

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 — 2025



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OUR MISSION

To inspire and enrich the lives of our community through excellent performances of diverse, distinctive choral music and unique education opportunities in Northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and surrounding communities.

SIDE PROJECTS

The Arrowhead Chorale is fortunate to have a plethora of talented musicians with professional choral direction experience. This has allowed us to grow our choral offerings by establishing side projects: Chamber Singers and Echoes of the Lake. Officially part of the Arrowhead Chorale organization, these groups allow the Chorale to reach beyond the conventional time, space, and logistical limitations of a 50+ person choir, and bring our mission to people and places otherwise unreachable.

Chamber Singers

The Arrowhead Chorale Chamber Singers are a small, mixed-ensemble that brings the spirit of the season to life each December, sharing joy and connection through caroling at community events, local establishments, and special gatherings. With heartfelt intention, the ensemble reaches those who may be unable to venture out or who might otherwise feel apart from the festivities—bringing music directly to them as a gift of inclusion and cheer. The past three Decembers, the Chamber Singers have sung for dinner guests at the Union Gospel Mission, the Benedictine Sisters of the St. Scholastica Monastery, residents of the Benedictine Living Center, unsuspecting shoppers and staff at Mount Royal Fine Foods, Bentleyville guests, shoppers at The Depot Christmas Market, and more.



Echoes of the Lake

Echoes of the Lake is a treble voices group which sings repertoire that illuminates the experiences of women, from lullabies and bluegrass hymns to modern rallying cries and serene wonderments, Echoes' music invites the audience to contemplate and explore the mosaic of stories that animate, encapsulate, and articulate the lives of women past and present. Founded in the summer of 2023, this all-female ensemble quickly established itself as an agile and versatile group with a collaborative spirit of belonging — a modern echo of the spirit that has carried women through the ages. Echoes extends the Chorale's mission into previously “unsung” times and spaces: various weekdays and times during the summer months at venues such as coffee shops, craft fairs, private residences, and sporting events.

Echoes had a productive 2025 season, furthering Arrowhead Chorale's presence in the community by singing at Love Creamery, Empire Coffee, and a fundraiser for the choral scholarship at First United Methodist Church. Echoes also boosted Arrowhead Chorale's social media presence significantly through polls, giveaways and a livestream that garnered 1.7k views (and counting). Echoes is looking forward to performing a benefit concert for Safe Haven June 2026.

SING FOR GOOD

Sing for Good is Arrowhead Chorale's community engagement program, under which any and all Chorale-initiated, community-oriented performances and service projects are housed.

The mission of the program is simple, yet powerful: to create harmony in our community through song and service.

ORIGIN STORY

Established in fall of 2022, the idea for our community engagement program — Sing for Good — was born from a mere observation: there is goodness here.

At any given rehearsal, it is obvious **this group understands music to have a transcendent power that heals, unifies, rejuvenates, and soothes.** Our singers truly care for each other and our community. To be sure, during the pandemic — a time that was rife with division and the dissolution of arts groups — not only did our group stick together, we emerged with a stronger sense of self and purpose, and with a heightened awareness of the needs in our community that we now endeavor to help meet.

The Arrowhead Chorale possesses a palpable sense of good will, and it felt natural and right to harness that good will and turn it outward, into our community. And so, we **Sing for Good.**

What we do for Goodness Sake



To achieve its mission, Sing for Good has five primary projects: outreach concerts, good give, community connect, concert cause, and soul-tending.



OUTREACH CONCERTS Sing for the marginalized & underserved

2022-23 + 2023-24 seasons: Benedictine Living Center, NERCC

2024-2025 season: Musical Merriment (12/3/24), NERCC (12/5/24), Ecumen (3/20/25)

December 2025 concert cycle: Musical Merriment (Tues. 12/2) + NERCC (Thurs. 12/4)



GOOD GIVE Collect goods for a local nonprofit each concert cycle

2022-23 + 2023-24 seasons: Rural Care and Share Food Shelf, Union Gospel Mission, Duluth Harbor Mission, Damiano Center, Safe Haven, Life House, and Birch Tree Center.

2024-2025 season: Dec 2024: LSS Crisis Nursery | March 2025: Damiano Center

December 2025 concert cycle: Carlton County Community & Family Initiatives



COMMUNITY CONNECT Host, participate, & pitch in at community events

2022-23 + 2023-24 seasons: Chamber Singers caroling at Bentleyville and The Depot Christmas Market, Haunted Shack, Season Splash

2024-2025 season: Oct 2024: Help with The Haunted Shack event and fundraiser for the Special Olympics in Carlton, MN | July 2025: Participation in Duluth Downtown Days

December 2025 concert cycle: Help with the Haunted Shack in Carlton, Chamber Singers caroling at various community events

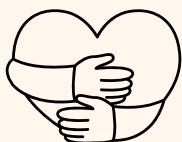


CONCERT CAUSE Fundraise for a local cause at each concert

2022-23 + 2023-24 seasons: Life House, MN Adult & Teen Challenge, Family Freedom Center

2024-2025 season December 2024: Raised \$450 for LSS Crisis Nursery in memory of our late friend and fellow singer, Gregory Garmer | March 2025: Raised \$500 for 23rd Veteran

December 2025 concert cycle: Stepping on Up



SOUL-TENDING Show care in proactive, intentional, tangible ways

2022-Dec 2025 concert cycle: Encouragement notes written to NERCC residents, Saved You a Seat Memorial at all ticketed concerts (reserved seat in first row marked with a rose and decorative pillow. Singers are welcome to insert notes or mementos to loved ones we've lost who we know would love to be in that seat listening to us sing.)

Sing for Good's flagship event:

Musical Merriment



Musical Merriment offers guests an intimate look at the Chorale's preparation for our **Holiday Traditions and Jubilations** concert by performing excerpts of the repertoire in a warm and welcoming atmosphere complete with festive decorations, Christmas cookies, cocoa, and a joyous singalong of treasured carols. This event is our goodwill offering to those in our community who may face barriers to experiencing live choral music and its life-giving effect. To ensure we reach this population, invitations are extended to local organizations in a targeted and more personal manner (individual emails and phone calls in addition to email blasts).



December 2024 marked our **second annual Musical Merriment** behind-the-scenes holiday choral experience. Thanks to generous funding by The Depot Foundation, as well as donations and discounts from SuperOne, Johnson's Bakery, and Caribou Coffee, this event was free and festive for all attendees. We were honored to welcome guests from Trillium, Lighthouse Center for Vital Living, DRCC, Sevita, MN Adult and Teen Challenge, and more. During our intermission we mingled in pleasant fellowship with our guests and were moved to see and hear their gratitude that we would put this together specifically for them. And that is why we will continue to do so — Musical Merriment 2025 is happening Tuesday, Dec 2 at The Depot Great Hall.

2024 — 2025

SEASON HIGH— LIGHTS

2024

September 2024

SEASON SPLASH
WADE STADIUM
12/5/24

December 2024

MUSICAL MERRIMENT
THE DEPOT
12/03/24

**OUTREACH
PERFORMANCE**
NORTHEAST REGIONAL
CORRECTIONS CENTER
12/5/24

**COMMUNITY CAROLING
CHAMBER CHOIR**

BENEDICTINE LIVING
CENTER, UNION GOSPEL
MISSION, MOUNT ROYAL
FINE FOODS, THE DEPOT
CHRISTMAS MARKET
Multiple dates
throughout December.

December concert:

**Holiday Traditions & Jubilations: O
Magnum Mysterium!**

Perhaps no other word has been set more frequently by composers throughout the ages in writing music celebrating the splendor, brightness, and joy of the holiday season. In our December concerts, the Arrowhead chorale presented settings of Gloria, with carol settings old and new alongside works of Mozart, Wilbert, and the centerpiece of the concert, John Rutter's breathtaking "Gloria." The Chorale collaborated with organ, brass, orchestra, and the Strikepoint Bell Ensemble to fill our concert home, First Lutheran Church of Duluth, with the glorious sounds of Christmas.

December 2024 concert: Holiday Traditions & Jubilations: O Mangu Mysterium



2024 — 2025

SEASON HIGH— LIGHTS

2025

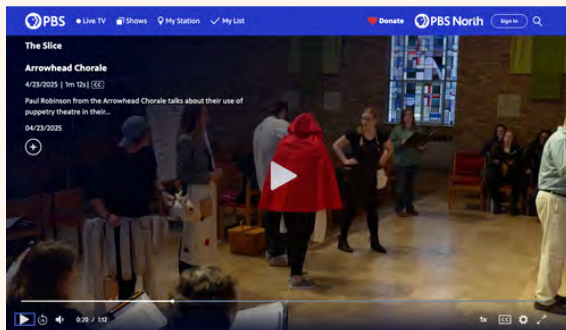
March 2025

WDIO FEATURE: THE LIFT
[The Chorale's Paul Robinson](#)
[interviewed on The Lift](#)
about use of puppetry in our
March 2025 concert

**OUTREACH
PERFORMANCE**
ECUMEN
03/20/25

April 2025

PBS FEATURE: THE SLICE
[The Chorale's Paul Robinson](#) featured on [The Slice](#) about use of puppetry in our March 2025 concert

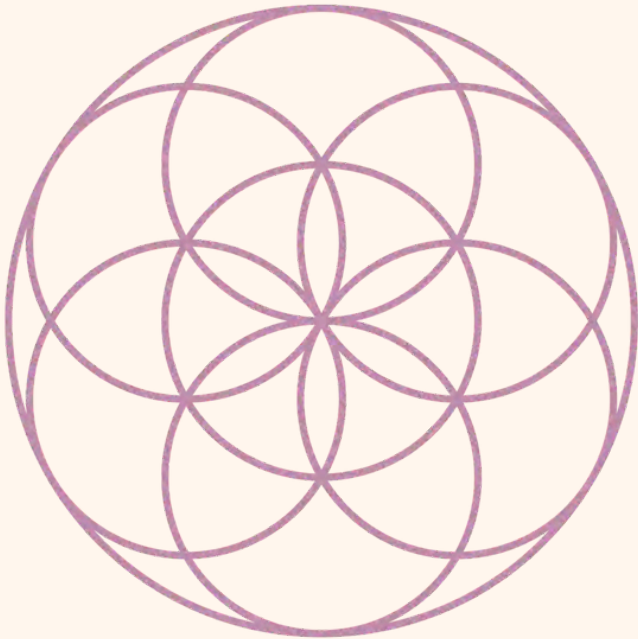


March concert:

**Circle of Life: Songs of the Stage
& Screen**

The Arrowhead Chorale presented Circle of Life: Songs of the Stage & Screen. From Richard Rogers' "It's a Grand Night for Singing" (State Fair) and Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings/Agnus Dei" (Platoon) to John Williams' "Hymn to the Fallen" (Saving Private Ryan), and more, the Chorale and orchestra brought to life songs that have truly shaped our life experience. A special feature was the element of puppet theatre, created and directed by our own Paul Robinson, a veteran of 17 years with In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theater.

March 2025 concert: Circle of Life: Songs of the Stage & Screen



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Goals & Accomplishments

The five-year strategic plan has provided a framework to provide focus of efforts on achieving five major goals: relevance, funding, programming, recruitment, and collaboration. To achieve these goals, many activities have been implemented to date. Our 2024-2025 season reflects activities in our fourth year of the strategic plan.

Funding

The Arrowhead Chorale will subsist on consistent financial support from the community and our immediate audience, while continuing to discover new funding opportunities to ensure we can fund our planned activities one season in advance.

- Maintained a positive fund balance at fiscal year end close to forward fund operations for fall season activities/concert
- Annual operating budget base is formulated
- Seasonal concert budgets are developed to coordinate efforts for grant writing, as well as garnering donations and sponsors.
- Structure for fundraising includes: ticket sales, grants, special activity fundraisers, patron donors, business sponsors.

Collaboration

The Arrowhead Chorale will pursue collaborations — both musical and non-musical — across local venues, community organizations, and musicians, as well as entities beyond our region, while being responsive to our stakeholders.

- Pertinent collaborations are identified in the program development cycle.
- Exploration of rehearsal and performance venues occurred to support concert themes and performance needs.
- Musical performances engaged multiple community organizations such as Trillium, Embark Supported Employment, NERCC, Benedictine Health Care, Union Mission gospel, MN Adult & Teen Challenge
- Event scheduling is coordinated with other community arts organizations to avoid date conflicts.
- Non-musical collaborations have included The Depot, Bentleyville, Trillium, Embark, and Downtown Duluth Days.

2025-2026 season focus

As part of the annual meeting process, the board of directors met to prioritize activities for each goal for the 2025-2026 season. While activities take place for each goal throughout the season, **programming, funding, and collaboration will be the primary focus for the 2025-2026 season.** At the annual meeting for 2026, the board will evaluate the results of the past five years, and determine a strategic plan for the next five years.

Programming

The Arrowhead Chorale will perform meaningful programming that stirs the mind, heart, and soul.

- Concert themes are drafted through Spring 2029
- Spring concert collaboration projects involve multiple organizations and/or mediums
- December theme will continue to focus on Holiday Jubilations and Traditions
- Annual process for theme/repertoire development includes soliciting ideas, themes and potential repertoire from chorale, community and board members. Artistic Director researches appropriate repertoire and works with the board to identify prospective collaborations and funding sources to help determine feasibility for the concert themes. A timeline is developed and a working committee is established to facilitate logistics planning.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Goals & Accomplishments, cont.

Recruitment

The Arrowhead Chorale will provide an affirming, exceptional musical experience which will attract singers and board members of talent and visions, reflective of the diversity in our community.

- Informal processes have been consistently used to recruit new singers and board members.
- For singers, invitations for auditions are posted via social media prior to each season and concert cycle to ensure the chorale continues to be a vibrant organization of vocal musicians.
- Current members also actively recruit new singers.
- For singers who wish to serve as board members, they are invited to attend board meetings, work on task committees to develop an understanding of the role of board members, meet with the board president to develop an understanding of the organization by-laws, strategic plan, and the value-added role they may play as a board member.
- Referrals from current singers or board members serve as a catalyst for the board president to meet with community members who wish to serve on the board to communicate the role/responsibilities of board members, the organizational by-laws, and strategic plan.
- Activity to formalize the board member recruitment process is underway.

Relevance

The Arrowhead Chorale will be recognized as a relevant and joyful organization for its members, audiences, and community.

- Invited service recipients and staff from community-based organization that serve special populations to attend workshops and participate in performances.
- Garnered grant monies to offset ticket costs for service recipients from special populations.
- Incorporated multiple art forms into concert performances, for example, puppetry in Spring 2025.
- Hosted a floral raffle from which proceeds are donated to a local service organization.
- Recognized VIPs from our local community prior to concerts.
- Offered Angel tickets to community members who could not afford to purchase tickets on their own.
- Recorded concerts to make performances available to residents at local assisted living and nursing home communities.
- Expanded our mission in the summer months through our treble ensemble, Echoes of the Lake, performing in various venues around the community, as well as throughout the holiday season through our Chamber Singers performing in various venues.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Grant Activities

Throughout its history, the Arrowhead Chorale has received support from a variety of grantors in the Arrowhead Region. Among those grantors are the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (ARAC), the Depot Foundation, the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation, the Duluth Superior Area Community Funds (DSACF), the Pachel Foundation, Chorus America, Minnesota Power, Essentia Health, Aspirus St. Luke's, and Enbridge.

Grant resources enable the Arrowhead Chorale to bring to life our most ambitious and community-enriching projects.

2024-2025 Grant Highlight

This season, grant awards from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation and the John T. And Elizabeth C. Adams Art Fund (Boreal) made an incredible, community-enriching collaboration possible: Theatrical puppetry!

Our own Paul Robinson has an extensive background in puppet theatre (credits include *In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre*, Minneapolis), and his vision and creativity resulted in a musical interpretation through puppets for two major works in our March 2025 concert!

Paul worked with a cadre of local community members to construct (larger than) life-sized puppets and led a crew of puppeteers to a mesmerizing performance.



Additionally, Paul led a series of free workshops with service recipients from two local organizations who work with special needs adults: Trillium and Embark. These adults learned about the art of puppet-making, made their own puppet masks, and wore their masks while participating as puppeteers in the concert's final song — "Circle of Life" from *The Lion King*.



Looking Back: A Snapshot of Support

Since 2018, grant resources have made it possible for the Chorale to:

- purchase music and invite professional orchestra members to participate in concerts
- bring in renowned guest artists such as soloist, Dr. Hope Koehler (American Spiritual Ensemble) and composer, William Hatcher
- provide educational workshops for area teachers, university students, families, children, and community members at large
- facilitate school-based workshops conducted by our guest artists
- collaborate with community artists and organizations — Minnesota Ballet, the Nordic Center, and more — to enhance musical and cultural experience for audiences.
- Continue our Sing for Good projects by funding Angel Tickets and equipment needed for outreach concerts

One major grant from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation supported the Chorale to engage in facilitated strategic planning activities in 2021 resulted in a five-year plan that, with one year remaining, has proven critical to our organization's success.

FINANCES

Ticket Sales

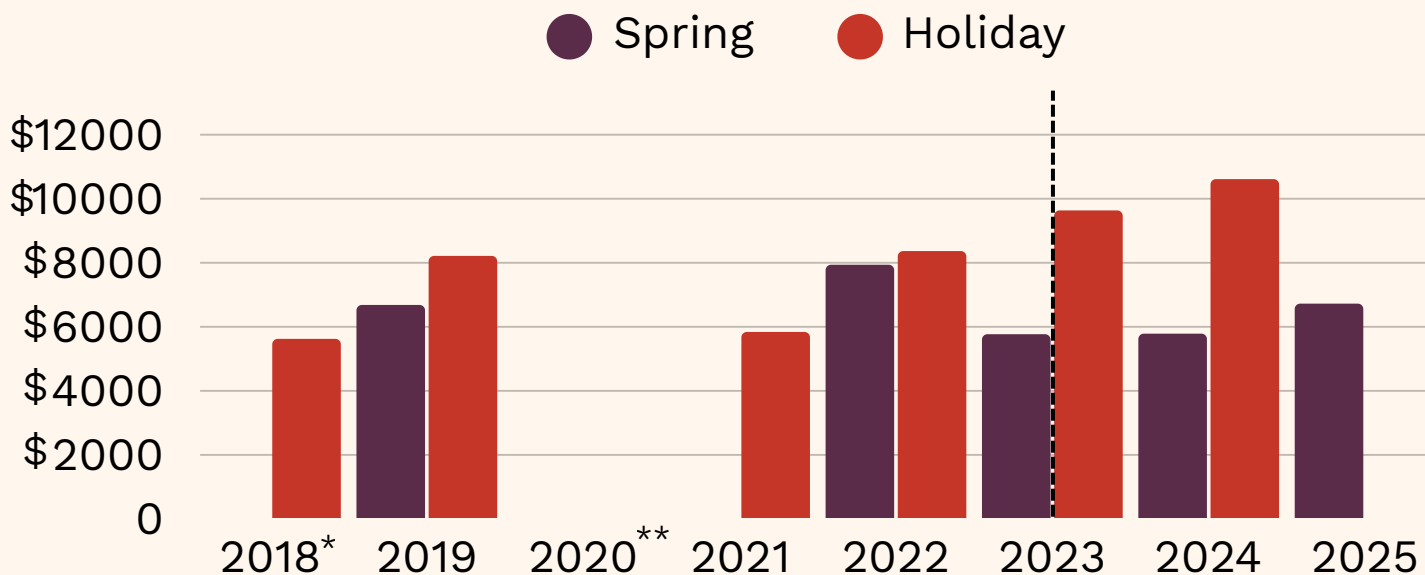
Ticket sales represent the community’s interest in our programming. The below chart shows gross concert ticket sales 2018–spring 2025. Capacity varies per concert, depending on venue and set up requirements — soloists, handbells, orchestra, dancers, puppets, etc. — but is typically 100-200 seats.

Our holiday concert has been at or near capacity since 2019. Spring concert attendance, however, is at a relative disadvantage due to time-of-year factors like snowbirding and school sports. Additionally, Americans may be more likely to seek out holiday concerts for music familiarity and sake of tradition. Our spring ticket sales reflect this reality. After spring concert attendance declined in 2023 and 2024, we focused on increased attendance — for all events, but spring concerts in particular — through:

- **unique programming:** Collaboration with nationally renowned soloist, Hope Koehler, from the American Spiritual Ensemble (spring 2024), incorporation of life-sized puppetry with master puppeteer Paul Robinson (spring 2025), and collaboration nationally renowned guest musician Richard Elliot, Principal Organist for The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah (spring 2026)
- **increased community visibility:** Engagement with our community through our Sing for Good program
- **Increase advertising:** we increased social media advertising, promoted concerts on a billboard in Duluth, and purchased an on-air announcement on YourClassical MPR.

Our efforts are paying off

Our 2024-2025 season saw a year-over-year ticket revenue increase of 10% for our holiday concert and 16% for our spring concert.



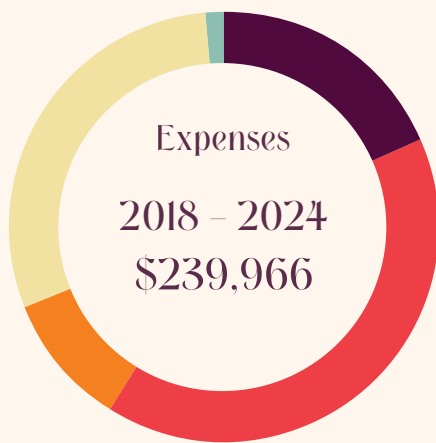
*2018 holiday only represented

**No concerts in 2020 or spring of 2021 due to the global pandemic

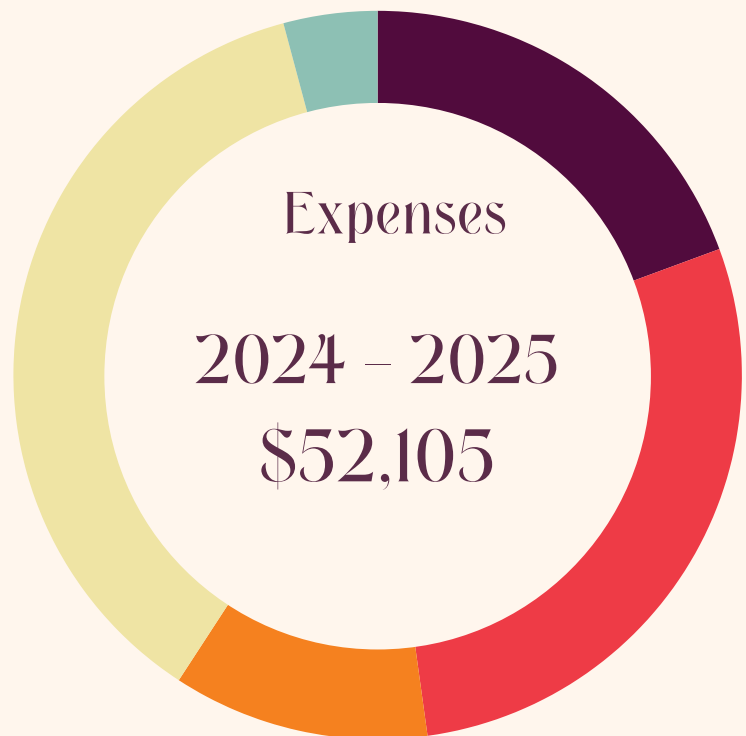
--- To continue to pay our staff and guest musicians a fair wage while maintaining fiscal responsibility, we increased our ticket price by \$5 beginning with our 2023 holiday concert. This decision was made by board vote after market research to ensure the increase was in line with comparable organizations.

Expenses

The categories in which we see the majority of our expenses is in our operating costs, concert production, and marketing. Below you will find a graph that illustrates the percentage of our spending in each category. These figures show expenses for 2018-2024 fiscal years for a total of \$239,966, as well as for the 2024-2025 fiscal year alone (\$52,105.35). Instrumentalists are shown separately from our concert production to show that a large part of our concert costs is paying local musicians to accompany the choir during our concerts.



- Operating: 40.3%
- Instrumentalist: 29.6%
- Marketing: 18.5%
- Concert Production: 10.1%
- Other: 1.3%



- Instrumentalist: 39.5%
- Operating: 26.9%
- Marketing: 18.2%
- Concert Production: 11.6%
- Other: 3.8%

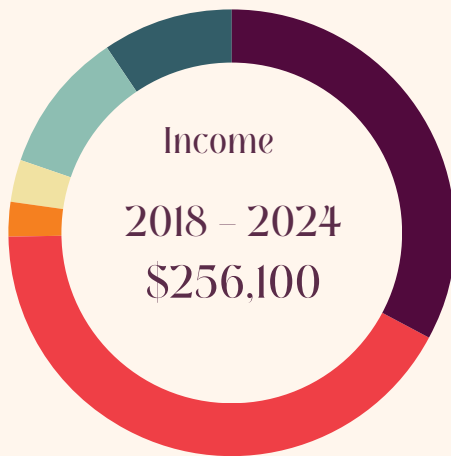
Key Takeaway

In 2024-2025, instrumentalist costs overtook operating costs as our largest expense. This change is largely due to the artificially low instrumental cost during the pandemic years, as we did not hold our usual concert schedule.

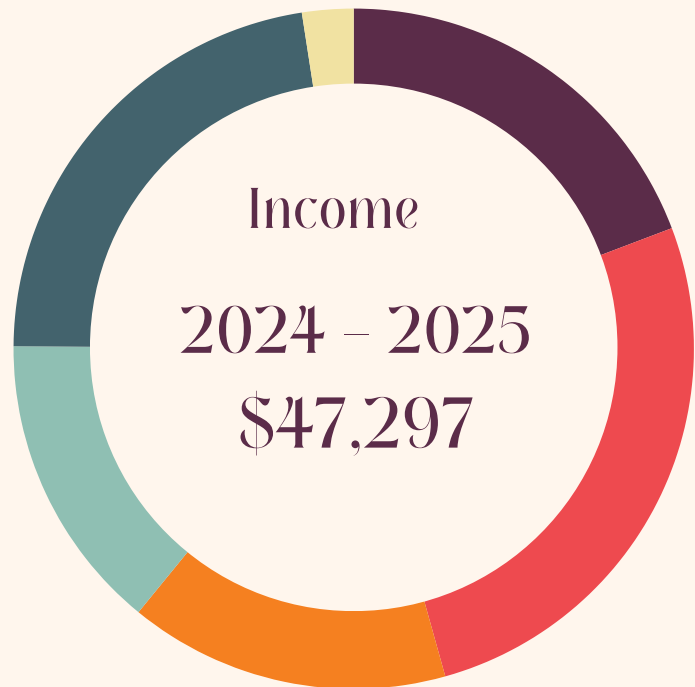
The relative stability of expense categories since 2018 demonstrates our commitment to financial responsibility while ensuring we pay our instrumentalists a fair wage.

Income

The main sources of income we see come from individual and local business contributions, grants, and ticket sales. The graph below shows the income the Arrowhead Chorale has earned in the 2018-2024 fiscal years for a total income of \$256,110, as well as for the 2024-2025 fiscal year alone (\$47,297.30).



- Grants: 41.7%
- Contributions: 33.0%
- Spring Concert: 10.2%
- Holiday Concert: 9.3%
- Sponsorships: 3.1%
- Fundraiser: 2.6%



- Grants: 26.4%
- Holiday Concert: 22.4%
- Contributions + Sponsorships: 19.2%
- Fundraiser: 15.2%
- Spring Concert: 14.2%
- Other: 2.4%

Key Takeaway

In 2024-2025, we saw combined ticket sale revenue become our largest income generator at 36.6%, overtaking historic category leaders of contributions and grants. **This change indicates the Chorale's strategic efforts for increased attendance have proven effective and benefit our organizations financial solvency.**

FUTURE PREVIEW

2025-2026 Season

December 2025 concert: Holiday Jubilations and Traditions: Hallelujah

Our annual Holiday Jubilations and Traditions concert is titled "Hallelujah" and features music of JS Bach, Stephen Paulus, Dan Forrest, and yes, Georg Frideric Handel!

March 2026 concert: Requiem of Light: The Music of Maurice Duruflé

To commemorate the 40 year anniversary of the passing of Maurice Duruflé, we will perform his Requiem in a concert that features very special guest artist Richard Elliott of the Tabernacle Choir on Temple Square

In the works

Special production: Joan d'Arc

In planning stages 100 year anniversary of Joan d'Arc (1928, directed by Karl Theodor Dreyer) / multimedia production of film with live soundtrack Voices of Light (by Richard Einhorn) for choir and orchestra

Collaboration with nationally renowned professional ensemble

In early planning with the American Spiritual Ensemble Duluth collaboration

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, OFFICERS, & STAFF

2024-2025

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Vice President

Samantha Kerr
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Rachel Bartell
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Dan Litman
Marketing

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Rachel Bartell
Business Manager

Matthew Faerber
Artistic Director

David Packa
Pianist

Members-at-large

Audrey Beyer

Alexandra Strelow

Thomas Wiig

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Marketing | Sing for Good

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Business Manager

Matthew Faerber
Artistic Director

David Packa
Pianist

Members-at-large

Jake Olson

Mark Knutson

Thomas Wiig