Executive Director's Report
March 2021

Almost exactly a year ago (March 21, 2020), the ensemble gathered for its final semi-normal recordings – a project with MPR (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdJz6XCRmYw) – and the staff packed up and closed the office. We'd postponed the Spring 2020 concerts and the original anniversary gala, but held on to faint hope that we'd still be able to perform Covers in early June. Even so, the outlook was daunting: the cash flow projections shared at the March 2020 board meeting showed us slipping under as early as last June.

This last year has been rough. But over the last 12 months, Cantus has managed to offer timely, meaningful, mission-driven programming; expanded its audience and donor base through compelling online and social media initiatives; signed with IMG Artists and Signum Classics; secured significant funding through major gifts and government relief programs; and continuously pivoted to remain financially viable. The *Star Tribune* deemed Cantus "classy and scrappy" when it named the organization as one of its 2020 Artists of the Year.

This year required significant collaborative efforts, and the board played a vital role in making these successes possible – patiently offering guidance and support, facilitating introductions, advocating on our behalf, taking on specific duties (i.e., accounting), supporting the organization financially, and continuing to believe in the value of Cantus' mission.

Thank you for helping to keep Cantus singing.

Home concerts

- **Fields of Wonder:** online, April 9-11; recorded at the Ordway in January.
  - **April 9-11:** once again, it's a pay-what-you-can model.
  - **So far:** Tickets went on sale on March 19. As of that evening – after about six hours of sales – we were at $1,420 in revenue, or 9 percent of our $15,500 goal.
  - **MPR:** Classical MPR recorded the program for future broadcast.
- **Covers:** online in early June, either June 4-6 *or* 11-13
  - **At the Ordway:** The ensemble will record the program in late May. The instrumentalists will record their parts separately and ahead of time.
  - **Announcement:** We plan to announce next week – as soon as we iron out some technical logistics that dictate which weekend we'll have the content available – that Covers will be online rather than in-person.
- **Beyond:**
  - **Fathers' Day at Lake Harriet:** Based on what we know now, Cantus plans to return to live, in-person performances in the Twin Cities with a free, outdoor concert at the Lake Harriet Bandshell at 2 pm on Fathers' Day (Sun., June 20), maintaining/resurrecting a longtime tradition.
  - **More:** We're looking for opportunities to offer a few more free, outdoor concerts this summer, once we get a few more puzzle pieces put together. Additionally, we're looking at an outdoor fundraising event, detailed in the fundraising section.
  - **Next season:** We're operating on the assumption that we'll return to some form of live, in-person, indoor concerts this fall, recognizing that 1.) we will need to work the venue partners to determine appropriate social distancing strategies; 2.) audiences may be slow to return, making conservative budgeting

necessary; 3.) we will embrace a hybrid in-person/online model to accommodate people hesitant to return and people who live outside the Twin Cities; and 4.) we're making these plans in pencil, as everything is subject to change.

Touring

- **Good and bad news:** Lets do bad first.
    - **Now looking to 2022-23:** Our California tour dates in early October 2021 in California (Lodi, Nevada City, and Rohnert Park) must now be postponed until the 2022-23 season. Rob originally scheduled this trio of dates to happen in April 2020, and this latest development is the third time he has worked with these presenters to reschedule the engagements (from April 2020 to September 2020 to October 2021 … and now to sometime in 22-23).
    - **A good surprise in the meantime:** Stephanie secured a new booking for Cantus on May 4, 2021, at the new McKnight Center for the Performing Arts in Stillwater, Oklahoma. When Chanticleer canceled, IMG was able to secure a $15,000 booking for us in Chanticleer's place. The ensemble discussed safety protocols and plans to drive to Oklahoma rather than fly.
- **Misc:** We have two online bookings via IMG for our *One Giant Leap* touring program: Penn State (March) and Lenoir-Rhyne University (April).
- **Looking further ahead:** As we've discussed, next season will likely be a slow one for touring. Most presenters rolled their current season (20-21) over to next season (21-22) … and this season was the last that Rob booked (and was a large part of the reason we chose to part ways). Additionally, some presenters – like our California trio – are moving Fall 2021 dates to the season *after* next (22-23). Both Stephanie and Rob predict an eventual return to something more normal – but it will likely take until the 22-23 season. Even with these headwinds, Stephanie secured an additional $17,000 date for us in Bowling Green, Ohio in November 2021. Acknowledging a lot of flux:
    - **October 2021**
        - Belton, Texas - $8,000 – rebooked by Alliance Artist Management (AAM)
    - **November 2021**
        - Decorah, Iowa - $15,500 – rebooked by AAM
        - Oxford, Alabama - $12,000 – rebooked by AAM
        - Harrogate, Tennessee - $5,000 – rebooked by AAM
        - Bowling Green, Ohio - $17,000 – new booking by IMG
        - Emory, Virginia - $10,000 – rebooked by AAM
    - **December 2021**
        - Brookfield, Wisconsin - $14,000 – rebooked by AAM
        - Wolf Trap/Vienna, Virginia - $11,000 – rebooked by AAM
        - Dallas, Texas - $14,000 – rebooked by AAM
    - **March 2022**
        - Albion, Michigan - $10,000 – rebooked by AAM
        - Grand Rapids, Michigan - $10,000 – rebooked by AAM
    - **Sometime in 2022-23**
        - Nevada City, Rohnert Park, and Lodi, California – rebooked by AAM

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Finances

- **Cash flow:** We are well-positioned through the end of the fiscal year and into the next:
    - Mar. 15: $488,846
    - April 1: $472,687
    - April 15: $490,439
    - May 1: $470,438
    - May 15: $455,546
    - June 1: $429,871
    - June 15: $424,945
    - July 1: $368,590
    - July 15: $351,037
    - Aug. 1: $333,827
    - Aug. 15: $292,172
    - **As always, very conservative assumptions:**
        - This does not include revenue from a special event. (Please see fundraising section.) Because plans are early in development, I have not included any revenue boost, or accompanying expenses.
        - This assumes that Covers only breaks even. Clearly my hope and expectation is that we'll do far better than that, but out of an abundance of caution – higher break-even point, least predictable audience, etc. – I have revenue and expenses matching one another at the moment.
        - This does not include potential album revenue or expenses. *Manifesto* will be available for sale this summer, and I'd love to wrap its release into whatever we do for a summer special event – but given the uncertainties all around, I have excluded the revenue at the moment. Additionally, we are exploring a recording project for the summer and are currently determining costs. This would be an up-front expense, but would be well positioned to net positive in the coming years, thanks to the new partnership with Signum.
        - As always, this cash flow does not include any one-time major gifts, which are difficult to predict. This scenario also does not touch anything in savings.
        - We are operating on the assumption that Cantus will have a subscription season next year. However, exactly what form that will take and/or when we roll that out is in flux – and/or how subscribers will respond. So in the spirit of extreme caution, I have not included *any* of the significant revenue boost that historically has come in the early summer when our most loyal patrons tend to get their subscription packages.
        - This cash flow scenario does, however, include the start of payments (approx. $650/mo.) on the Economic Injury Disaster Loan in June.
        - The Stillwater, Oklahoma engagement came in after Wednesday's finance committee meeting – so that would be a *net* boost of approx. $8,500 arriving in May.
- **PPP:** The final remaining $10,000 of our first PPP loan was forgiven early this month, thanks to new federal legislation. This $10K was in limbo because we had received a cash advance in that amount through the separate Economic Injury Disaster Loan.
- **Tax credit:** I'm looking into a new tax-credit opportunity tied to employee retention during the pandemic. Thank you to Kevin Stocks for the tip!

Fundraising

- **25th/26th/now 27th pandemi-versary gala:** Unfortunately, we are looking to push the 25th anniversary gala back yet another year (originally scheduled for May 2020, then

June 2021), and I'm working with the Ordway and the RiverCentre on dates in spring 2022.

- **In the meantime, this summer:** Instead, we are looking at a fundraising event that's more tuned to the moment – when Zoom fatigue is pervasive, and when it's likely possible to gather in-person again outdoors. Anne Todey and I are looking at outdoor or semi-outdoor (i.e., Lake Como Pavilion or similar) options for an outdoor concert/fundraiser in mid/late August, which serves as a finale to the summer, kick-off to the upcoming season, and an opportunity to gather after so long. More details to come.
- **Spring appeal:** Letters should hit mailboxes around April 5, timed to coincide with the *Fields of Wonder* program.
- **Grants in the works:**
    - **Knight/Ordway:** Alex and I are working on an additional grant proposal that, if approved, would cover part of the Ordway rental for Covers.
    - **Target:** I'm applying for our final round of funding before Target fully shifts away from the arts.
    - **MSAB:** The Minnesota State Arts Board is considering our full application, which partially governs our funding priority level for the next four years. Jeff Reed, Nancy Gaschott, Alberto de la Paz, and I have an interview/meeting with our program officer next week to field their questions.

<u>Personnel and HR</u>

- **New ensemble members:**
    - **Jeremy Wong:** Jeremy's first day as a full-time, permanent member of Cantus will be April 25. We are excited to welcome him!
    - **Baritone TBD:** Cantus is accepting audition materials through Monday, and the ensemble and staff will hold auditions online in April. The audition pool already appears strong, with more applications continuing to arrive.

<u>General and misc.</u>

- **Media:**
    - ***The Voice* magazine:** Jake Christopher spoke with a writer for Chorus America's quarterly magazine about digital initiatives.
    - **"With One Accord" podcast**: Paul Scholtz was interviewed on this new podcast from the Houston Chamber Choir.
- **Lakewood:** Lakewood Cemetery will hire Cantus to record a few pieces in its chapel to be released with its online Memorial Day program, which will apparently double as a 150th anniversary event.
- **Signum Classics:** Cantus' record label has two releases in the pipeline:
    - **Manifesto:** Originally recorded in summer 2016 and locked away at eOne for years, this album will finally be released this year. Signum will roll it out in Aug./Sept., and we can offer the album as an exclusive to our audiences as early as June – originally timed to coincide with the June 27 anniversary gala.
    - **COVID-19 Sessions:** Signum has been very pleased with the traction these have gotten through streaming and digital downloads. The label plans to release a physical album in March 2022, and we could offer it as an exclusive to our audiences in time for Christmas 2021.
    - **Beyond:** We're exploring options to record two new albums this summer, which would be released in 2022-23 on the Signum label. More details to come!