one singers. Membership remained stable in 1991; the Board accepted forty-three singers into the ensemble. The Federation also increased its efforts to defray the costs of the AYC program. In 1990 the Committee began selling advertising space in the tour program to local businesses. That year's program featured advertisements from six local companies in addition to the customary recognition of government sponsors. The Committee expanded the layout of the tour program in 1991 to

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<sup>72</sup> de Frece, "Report," ACF, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 2.

include both a cover and an insert. The cover acknowledged the AYC's various benefactors while the insert contained marketing for businesses resident to the AYC's various tour locations. These inserts would be changed according to the city in which the choir was performing.<sup>75</sup>

That same year, the Federation organized two benefit concerts for the Alberta Youth Choir. The first took place during the choir's September session and featured the Calgary Junior Youth Choir as well as *Ad Libitum*, an ensemble originally created by AYC alumni.<sup>76</sup> The second benefit concert immediately followed the Alberta Music Conference and featured three of Edmonton's most prominent choral ensembles: the Richard Eaton Singers, the Da Camera Singers, and Pro Coro Canada.<sup>77</sup> By scheduling the concert on the Sunday following the AMC, the Committee took advantage of support from the delegates as well as the guest choirs' local audiences.

Despite signs that the AYC was flourishing, there were disagreements among the Board as to its sustainability. The program was expensive. Since 1988 the choir had cost the Federation an average of nearly \$36,000 a year to operate. Board members proposed various ways in which the ACF could cut costs to the program: limit choir membership to forty singers; eliminate the tour from the schedule; increase fees to \$200. These changes alone would decrease expenses by almost \$6,000.<sup>78</sup> Two AYC choristers joined the Committee in 1991 to offer a different perspective. They suggested that stronger

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<sup>75</sup> Marla McCready to Joanne Dyck, October 12, 1993.

<sup>76</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>77</sup> Minutes, 15 May 1991, ACF.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes, 8 Mar 1991, ACF.

advocacy for the youth choir in high school programs throughout the province might help its success.<sup>79</sup>

By May of 1991 it became clear that the ACF was contemplating cancelling the Alberta Youth Choir program. Aware of these potential plans, John Mahon (a former manager of the AYC, now General Manager of Pro Coro Canada) wrote a letter to ACF president Malcolm Edwards. The letter praised the youth choir and its influence on young singers, and implored the Board to continue to fund it: “We at Pro Coro Canada urge you to maintain this programme.”<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, Marc Hafso, the AYC’s conductor that year, felt differently. Hafso reported that choristers’ behaviour was not indicative of the sense of honour and responsibility a member of the youth choir should exemplify. He felt that some of the choristers were lethargic, complacent, and uncommitted to achieving the superior results expected of the ensemble. To prevent these issues in the future, Hafso proposed the age range of the choir be narrowed; too great a disparity in maturity existed in an ensemble comprising students of ages sixteen to twenty-three.<sup>81</sup> He suggested other changes as well: a restriction imposed on the number of years a chorister could participate in the program; a list of standards and expectations that choristers would review upon acceptance into the choir; and a higher fee, a portion of which would be returned to the choristers following attendance at all sessions.<sup>82</sup>

The Federation’s 1991 Annual Report, a collection of messages from ACF staff as well as smaller reports on individual programs, did not portray a better picture of the AYC’s current status. For the first time, the report on the AYC did not refer to the

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<sup>79</sup> Minutes, 9 Mar 1991, ACF.

<sup>80</sup> John Mahon to Malcolm Edwards, May 16, 1991.

<sup>81</sup> Minutes, 30 May 1992, ACF.

<sup>82</sup> Minutes, 21 Sep 1991, ACF.

program's success, describe its benefit to the choristers, list its yearly sessions, or even mention the concerts the choir had offered. Instead, the report listed proposed solutions to AYC's "problems that had occurred in previous years."<sup>83</sup> This was followed by an acknowledgement of various individuals and choral organizations whose sponsorship had facilitated the choir's operation that year.<sup>84</sup> The subtext of the report was clear: the AYC was becoming a financial burden on the Federation. In a meeting that November, the Board moved to suspend the Alberta Youth Choir for 1992 in order to conduct a thorough review of the program and its funding. This decision may have been symptomatic of a larger issue troubling the ACF that year: the uncertainty of the Federation's fiscal future. A discussion of the funding the organization received from government sources will help clarify the Board's motivations.

#### ACF Sources of Funding, 1972–1991:

In the first six years of the ACDA's history, operational funding was virtually non-existent. The money the Association received came exclusively from Alberta Culture by way of reimbursement for expenses incurred operating small, yearly programs like the massed church choir in 1973, the Choir Clinic in 1974, or the ACDA's yearly conferences. When Alberta Culture began funding the Executive Director position in 1978 (under the title of Executive Secretary) the ACDA had the organizational capacity to present more ambitious programs such as the All-Province Choir. The following year, in 1979, the Association began receiving money from the Western Canada Lottery

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<sup>83</sup> "Programmes and Services Report," *1991 Annual Report*, 1991, 4.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 3–7.

Foundation. These funds were solely responsible for the solvency of the ACDA until 1998.<sup>85</sup>

Canada's federal and provincial governments had been interested in using lottery monies as a source of funding ever since 1973, when Quebec's Organizing Committee founded a provincial lottery to subsidize the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. In 1974, Canada's four western provinces incorporated the Western Canada Lottery Foundation to help support sports, and arts and culture initiatives in the province. The federal government joined the initiative in 1976 by instituting Loto-Canada Inc.,<sup>86</sup> a corporation which donated 12.5% of its proceeds to provincial governments.<sup>87</sup> In June of 1979, the ACDA received a three-year license to receive Western Canada Lottery monies from Alberta Culture.<sup>88</sup> At that point, the future of lottery funding was unsure. The Board knew the ACDA was to receive between \$25,000–\$50,000 but were unsure as to when the money would arrive or what the amount would be.<sup>89</sup> "It might be, we get a cheque for \$3,000...maybe two months later we get \$13,000."<sup>90</sup> As a result, the Board formed a Lottery Fund Committee to make decisions regarding the use of the funds.<sup>91</sup>

The government had regulated that 25% of lottery monies be set aside for future years, leaving 75% for operational expenses. The Lottery Fund Committee decided to restrict the ACDA's spending even further; the Board would use 40% of the funds for its own use (25% for operation, and 15% for programs and services), and 20% to establish a

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<sup>85</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>86</sup> The federal government shut down the corporation in 1979 after opposition from the provinces.

<sup>87</sup> "Lottery," Business, The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed Aug 4, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lottery/>.

<sup>88</sup> Minutes, 8 Nov 1979, ACF.

<sup>89</sup> Minutes, 11 Jan 1980, ACF.

<sup>90</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>91</sup> Minutes, 11 May 1979, ACF.

development program that would provide financial assistance to other choirs in the province.<sup>92</sup> The remaining 40% would be placed in an endowment fund, the interest of which could fund the Association's programs in the future.<sup>93</sup>

With lottery amounts increasing every year, the board was able to offer more involved, and therefore expensive, programs such as the Alberta Honour Choir in 1982. By 1984 the Choral Federation was having difficulties with its self-imposed restrictions. It now required 40% of the lottery funds for operational expenses. Fortunately, government regulations had relaxed, mandating that only 15% be saved for future use.<sup>94</sup> The remaining 45% could be used for programs and services.<sup>95</sup>

In 1987 the ACF's lottery allotments stabilized at \$125,000 annually. The Federation had become so dependent on the funds that a variation in the allowance would mean an interruption to its programs or services. By 1990 the Board realized that "ACF [could not] operate, or even maintain current level without the lottery funding, which could be decreased. Funding not only needs to be maintained at present level, but a need exists for additional funding."<sup>96</sup> The Board decided to recommit themselves to corporate sponsorship as a potential source for this additional revenue.

It had been the ACF's goal to approach the private sector for funds since the AHC was founded in 1982.<sup>97</sup> Jonathan Mohr had recommended this approach in a March Board meeting, but, despite the launch of a corporate fund-raising campaign, by the end

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<sup>92</sup> Minutes, 9 Nov 1979, ACF.

<sup>93</sup> This first occurred in 1999, when all interest earned by the endowment fund was transferred to the ACF's General Operating Fund.

<sup>94</sup> Minutes, 26 Oct 1985, ACF.

<sup>95</sup> Minutes, 22 Sep 1984, ACF.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes, 24 Nov 1990, ACF, 3.

<sup>97</sup> Minutes, 13 Mar 1982, ACF.



of 1983 the Board had had no real success at gaining substantial corporate support. It was at this time the ACF decided to raise the fees for the AYC program to \$100.<sup>98</sup>

Youth choir expenses continued to grow, and though the Board frequently addressed the idea of corporate funding, the ACF's first sponsorship proposal would not be created until 1989. This sponsorship package was intended for distribution to three large corporations: Shell, Dow Chemical, and the paper manufacturer Domtar, although it's not clear whether the Federation ever sent the package to the latter two companies.<sup>99</sup> Shell responded in October of that year by rejecting the proposal.

In 1990 the ACF redesigned its sponsorship package. Of the thirteen companies the Board had initially contacted, only a country music radio station in Camrose (CFCW 790) offered support. However, the Board was eventually able to secure funding from five other businesses, as the advertisements in the AYC's tour program that year attest.

Emboldened by its success, the Federation devoted more attention to its corporate sponsorship campaign in 1991: Board members approached numerous media outlets for free advertising for the AYC; local business and government bodies received letters inviting representatives to youth choir concerts, and the format of the tour program was altered to allow the inclusion of more advertising. Unfortunately, corporate support fell short of the results of the previous year. Sun Life Assurance contributed \$1000 to the AYC program, and CFCW advertised the choir's concerts at no cost to the Federation, but most donations to the youth choir came from ACF members.<sup>100</sup> The Federation's corporate funding wouldn't increase significantly for almost twenty years, and even then,

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<sup>98</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "Important Announcement: Alberta Youth Choir Auditions," in *Quires*, November 1983, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 4 (hereafter cited as *Quires*).

<sup>99</sup> Minutes, 13–15 Jan 1989, ACF.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes, 5 Sep 1991, ACF.

private sponsorship would continue to outstrip it.<sup>101</sup> The ACF's most significant source of revenue remained the Western Canada Lottery.

In 1991 the Federation perceived a change in the Ministry of Alberta Culture as a threat to the continuity of these essential funds. Culture had notified the Board of the impending establishment of a new Foundation that would amalgamate four government arts foundations into one, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA). To allow for the establishment and orientation of the AFA's new Board, financial allotments to all Provincial Arts Service Organizations such as the ACF would be frozen (meaning they would remain the same) the following year.<sup>102</sup> To compound the problem, Alberta Culture had recently experienced a change in staff which left the Ministry without personnel of musical background at the management level of the Arts Branch. Consequently, there would be no representative on the AFA Board who specialized in music. In 1993, when the AFA would resume the allocation of funds based on applications from individual organizations, there was no guarantee that the ACF would receive amounts similar to those to which it had become accustomed.<sup>103</sup>

#### AYC's Hiatus and Redevelopment:

Given the uncertainty of future funding, it is understandable that the ACF might choose to suspend its most expensive program. However, the Board's actions the following year suggest its motivations for postponing the youth choir were not simply financial. With the prospect of decreased funding on the horizon, one might assume that

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<sup>101</sup> Brendan Lord, Interview by Adam B. Robertson, July 13, 2018 (hereafter cited as Lord, Interview).

<sup>102</sup> McCready "ED Report," *1991 Annual Report*, 1991, 2–3.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes, 8 Nov 1991, ACF.

the Board would invest monies saved by suspending the AYC into the Federation's endowment fund, but they made no such investment. That Board had not deposited funds into the endowment since 1985, and would not add to it again until 1993, *after* the youth choir had resumed operation. Also, reinstating the AYC in 1993 was no more financially feasible than it would have been the previous year. At a Board meeting in March of 1992 a financial report indicated that both reinstating the AYC and maintaining a balanced budget would require cuts to multiple other programs. Even then, the youth choir would present a deficit of approximately \$12,000 to the Federation's annual budget.<sup>104</sup> Despite this information, the Board voted in September of that year to continue the AYC program.

Madge McCready offers a different explanation as to why the Board suspended the program:

There was some discontent among the membership about the amount of money spent on the Alberta Youth Choir... There were those who felt that it was too much money spent on an 'elite group'... In their eyes it didn't justify the expense, this elite group... The people who were members of the Association were largely School teachers who had *some* knowledge, and [were] eager to get more knowledge. So, you can understand that... they want that money spent to try and develop in their own communities, *something*... The Board decided that it was too costly for too few.<sup>105</sup>

Karen Hudson, a Board member during this time, remembers the disparity in maturity between choristers playing a role in the decision to suspend the youth choir: "[I]t was concern for the disparity in age from a group of people that didn't have connection"—meaning that there were sometimes difficulties combining a group of young singers from across the province who did not know or normally work with each other. During the AYC's 1991 season a conflict arose between a sixteen-year-old

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<sup>104</sup> "Notes to the Proposed 1992–93 Budget," Minutes, 13 Mar 1992, ACF.

<sup>105</sup> McCready, Interview.

chorister and a group of older choristers, and the program was suspended in order to re-evaluate its structure.

The outlook for the future of ACF's funding, and the future of AYC, began to improve in April. The Federation received a letter from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts indicating that it would continue to provide lottery funds in the amount of \$125,000 for two additional years, at which point the allotment of each provincial arts organization would be re-evaluated.<sup>106</sup> The AYC Committee had begun writing a proposal of recommended changes to the youth choir program for the Board's consideration. It had received letters from Leonard Ratzlaff and Bob de Frece, both former conductors of the AYC, urging the reinstatement of the program.<sup>107</sup> The Committee attached de Frece's letter as an appendix to their proposal. This letter not only addressed the issue of the AYC as a substantial financial investment, but also aptly summarized and commented on the issues raised by Hafso, McCready, and Hudson:

I consider the Alberta Youth Choir to be one of the most important programs of the Alberta Choral Federation. It has proven to be a catalyst in the growth of the choral art for a number of young Albertans. As you are well aware, Ad Libitum would not exist if it were not for the AYC. Similarly, a number of young singers have come to sing in Len Ratzlaff's U of A Madrigal Singers and into the U of A Mixed Chorus to sing for me because of contacts they made in the Alberta Youth Choir. We are all benefactors of the work of the AYC, and in the future, I have strong hopes that past members of the choir will go on to become choral conductors in schools and in the community.

I am aware that the Alberta Youth Choir is an expensive undertaking, but I firmly believe that it is money well spent....

Regarding the level of satisfaction that the conductors of the AYC have (or have not) enjoyed, I can only reiterate the fact that I have no complaints whatsoever about the level of cooperation that I experienced during my tenure as conductor of the AYC.... We are speaking of human beings with their many failings and foibles....

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<sup>106</sup> Minutes, 15 Apr 1992, ACF.

<sup>107</sup> McCready, Interview.

Please relay to the Board of the Alberta Choral Federation my sincere hope that the AYC will again become an annual program. It is just too valuable to lose.<sup>108</sup>

The AYC Committee concurred with de Frece's observations. In its report to the Board on May 30, it stated:

[W]e have become only more convinced that the project is a very important one. The money spent on this project provides choral opportunities and enrichment for many people in our province. It must be recognized that not only the singers involved benefit from the experience. The tree then branches out to the many people with whom these 'chorally enriched' youngsters later come in contact. As a choral federation, support of this program is one of our very important contributions to choral music in this province.<sup>109</sup>

This wasn't to say that the Committee believed the AYC should remain unchanged; its report made numerous recommendations for changes to the Alberta Youth Choir Program. The Committee believed that the All-Province High School Choir Camp, which had continued to operate during the youth choir's hiatus, should be preparatory to the AYC both in terms of prestige and age. The age of APHSCC participants should remain 15-18, while the age of youth choir participants should be narrowed to 18-23. This higher age limit would "increase [the] standard [of the choir] and may decrease behaviour problems." In support of these goals, the Committee proposed changes to the AYC's attendance and refund policy, and advised that a "contract of acceptance," outlining behavioural expectations, be presented to prospective choristers at their audition.<sup>110</sup>

Among the other changes the Committee proposed were mandatory yearly performances in Alberta's two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary, "to help increase

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<sup>108</sup> Robert J. de Frece to Julie Harris, April 2, 1992.

<sup>109</sup> "Alberta Youth Choir Committee Recommendations to the Board of Directors of ACF," Minutes, 30 May 1992, ACF, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

awareness and attract a wide choral audience.” To this end, these performances should take the form of a benefit concert shared with a local ensemble; “[j]oint concerts most easily expose AYC to audiences supportive of choral music.”<sup>111</sup> The choir would shift its focus to touring small city centres following the Alberta Music Conference.<sup>112</sup>

The Committee recommended that the Board continue to avail itself of conductors from Alberta. Not only did the decision to support local conductors fit the ACF’s mandate to support and promote Albertans making music, but it would keep the costs of the AYC program minimal. Local conductors’ travel expenses would be lower than conductors from other provinces or countries. Using Alberta conductors might also increase the choir’s revenue; they might attract an audience from their respective geographic centres. The main problem with this policy lay in its practicality; eventually the Federation would exhaust the number of appropriate conductors it could choose. The Committee acknowledged that there were more advantages to choosing an external conductor but decided to retain its previous policy for financial reasons.<sup>113</sup>

The Committee concluded that the schedule of the AYC needed almost no revision. The length of the summer camp would be halved in order to reduce costs, and the length of the tour would be shortened to two days instead of four, but the dates and regularity of the sessions were to remain untouched. Finally, the Committee proposed restarting the program with fees of \$200. This price more adequately reflected the Federation’s cost of the program for each chorister.<sup>114</sup> With these many revisions to discuss, the Board decided to postpone the vote to reinstitute the AYC until its September

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

meeting, at which point the motion was carried. The announcement that the AYC would return in 1993 was made to ACF members gathered at the Alberta Music Conference that fall as part of the Federation's Annual Report.

Reinstatement and Transformation of the AYC, 1993–1996:

The schedule for the AYC's 1993 season proceeded largely as the Committee had recommended. Choristers began their season with a five-day retreat at Camp Evergreen just north of Calgary. The choir's second session took place in Calgary and concluded in a joint concert with the Calgary Renaissance Singers and the Calgary Youth Choir. In a poetic gesture, the Board hired soloist Shelagh Tyreman, a chorister in the original Alberta Honour Choir in 1982, to sing Mozart's "Laudate Dominum" from his *Vesperae solennes de confessore*. Since her time in the choir, Tyreman had moved from Mount Royal College to the University of Toronto where she graduated with a vocal performance degree.<sup>115</sup> The Board also realized its goal of raising the profile of the AYC through its concerts; the Calgary benefit concert was recorded and broadcast by CBC.<sup>116</sup> Following the AMC in Banff, the choir embarked on a three-day tour of smaller centres in the province: Lethbridge, Coaldale, and Medicine Hat. In each of these locations the AYC presented joint concerts with local ensembles.

Not every element of the AYC's season was successful. The Committee found it more challenging to enlist singers than in previous years and had to make compromises to encourage recruitment. They delayed the audition application deadline twice and were

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<sup>115</sup> AYC Program, 1993.

<sup>116</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 1993, ACF.

forced to make exceptions to the choir's new age range by allowing students in grade eleven to audition.<sup>117</sup> In the end, only thirty-nine singers auditioned for the AYC, thirty of whom the Committee accepted into the program. By the end of the year the ensemble would comprise only twenty-seven singers.<sup>118</sup> The AYC's poor numbers may also have been due to faltering attendance at the APHSCC that same year. Only seventy-nine singers were enrolled in the program (typical membership was near 100) and there was a dearth of male singers as well. Finally, the AYC's higher fees in 1993 may have deterred potential applicants. The Board had raised the cost of the program to \$250 instead of the Committee's originally proposed \$200. The additional \$50 would be returned to the choristers in the form of a *per diem* that would cover any meals not provided by billeting families, but this was not clear in the brochure.<sup>119</sup>

Malcolm Edwards, past president of the Alberta Choral Federation, directed the AYC in 1993. His year-end report to the Board indicated that he did not experience the issues that had troubled some conductors in the past. Choristers demonstrated an excellent work ethic and got along well, "no cliques developed." There appeared to be no problems with maturity as a result of the age range. In fact, admitting singers younger than the Committee had originally planned contributed the quality of the ensemble; Edwards stated, "some of the better voices were in the younger members." Lack of musical ability, which the Committee had also considered when narrowing the age range, was not a hindrance. Admittedly, many of the choristers' sight-reading ability was poor, but their good ears and memories overcame this apparent shortcoming. Edwards summarized his feelings with regard to the age of the choir in this way, "perhaps a keen

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<sup>117</sup> Minutes, 23 Jan 1993, ACF.

<sup>118</sup> AYC Program, 1993.

<sup>119</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 1992, ACF.



desire to join the group coupled with a reasonable voice is more of a qualification than the attainment of a certain age.” He concluded, “I am very aware that the Alberta Youth Choir is a very large investment for the Federation. I feel that this year it has been worth every penny.”<sup>120</sup>

The value of the program did not diminish the Federation’s need to mitigate its expenses. Shortening the length of the summer retreat and fall tour reduced the cost of the AYC to under \$30,000 for the first time since 1986, but in 1993 the ACF seized upon a special opportunity to offset the youth choir’s cost. That year marked the tenth anniversary of the Alberta Youth Choir<sup>121</sup> as well as the year the Federation had designated for its twentieth-anniversary celebrations. As such, the Board organized a special benefit concert in support of the Alberta Youth Choir to take place concurrently with its twentieth-anniversary festivities at the beginning of May. The concert would comprise performances from four prominent Edmonton ensembles (Da Camera Singers, Greenwood Singers, Pro Coro Canada, and the Richard Eaton Singers) as well as a project choir composed entirely of AYC alumni. The time commitment for the new ensemble was difficult for most alumni; of the two hundred choristers contacted by the Federation, only forty-three sang in the concert. However, low membership did not prevent the choir from presenting several successful concerts over the weekend. The newly-assembled Alberta Alumni Youth Choir (AAYC) performed at the ACF’s twentieth-anniversary celebration on Saturday, May 1, followed by a Sunday morning service at Robertson Wesley United Church, and the benefit concert itself that afternoon at the same church.

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<sup>120</sup> Malcolm Edwards to Madge McCready, November 4, 1993, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Not including the year in which it was known as the Alberta Honour Choir.

The reinstatement of the Alberta Youth Choir was a success, although funding it was still a concern for the Federation. 1994 marked the final year of the freeze on funds distributed by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. As a result, the Board voted that, should the need arise in the future, the ACF could use more than the interest generated by the endowment fund and begin to draw on the principal.<sup>122</sup> The Federation also invested time in the development of a new sponsorship package. Unfortunately, this proposal met with limited success, as had previous packages, and earned the support of only two companies: Syncrude Canada Ltd., and The Gramophone.<sup>123</sup>

The AYC experienced more success in 1994 in terms of the number of auditionees who applied to the program; twenty more singers auditioned this year than in 1993. This may have been the result of increased exposure the AYC enjoyed from the previous years' concerts, or the expanded age range (16-23) that the Committee had been forced to adopt out of necessity. Regardless of the reason, the choir continued to work and sing well together. Debra Ollikkala, the director of the choir that year, referred to the choristers as "keen, accomplished choral musicians" in her report following the summer retreat.<sup>124</sup>

From 1993 to 1996 the format of the youth choir program was fairly consistent, with minor variances between the lengths of the summer retreat and second session. Each August, the choir met for a week-long summer camp, and in September the ensemble held a benefit concert in either Edmonton or Calgary. The AYC concluded each season with a fall tour to a different region of Alberta, each of which featured joint concerts in multiple smaller cities or towns. Sometimes the Committee changed the schedule to

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<sup>122</sup> Minutes, 29 May 1993, ACF.

<sup>123</sup> "Programs and Services Report 1993-94," *1993-94 Annual Report*, 1994, 4-9.

<sup>124</sup> Minutes, 17 Sep 1994, ACF, 4.

accommodate the needs of younger singers. In 1995 the Alberta Music Conference occurred late enough in October that a tour following the AMC would have conflicted with Halloween. The Committee made the decision to schedule the tour before the conference, making the AMC the choir's final performance. This format for the final session worked so well that the Committee retained it in 1996.

Problems common to the AYC in the past persisted during this time. Audiences in tour cities, while enthusiastic, remained small. Retention was still a challenge; in 1996 the choir membership dropped from an already-meager thirty-four singers to thirty, the second lowest in the choir's history. Recruitment continued to be an issue as well; Karen Hudson, the chair of the AYC Committee in 1996, reported that it had been difficult to interest enough singers to audition. Although the Federation's Annual Report in 1995 had proclaimed that year's youth choir the best since its reinstatement, Hudson declared that the 1996 ensemble did not deliver the excellence that should have distinguished the youth choir. She summarized the problem this way:

AYC seems to have been conceived with a two-prong mission:

1. To provide the best young choral singers in the province, selected by audition, a superior experience in both education and professionalism.
2. To produce an ensemble which will present performances representative of the best Alberta has to offer.

These are not mutually exclusive goals, but they may not necessarily always be achieved at the same time...

With no disrespect to the members of this group, this AYC was not all "the brightest and best" Alberta has to offer from this age group...

An honour choir needs the support of conductors and teachers who want their best to have a better experience. If they want their singers to just go to a camp, they can go to Alberta High School Choir Camp or Musicamrose.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Karen Hudson, "1996 Alberta Youth Choir," Minutes, Appendix 3, 22 Nov 1996, ACF, 2 (hereafter cited as Hudson "AYC," 1996).

To fulfill its mission, Hudson proposed:

AYC needs a rebirth...In reviewing the program, I do think that we need to consider the setup...in the context of the original intention of this kind of ensemble: 'It's an honour.'<sup>126</sup>

This rebirth would occur in 1997 when the Board split AYC into two groups: a choir for university undergraduates, which would be known as the Alberta University and College Choir; and a choir for high school aged participants, which would be given the original name of the AYC, the Alberta Honour Choir.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes, 19 Nov 1995, ACF.

## **Music Alberta and the Maintenance of the Honour Choir Program**

**1997–2007**

The last decade of the twentieth century was a time of growth for post-secondary music in Alberta. Choirs and choral programs at smaller institutions began to gain wider recognition around the province: Marc Hafso had developed a rapidly growing choral program at Augustana University in Camrose; choirs at Concordia University in Edmonton were growing under the direction of John Hooper; and the University of Alberta Faculté St. Jean hired Laurier Fagnan, whose studies in choral acoustics would eventually raise the international profile of that faculty.<sup>1</sup> There existed also a yearly collaborative endeavour, the Tri-University Choral Festival, between Alberta's three largest post-secondary institutions: the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. Choirs from those universities gathered biennially to present concerts for each other as well as combine in the performance of a larger work. The festival exposed undergraduate choristers to new conductors, techniques, repertoire, and experiences. It was successful, but exclusive.<sup>2</sup>

Until 1995, the Federation's programs had focused primarily on providing choral opportunities and experiences for youth or educators. There was no program designed specifically for singers of university age, but "there was an excitement and vitality in that demographic" that the Board was eager to explore.<sup>3</sup> In November of that year, Karen Hudson presented an idea that would solve two issues simultaneously: the disparity in age that, despite the Federation's efforts, continued to trouble the Alberta Youth Choir;

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Heshedahl, Interview by Adam B. Robertson, July 12, 2018 (hereafter cited as Heshedahl, Interview).

<sup>2</sup> Karen Hudson, Interview by Adam B. Robertson, July 14, 2018 (hereafter cited as Hudson, Interview).

<sup>3</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

and the exclusivity of the Tri-University Choral Festival.<sup>4</sup> She moved that the AYC program be split into two separate ensembles: one composed uniquely of high school singers, the other, university singers. The motion was carried, but since it was too late in the year for the Board to effect such changes for the 1996 season, they would implement the new programs in 1997.<sup>5</sup>

In its first year, the new post-secondary program was referred to as the Alberta University and College Ensemble (AUCE), and the Alberta Youth Choir was renamed the Alberta Honour Choir (AHC). The purpose of the AUCE was to “provide a venue where collegiate choral musicians could be exposed to world class choral conductors and there by [*sic*] gain a greater appreciation for choral music.”<sup>6</sup> These musicians would not audition for the choir but be recommended by their respective conductors. Each university or college choir could send a minimum of a balanced quartet singers, with an octet being preferable. The resulting ensemble would be featured at the Alberta Music Conference in the fall, at which its guest conductor would also serve as a clinician. Using the director in this way allowed the Federation to attribute some of the AUCE’s expenses to the AMC and thus keep the budget for the new ensemble low. The Board also designed the AUCE to boost student involvement at the music conference; program registration fees would include conference registration, allowing choristers to participate in sessions during their free time.<sup>7</sup>

The Federation did not intend for the Alberta University and College Ensemble to be an improved version of the Alberta Honour choir, or to detract from it in any way. It

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<sup>4</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Minutes, 19 Nov 1995, ACF.

<sup>6</sup> Chuck Steddom, “Alberta Collegiate Honor Choir (Needs better Name) Proposal,” Minutes, 22 Jun 1996, ACF, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Chuck Steddom, “University & College Choir,” Minutes, Appendix 5, 24 Nov 24 1996, ACF.

simply offered a new opportunity for post-secondary students whose participation in the AYC may have been precluded by its heavy time commitment. The Committee designed a condensed rehearsal schedule for the university choir. Choristers would not gather for a week-long retreat earlier in the year, but instead meet for four days surrounding the AMC in the fall. This intense schedule made it imperative for choristers to learn their music in advance of the first rehearsal. Rehearsals would begin the day prior to the three-day conference and culminate in either a performance or a demonstration at one of the conference's sessions.<sup>8</sup>

Separating university students from the high school students also benefited the newly-restructured Honour Choir. It allowed for a "greater concentration of peers," and a "more appropriate emphasis on the educational and performance aspects of the program."<sup>9</sup> The retreat was an essential part of this education and was retained by the AYC Committee. However, it was moved to September, replacing the second session in which the choir normally presented its first benefit concert, and reduced to four days in length. The choir's involvement at the AMC would remain unchanged, but the Committee suggested the length of the tour be reduced from four days to two.<sup>10</sup> These changes reduced program expenses significantly, and would allow the Federation to offer both the AHC and AUCE for what the AYC had cost them the year before.

The success of these new programs depended not only on the interest and involvement of the choristers, but on the support of Alberta educators. The AYC Committee felt it could meet the needs of both groups by widening the search for the ensembles' conductors. Hudson stated in her report:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "1997-98 Programs," *1997-98 Annual Report*, 1998, 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Minutes, 24 Nov 1996, ACF.

If we truly wish to attract the support of conductors and teachers, their personal evaluation of the conductor selected is going to be a factor and that evaluation is going to be significantly biased by an Alberta-only policy... an auditioned ensemble conducted by a figure not readily accessible to their own choirs may be more attractive.<sup>11</sup>

To reduce the travel costs involved in hiring an external conductor for two rehearsal sessions, a Resident Conductor from Alberta would be chosen to lead rehearsals during the retreat in September. The featured Guest Conductor would then assume leadership of the group at the Alberta Music Conference.

The implementation of the new choral programs in 1997 largely matched the format the Committee had proposed in 1995. John Hooper served as the AHC's first Resident Conductor, leading the choir during its September retreat at Camp Caroline. At the AMC in Calgary, Richard Nace, from Tacoma, Washington, led the Honour Choir while acclaimed Vancouver director Diane Loomer conducted the AUCE. However, the escalating costs of the AHC precluded a tour following the conference as the Committee had originally planned. The previous season's Youth Choir had cost the Federation over \$13,000; including a tour in 1997 would have exceeded that amount, and the Federation required financial leeway to operate the AUCE. Alternatively, the Honour Choir offered a single joint concert on Sunday with its long-time supporters the Mount Royal Youth Choir, conducted by David Ferguson. Budgetary concerns also truncated the AUCE's schedule. Instead of the four days of rehearsal proposed by the committee, singers rehearsed for only two days before performing their repertoire in a joint concert with the AHC on Saturday, the conference's closing night. Both ensembles benefitted from healthy membership numbers in their first year. Seventy-two singers from eleven

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<sup>11</sup> Hudson, "AYC," 1996, 3.



university and college choir choirs across the province registered in the AUCE, and the Committee admitted thirty-four high school age singers into the AHC.<sup>12</sup>

The Federation's new ensembles were generally well received. Guest conductors Richard Nace and Diane Loomer were complimentary and encouraging, and members of the Board found both choirs to be strong, though not at the performance level they had hoped. The Honour Choir was more prepared than the AUCE, and even so it had not shown appreciable signs of improvement from its previous season.<sup>13</sup> Elements of the programs regarding the singers' preparation needed refining. The Board changed the name of the university choir to clarify that the ensemble was music-based and not simply a gathering of undergraduate students. The AUCE became the AUCC – the Alberta University and College Choir.<sup>14</sup> The Honour Choir underwent more significant changes.

The AHC program would be difficult to maintain if its membership remained consistent with that of a chamber choir. Increasing membership would increase revenue from registration fees, but at \$350, the current fee for singing in the Honour Choir was prohibitive. In contrast, registration fees for the AUCE were only \$50. AHC's fees could be lowered if the Federation reduced the costs of the program, so the Board proposed two major changes: discontinuing performances following the Alberta Music Conference, and eliminating the audition process.<sup>15</sup> In the future, the selection process for the AHC would be identical to that of the AUCE; Honour Choir participants would be selected by their own ensembles. Mixed high school, community or church choirs around the province could recommend a balanced quartet to take part in the Honour Choir program, while

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<sup>12</sup> "1997–98 Programs," *1997–98 Annual Report*, 1998, 4–5.

<sup>13</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, 1 Nov 1997, ACF.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

women's or men's ensembles could send a trio of singers.<sup>16</sup> The Board implemented these changes in the 1998 season, reducing the program's fees to \$235.

The ACF's access to future funds was also a significant factor in determining format and schedule changes to its honour choir programs, and nothing had a greater impact on the Federation's funding than the founding of a new organization, Music Alberta. After the AFA released its freeze on Western Canada Lottery funds in 1995, it proposed a radical restructuring of Alberta's five music provincial arts service organizations (also referred to as PASOs). The AFA Board stated it would fund only one provincial organization in each discipline (music, dance, drama, art, literature, sports, etc.). To that end, it suggested that the province's five music PASOs unite to form a single superPASO which would then distribute funding to its charter members.<sup>17</sup> This superPASO was founded in 1997 under the name Music Alberta. Its charter members comprised the Alberta Choral Federation, the Alberta Band Association (formerly the CBDA), the Alberta String Association (ASA), the Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association (ARMTA), and the Alberta Summer Music Workshop Association (ASMWA).<sup>18</sup>

The Boards of Alberta's five music PASOs attempted to structure Music Alberta in a way that would represent each organizations' interests equally; the Music Alberta Board was composed of one representative from the Board of each of its charter members.<sup>19</sup> However, the new superPASO ultimately failed at meeting the needs of its member organizations. Its existence added an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy to a

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<sup>16</sup> Minutes, 23 Jan 1998, ACF.

<sup>17</sup> Minutes, 14 Jun 1997, ACF.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes, 1 Nov 1997, ACF.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

funding procedure already weighed down by administrative processes. Worse yet, Music Alberta required a portion of the funds it was meant to distribute to finance its own administration. Madge McCready would later refer to Music Alberta simply as “The Disaster.”<sup>20</sup>

Music Alberta’s involvement had ramifications in the Federation’s programs. In 1997 the ACF received \$7,000 less in lottery funds than it had the previous year. Fear of insufficient future funding motivated changes to the AHC and AUCC programs as much as a desire to increase membership and decrease expenses. The All-Province High School Choir Camp was also affected. Since the narrowing of the AHC’s age range to include only high school students, the Board decided to ease the demands on high school choristers by changing the camp to a junior high school experience every alternating year.<sup>21</sup> Laurier Fagnan was slated to direct the camp in 1998, but in June of that year the Federation decided it could no longer maintain the program.<sup>22</sup> Funding would reach a critical state in 1998 when the Federation suffered an almost \$75,000 cut to its lottery funds at the hands of Music Alberta.

Were it not for funds from the Alberta Gaming and Licensing Commission (AGLC), it is likely the Federation would have been obligated to discontinue most of its programming. In the 1980s the AGLC had established a system whereby a non-profit organization could receive a portion of a casino’s profits in return for providing a volunteer labour force to fill essential roles at the facility. The organization could use the proceeds to fund its programs, not its operational expenses. When the program was first established, organizations received a portion of the profits for the specific nights for

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<sup>20</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes, 14 Jun 1997, ACF.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes, 13 Jun 1998, ACF.

which they volunteered. This meant revenue from casinos was erratic; an organization could either receive a large amount of money or even no money at all. In 1988, the Federation's first year participating in the program, it received over \$47,000 in casino monies. However, the following two years it ran a deficit. Fortunately, this shortfall was covered by Alberta Culture.<sup>23</sup>

In 1993 the AGLC changed the way in which funds were distributed. Casinos pooled proceeds over longer periods of time and divided the funds between multiple non-profit organizations. This way, a single organization might make less than it would have had it volunteered on a profitable night, but the acquisition of funds was guaranteed. However, since the number of participating associations had grown so numerous, the AGLC limited involvement in the program to once every two years.<sup>24</sup> In 1993 the Federation began receiving funds biennially, totaling just over \$27,000. By 1998 this amount had grown to nearly \$39,000. This money prevented the ACF's programs from collapsing.<sup>25</sup>

That same year, the Board saw an opportunity to generate additional revenue for the Federation by creating yet another honour choir program, the Alberta Children's Honour Choir (ACHC). Renowned youth and children's conductor Henry Leck was slated to present at the Alberta Music Conference in 1998. Karen Hudson and Joanne Collier, a fellow Board member, believed this was an ideal opportunity to give children across the province the opportunity to sing under an expert clinician.<sup>26</sup> They proposed the project at a Board meeting in June. Like the AUCC and AHC, choristers for the ACHC

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<sup>23</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold Rumbold, "Finance," 2006–07 Annual Report, 2007, 4–5.

<sup>26</sup> Hudson, Interview.

would be recommended by the conductors of their home ensembles to participate in the program. The children would range in age from 10-14 and would meet for the first time at the music conference. The lack of preceding rehearsals helped to keep the costs of the new program low but necessitated the creation of rehearsals tapes, an arduous task, to assist the children in learning their repertoire.<sup>27</sup> Rehearsals with Henry Leck would begin on Friday, the second day of the AMC, and culminate in a short concert for parents and delegates on Saturday.<sup>28</sup>

Over 130 children, selected from forty ensembles across Alberta, participated in the first ACHC in 1998.<sup>29</sup> The new program was a resounding success, but there was a host of logistical issues with regard to the distribution of music, complimentary tickets, communication with parents, and the mobilization of volunteers. There was also the matter of chorister preparation. Children had not arrived at the conference with their music learned, making the rehearsal process more challenging. The Board decided it would need to remind recommending conductors of their responsibility to send students to the program well prepared in future seasons.<sup>30</sup> Despite these problems the Federation decided to continue the ACHC program in 1999. The choir's mission to provide elementary and junior high school aged singers with "an engaging choral music experience" that exposed them to different conductors and diverse repertoire fulfilled the mandate of the ACF.<sup>31</sup> Also, the program made money.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 1998, ACF.

<sup>28</sup> "1997-98 Programs," *1997-98 Annual Report*, 1998, 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> "1998-99 Programs," *1998-99 Annual Report*, 1998, 4-6.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes, 12 Nov 1999, ACF.

<sup>31</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "Alberta Children's Honour Choir (ACHC)," *Alberta Choral Federation Policy Book*, Binder: ACF Board Minutes, October 1998-Nov 2000, Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Hudson, Interview.

Membership in the ACHC remained high over the next five years, averaging nearly 130 choristers per year, which meant that the program either recovered its costs or added revenue to the Federation's budget. While the ACF became proficient at managing the logistics involved with a large children's choir, solving the problem of chorister preparedness continued to elude them. In November of 2000 the Board decided there was room in the ACHC's fee schedule to implement regional rehearsals, led by local conductors, for the 2001 season. These would be held in Calgary, Lethbridge, Lac La Biche, and Grande Prairie.<sup>33</sup> That same year, instead of presenting its own concert, the ACHC offered a joint concert with the AHC on the closing night of the conference. This tradition would continue until 2004.

Unfortunately, despite preparatory rehearsals, the choir's performance was such that the Board felt obligated to remind recommending conductors that the ACHC was an honour ensemble. Not only should local directors ensure their choristers learned the repertoire in advance of the conference, but they were to recommend their very best choristers.<sup>34</sup> These pointed reminders made little difference in 2003. Following the conference that year, the Board implemented a number of changes to the ACHC in an attempt to enhance its quality for the 2004 season: admission to the choir would be contingent on a taped audition submitted by the chorister subsequent to their recommendation; regional rehearsals would be lengthened; and rehearsal time at the conference would be increased.<sup>35</sup>

Problems with choristers' preparedness were not unique to the Children's Honour Choir but were a matter of concern for the AUCC as well. It first became a noticeable

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<sup>33</sup> Mary MacDonald, "Alberta Children's Honour Choir 2000," Minutes, 4 Nov 2000, ACF.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes, 18 Nov 2001, ACF.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes, 14–15 Nov 2003, ACF.

issue in 1999 when Noel Edison, the conductor of the choir that year, communicated his frustrations to the Board (and the choristers) over the students' apparent lack of preparation. Karen Hudson believed this problem was symptomatic of a larger, unsolvable problem: the awkward timing that the Alberta Music Conference posed to a university student. Scheduled for late October or early November, the AMC fell around the time of midterm exams. As such, it was difficult for university students to devote the necessary time to learning the repertoire. The Federation was limited in its choice of solutions. The best option was to schedule a retreat, similar to the AHC's, to help choristers learn their music prior to the conference.<sup>36</sup> However, this would involve asking more time and money of the students, neither of which they possessed in abundance.<sup>37</sup> Fortunately, undergraduate involvement in the AUCC program belied the presence of these larger issues. In 1999 membership grew to over ninety singers. The Board felt that the program was "well supported by the university and college choral directors and...a strong part of building a community among both the students and the directors."<sup>38</sup>

The Federation implemented what changes it could to the AMC in 2000. That year's conference took place in mid-October, two weeks earlier than normal. The AUCC Committee made improvements to the choir's schedule by adding an evening rehearsal prior to the singers' first full day of workshops. Ultimately, the alternate time of the conference did not affect the chorister's level of preparation, but it hindered AUCC membership by precluding the involvement of singers from both Prairie Bible College and the University of Lethbridge who had concerts scheduled during that time. However,

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<sup>36</sup> Minutes, 12 Nov 1999, ACF.

<sup>37</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Hudson, "Alberta University and College Choir Committee Report," Minutes, 12 Nov 1999, ACF, 1.

the Committee found that adding the evening rehearsal contributed significantly to the quality of the choir's final performance.<sup>39</sup>

In 2001 the Alberta Music Conference returned to its usual time in late October, but the format of the AUCC remained unchanged. Choristers gathered on Wednesday night, prior to the beginning of the Alberta Music Conference, for either a sectional or full rehearsal. The following day the choir rehearsed until 4:30pm, at which point singers were free to explore the music conference. Friday brought three more rehearsal sessions and ended with the choir's concert in the evening. While the AUCC performed well, it was still not the flagship choir the Board had hoped for; strategies for improving choristers' preparation was a constant topic of conversation around the Board table.<sup>40</sup> In 2003 the Committee took further measures to address this issue by replacing the choir's free time on Thursday evening with an extra rehearsal. In addition, a sternly worded reminder was added to the registration form:

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU LEARN YOUR PART PRIOR TO  
ARRIVING AT THE FIRST REHEARSAL. PLEASE TAKE THIS  
RESPONSIBILITY SERIOUSLY.**<sup>41</sup>

Choristers in the Alberta Honour Choir tended to shirk this responsibility as well, but the September retreat mitigated the problem, allowing singers to arrive at the Alberta Music Conference well prepared. The Board received positive feedback following the choir's 1998 season; admitting choristers by recommendation as opposed to audition had not hampered the quality of the ensemble.<sup>42</sup> In 1999 Canadian conductor Iwan Edwards

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<sup>39</sup> John Hooper, "Report on the Alberta University and College Choir, October 11–13, 2000," Minutes, 4 Nov 2000, ACF.

<sup>40</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>41</sup> "SEP letter 03 AUCC.doc" Digital Archives, AUCC, 2003 (emphasis in original).

<sup>42</sup> Karen Hudson, "Alberta Choral Federation Committee Report: Alberta Honor Choir," Minutes, 14 Nov 1998, ACF.



directed the AHC and made a point of commending the choir to the Board for its level of preparation and decorum.<sup>43</sup>

Honour Choir membership grew steadily over these two years, from fifty-eight choristers in 1998, to eighty-eight choristers in 1999, an increase of over 250% since the Federation restructured the program only three years earlier. Membership in the AUCC and ACHC had risen as well; all three of the Federation's honour choirs were thriving. The president's message to the Board in November of 1999 expressed a humble enthusiasm for the programs' accomplishments:

It appears that everyone in the province is singing. Although we cannot take credit for this, the opportunities we provide conductors and singers does [*sic*] contribute to it.<sup>44</sup>

AHC membership reached its apex in 2001 at 117 singers but fell sharply to under ninety members the following year. This was likely because the rising costs of the program (especially the camp) had prompted the Federation to increase program fees in 2002, making the choir more difficult to afford. The ACF also shortened the camp that year in order to decrease expenses. Doubtless, Committee members had confidence in the choristers' ability to adequately prepare with reduced rehearsal time because of their success under similar circumstances in 2000.

Scheduling difficulties prompted changes to the AHC retreat in the 2000 season. In 1998 the Committee had moved the camp from September to mid-October, ending just days before the start of the Alberta Music Conference. This caused problems in 2000, when the mid-October date of the AMC forced them to schedule the camp for the beginning of the month, where it conflicted with Thanksgiving weekend. As a result, the

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<sup>43</sup> Joanne Collier, "Alberta Honour Choir Report," Minutes, 12–14 Nov 1999, ACF.

<sup>44</sup> Heather Bedford-Clooney, "President's Report," Minutes, 19 Nov 1999, ACF.

length of the retreat was reduced by a day. This shortened schedule could have had negative consequences for the choir, whose choristers continued to arrive at camp unprepared.<sup>45</sup> The Committee attempted to address this issue by adding a phrase to the AHC's Code of Conduct, a form contained in the choristers' registration packet: "choristers are responsible for **learning the assigned music in advance of rehearsals.**"<sup>46</sup> Additionally, singers were warned that failing to abide by the Code of Conduct would result in revocation of their membership.<sup>47</sup> The Committee's approach appeared to have worked; Robert de Frece, the Resident Conductor in 2000, reported that students came to the camp well prepared. De Frece increased the efficiency of the preparatory process by reporting on the choir's progress directly to its Guest Conductor, Doug Dunsmore. In this way, Dunsmore could tailor his rehearsals to address the challenges specific to the ensemble.<sup>48</sup>

Board members were hesitant to permanently reduce the length of the AHC's camp from four days to three in 2002. They believed the camp was vital to the success of the program and didn't want to jeopardize choristers' success.<sup>49</sup> To aid singers in their preparations prior to the retreat, the Committee asked Guest Conductor Lynne Gackle to create a detailed document that would be included in the choristers' registration packet. The document, entitled "Rehearsal Notes", gave a brief description of each of the pieces Gackle had selected, and listed challenging rhythmic and melodic elements for choristers to practice. This guide was evidently beneficial to the choristers; the Committee asked the choir's Guest Conductor in 2003, Diane Loomer, to create the same document.

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<sup>45</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 1999, ACF.

<sup>46</sup> "ACH00forms.doc" Digital Archives, AHC, 2000, 3 (emphasis in original).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Karen Hudson, "Alberta Honour Choir Report," Minutes, 4 Nov 2000, ACF.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 1999, ACF.

These additional resources did not relieve the Committee of its perceived obligation to remind choristers to prepare their repertoire. In 2003 the strong language of the AUCC registration form was used in the AHC letter of acceptance:

**BE SURE THAT YOUR PART IS LEARNED BEFORE YOU ARRIVE AT CAMP CAROLINE. Please take this responsibility seriously. Your preparation will directly affect the success of the choir.**<sup>50</sup>

At the bottom of the acceptance letter was a much subtler message. Below the name of the sender, Kevin Heshedahl, appeared the title Executive Director, a term the ACF had not used since becoming a charter member of Music Alberta. In fact, there was no mention of Music Alberta anywhere in the registration packet as there had been in previous years. This was because the Federation had seceded from the organization in May of that year.

The Board had feared the reduction of funding since the foundation of the AFA in 1991, but the \$75,000 decrease in lottery monies in 1999 painted a truly bleak picture for the Federation's future. These funds were reduced by a further \$20,000 in 2000 when the Federation received only \$24,729 from Music Alberta. Casino proceeds from the previous year offset the shortfall somewhat, but the Board was still obligated to withdraw significantly from the endowment fund in order to balance its operating budget, which, at just over \$133,000 per year, was less than half of what it had been before joining the superPASO.

Reductions in Music Alberta's funding redefined the Federation's system of governance. When the superPASO subsumed the ACF in 1997, the position of Executive Director was renamed Managing Director.<sup>51</sup> Following further budgetary shortfall in

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<sup>50</sup> "SEP letter.doc" Digital Archives, AHC, 2003, 1 (emphasis in original).

<sup>51</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

2000, Music Alberta terminated the Managing Director position replacing it with a part-time Program Director who would be hired by, and answer to, the ACF Board.<sup>52</sup> The Federation's Managing Director at the time did not continue as Program Director in 2001. That role was handled by two different Board members until 2002 when Kevin Heshedahl, a former member of the Alberta Youth Choir, filled the position.

As funding from Music Alberta, and thus the Federation's operating budget, was reduced, the Board was obliged to terminate all of the ACF's paid support positions.<sup>53</sup> Certain membership services, such as the Alberta Music Conference, were attributed to Music Alberta in order to continue operating. Other programs such as Workshops Work! (the Federation's bursary program) were cut almost to the point of elimination. It is significant, then, that in this time of financial crisis the honour choir programs remained intact. The ACF's president Mary MacDonald stated:

The interest in and success of these programs signals a bright future for the choral community throughout the province. Among these choir members are our future conductors, choristers, arts administrators, and perhaps most importantly, our audiences.<sup>54</sup>

Music Alberta explained that the AFA had cut funding in 1999 because its revenue did not match the amount granted by the AFA the previous year, as was mandated by its regulations. This was not strictly true: the income of Music Alberta's five charter members did meet these guidelines, but the Foundation did not recognize the revenue of charter member associations. The AFA Board reiterated that while it was their intention to support only one organization for each arts discipline, it would not support an organization that was "simply an umbrella through which funds flowed to existing

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<sup>52</sup> Minutes, 19–20 Jan 2001, ACF.

<sup>53</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>54</sup> Mary MacDonald, "President: Report," *2000–01 Annual Report*, 2001, 2 (hereafter cited as MacDonald, "Pres Report," *Annual Report*).

organizations.”<sup>55</sup> This was a confusing statement since Music Alberta was born out of the AFA’s own suggestion to create an organization whose primary purpose was to distribute funding to its charter members.

Music Alberta proposed various solutions to its funding problem. A consolidated budget, uniting those of its charter members, would demonstrate to the AFA that Music Alberta supported programs as opposed to organizations. Another possible solution lay in the idea of universal membership. Individuals, businesses or institutions who were currently members of a charter organization could instead become members of Music Alberta directly. In this way, the superPASO could use the membership fees of its charter members as revenue. However, the Board for Music Alberta stated that implementing these changes did not guarantee increased funding in the future. The AFA had stated it was moving to a more “equitable distribution of grants to the community as a whole,” which would likely mean a further funding cut of \$50,000 over the next two years.<sup>56</sup>

The Federation was the first charter organization to leave Music Alberta when it seceded in May of 2003.<sup>57</sup> The idea of instituting universal membership was undesirable, but it was Music Alberta’s proposal that it be allowed to borrow money in the Federation’s name with prior consultation that was the tipping point.<sup>58</sup> In the end, the decision to leave was motivated by simple math. The Board realized that, if the Federation could retain its membership fees as a source of revenue, continue to receive

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<sup>55</sup> “Music Alberta: Report”, *1999–00 Annual Report*, 2000, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>58</sup> MacDonald, “Pres Report,” *2002-03 Annual Report*, 2003, 3–4.

proceeds from casinos, and use monies from the endowment fund, it should be able to continue its programs.<sup>59</sup>

Like Madge McCready in 1978, Kevin Heshedahl, now Executive Director, was the only paid position in the Alberta Choral Federation. Managing the ACF from 2003–2004 was challenging. As expected, the Federation was not eligible to apply directly to the AFA for funding. Heshedahl and other Board members petitioned the Foundation to reconsider its policies without success. It wasn't until Music Alberta disbanded in 2004 that the Federation would again be able to apply to the Foundation for grants. Despite the lack of funding, it was important to the Board that the Federation continue to offer its flagship programs, especially the honour choirs.<sup>60</sup> Heshedahl wrote:

I am often reminded that this extraordinary opportunity can be pivotal in a young musician's decision to pursue music at the next level, or even as a career. Conductors, too, enjoy the rewards of this project as their choristers return as stronger musicians.<sup>61</sup>

All ACF programs operated without interruption until AFA funding resumed in 2005.

Of course, the Federation had to raise fees for its honour choirs to combat its loss of revenue. By 2003, membership fees had risen significantly in all three honour choir programs. It cost parents \$150 for their children to sing in the ACHC, an increase of over 400% since the choir began in 1998. The AUCC fee had tripled since its inception; university students paid \$150 to sing in the choir. Fees for the AHC rose to \$375, higher than in 1997 when the expense was deemed prohibitive. Fortunately, the increase in fees in 2003 did not seem to affect membership, which for all three choirs had remained stable since 2002.

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<sup>59</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Heshedahl, "ED Report," *2003–04 Annual Report*, 2004, 5.

The interim separating the ACF's departure from Music Alberta and the disbanding of that organization presented another problem. As a program, the Alberta Music Conference belonged to Music Alberta and its charter organizations. In order to showcase its provincial honour choirs as it had done in previous years, the Federation created a new conference, SING Alberta! in 2003.<sup>62</sup> Like the AMC, this conference would serve as a professional development tool for singers, conductors, and music educators around the province by offering a variety of sessions taught by expert clinicians. Also, it would run for three days in late October, so the honour choirs' schedules did not need to change.

In 2004 the Board decided to examine the branding of its honour choir programs. Only two honour choir names reflected the demographic they served, the Alberta *University* and *College* Choir, and the Alberta *Children's* Honour Choir. The name of the Alberta Honour Choir remained demographically ambiguous, so the Board decided to revert to the name Alberta *Youth* Choir. This way, it would be clear to both members and non-members alike that the Federation offered programs that benefitted singers from childhood to adulthood.<sup>63</sup> The second annual SING Alberta! conference in 2004 provided an excellent opportunity for committees to plan a new scheduling arrangement that would unify the Federation's triptych of honour choirs.

Both the AYC and ACHC's time at the conference was increased from two days to three. This would afford choristers from all three honour choirs the time and opportunity to hear each other's concerts. Having begun their rehearsals on the Thursday, the children and university students could attend the AYC concert on Friday evening. The

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<sup>62</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

AYC would be featured as a demonstration choir in a Saturday morning session, following which Youth Choir choristers could attend the AUCC and ACHC's joint concert that afternoon. In addition to these opportunities, the extra time in the schedule allowed AYC and AUCC choristers to attend the concert of the conference's featured guest ensemble, *Musica Intima*, on Thursday night.

Children's Choir membership decreased significantly in 2004, from nearly 130 singers the previous year, to only eighty-three. This was likely due to the institution of audition tapes, which were a chore for teachers to prepare. However, the tapes did seem to seem have an impact on the quality of the ensemble.<sup>64</sup> Reviews of the AUCC were not as positive. The students' level of unpreparedness was frustrating for both conductor and fellow choristers. The AUCC committee's year-end report stated:

[T]he post-secondary conductors do not seem to be supporting the program and communicating the intent of this program, so perhaps we are not getting the highest quality of performers for this choir which translates into commitment problems, etc.<sup>65</sup>

As previously explained, solutions to this problem were few. The choristers' time at the conference could not be extended because of conflicts with midterm exams. The program could not be held at a different time of year because then it would not be part of the larger, inclusive choral experience the Board had worked so hard to create. Implementing regional rehearsals was still not feasible because they would require more time and money from the students. The Board resolved that its best solution was to contact conductors individually and commit them to preparing the choristers.

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes, 20 Nov 2004, ACF.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 5.



Since the dissolution of Music Alberta in 2004, the Board had been eager to resume collaborating with other music organizations.<sup>66</sup> They especially wanted to reinstitute the Alberta Music Conference with the Alberta Band Association, a program those organizations had offered for over twenty years. In February of 2005 the leadership of the ABA informed the Federation that they “needed to dedicate their energies towards their membership.”<sup>67</sup> As such, they would not be in a position to host a joint conference with the federation for one or perhaps two years. This was understandable; the collapse of Music Alberta had been challenging for all music PASOs in Alberta. Eventually, the Federation was able to offer a joint conference with the Alberta Music Education Foundation (AMEF) and the Alberta Registered Music Teachers’ Association (ARMTA) in November of 2005, which, out of respect for the ABA, was renamed to the Alberta Music Educators’ Conference (AMEC).<sup>68</sup>

The AMEC marked the conclusion of an optimistic fiscal year for the Federation. The ACF received its first monies from the AFA as an independent organization. The grant was small, around \$24,000, and the Board appealed to the membership for donations, but it indicated a positive turn in the relationship between government and provincial arts organizations.<sup>69</sup> The status of the Federation’s honour choirs was not as positive. ACHC membership had declined further to sixty-six; teachers were not supporting the program as they had in the past. AUCC enrolment sank to sixty-three from the previous year’s membership of seventy-three, but this was higher than anticipated,

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes, 19 Nov 2004, ACF.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes, 11 Feb 2005, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>69</sup> Joanne Collier, “From the President,” *2004–05 Annual Report*, 2005, 4–5.

considering the many university choristers involved in Alberta's centennial celebrations throughout the province.

The caliber of the high school and university honour choirs' performances still troubled the Board. The AUCC Committee suggested lengthening rehearsal time at the conference by adding an afternoon session prior to its Thursday evening rehearsal. The AYC Committee believed that recommending conductors needed to be reminded that the choir was not to be used as a training event, but to send only their finest choristers.<sup>70</sup>

Arlie Langager, a former vocal coach for the AYC now serving on its committee, proposed that the Board examine other youth honour choir models in order to explore how the Federation could better achieve its goals for the ensemble.<sup>71</sup> Yet, the gradual change in the ACF's goals for its honour choirs was in part what had prevented them from becoming the superlative ensembles the Federation had originally intended.

After the Federation left Music Alberta, the Board's goal for its programs was simply one of maintenance. It was possible to preserve the honour choirs because good models had already been put in place, but the state of the ACF's personnel and financial resources made it difficult for the ACF to deliver its programs with the same attention it had in previous years. Implementing significant improvements to the programs would not be possible without an increase in resources. Barring the provision of more funding, and without the need to service the larger organization of Music Alberta, the Federation began to turn its attention to the specific needs of its membership.<sup>72</sup>

The Federation's primary goal for its members became one of education. Its desire to work with educational institutions, evident in the name of the new conference,

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<sup>70</sup> Minutes, 11–12 Feb 2005, ACF.

<sup>71</sup> Minutes, 25–27 Nov 2005, ACF.

<sup>72</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

dictated the content of the AMEC. Kevin Heshedahl stated, “because the honour choir programs were so closely tied to the conference, there was a real intention to offer the people who were standing in front of those kids who were in the program... tangible tools for improvement.” The conference was designed to educate Alberta’s music educators because they were what Heshedahl referred to as “the initial point of contact for choristers.” The ACF’s new educational focus had affected the format of the children’s choir more than that of the AUCC or AYC. The ACHC Committee became more focused on the choir as an educational tool as opposed to an honour choir experience. As a result, the quality of the ensemble suffered, and teachers’ and children’s interest in the program waned.<sup>73</sup>

With regard to the Youth Choir, Heshedahl believes that the Federation was never successful convincing teachers that they needed to send their best singers, or send their singers well prepared, because “public music educators are so torn by a million other things that are so far away from the Federation’s mandate.” Teachers prioritize the intellectual, psychological, and social benefits the honour choir would have on their students over the Federation’s need for excellence, which tends towards exclusivity. Also, the various demands on an educator’s time often precluded their ability to oversee the preparation of their choristers.<sup>74</sup> In the end, it was more important that the ACF’s honour choirs support the efforts of Alberta educators than produce an exceptional product. However, this would change in 2007.

The ACF continued to offer the Music Educators’ Conference in collaboration with AMEF and ARMTA in 2006. The Alberta String Association and the ABA would

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

join the organizations in presenting a conference the following year. This new conference would not bear the name of the old convention which had ended with Music Alberta. Instead it would be called Music Conference Alberta (MCA). Unfortunately, this inaugural collaborative convention would feature only one honour choir, the AYC. The Board had decided to suspend both the children's and university honour choirs following their 2006 season. The AYC's brochure for the 2007 season stated that the ACHC and AUCC had been suspended "[d]ue to uncertainties surrounding program funding," but this wasn't entirely accurate.<sup>75</sup>

Participation in the ACHC had dwindled by 2006. At its height the choir had comprised over 150 singers; now, only forty-nine children sang in the ensemble. The choir's performances continued to fall short of the Board's expectations. Requiring audition tapes from students had improved the quality of the ensemble, but the Committee was still limited in its choice of excellent choristers; many conductors had simply not recommended qualified singers. The Board began to question the goal of the ensemble in its meetings; as in 1981, it debated which was more important: chorister experience or choral excellence.<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, the Board decided to suspend the program in order to redesign its format and redefine its purpose.<sup>77</sup> The Federation would not reinstate the program until January of 2009 when it received a new name, the name Alberta Children's Choir (ACC).

Like the children's choir, the AUCC never achieved the level of excellence the Board had envisioned.<sup>78</sup> In the program's later years, as university students' interest in

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<sup>75</sup> "2007 BROCHURE.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2007, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>77</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

the program started to wane, the committee allowed recommending choirs to submit more choristers in order to boost membership. Many of these singers were not equal to the challenge the AUCC program presented. Karen Hudson explains, “we assumed, wrongly so, that the kids would prepare themselves.”<sup>79</sup> Adequately prepared choristers were often upset by their colleagues’ lack of preparation. As a result, involvement of qualified singers began to decline. The Board concluded that the AUCC program wasn’t realizing its goal of offering university students a place where they could achieve excellence, and decided to suspend the program for the 2007 season.<sup>80</sup> The same AYC brochure that announced the cancellation of the AUCC promised it would run again in 2008, but the honour choir was never reinstated.

To say that university choristers’ interest declined because of their frustration with fellow singers is perhaps too simple a generalization. Heshedahl proposed a loftier explanation. He believed students’ involvement had decreased because the demands on their time had grown. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the “things invented for people to do and be distracted by” had increased. “The world just got a lot busier for people.” Besides this, numerous excellent ensembles involving students of university age had begun to appear around the province. It was “less atypical of an experience to be part of an excellent choir.”<sup>81</sup>

Since 1997, through the growth and decline of the AUCC and ACHC, the Youth Choir had remained the strongest of the Federation’s three honour ensembles both in terms of quality and administrative support. The Board considered the AYC the flagship

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

program of the Federation, and maintaining it was one of their highest priorities.<sup>82</sup> However, in the last three years it too had experienced a decline in student involvement. By 2006 membership in the choir had dropped to fifty-six, the lowest since admission by recommendation began in 1998. Heshedahl attributed this to the choristers' perception of the decline in AYC's prestige. The "chocolate and cherries" of a week-long summer camp and a tour with performances in schools and concert halls throughout the province had disappeared. This in turn affected the quality of the singers who registered for the program. In the early years it was a much greater honour to sing in the ensemble because of the rewards it offered its choristers.<sup>83</sup>

The Board was thrilled when renowned British Columbian composer Stephen Hatfield accepted its invitation to conduct the AYC in 2007. In honour of the ensemble's twenty-fifth anniversary, the Committee had wanted an Alberta conductor to take the podium, but believed Hatfield's name would generate greater enthusiasm from recommending conductors and therefore increase student participation.<sup>84</sup> Hatfield's name did not create the draw the Board had expected; AYC membership declined to fifty-one this year.

2007 was also a year of significant personnel changes for the ACF. Kevin Heshedahl resigned as Executive Director and was replaced by Brendan Lord who, at the time of this study, still holds that position. The Federation continued to be in a state of financial crisis, and the Committee was forced to make further alterations to the AYC program. This restructuring had negative ramifications, nearly causing the collapse of the program.

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<sup>82</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>83</sup> Heshedahl, Interview.

<sup>84</sup> Minutes, 10 June 2007, ACF.

## **Redesigning the Alberta Youth Choir**

### **2008–Present**

When the Alberta Choral Federation hired Brendan Lord as its Executive Director in June 2007, the organization was at a financial crossroads. Although the AFA had recently granted the Federation close to \$44,000 (nearly \$20,000 more than its grant in 2005), the endowment fund had been exhausted.<sup>1</sup> The Board had used the funds to supplement the ACF's budget during the years it was without significant funding from the Foundation. Arnold Rumbold, the treasurer at the time, informed Board members that unless they cut programs, the Federation would no longer have sufficient money to operate.<sup>2</sup> Programs would have to be evaluated according to profitability. Raising program fees was not an option; Board members felt the community would not pay more money for the services the ACF currently offered. "We must look at the needs of the choral community and perhaps serve different purposes in the future.... [W]e need to focus our energies and minimize our risk at a very crucial financial time."<sup>3</sup>

The Federation's financial difficulties were as much due to inadequate financial record keeping as insufficient grant revenue. In 2007 the world of arts management was changing, and expectations with regard to financial record keeping, specifically an organization's ability to represent its financial status accurately, had risen substantially in the past ten years. Brendan Lord states, "by today's standard, the information provided at the Board table was inadequate." Financial reports at the time didn't list revenue and expenditures by specific programs; instead, similar programs, such as the provincial honour choirs, were grouped together. As a result, profitable programs like the ACHC

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes, 9 Jun 2007, ACF.

<sup>2</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes, 27 Jan 2007, 3.

could appear unprofitable when their financial information was combined with that of the AUCC and AYC. Also, Board members didn't necessarily possess the level of expertise needed to properly interpret these statements. Lord continues, "the Board was being tasked with decisions it was ill-equipped to make."<sup>4</sup>

Under these circumstances, it is understandable that the Board would vote to suspend both the AUCC and ACHC. Not only did those programs not meet the members' expectations of an honour ensemble, but they were deemed a burden on Federation resources. The Board also suspended its long-running music festival, Choralfest, for the 2007 season. The Alberta Youth Choir remained operational during this time primarily because of what it represented. As the ACF's flagship program, it embodied the Federation's goals of province-wide musical education and collaboration. Brendan Lord recalls:

I think if, at that time, you were to go around the Board table and asked people...what is the most important program we do, a number would have said Alberta Youth Choir.<sup>5</sup>

The decision to cut these programs was not popular with the Federation's membership. Ardelle Ries, director of Augustana University College's choral program, and ACF president at that time, justified the Boards' decision in the Federation's Annual Report that year:

[W]e felt it more important to have a face to our organization plus consistent, daily office hours. In addition, energies were needed to research financial stabilization strategies.<sup>6</sup>

The Board's decision to maintain the AYC did not mean it was immune to change. In 2007 the program had cost the Federation \$7,000 in lost revenue as a result of

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<sup>4</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ardelle Ries, "From the President," *2006–07 Annual Report*, 2007, 8.



low registration.<sup>7</sup> For the choir to continue operating it was important for it to begin recovering its costs. At \$375, membership fees were already too prohibitive to raise further. The preferable solutions were to increase choir membership and cut extraneous expenses, both of which the Committee managed in 2008.<sup>8</sup> They reduced AYC's membership fees by \$100, making it easier for choristers to sing in the choir, and they removed the program's most costly element, the preparatory three-day retreat. These reductions in cost and time commitment caused membership to rise dramatically, from fifty-one singers in 2007, to ninety singers in 2008.

Chorister surveys from the AYC's 2007 season indicated that eliminating the camp from the schedule might increase interest in the choir. The Committee had administered surveys as part of its honour choir programs for years, but the results had seemingly never fueled such a drastic change. In the past, chorister feedback had been used to assess the efficacy of administration (the receiving of music, the running of rehearsals, etc.) or the intensity of the rehearsal schedule, and had had an impact on the structure of the weekend retreat as a result. However, in 2007 choristers indicated that AYC membership was suffering partly because the three-day camp presented too great a time commitment.<sup>9</sup> The Committee had also received feedback from recommending conductors that a schedule involving only one weekend of rehearsals would be preferable to the current arrangement.<sup>10</sup> The Board discussed an alternative solution: remove one weekend from the choir's schedule by shifting the camp to the same week as Music Conference Alberta. Unfortunately, this would cost the Federation more than it saved

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<sup>7</sup> Minutes, 26 Jan 2008, ACF.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes, 27 Jan 2007, ACF.

<sup>9</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>10</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2008–09 Annual Report*, 2009, 9–10.

because it would also need to cover the choristers' transportation to the conference.<sup>11</sup>

Ultimately, both the costs involved and chorister feedback played a role in the Board's decision to eliminate the retreat.

The fees and schedule were not the only elements of the Youth Choir program to change in 2008. The Board introduced its Conducting Apprenticeship program that season.<sup>12</sup> Under this program, a young, promising Alberta conductor would be given the opportunity to work with AYC's renowned guest conductor by leading the choir in the rehearsal and performance of one piece in its gala concert at the fall conference.<sup>13</sup> The Committee also broadened the age range of the Youth Choir (16-25) to again include university age students, a demographic the ACF's programs had not involved since the cancellation of the AUCC.<sup>14</sup>

The Board was convinced university students could still find value performing with younger singers, while at the same time realizing the Federation's mandate of education, collaboration, and advocacy. Experienced choristers could act as mentors to the high school students, thereby elevating the quality of the ensemble.<sup>15</sup> They were also inherent advocates for their post-secondary programs, and therefore a tool for recruitment.<sup>16</sup> However, the primary reason for incorporating older singers was the financial viability of the AYC. If the choir were to have sufficient funds to operate, it would need to include a wider demographic than was currently possible by the limited

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<sup>11</sup> Minutes, 17 Nov 2007, ACF.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes, 26 Jan 2008, ACF.

<sup>13</sup> "Conducting Apprenticeship Program," Alberta Youth Choir, Programs, Choir Alberta, accessed Aug 5, 2018, <https://www.choiralberta.ca/conducting-apprenticeship.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, 7 Nov 2008, ACF.

<sup>15</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>16</sup> Ardelle Ries, "President's Report," *2007–08 Annual Report*, 2008, 7–8.

four-year age range (15-18).<sup>17</sup> Ardelle Ries confirmed this in the ACF's Annual report for 2008:

Our decision to adopt this historic model was based on a number of factors; however, the wise use of limited financial resources dictates our decision-making process for our programs and services.<sup>18</sup>

In this way, financial strain, while not the sole reason for AUCC's suspension in 2007, caused its cancellation in 2008.

With the camp eliminated, it was imperative that choristers learn their music prior to arriving at Music Conference Alberta. This was emphasized in the letter welcoming choristers to the AYC; instead of the traditional two lines of bolded text, an entire paragraph written in bold font urged choristers to rehearse ahead of time. The Committee revised the schedule in an attempt to compensate for the loss of 14 hours of rehearsal the retreat had provided. Instead of starting rehearsals on Thursday night, choristers arrived Thursday morning to rehearse under British Columbia conductor Adam Con for three full days, after which the choir would present its gala concert on Saturday evening. However, this intensive schedule amounted to only sixteen hours of rehearsal, thirteen hours less than the previous year's ensemble had received.

The choir did not sing well.<sup>19</sup> Karen Hudson attributed this to the removal of the weekend retreat. The camp was typically the time where choristers learned their music because the conductor guided them through the learning process. Without the camp, choristers simply wouldn't take responsibility to learn their notes. Hudson states, "unless somebody's helping them learn it, they're not going to do it on their own.... I don't care whose program you're from." The absence of a retreat put the onus on the MCA

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<sup>17</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>18</sup> Ardelle Ries, "President's Report," *2007-08 Annual Report*, 2008, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Lord, Interview.

rehearsals to fill this role. As a result, the choir was unable to give a polished performance.<sup>20</sup>

The weekend retreat also served as a catalyst for the social cohesiveness of the group. Over the course of three days of rehearsal, choristers grew closer and developed maturity because of the leadership opportunities the camp environment provided.<sup>21</sup> Without it, the group dynamic became strained under the pressure of a shorter rehearsal schedule. This strain was evident in the feedback from that season; many university choristers indicated a desire for the choir to return to a uniquely high school aged ensemble.<sup>22</sup> Ardelle Ries reported that the singers she recommended felt high school students were too inexperienced to sing with the caliber of university students in the choir. Because she held one of the few choral university positions in the province, Ries' opinions carried weight with the Board.<sup>23</sup> Members reached a compromise and narrowed the age range of the AYC by three years (16-22) for 2009.<sup>24</sup>

The Board also decided to reincorporate a camp into the choir's schedule, although not in the traditional manner. For 2009, all rehearsals prior to Saturday took place at Camp Evergreen, south of the MCA in Red Deer. Choristers began rehearsing on Wednesday night, as opposed to Thursday morning, and relocated to the conference venue for the dress rehearsal and concert. However, restructuring the itinerary in this way added only one hour of rehearsal time to the choir's schedule and an additional \$20 to its fees (now \$295).<sup>25</sup> AYC membership fell to fifty-five in 2009, likely the result of a

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<sup>20</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes, 24 Jan 2009, ACF.

<sup>23</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes, 24 Jan 2009, ACF.

<sup>25</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2008-09 Annual Report*, 2009, 9-10.

combination of higher fees, narrower age range, and choristers' negative experience the previous season.

The AYC's performance at Music Conference Alberta in 2009 marked a turning point in the history of the program; the choir was extremely unprepared for the gala concert, more so than in 2008. The Board had engaged internationally renowned South American conductor Maria Guinand to lead the choir. Brendan Lord recalls:

It was very embarrassing. Maria comes from another continent, [has] worked with some of the world's professional choirs, and she's stuck with these kids who can't get a four-part piece of accompanied music put together.<sup>26</sup>

Maria had chosen difficult music. Choristers found the rhythms especially challenging, but they also encountered difficulties with the text.<sup>27</sup> In performance, the choir was obliged to omit the text of some pieces entirely, singing instead on the neutral syllable "la."<sup>28</sup> The poor quality of the choir's performance compelled the Board to initiate a three-year probationary period for the AYC. If the Federation could not find a financially sustainable format that provided young singers with superior choral experiences within this time, the Alberta Youth Choir would be removed from the Federation's programs.<sup>29</sup>

### Reinvention of the AYC:

It was not in the interests of the Alberta Choral Federation to continue expending resources on what was essentially a "glorified community choir."<sup>30</sup> The goals of Federation programs had always centred on community development or enhancement. If

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<sup>26</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>27</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>28</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>29</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 10–11.

<sup>30</sup> Lord, Interview.

the AYC could not play a role in the improvement of the province's school, community, and church choral programs, what should its purpose be?<sup>31</sup> The Board debated this in a meeting in November 2009. Should the AYC be a vehicle to teach inexperienced choristers musicianship skills? Was its value in the performance opportunities it provided for singers in smaller choral programs? Or, was its purpose to create an elite choral experience?<sup>32</sup>

The Board admitted that the AYC had not been an honour choir experience for a number of years.<sup>33</sup> In 2005 Marc Hafso, who had returned to conduct the ensemble, expressed that the caliber of the choristers was below what it should have been; and in 2007 the choir had struggled with the repertoire Stephen Hatfield had chosen, despite its low level of difficulty.<sup>34</sup> Members proposed alternate formats for the honour choir. The AYC could be offered in conjunction with MusiCamp Alberta (formerly Musicamrose) in Red Deer, reimagined as a men's choir, or perhaps reconstituted as massed choir comprising several high school choirs. Ultimately, the Board concluded that it was still important to offer young singers the opportunity to sing in an outstanding choir.<sup>35</sup> "The over arching [*sic*] goal of this reorientation was to facilitate a higher standard of performance by the ensemble, thereby providing a more valuable and enriching experience for participating choristers."<sup>36</sup> The challenge remained to develop a model that encouraged artistic quality while maintaining financial stability."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2011 Annual Report*, 2011, 10–11.

<sup>32</sup> Minutes, 22 Nov 2009, ACF.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Minutes, 22 Nov 2009, ACF.

<sup>36</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Ries, "Pres Report," *2008–09 Annual Report*, 2009, 7.

One element to reconsider was the cost of the choir to its choristers. Although lower than the \$375 amount in 2007, the registration fee was still prohibitive. The Board found that, in many cases, teachers' recommendations were based on which students could afford to participate in the AYC. This cast too wide a net for singers. Consequently, the choir became populated with choristers who were less dedicated to choral music. Their participation was motivated by their parents' willingness to pay, or by their desire to spend more time with friends, but not out of an especial passion for choral singing. This also explained the choristers' reactions to the camp in 2007. The retreat, in addition to the residency at the conference, posed too great a time commitment for many choristers because they were unhappy to be there in the first place.<sup>38</sup>

Another element of the AYC program that needed to change was participation by recommendation. As Kevin Heshedahl stated earlier, the goals of high school directors do not necessarily align with those of the Federation. Brendan Lord echoed this sentiment: "[Teachers] want to be equally supportive of all of their choristers." Recommending conductors were hesitant to choose only their best singers for the program because they believed this would create tension in their own ensemble. It would be clear to those not selected that their teacher had deemed them less capable than their peers. It was safer for teachers to ask which of their choristers wanted, or could afford to, sing in the program. As such, in 2010 the Committee decided to assume responsibility for the selection process by reinstituting auditions for the first time in thirteen years. They left the age range of the AYC unchanged. Committee members believed that the audition process

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<sup>38</sup> Lord, Interview.

would uncover experienced and dedicated high school singers, choristers with whom university students would enjoy collaborating.<sup>39</sup>

The preparatory retreat also returned to the AYC's schedule. Though there had been disagreement initially with regard to its reinstatement, the Board decided that the honour choir would never reach its potential with the rehearsal time permitted by the current schedule.<sup>40</sup> Reincorporating the weekend retreat into the Youth Choir program posed additional challenges for the Committee. In its letter to conductors that year, the Committee stated:

Our challenge has been to create a province-wide youth choir which can achieve a high standard of performance while keeping rehearsal periods brief and the fee to participate affordable.<sup>41</sup>

To manage this balance of time and money, the retreat was restructured so as to take place at Red Deer College over the course of two days. Choristers would be able to leave on Saturday morning, from most locations in the province, in order to arrive for the first rehearsal at 1:00pm that afternoon. They could then return home following the conclusion of the last rehearsal at 3:00pm on Sunday; choristers would not have to miss any school.<sup>42</sup> Instead of paying for a camp to provide food and accommodations, AYC members were responsible for their own meals, and could spend Saturday night at a hotel, for which the Committee negotiated a reduced rate.<sup>43</sup> This new format drastically reduced the program's expenses (the registration fee dropped from \$295 to \$195) and added little

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Brendan Lord, "AYC 2010 Conductor Letter.docx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2010, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>43</sup> "General Information Sheet.docx," Digital Archives, Chorister Packet, AYC, 2010.



financial burden to the choristers.<sup>44</sup> Most importantly, the retreat added eleven much-needed hours of rehearsal back into the choir's schedule.

The 2010 season began with chorister auditions in early September, held by Committee members in communities around the province. Following the completion of an online application form, prospective choristers received an email detailing audition requirements. Singers were to prepare an unaccompanied piece to sing for the jurors, after which they would be led through a series of simple vocal exercises. The audition would then conclude with the performance of a quick study piece that had been emailed to the applicant the previous day.<sup>45</sup> With this last requirement the Committee cleverly capitalized on the audition as a tool for choristers' advance preparation; the quick study piece was part of the AYC's repertoire list for 2010, selected by its guest conductor, University of Manitoba's Elroy Friesen. The Federation notified singers of their acceptance into the choir in late September, after which music was couriered to them.<sup>46</sup>

Of the forty-four auditions heard by the Committee in September, only twenty singers, a historic low, were admitted into AYC.<sup>47</sup> After the rehearsal weekend at Red Deer College in mid-October, choristers gathered for rehearsals at Music Conference Alberta at the beginning of November. Attendance at the conference was limited to two days. The choir began rehearsals on Thursday morning before presenting its gala concert on Friday night. The AYC was also featured in a choral demonstration session on Saturday morning, as it had been when the ACF offered the SING Alberta! conference.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "AYC 2010 Registration Form.docx," Digital Archives, Chorister Packet, AYC, 2010.

<sup>45</sup> "Audition Confirmation Email.docx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> "AYC 2010 Info Sheet.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> "AYC 2010 Roster.xlsx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> "SCHEDULE Master.docx," Digital Archives, Chorister Packet, AYC, 2010.

Members of the ACF expressed their concern to the Board once they learned that the 2010 AYC comprised only twenty singers. However, in terms of its quality, Brendan Lord believed the choir outshone its predecessors: “That choir of twenty was infinitely better than the choir of [fifty-five] the year before.”<sup>49</sup> Karen Hudson did not share Lord’s appraisal of the choir. In her words, “it was terrible.”<sup>50</sup> A choir composed of only twenty young, and relatively inexperienced singers did not demonstrate the confidence or refinement a larger choir might have displayed. Lord acknowledged:

Even though...there were definitely things that were not as refined as we might have loved them to have been, it was evident that the choristers who were there actually had an experience that allowed them to realize the goals of AYC. I would say that was the first year since I started working at [the Alberta Choral Federation] that I felt that way about the program.

Regardless of these conflicting opinions, the choir’s low membership demonstrated that the Committee’s recruitment process needed development. In 2010 the Federation had published information for the upcoming AYC in *Quires*, its quarterly newsletter.<sup>51</sup> It had also distributed brochures directly to high schools with prominent choral programs, as well as those whose choirs had placed first in provincial festival classes. Karen Hudson maintained that only a small pool of individuals received these materials; neither she nor her colleague Frank Gndt had received invitations to audition at their high schools in Lethbridge, home to two of the most prominent high school choral programs in the province.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the AYC audition schedule for 2010 indicates that auditions took place only in Edmonton, Camrose, Wetaskiwin, and Calgary.<sup>53</sup>

Notwithstanding these perceived deficiencies in the Federation’s distribution of

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<sup>49</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>50</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>51</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>52</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>53</sup> “Audition Schedule.xlsx,” Digital Archives, AYC, 2010.

information, it was unclear if the teachers even passed on the material to their students.<sup>54</sup> To address these issues, the Board suggested contacting past AYC singers directly, or sending a pointed letter to teachers urging them to encourage their best choristers to audition.<sup>55</sup> Hudson suggested re-establishing a version of the recommendation process that would work in concert with the audition process.<sup>56</sup>

The problem with the AYC's current method of recruitment was the absence of direct involvement from local conductors. There was no channel through which teachers could support their choristers' involvement in the program. Hudson's solution was simple: teachers should recommend choristers to audition.<sup>57</sup> This would restore conductors' personal investment in the program and encourage more singers to apply for the AYC. It would also solve the problems with the recommendation process in the past; conductors could recommend whomever they wished without fear of offending their students, and the audition process would select the best from among them. The Committee abandoned the notion of holding live auditions. For a provincial choir, these types of auditions were logistically impractical. Worse yet, they tend to frighten, and consequently discourage, most high school singers from applying.<sup>58</sup> Instead, it was decided that applicants would submit audition recordings.

The following chart outlines the timeline of the Federation's recruitment process in 2011:

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<sup>54</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>55</sup> Minutes, 20–21 Nov 2010, ACF.

<sup>56</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Hudson, Interview.

Table 1: 2011 Recruitment Process for the Alberta Youth Choir

<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
May 16	Teachers submit chorister recommendations to the ACF by way of an Audition Application form.
Mid-May	The ACF emails audition materials to each recommended chorister.
May 30	Applicants submit completed audition recordings to the ACF.
June	The AYC Committee evaluates the audition recordings.
End of June	The ACF notifies choristers of the success, or failure, of their application.
July 15	Choristers submits registration form and payment

In 2011 the audition format remained largely the same as in 2010. Singers recorded a prepared piece, which could now be accompanied, followed by vocalises, and the performance of a prepared piece sung *a cappella*.<sup>59</sup> A significant change to the process was the addition of a questionnaire designed to gauge prospective choristers' experience and attitude. In addition to inquiries surrounding the applicant's choral background and instrumental proficiency, the questionnaire posed the following questions:

Why are you auditioning for AYC? If selected to sing in the choir, what do you hope to gain for the experience?

Do you read music? Knowing that, if selected, you are expected to learn the AYC music *prior* to the choir's first rehearsal, explain the different ways in which you will go about learning it.

What specific skills and abilities will you bring to AYC? Your response can include musical, vocal, social, and leadership qualities.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> "Audition Letter.pdf," Digital Archives, Audition Packet, AYC, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> "Audition Questionnaire PRINTABLE.pdf," Digital Archives, Audition Packet, AYC, 2011, 2.

With the exception of a yearly shifting of due dates, the Federation's recruitment process and audition requirements described above remain in practice today. Also unchanged is the process by which applicants' auditions are evaluated. Every recording is heard by two jurors; to reduce bias, jurors from Edmonton evaluate recordings from southern Alberta, and jurors from Calgary evaluate recordings from northern Alberta.<sup>61</sup> Jurors use a detailed rubric to assess the quality of each audition.

The 2011 rubric offered evaluators six categories by which to score auditions: tone, musicality, vibrato, intonation, diction, and overall performance.<sup>62</sup> In 2013 the rubric expanded, and jurors were given several categories by which to judge each component of the applicant's audition. However, not each category, such as "Expression & Musicality" and "Tone Quality" was given equal numeric weight. The rubric stabilized in 2016 allowing a maximum score of five in each category. Below is a summary of this rubric:

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<sup>61</sup> Lord, Interview."

<sup>62</sup> "Audition Rubrick.xlsx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2011.

Table 2: Alberta Youth Choir Audition Rubric – 2013

<b>Audition Component</b>	<b>Category</b>
Questionnaire	Choral Experience
	Musical Education
	Vocal Training
Vocal Exercises	Tone Quality
	Control & Consistency Throughout Range
	Intonation
Prepared Piece & Quick Study	Accuracy of Pitch & Rhythm
	Intonation
	Diction
	Tone Quality
	Use of Vibrato
	Expression & Musicality
	Overall Performance

Despite the rubric, jurors sometimes vary significantly in their opinions as to whether a chorister should be admitted to the Alberta Youth Choir. In these instances, Brendan Lord offers his opinion as a qualified conductor.<sup>63</sup>

Since 2011 the Federation has received between eighty and 140 auditions annually. Were it not for the advent of certain internet technologies, the number of applicants completing auditions would be a fraction of this amount. In addition, the evaluation process would be much more time consuming, and less sustainable, than it is. Lord reflects, “technology has definitely helped the program flourish.”<sup>64</sup> In 2011 applicants could either mail the Federation a hard copy of their audition recording, or

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<sup>63</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

they could submit an .mp3 file to a secure website. The same was true for the questionnaires.<sup>65</sup> Jurors recorded their scores on electronic spreadsheets, which were later consolidated for review by the AYC Committee, but this required an enormous amount of time from the ACF's office personnel.<sup>66</sup> In 2014 the submission of both the questionnaire and recording became entirely online processes; applicants now upload their auditions as private YouTube videos.<sup>67</sup> The Federation has also streamlined the evaluation process. Jurors view the rubric as an online form, powered by Google software, which they complete while listening to the auditions. Once the rubric is complete and submitted, the software automatically consolidates the results.<sup>68</sup>

Internet technologies have also played a role in improving singers' preparation. The repertoire list choristers receive as part of their acceptance package now displays links to YouTube recordings beside many of the pieces.<sup>69</sup> Choristers also have access to the AYC's Facebook page, and a secure area of the Federation's website, where they can access recorded demonstrations of challenging rhythmic passages or language pronunciation.<sup>70</sup> The increasing prevalence of portable electronic devices has only magnified the convenience of these resources. One is forced to wonder how the AYC might have evolved if choristers had had access to this technology in the 1980s, when the program was more involved and the Federation's financial resources more abundant. However, it is important to understand that these improvements to the recruitment, evaluation, and chorister preparation processes were only possible because the structure

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<sup>65</sup> "Audition Letter.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>67</sup> "AYC 2017 Audition Information and Quick Study.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>69</sup> "AYC 2017 Repertoire List with videos.docx," Digital Archives, Chorister Folder, AYC, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Lord, Interview.

of the Federation itself had evolved to accommodate more attentive support of the singers.

#### Changes in the Governance Structure of the ACF:

The governance structure of the Federation has directly impacted the efficiency with which the AYC program operates. Brendan Lord mentioned that the choir's 2009 season was unsuccessful partly because the ACF "didn't have a structure in place to support the guest artist in setting their program, and... helping the choristers to prepare in advance." The Federation's operating strategies have undergone significant changes since Lord's appointment as Executive Director in 2007. They began to change in 2010, and by 2013 had evolved into the structure currently in place.<sup>71</sup>

The ACF functions using three different groups: the Board, Program Advisory Committees (PACs), and Working Groups. The Board of Directors makes decisions with regard to the Federation's operation as well as the future of its programs. Lord refers to this process as "visioning." In the past, the Board consisted mostly of conductors and music teachers. Now, in addition to these individuals, the Board includes persons with diverse areas of expertise: human resource managers, accountants, lawyers, and design communication specialists. Access to these sets of skills protects the Board from the kind of budgetary confusion it experienced in 2007. It also helps the Federation develop effective communication strategies for its programs. Lord states:

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



To run an organization like this you need more than just [music specialists]. You need somebody who knows how to read a balance sheet, and somebody who knows how to develop key messaging for the programs.<sup>72</sup>

A Program Advisory Committee makes artistic decisions with respect to a specific program. It comprises conductors and music teachers with the experience and understanding necessary to develop and maintain sustainable, effective choral curriculums. Individuals on a PAC define a program's purpose and negotiate the logistics required to realize it. For the AYC, the Program Advisory Committee selects guest conductors, sets the length of the rehearsal schedule, decides on rehearsal and performance venues, and approves guest conductors' repertoire lists.<sup>73</sup> Historically, the Youth Choir's PAC was solely responsible for all elements of the program's operation, but the addition of a Working Group brought greater efficiency to the process.

A Working Group is a team of volunteers primarily responsible for coordinating a program's details, such as hotel accommodations, food, and the volunteer schedule. The Federation has established a Working Group for every program it offers; it typically comprises parents of choristers, retirees who sing in choirs, and music teachers – individuals who are eager to support the Federation in its mission, but without the time to volunteer on the Board or a PAC. Recently, the role of Learning Coordinator was introduced into the AYC's Working Group. The Learning Coordinator facilitates the choristers' learning of music ahead of the weekend retreat by providing convenient access to rehearsal resources. It is the Learning Coordinator who inserts YouTube links on the repertoire list, or who posts recordings to the AYC Facebook page or the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Federation's secure website. Having an individual dedicated to singers' preparation has greatly improved the Youth Choir experience.<sup>74</sup>

The Federation's greater investment in the success of its choral singers was reflected by a superficial yet important change in 2015. At the Annual General Meeting at Music Conference Alberta in October of that year, membership voted to change the name of the Alberta Choral Federation to Choir Alberta.<sup>75</sup> In the Annual Report, president Rita Burns mentioned that the title of Choral Federation "does not describe us well now," and in fact had not accurately represented the membership of the organization for several years.<sup>76</sup> Just as the ACDA's name changed in 1980 to reflect the inclusion of choirs and choristers in addition to choir directors, the ACF's name changed in 2015 because the organization had come to represent more than the interests of choristers and choral ensembles. The name Choir Alberta denotes inclusivity; it signifies that the organization is available to all individuals who love choral music.

The current governance structure allows Choir Alberta to invest its volunteers' skills in projects consistent with their areas of interest and expertise. Consequently, volunteers' time is used more efficiently. In earlier years, Board meetings might have lasted for eight hours, five hours of which were devoted to program operation. The evolution of the PACs' and Working Groups' responsibilities has precluded the need for the Board to hold these types of discussions; program development now occupies approximately forty-five minutes of a four- to five-hour Board meeting. Brendan Lord states:

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2015 Annual Report*, 2015, 10–11.

<sup>76</sup> Rita Burns, "Message from the President," *2015 Annual Report*, 2015, 8.

[P]art of the reason that AYC can sing the level of music at the caliber they're singing it now is because of the way the governance has evolved.... If we had had a model like this back in Maria Guinand's year we might have had a hope in hell of not having a disaster.<sup>77</sup>

Changes to Choir Alberta's structure, particularly its office personnel, have directly impacted its financial security as well. In 2008 the Board approved the hiring of an office assistant so Lord could devote more time to the exploration of various avenues for funding.<sup>78</sup> In 2012 the Federation established a fundraising committee to write grant applications, coordinate casino volunteer schedules, and organize other fundraising activities.<sup>79</sup> Since Brendan Lord began working at the ACF its annual budget has more than tripled, from nearly \$160,000 in 2007, to approximately \$500,000 in 2018. Inflation accounts for less than \$30,000 of this increase.<sup>80</sup> The remainder is a product of the Board prioritizing program development and the acquisition of revenue.<sup>81</sup>

Choir Alberta's main sources of income continue to be program revenues, grants, donations and sponsorships. In 2007 each of these areas needed development. The ACF's revenues from its programs were modest not only because participation was low, but because the Federation undervalued that participation when compared with similar organizations. For example, in 2007 the registration fee for a band to participate in the ABA's annual Festival of Bands was in excess of \$400, whereas the Federation charged choirs only \$180 to participate in Choral fest.<sup>82</sup> Since, as previously mentioned, the Board felt the ACF's membership would not support a sudden increase in program fees, it

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<sup>77</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes, 26 Jan 2008, ACF.

<sup>79</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2012 Annual Report*, 2012, 10–11.

<sup>80</sup> "Alberta Inflation Calculator," Provincial Calculators, accessed Aug 6, 2018, <http://inflationcalculator.ca/alberta/>.

<sup>81</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

devoted its efforts to expanding the organization's membership base, thereby increasing its revenue through membership fees.<sup>83</sup> A larger pool of members would, in turn, lead to increased participation in, and revenue from, Federation programs. The Board also reinstituted the profitable children's honour choir program under the name Alberta Children's Choir (ACC) in 2009. This will be discussed in detail later. Finally, in 2011 the Board inaugurated the Federation's annual Run for Music, a five- and ten-kilometer athletic event where participating choristers donate 40% of earned pledges to the ACF, while retaining 60% for their own community or school ensembles.<sup>84</sup> The program added over \$42,000 in revenue to the Federation's budget that year.<sup>85</sup> With the addition of a Run for Music in Calgary, the program now earns nearly \$100,000 annually, half of which the ACF retains for its operation.<sup>86</sup>

Choir Alberta's grant revenue has also significantly improved in the last decade. In 2007 the ACF's operational grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts was meager compared to what it had once been, but by 2010 grant revenue had increased to nearly \$70,000.<sup>87</sup> Now, Choir Alberta receives grants from four additional organizations: Edmonton Arts Council, Edmonton Community Foundation, the Community Initiatives Program, and the Nickel Family Foundation. Not all of these organizations are consistent in the amount of money they grant, but their contributions average approximately \$100,000 annually.<sup>88</sup> Revenue from casinos has also increased; since 2007 Choir Alberta has received an average of nearly \$70,000 every two years.

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<sup>83</sup> Minutes, 17 Nov 2007, ACF.

<sup>84</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2010–11 Annual Report*, 2011, 10–11.

<sup>85</sup> "2012–2013 Budget to Actual," *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 28.

<sup>86</sup> "2016–2017 Proposed Budget," *2017 Annual Report*, 2017, 26.

<sup>87</sup> "2010–2011 Budget to Actual," *2010 Annual Report*, 2010, 25.

<sup>88</sup> Lord, Interview.

Private donations and corporate sponsorships have seen substantial improvement in the last ten years. In 2007 the Federation recorded only \$1,100 in revenue from private donations. Corporate sponsorship was non-existent. It was clear to Lord that not all in-kind donations had been reported. In a meeting that November, the Board made the tracking of private donations and the developing of new sponsorship programs a priority. These new initiatives would rely on smaller donations and capitalize on members' desire to support ACF programs directly. One such example was the AYC's Sponsor-A-Singer program; for \$250, members could finance one chorister's participation in this musically and socially formative experience.<sup>89</sup> This has since become the Adopt-A-Singer program, in which members can participate for \$95.<sup>90</sup> The Board's efforts were successful; by the end of the 2007–2008 fiscal year private donations had risen to around \$7,500.<sup>91</sup> In recent years the Board has also tried to galvanize AYC alumni into supporting the program, either by continuing to enroll in the Youth Choir, or by donating to the AYC bursary fund. Though still fledgling, this fund has financed a number of choristers' involvement in the choir. Last year Choir Alberta's donations totaled over \$18,000. Over \$12,000 came from private donations, while over \$6,000 came from corporate sponsorship.<sup>92</sup>

Augmenting corporate sponsorship has been challenging for the Board. When searching for commercial support, it is best to approach those companies that have donated to the organization in the past. When there is no record of corporate sponsorship, options are severely limited. The Board failed to generate corporate interest in the 1980s because it continually approached large companies with whom it had no affiliation. Now,

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<sup>89</sup> Minutes, 17 Nov 2007, ACF.

<sup>90</sup> "Adopt-A-Chorister Campaign," Alberta Youth Choir, Choir Alberta, accessed Aug 5, 2018, <https://www.choiralberta.ca/aycadopt.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2007–08 Annual Report*, 2008, 9–10.

<sup>92</sup> Lord, Interview.

the Board approaches organizations with which it is directly connected. Choir Alberta currently receives funds from the Alberta Treasury Branch, the financial institution that holds its accounts. Long & McQuade, a large musical retail chain from whom Choir Alberta orders most of its music, has become a strong sponsor over the past decade. Other businesses, such as Snyder & Associates (a law firm) or the Muttart Foundation, donate because avid choral musicians number among their partners and associates. Private donations currently double corporate sponsorship amounts, but Brendan Lord states, “if [Choir Alberta is] going to exist ten years from now...that’s going to have to change.”<sup>93</sup>

#### The Success of the New Model and the Return of Tour:

A confluence of the Federations’ improved recruitment process, evolving governance structure, and increasingly healthy financial resources led to a healthy membership for the AYC in 2011. Of the 149 recommendations from local conductors, the Federation received fifty-six completed auditions. From these, the Committee was able to accept thirty-eight singers, nearly double the choir’s 2010 enrolment.<sup>94</sup> Although the Youth Choir experienced success in terms of its membership, it suffered several setbacks with regard to its guest conductor. In June of 2010 the Committee had asked renowned Swedish conductor Fred Sjöberg to serve as the AYC’s guest conductor for the following season. Sjöberg’s name would have attracted numerous recommendations from conductors around the province. Unfortunately, despite its improved fiscal situation, the

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> “AYC,” *2012 Annual Report*, 2012, 15.

Federation was unable to offer Sjöberg a satisfactory fee.<sup>95</sup> The Committee then contracted Elroy Friesen to return as guest conductor. A few weeks prior to the weekend retreat, Friesen broke his foot and withdrew from the contract. For his replacement, Friesen recommended his colleague at the University of Manitoba, Catherine Robbins, who, after minor changes to the repertoire list, became the AYC's guest conductor in 2011.<sup>96</sup>

Alberta conductor Scott Leithead led the Alberta Youth Choir the following year, which experienced its highest membership in four seasons: sixty choristers from thirty-six choral programs in seventeen cities across the province.<sup>97</sup> This rise in membership mirrored an increase in response to the Federation's recruitment efforts; the Committee had received 100 auditions from prospective choristers, forty-four more than the previous year.<sup>98</sup> Higher turnout could have been due to the scheduling of the recommendation and audition processes (the Committee had moved its deadlines further from the end of the school year to late-April), but it was most likely a product of singers' renewed interest in the program. Not only had the 2011 season been a positive experience for AYC choristers, but Scott Leithead was recognized by many recommending conductors as an exciting and innovative figure in Alberta's choral community.

The conclusion of the 2012 season marked the end of AYC's probationary period. The Board decided to maintain the honour choir program based on its artistic quality; to put it simply, the choir was singing at a much higher level than it had been in 2009.<sup>99</sup> In addition, feedback from choristers and recommending conductors alike was

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<sup>95</sup> Minutes, 5 Jun 2010, ACF.

<sup>96</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>97</sup> Invitation to AYC 2013

<sup>98</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 10–11.

<sup>99</sup> Lord, Interview.

“overwhelmingly positive, affirming that the current AYC experience is meaningful, and one which facilitates [choristers’] musical growth.”<sup>100</sup>

The 2012 season was also significant because it saw the return of the AYC tour. That year marked the Alberta Choral Federation’s fortieth anniversary, as well as the Youth Choir’s thirtieth. The Board had organized a number of special projects for the occasion, one of which was to send Youth Choir choristers on tour for the first time in sixteen years.<sup>101</sup> Following its demonstration session at Music Conference Alberta on Saturday morning, the choir travelled to Calgary where it presented two joint concerts. The first concert took place in the afternoon at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church with local group Harmony Through Harmony. In the Evening, the AYC joined with Il Sono Men’s Vocal Ensemble in a concert at St. Stephen’s Anglican Church.

The Committee had not finalized tour plans by the time applicants were to submit their auditions. Choristers were first notified of the tour on the registration form in the AYC acceptance packet. As such, they were not obligated to attend.<sup>102</sup> It speaks to the impact of the redesigned AYC program that fifty-seven choristers volunteered for the additional time commitment.<sup>103</sup>

Returning the tour to AYC’s season restored a purpose it had lacked for many years: to be a direct advocate for choral music in schools and communities across Alberta. It also heightened the value of the program to the Board. When designing programs, the Board and PAC members strive for compound programming, the incorporation in a program of multiple layers of benefit. The tour creates this additional

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<sup>100</sup> Lord, “ED Report,” *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 10–11.

<sup>101</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>102</sup> “Registration Form 2012.pdf,” Digital Archives, AYC, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> “Trans and Accom Info.pdf,” Digital Archives, AYC, 2012.



layer for the Youth Choir. It benefits audiences in communities who would not otherwise have the opportunity to hear the ensemble, but it also benefits Youth Choir choristers. Brendan Lord reflects, “What we found from [the tour] was that it actually elevated AYC to another level.”<sup>104</sup>

The tour has remained a part of the Youth Choir’s season every year since 2012. For the Committee, the most important element of tour has been the partnering with local ensembles in joint concerts; collaborating with other choirs heightens AYC’s impact as a choral advocate. The number of ensembles with which it performs has varied throughout the years. In 2013 the AYC orbited Edmonton in a tour of Stony Plain and Camrose, and in 2014 it travelled to Calgary and Lethbridge, performing with one ensemble in each city. However, in 2015 the AYC toured to the more remote town of Lac La Biche where it offered a joint concert with four local community and school choirs, following which it performed in Stettler with another community choir and four soloists. Choir Alberta members expressed concerns to the Board that the Youth Choir’s purposes were not best served by visiting only rural locations. The Board considered extending the tour so the choir could perform in more communities, but the music conference schedule the following year precluded this possibility.<sup>105</sup>

In 2016 Music Conference Alberta took place in Banff. Choristers lost most of what would normally have been their first day of rehearsal travelling to the conference venue; the choir met for the first time Thursday evening. The AYC also lost its Friday night rehearsal to a featured jazz concert. The combination of these two events delayed the gala concert until Saturday evening. This in turn shifted the AYC’s demonstration

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<sup>104</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>105</sup> Minutes, 6 Oct 2015, ACF.

session to Sunday morning, which allowed only the remainder of that day for its tour. Choristers could go only as far as Calgary but were still able to perform a joint concert with three local high school choirs before returning home.<sup>106</sup>

The MCA schedule in 2017 necessitated a similarly condensed tour; the choir presented a single concert in Medicine Hat with the Medicine Hat College Girls' Choir.<sup>107</sup> However, in 2018 the Youth Choir will resume its normal touring schedule, enabling it to travel to more remote centres in the province. Following its gala concert in Edmonton the AYC will travel north to Grande Prairie, after which it will move east to perform for the town of Valleyview.<sup>108</sup>

Choir Alberta is already reaping the benefits of AYC's advocative efforts; the impact the choir has made in communities while on tour has fed involvement in its other programs. Lord recalls one instance during a provincial workshop tour, a program in which choral conductors tour the province offering workshops in different communities. During one workshop, Lord was approached by a woman who indicated that her participation was based on Choir Alberta's affiliation with AYC. On the poster advertising the workshop, she'd recognized Choir Alberta's name from the AYC's poster the previous year. Because the choir had been so excellent, she decided the workshop was worth her time.<sup>109</sup>

The Alberta Youth Choir's revitalized purpose as an advocate for choral music found dramatic expression in 2013 when it performed before an audience of thousands. The road to this unique opportunity began in 2012, when Scott Leithead was guest

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<sup>106</sup> "SCHEDULE 16.10.19 FINAL.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2016.

<sup>107</sup> "CONCERT POSTER Medicine Hat PRINT.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2017.

<sup>108</sup> "schedule\_overview\_draft\_18.7.19.pdf," Digital Archives, AYC, 2018.

<sup>109</sup> Lord, Interview.

conductor. That year, Leithead's community ensemble Kokopelli had commissioned an arrangement of Alberta country music artist Paul Brandt's song "Alberta Bound" from Edmonton composer Jennifer McMillan. Kokopelli presented the arrangement as a gift to the AYC in honour of its thirtieth anniversary.<sup>110</sup> This did not prevent Kokopelli from recording the arrangement later that year and posting it to YouTube.

In June 2013, catastrophic flooding displaced thousands of southern Alberta residents. Paul Brandt planned to return to his home town of Calgary and perform as part of a televised benefit concert on August 4 for flood victim relief. He discovered Kokopelli's recording of "Alberta Bound" on YouTube and requested the choir join him in the concert. However, Kokopelli was unable to accept the invitation; Leithead was touring with the ensemble in South Africa. He suggested that Brandt engage the Youth Choir from the previous year to perform at the concert instead.

Obviously, the Board was thrilled at the prospect of this high-profile performance opportunity, and accepted the proposal. The AYC in 2012 had been strong both musically and interpersonally; it would likely be easy to assemble a large enough group to sing in the benefit concert.<sup>111</sup> Brendan Lord and his colleague Kim Denis organized an intense, one-day excursion: choristers would arrive in Calgary for an afternoon rehearsal, and return home late that night following the concert. It is a testament to the strength of redesigned AYC program that thirty singers committed to this event. ACF president Kathleen Skinner called the concert "a high point for choral music visibility and

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<sup>110</sup> "Alberta Bound (SSATB)," Choral, Arrangements, McMillan Music, accessed, Aug 5, 2018, <http://mcmillanmusic.com/arrangements/choral/alberta-bound>.

<sup>111</sup> Kathleen Skinner, "Message from the President," *2013 Annual Report*, 2013, 8–9.

advocacy in our province.”<sup>112</sup> A letter to the Federation from benefit concert organizers underlined the choir’s impact as an advocate:

There is a gigantic reason Albertans claim you as their own. Stunning vocals only offset by devotion to the cause. Bravo to you...for bringing out the best in this province’s youth.<sup>113</sup>

### Reinstatement of the Alberta Children’s Choir:

The Alberta Youth Choir was not the only thriving Federation program. Since its reinstatement in January 2009, the Alberta Children’s Choir had experienced great success. Following the announcement of ACHC’s suspension in 2006, the Board began receiving negative feedback almost immediately.<sup>114</sup> Not only had the honour choir been a source of revenue for the ACF, it was the Federation’s only program to provide choral opportunities for children. Administrative and government support for fine arts programs in schools was tenuous; the Federation needed an advocacy program for young, developing singers.<sup>115</sup> Grande Prairie Regional College offered to host the ACHC in 2007, but the Board felt a new location and sponsor would cause confusion among the membership.<sup>116</sup> As it had done with the AYC, the Board discussed offering the children’s honour choir program as part of MusiCamp Alberta, but quickly decided it would be too challenging to find adequate rehearsal and performance venues in Red Deer.<sup>117</sup>

It had always been the Board’s intention to reinstate the ACHC in 2008, once it had a clearer understanding of the Federation’s revenue and expenses. However, Music

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>113</sup> Alison and Tom Jackson to The Alberta Youth Choir and Kimberley Denis, Aug 4, 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Minutes, 25 Jan 2007, ACF.

<sup>115</sup> Skinner, “Pres Message,” *2014 Annual Report*, 2014, 8–9.

<sup>116</sup> Minutes, 9 Jun 2007, ACF.

<sup>117</sup> Minutes, 17 Nov 2007, ACF.

Conference Alberta was scheduled across Halloween that year, an impossibility for a children's choir. Singposium, The Kodály Society of Canada's (KSC) annual conference in January was the ideal solution.<sup>118</sup>

In 2009, the KSC's Edmonton conference hosted the newly instituted Alberta Children's Choir (ACC). Admission to the program was still by recommendation; the new choir welcomed sixty children, between 10 and 15 years old, from seventeen choirs across the province. Like the ACHC program before it, children attended regional rehearsals prior to the conference to prepare for the residency. Choristers also received documents with rehearsal notes similar to those Lynne Gackle had sent the Youth Choir in 2002. The first rehearsal took place on Thursday night, followed by three sessions on Friday. After two sessions on Saturday morning, the ACC performed for the first time in a joint concert with St. Mary's Catholic School Choir on Saturday afternoon.<sup>119</sup>

The new program was an immediate success with parents and choristers, and, for the next three years, operated with only minimal changes to its schedule. By 2012 membership in the ACC had grown to 109.<sup>120</sup> Local participation in ACC's gala concert had also increased; three community and school choirs joined in the choir's Saturday evening concert. Unfortunately, the quality of the ensemble that year prompted Committee members to question the selection methods of recommending conductors. The ACC's 2012 conductor survey asked teachers to describe how they chose their choristers. Responses included a number of different approaches, from basing selection on the age of the participants, to simply selecting as many as was allowed by the ACC guidelines. Only six surveyed conductors indicated that they had chosen their choristers based on

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<sup>118</sup> Ries, "Pres Report," *2007–08 Annual Report*, 2008, 7–8.

<sup>119</sup> "SCHEDULE.pdf," Digital Archives, ACC, 2008–2009.

<sup>120</sup> "ACC," *2012 Annual Report*, 2012, 14.

ability.<sup>121</sup> It was clear that most teachers did not view the ACC as an honour choir experience.

For the 2013 season the Committee took additional measures to ensure the quality of the ensemble. It established “a more practical vehicle through which choristers will be selected by the jury.”<sup>122</sup> The ACC brochure provided teachers with a list on which they could rank their choristers from 1 to 8. This was accompanied by detailed guidelines for the ranking and recommending of choristers. As the Youth Choir’s PAC had done in 2011, the ACC Committee introduced a questionnaire to the selection process in 2012. It posed questions of both the parents and prospective choristers. The parents’ questions dealt with the musical background and training of their child:<sup>123</sup>

Of which choirs has your child been a part? For how many years has (s)he been involved in each?

Does your child take voice lessons or play any musical instruments? If so, which ones and for how long?

Does your child feel comfortable performing on stage?

To what extent does your child read music?

Some of the children’s questions were more reflective:

What is your favorite part about singing in a choir?

What is the name of one of your favorite songs?

The parents were to return completed questionnaires to the conductor, who would then forward it, with the rankings, to the Federation for a jury to consider. The ACC Working

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<sup>121</sup> “ACC Evaluation 2012.pdf,” Digital Archives, ACC, 2012.

<sup>122</sup> “Recommendation Packet 12.9.11.pdf,” Digital Archives, ACC, 2013, 1.

<sup>123</sup> “Information for Parents 12.9.11.pdf,” Digital Archives, ACC, 2013.

Group would use both these tools to select appropriate choristers for the program.<sup>124</sup>

However, recommendations for the 2013 season became so numerous that the Committee no longer felt comfortable rejecting so many interested children.<sup>125</sup> The result was the inauguration of the Alberta Children's Apprentice Choir (ACAC).

Such a choir was not part of the Committee's plan for the upcoming season. The ACC information distributed to parents as part of the questionnaire did not allude to any kind of secondary ensemble. Kim Denis' letter to Linda Burwell, the ACAC guest conductor in 2013, clarifies:

[It] is a new initiative of the Alberta Choral Federation in response to the large number of recommendations to the Alberta Children's Choir this year.... [W]e have agreed that this choir would be offered to those singers not yet ready for the honour choir experience provided by the Alberta Children's Choir.<sup>126</sup>

The guidelines used to assign prospective choristers to the ACAC or ACC were determined at a meeting of the ACC's Working Group in November. Children between the age of 10 to 11, ranked fourth or lower in their teacher's recommendations, were enrolled in the ACAC. Children 12 years old ranked fifth or lower also went to the Apprentice Choir.<sup>127</sup> ACC membership was still large that year; it consisted of 109 children from forty-three ensembles across the province. At fifty-four children, the ACAC comprised half that amount.

The Apprentice Choir did not receive positive feedback from parents. This was not because the children had had a poor experience, but likely because the word "apprentice" made them feel their child was less skilled than choristers in the ACC. It did not help that some children assigned to the Apprentice Choir had already sung in ACC

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<sup>124</sup> Minutes 2 Jun 2012, ACF.

<sup>125</sup> Kimberley Denis to Linda Burwell, November 5, 2012.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes, 13 Nov 2012, Working Group, ACF.

for years.<sup>128</sup> It was unlikely the Federation would continue to find enthusiasm for the children's honour choir program if it maintained the Apprentice model.

For the 2014 season, the Committee proposed a solution that would both reduce the unwieldy membership of the ACC and satisfy parents. Since 2009, the ACC program had taken place exclusively in Edmonton, an inconvenient distance for many parents. The Board had received numerous requests from educators, conductors, and parents that it establish a Calgary-based ensemble.<sup>129</sup> The ACF obliged, and in 2014 separated the ACC into two choirs: ACC North and ACC South. ACC North would serve communities around and north of Edmonton; ACC South would serve communities around and south of Calgary. The new program was a huge success. In its first year, ACC North received 105 children, and ACC South received eighty-seven.<sup>130</sup>

For its 2015 season, the ACC Committee enhanced its recommendation system. It abandoned the inaccurate ranking method in favour of a detailed rubric, which teachers would complete for each chorister. The rubric listed multiple areas in which a chorister could receive a score between 6 and 10, increasing in 0.5 intervals. Each category offered detailed explanations as to the level of achievement that constituted a particular score. The areas included: pitch and rhythm, tone quality, independence on a part & ear training, ability to learn music, retaining the material, conduct, team-work, and physical approach to singing.<sup>131</sup> The new recruitment procedure was embraced by educators, and is still used in 2018.

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<sup>128</sup> "ACAC Parent Evaluation Summary.docx," Digital Archive, ACC, 2013.

<sup>129</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2014 Annual Report*, 2014, 10–11.

<sup>130</sup> "ACC," *2014 Annual Report*, 2014, 14–15.

<sup>131</sup> The Alberta Choral Federation, "Alberta Children's Choir Recommendation Rubric," Choir Alberta, Edmonton, AB, 2015.



Choir Alberta continues to offer ACC North and South. Both these programs have been wildly successful and are a source of revenue for the organization.<sup>132</sup> Since 2014, ACC North has seen an average participation of eighty-seven children, from twenty-three choirs, in ten communities from central and northern Alberta. ACC South's membership has averaged eighty-one children, from twenty-one choirs, in eight communities. The format for both ensembles remains the same, and each year ACC North and South present gala concerts with multiple local school and community choirs. These concerts fulfill much the same advocative role as the tour in the AYC program. They present a valuable opportunity for local choirs to hear their peers make music at a high level, but they also offer parents and children greater insight into their community's level of engagement in choral music. Seated with their parents or fellow choristers in an auditorium filled to capacity, perhaps they realize their interests are not solitary, and will continue to sing in the future.

#### AYC from 2013 Onward:

The 2012 season marked the beginning of a period of stability for the AYC. For the last eight years the program has operated with minimal changes to its model, schedule, or membership. In 2013 the Committee broadened its recruitment strategy by sending letters to 15-year old ACC alumni, encouraging them to audition for the Youth Choir. That year audition submissions climbed to 140, a number not matched in subsequent seasons. Notwithstanding fluctuations in the number of auditions, the AYC has managed to maintain stable membership; since 2013 the Youth Choir has averaged

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<sup>132</sup> Hudson, Interview.

fifty-eight choristers, from thirty choral ensembles, in seventeen communities across Alberta.

The honour choir has remained consistently successful, despite the occasional setback. In 2015 the AYC Committee did not receive the guest conductor's repertoire list in time to order and distribute music to the choristers as early as it had in the past. In previous seasons this would have resulted in unprepared singers, and hampered the quality of the ensemble. However, the redesigned program now attracts more skilled and responsible individuals. Of that season the PAC reported, "Fortunately, we had a capable group and this didn't prove to be too large of an issue."<sup>133</sup>

The status of the Youth Choir program is no longer a source of worry for the Board. This is evidenced in Choir Alberta's current Annual Reports. Since its founding in 1982, the AYC has been a nearly annual subject of importance or concern in the president's and Executive Director's messages. In the last three Annual Reports, the president's message has mentioned the Youth Choir only in passing, as part of a larger list of Choir Alberta's programs. Lord's report has referred to the choir only once, in 2016, to announce Fred Sjöberg as its guest conductor.<sup>134</sup>

The Committee's experience with the guest conductor in 2017 is representative of the Youth Choir's progress as an honour choir program. That year, Choir Alberta had contracted Elroy Friesen to return as AYC's director. Remembering his experience with the 2010 ensemble, Friesen chose his repertoire and forwarded the Committee the list.

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<sup>133</sup> "Program Report AYC 2015 15.10.6.xlsx," Digital Archives, AYC 2015.

<sup>134</sup> Lord, "ED Report," *2016 Annual Report*, 2016, 10–11.

Members of the PAC advised Friesen to choose more challenging music; the pieces were too easy for the Youth Choir's current level of musicianship.<sup>135</sup>

In this, the program's thirty-sixth season, the Youth Choir shows no signs of trouble. Jurors have reviewed applicants' auditions, and Lord confirms the membership will be around seventy choristers.

### Conclusion:

Over the course of its thirty-six year history, the honour choir has been subject to a cycle of sorts: the Board desires to offer singers a new or reformed program, which the Committee then designs (1982, 1996, 2010); this kind of program requires substantial financial investment in order to operate; eventually the program becomes too expensive to maintain, and the Board removes various components to reduce its cost (1989, 1993, 1996, 2008); this leads to a decrease in the program's quality, which forces Board members to debate the value of the program (1991, 1995, 2009); the Committee then institutes program reforms, and the cycle begins again. Knowing the multitude of challenges the AYC program has faced since 1982, it is natural to consider the reasons for the program's survival.

One contributing factor is the tenacity of individuals who constitute Choir Alberta. Over the decades these individuals have become more educated and experienced as to the operation and maintenance of provincial programs. They are passionate about

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<sup>135</sup> Lord, Interview.

these programs and the benefits they offer young singers, so they persist, despite fluctuations in quality or funding.<sup>136</sup>

The program's logistics play a role in its survival as well. Brendan Lord states, "If those don't work, the choristers aren't going to come."<sup>137</sup> AYC has remained relatively inexpensive (save for a few seasons), its rehearsal and performance venues have been easily accessible for most singers in the province, and its schedule has minimized interference with school. The opportunity to work with galvanizing guest conductors has also motivated chorister enrollment, and re-enrollment, throughout the years.<sup>138</sup>

A large part of the Youth Choir's continued success is attributable to the benefits it offers choristers. Lord reflects, "When I started this job in 2007 I was pretty skeptical as to the real benefit. Now I'm not skeptical anymore." He continues, "Success breeds success, ...excellence breeds excellence." Students are excited by the results they achieve within a condensed rehearsal period, and they appreciate working with other singers who are committed to excellence. One AYC chorister confirms this in their feedback to the Youth Choir's survey in 2011:

[S]inging with the rest of the participants was one of the best feelings ever. Knowing that I was singing with others that shared the same passion for music that I have, was amazing. After the concert I just wanted to jump up and down and scream in excitement because I knew we did so well."<sup>139</sup>

Choristers relate their AYC experiences to friends in their home choir. Often, they will return with these friends the following year.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> McCready, Interview.

<sup>137</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> "Evaluation 2011.docx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2011, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Lord, Interview.

Students benefit from the connections they make with their colleagues. Singing with choristers from different ensembles across the province shows students they are not alone in their interests. Choristers often continue to associate with and support each other once the program has concluded. Brendan Lord has seen AYC choristers attend Kokopelli's concerts, or drive from Edmonton to Calgary to support their colleagues' high school choir performances. These friendships are cemented by a mutual love of choral music.<sup>141</sup> Some relationships become lifelong friendships.<sup>142</sup> An AYC chorister relates:

I...was able to meet so many new and wonderful people who I will now have a bond with my entire life. ... We all became a family and I wouldn't miss that opportunity again for anything."<sup>143</sup>

The opportunities for personal growth and leadership development that the Alberta Youth Choir provides are valuable to choristers. AYC alumni often become leaders in their home ensembles, which, for timid choristers, might not have happened otherwise. Lord recalls an experience with one such chorister whom he had known for a few years. For the performance of a certain piece at the gala concert, the choir had been asked to spread out across the auditorium. The conductor had placed this particular singer alone, at the edge of the stage, elevated above the audience. Despite this incredibly exposed position, the chorister managed the performance with capability and confidence. When Lord later remarked on this to the singer, the chorister replied, "Well, that's the thing about AYC: you have no choice, you just do it."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Hudson, Interview.

<sup>143</sup> "Evaluation 2011.docx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2011, 10.

<sup>144</sup> Lord, Interview.

The Youth Choir experience changes how young singers value choral music. For many choristers, it introduces them to the art form's potential. One chorister reflects, "at AYC I got to see what a real choir is like and it just blew my mind."<sup>145</sup> The condensed timeline and concentrated learning process allow choristers to glimpse their own potential as well. They feel empowered by the responsibilities required of them and by their role in the choir's success. Choristers continue to enroll in the program because, as Lord states, "they expect to come and be artists."<sup>146</sup>

Certainly, each of the above factors has played a role in the survival of the Alberta Youth Choir program. However, I believe it is a feeling of unification in Alberta's choral community, a collective sense of duty that has kept the program operating for nearly four decades. In 2009 the Federation drafted a new mission statement:

The Alberta Choral Federation actively collaborates with choirs, choral conductors, music educators and choristers to foster the development, understanding and appreciation of choral music."<sup>147</sup>

This statement makes it clear that the organization and its programs seek to benefit more than just students, and rely on the efforts of more than just program administrators.

Programs succeed and persist because teachers, conductors, parents, and any individual who has come to an "understanding and appreciation of choral music," are invested in that music's future. Choir Alberta connects a diverse network of music makers, administrators, and enthusiasts in a way Robert Cook had perhaps not anticipated when he assembled that group of ten conductors in 1971. When our honour choirs perform, we gather to listen and to celebrate our connection as a community, unified in its mission to

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<sup>145</sup> "Evaluation 2011.docx," Digital Archives, AYC, 2011, 8.

<sup>146</sup> Lord, Interview.

<sup>147</sup> Minutes, 6 Jun 2009, ACF, 6.

further choral music in the province. If the choirs disappoint, we think, “this can be better.” If they impress, we think, “this should continue.”

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Hudson, Karen. Interview by Adam B. Robertson. July 14, 2018.

Lord, Brendan. Interview by Adam B. Robertson. July 13, 2018.

McCready, Madge. Interview by Adam B. Robertson. July 5, 2018.

## Appendix 1

Table of AYC Artistic Staff, Sessions, Membership, and Fees from 1982–1996

Year	Conductor	Accompanist	Vocal Coach	Sessions (No. of Days)	Rehearsal Locations	Tour Locations	Membership	Fee
1982	David Ferguson	Sharon Lang	N/A	Feb (3) May (3) Aug (4) Oct (3) Nov: Conference (3) Concert (1)	Edmonton Calgary Canrose Red Deer CBDA/ACF (Lethbridge) Calgary	N/A	38	\$ (100.00)
1983	Marilyn Perkins	Frima Boroditsky	N/A	Aug (unknown) Oct: Session (2) Conference (3)	Canrose Red Deer; Edmonton CBDA/ACF (Calgary)	N/A	40	\$ (100.00)
1984	Adele Armstrong	Ken Murdoch	N/A	Feb (unknown) Jun (3) Aug (4) Sep (unknown) Oct (3)	Calgary Red Deer Canrose Medicine Hat AMC (Edmonton)	N/A	40	\$ 100.00
1985	Dr. Brian Trevor	Eileen Keown	N/A	May (4) Aug (6) Sep (3) Oct: Conference (2) Tour (3) Dec (1)	Calgary Camp Caroline Calgary AMC (Grande Prairie) Calgary	Edmonton Red Deer Lethbridge	31	\$ 100.00
1986	Jonathan Mohr	Elizabeth Liez	N/A	May (5) Aug (6) Sep (4) Oct: Conference (2) Tour (2)	Canrose Camp Caroline Edmonton AMC (Calgary)	Airdrie Calgary	38	\$ 100.00
1987	Leonard Ratcliff	Elizabeth Schlosser	Sylvia Dyck	Mar (3) May (3) Aug (6) Oct: Conference (3) Concert (1)	Red Deer Calgary Camp Caroline AMC (Edmonton) Edmonton	N/A	57	\$ 100.00
1988	George Evelyn	Elinor Lawson	Sylvia Dyck	Mar (3) May (3) Aug (6) Oct: Conference (3) Tour (4)	Edmonton Red Deer Camp Evergreen AMC (Calgary)	Medicine Hat Brooks Taber Lethbridge Crowsnest Pass	36	\$ (100.00)

1989	Robert de Frece	Joy Berg	Eva Bostrand	Aug (10) Sep (3) Oct: Conference (3) Tour (4)	Camp Evergreen Calgary AMC (Edmonton)	Edson Hinton Grande Cache Spruce Grove	39	\$ 150.00
1990	David Ferguson	Marian Smith	Eva Bostrand	Aug (10) Sep (3) Nov: Conference (2) Tour (3)	Camp Evergreen Edmonton AMC (Calgary)	Red Deer Sylvan Lake Stettler Camrose	51	\$ 175.00
1991	Marc Haiso	Milton Schlosser	Eva Bostrand	Aug (10) Sep (3) Oct: Conference (3) Tour (4)	Camp Evergreen Calgary AMC (Red Deer)	Edmonton Camrose	43	\$ 175.00
1992	HIATUS							
1993	Malcolm Edwards	Heather Larsen	Eva Bostrand	Aug (5) Sep (3) Oct: Conference (3) Tour (3)	Camp Evergreen Calgary AMC (Banff)	Lethbridge Coaldale Medicine Hat	27	\$ 250.00
1994	Debra Cairns Olikkala	Tanya Wan Lim	George Evelyn	Aug (5) Sep (3) Oct: Conference (2) Tour (2)	Camp Nakamun Edmonton AMC (Edmonton)	Edson Grande Prairie	34	\$ 250.00
1995	Frank Grandt	Sheryl Dyck	Eva Bostrand	Aug (5) Sep (4) Oct: Tour (4) Conference (1)	Camp Nakamun Calgary AMC (Banff)	Medicine Hat Cardston Lethbridge	35	\$ 250.00
1996	Bill Hamm	Cheryl Meckelburg	Kathleen Neudorf	Aug (4) Sep (3) Oct: Tour (3) Conference (1)	Prairie Bible Institute Edmonton AMC (Edmonton)	Slave Lake Sexsmith Grande Prairie Whitecourt	30	\$ (250.00)

Fees in parentheses are unconfirmed by primary sources

## Appendix 2

Table of AYC Artistic Staff, Sessions, Membership, and Fees from 1997–2007

Year	Conductor	Rehearsal Conductor	Accompanist	Vocal Coach	Sessions (No. of Days)	Session Locations	Membership	Fee	
1997	Richard Nace	John Hooper	Julie Willie/ Rachel Stefan	Arlie Langager	Sep (4) Oct: Conference (2) Concert (1)	Camp Caroline AMC (Calgary) Calgary	34	\$ 350.00	AYC
1998	Lydia Adams	George Evelyn	Rachel Stefan	Karen Hudson	Oct: Camp (4) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline AMC (Edmonton)	58	\$ (235.00)	
1999	Iwan Edwards	Karen Hudson	Rachel Stefan	Joanne Collier	Oct: Camp (4) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline AMC (Calgary)	88	\$ (235.00)	
2000	Doug Dunsmore	Robert de Frece	Helen Stuart	Eva Bostrand	Oct: Camp (3) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline AMC (Edmonton)	85	\$ (235.00)	
2001	Bob Chilcott	Marc Hafso	Tova Olson	Joy Berg	Oct (4) Nov (2)	Camp Caroline AMC (Edmonton)	117	\$ 235.00	AHC
2002	Lynne Gackle	Malcolm Edwards	Sarah Wipf	Eva Bostrand	Oct: Camp (3) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline AMC (Calgary)	88	\$ 295.00	
2003	Diane Loomer	Ardelle Ries	Roger Admiral	Josie Burgess	Oct: Camp (3) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline SING Alberta (Edmonton)	80	\$ 375.00	
2004	Richard Nace	Robert de Frece	Roger Admiral	Eva Bostrand	Oct (3) Nov (3)	Camp Caroline SING Alberta (Edmonton)	88	\$ 375.00	
2005	March Hafso	John Wiebe	Tova Olson	Jolaine Kerley	Oct (3) Nov (3)	Camp Caroline AMEC (Edmonton)	79	\$ 375.00	AYC
2006	Juan Tony Guzmán	Trent Worthington	Roger Admiral	Jolaine Kerley	Oct: Camp (3) Conference (2)	Camp Caroline AMEC (Edmonton)	56	\$ 375.00	
2007	Stephen Hatfield	Bruce Cable	Roger Admiral	Josie Burgess	Oct (3) Nov (3)	Camp Caroline MCA (Red Deer)	51	\$ 375.00	

Fees in parentheses are unconfirmed by primary sources

## Appendix 3

Table of AYC Artistic Staff, Sessions, Membership and Fees from 2008–2018

Year	Conductor	Apprentice Conductor	Accompanist	Sessions (No. of Days)	Session Locations	Tour Locations	Membership	Fee
2008	Adam Con	Elaine Myhre	Roger Admiral	Oct (3)	MCA (Red Deer)	N/A	90	\$ 275.00
2009	Maria Guinand	Maria Conkey	Roger Admiral	Oct (4)	MCA (Red Deer)	N/A	55	\$ 295.00
2010	Elroy Friesen	None	Sheila Wright	Oct (2) Nov (3)	Red Deer College (RDC) MCA (Red Deer)	N/A	20	\$ 195.00
2011	Catherine Robbins	Alexander McCune	Roger Admiral	Oct (2) Nov (3)	RDC MCA (Red Deer)	N/A	37	\$ 195.00
2012	Scott Leithhead	Lisa Friesen	Tova Olson	Oct (2) Nov: Conference (2) Tour (2)	RDC MCA (Red Deer)	Calgary	61	\$ 195.00
2013	Robert Fillion	Angela McKeown	Roger Admiral	Aug (1) Oct (2) Oct/Nov: Conference (2) Tour (2)	Calgary (Halo High Water) RDC MCA (Red Deer)	Stony Plain Canmore	53	\$ 250.00
2014	Rollo Dilworth	Britany Michnichuk	Mathew Walton	Oct: Camp (2) Conference (2) Tour (2)	RDC MCA (Edmonton)	Calgary Lethbridge	63	\$ 250.00
2015	Graeme Langerer	None	Roger Admiral	Oct: Camp (2) Conference (2) Tour (2)	RDC MCA (Red Deer)	Lac La Biche Stettler	51	\$ 295.00
2016	Fred Sjöberg	Gloria Wan	Tova Olson	Oct: Camp (2) Conference (3) Concert (1)	RDC MCA (Banff) Calgary	N/A	61	\$ 295.00
2017	Elroy Friesen	Joel Forth	Tova Olson	Sep (2) Oct: Conference (3) Tour (1)	RDC MCA (Red Deer)	Medicine Hat	63	\$ 295.00
2018	Cristian Grases	Unknown	Unknown	Sep (2) Oct: Conference (2) Tour (2)	RDC MCA (Edmonton)	Unknown	approx. 70	\$ 295.00



## Appendix 4

Table of AUCC Artistic Staff, Sessions, Membership, and Fees from 1997–2007

Year	Conductor	Accompanist	Sessions (No. of Days)	Session Locations	Membership	Fee
1997	Diane Loomer	Pamela Connolly	Oct (2)	AMC (Calgary)	72	\$ 50.00
1998	Maurice Skones	Jeremy Spurgeon	Oct (2)	AMC (Edmonton)	84	\$ (50.00)
1999	Noel Edison	Unknown	Oct (2)	AMC (Calgary)	91	\$ (50.00)
2000	Gerald Fagan	Jeremy Spurgeon	Oct (3)	AMC (Edmonton)	69	\$ 50.00
2001	Richard Sparks	Jeremy Spurgeon	Oct (3)	AMC (Edmonton)	65	\$ 75.00
2002	Fred Stoltzfus	Pamela Connolly	Oct (3)	AMC (Calgary)	58	\$ 95.00
2003	Brazeal Dennard	Gail Olmstead	Oct (3)	SING Alberta! (Edmonton)	60	\$ 150.00
2004	Ivars Taurins	Jeremy Spurgeon	Nov (3)	SING Alberta! (Edmonton)	73	\$ 150.00
2005	Maria Guinand	Roger Admiral	Nov (3)	AMEC (Edmonton)	63	\$ 150.00
2006	Robert Sund	Jeremy Spurgeon	Oct (3)	AMEC (Edmonton)	60	\$ 150.00

Fees in parentheses are unconfirmed by primary sources

## Appendix 5

Table of ACC Artistic Staff, Sessions, Membership, and Fees from 1998–2018

Year	Conductor	Accompanist	Sessions (No. of Days)	Session Locations	Membership	Fee	
1998	Henry Leck	Roger Adniral	Oct (2)	AMC (Edmonton)	135	Unknown	
1999	John Barron	Nhat-Viet Phi	Oct (2)	AMC (Calgary)	133	\$ 35.00	
2000	Bob Chilcott	Roger Adniral	Oct (2)	AMC (Edmonton)	120	\$ 50.00	
2001	Linda Beaupre	Criselda Mierau	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Nov (2)	AMC (Edmonton)	151	\$ (125.00)	
2002	Mark Sirett	Vicky Oveson	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Conference (2)	AMC (Calgary)	109	\$ 125.00	ACHC
2003	Jean Ashworth Bartle	Robert Casgrain	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Conference (2)	SING Alberta (Edmonton)	128	\$ 150.00	
2004	Glenda Crawford	Robert Casgrain	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Conference (3)	SING Alberta (Edmonton)	83	\$ 150.00	
2005	Cristian Grases	Robert Casgrain	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Conference (3)	AMEC (Edmonton)	66	\$ 150.00	
2006	Anne Tomlinson	Robert Casgrain	Oct: Regional Rehearsals Conference (3)	AMEC (Edmonton)	49	\$ 150.00	
2007	Hiatus						
2008							
2009	Elise Bradley	Helen Stuart	Jan (3)	Edmonton	60	\$ 175.00	
2010	Zimfira Poloz	Roger Adniral	Jan (3)	Edmonton	64	\$ 175.00	
2011	Linda Beaupre	Sheila Wright	Feb (3)	Edmonton	66	\$ 180.00	
2012	Kellie Walsh	Sheila Wright	Feb (3)	Edmonton	109	\$ 180.00	
2013	Catherine Glaser-Clinnie	Sheila Wright	Jan (3)	Edmonton	106	\$ 180.00	ACC
	Linda Burweel	Judy Loewen	Jan (3)	Edmonton	54	\$ 150.00	ACAC
2014	Carolyn Boyes	Sheila Wright	Jan: Prep. Rehearsal (1) Residency (3)	Edmonton; Lac La Biche Edmonton	105	\$ 185.00	ACC North
	Elise Bradley	Faye Klassen	Jan (1) Feb (3)	Calgary Calgary	87	\$ 185.00	ACC South

2015	Sanna Valvanne	Mathew Walton	Jan: Prep. Rehearsal (1) Residency (3)	Edmonton Edmonton	72	\$ 195.00	ACC North
	Christy Elsner	Sheila Wright	Jan (1) Feb (3)	Calgary Calgary	69	\$ 195.00	ACC South
2016	Janeal Krehbiel	Megan Crane	Jan: Prep. Rehearsal (1) Residency (3)	Edmonton Edmonton	74	\$ 195.00	ACC North
	Zimifra Poloz	Faye White	Jan (1) Feb (3)	Calgary Calgary	95	\$ 195.00	ACC South
2017	Glenda Crawford	Megan Crane	Jan: Prep. Rehearsal (1) Residency (4)	Edmonton Edmonton	97	\$ 195.00	ACC North
	Joan Gregoryk	Faye White	Jan (1) Feb (3)	Calgary Calgary	73	\$ 195.00	ACC South
2018	Ruth Dwyer	Kim Cousineau	Jan: Prep. Rehearsal (1) Residency (3)	Edmonton Edmonton	Unknown	\$ 195.00	ACC North
	Kellie Walsh	Evan Mounce	Jan (1) Feb (3)	Calgary Calgary	Unknown	\$ 195.00	ACC South

Fees in parentheses are unconfirmed by primary sources

## Appendix 6

### Table of Acronyms

AAYC .....	Alberta Alumni Youth Choir
ABA .....	Alberta Band Association
ACAC .....	Alberta Children's Apprentice Choir
ACC .....	Alberta Children's Choir
ACDA .....	Alberta Choral Directors' Association
ACF .....	Alberta Choral Federation
ACHC .....	Alberta Children's Honour Choir
ACMA .....	Alberta Choral Music Association
AFA .....	Alberta Foundation for the Arts
AGLC.....	Alberta Gaming and Licensing Commission
AHC .....	Alberta Honour Choir
AMC .....	Alberta Music Conference
AMEC .....	Alberta Music Educators' Conference
AMEF .....	Alberta Music Education Foundation
APC.....	All-Province Choir
APCC .....	All-Province Chamber Choir
APHSCC .....	All-Province High School Choir Camp
ARMTA .....	Alberta Registered Music Teachers' Association
ASA .....	Alberta String Association
ASMWA .....	Alberta Summer Music Workshop Association
AUCC .....	Alberta University and College Choir
AUCE.....	Alberta University and College Ensemble
AYC .....	Alberta Youth Choir
CBC .....	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CBDA .....	Canadian Band Directors' Association
CFCW .....	Canada's Finest Country and Western
CMEA.....	Canadian Music Educators' Association
KSC.....	Kodály Society of Canada
MCA .....	Music Conference Alberta
NSCF .....	Nova Scotia Choral Federation
OYC .....	Ontario Youth Choir
PAC.....	Program Advisory Committee
PACES .....	Performing Arts Coordination and Education Services
PASO .....	Provincial Arts Service Organization
UAMC .....	University of Alberta Mixed Chorus