



# Cincinnati Youth Choir Annual Report 2020

## Devotion to Musical Excellence

The Cincinnati Youth Choir provides passionate and inspiring choral education to young people of various abilities and all backgrounds. We combine musical rigor with a diverse repertoire and a fun, welcoming and supportive educational approach.

## Education for Life

At CYC, we encourage our students to aim high and work hard to achieve their personal best. As our students pursue musical excellence, they learn not only to be better choristers, but also develop important 21st-century life skills that will help them to succeed in everything they do: self-confidence, persistence, a strong work ethic, creativity, responsibility, independence, the ability to work well in a team and to concentrate on multiple aspects of a task at once, and the courage to set ambitious goals that will take significant work and many tries to attain.

## Local Collaboration, National Recognition

CYC has been ensemble-in-residence at UC's College-Conservatory of Music since 2001, giving our students access to world class rehearsal and performance spaces as well as opportunities to learn from and perform with UC's students and faculty. We partner with Cincinnati Public Schools, May Festival and Vocal Arts Ensemble to bring the Cincinnati Choral Academy to students in inner-city schools that have no choral programming in their curriculum. We team up with local school districts each fall and spring for the ChoralQuest program. And we join forces with an amazing array of local professional arts organizations to give our students exceptional enrichment activities, including the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops Orchestra, Cincinnati Opera, Cincinnati May Festival, Vocal Arts Ensemble, the Cincinnati Ballet and the Cincinnati Art Museum. As a result of our core commitment to musical excellence and collaboration, CYC receives frequent national recognition for our work:

- 2018 Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award
- 2016 Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming
- 2015 The American Prize in Choral Performance Winner, Youth & High School Chorus Division
- 2012 World Choir Games, Gold Medal Youth Choir of Equal Voices



## A Typical CYC Year at a Glance

- 900 Young Singers, ages 6-18
- 40+ concerts locally and on tour
- 7 Resident Choirs held on the CCM campus
- 6 Cincinnati Choral Academy Choirs that meet in CPS schools in low-income neighborhoods
- 6-8 ChoralQuest Choir programs offered in public schools across Greater Cincinnati
- The CPS Honor Choir
- Queen City Festival
- Sing-A-Bration Summer Camp
- Annual Children's Choir Composition Competition
- Professional Development for local music teachers

## Covid19 and the CYC Choirs

We had a fantastic fall 2019 semester! We enrolled nearly 400 young singers who gave an astounding 21 performances (8 ticketed and 13 free) in October, November, and December, with a cumulative audience of 7000 attendees. Five CPS schools participated in the Cincinnati Choral Academy and there were three ChoralQuest choirs. We achieved significant growth in our engagement with local communities and strengthened our outreach to Hispanic students.

Our spring season started off strong as well, but then the Covid pandemic threw a wrench in our plans. The UC Campus closed the day before our March concert, and we had to cancel the performance at the last minute. We also had to cancel all in-person rehearsals for our Resident and CCA choirs, our May Concert, the CPS Honor Choir, the spring ChoralQuest programs, our summer tours, and the Queen City Festival. In lieu of the May Concert, we created a virtual performance video of *One Voice* by Ruth Moody, which ended up being a wonderful, meaningful, and very well received project. (See more on page 3.) On the basis of that experience, we held our Sing-a-Bration summer camp on-line, which gave students a fun choral experience and helped us refine our virtual programming.



# Cincinnati Youth Choir Measures of Success

The Cincinnati Youth Choir measures success in many ways. During our 27<sup>th</sup> season, success looked like:

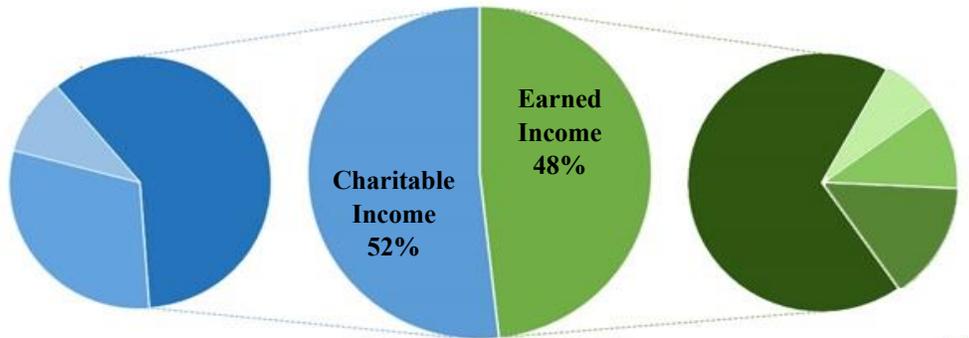
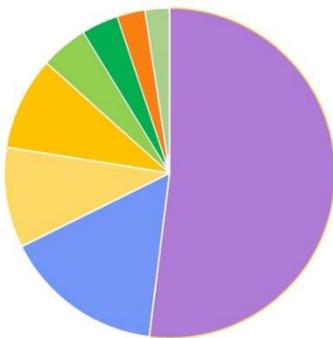
- A holiday concert that brought hundreds of students from across Greater Cincinnati to UC-CCM’s campus to perform exquisite and challenging music together at the highest of musical standards.
- Progress toward achieving inclusivity goals so that our student body mirrors the racial, socio-economic, ethnic, and geographic diversity of Greater Cincinnati.
- Increased community engagement with students performing not only at UC, but also in schools, churches, nursing homes, and other local venues.
- Achieving educational goals which meant our students not only became better singers, but also developed personal qualities like a strong work ethic, reliability, independence, leadership and teamwork, while expressing their individuality, exploring their creativity and having fun.
- Pivoting quickly to virtual meetings, hosting zoom seminars for students, producing the One Voice online performance (see page 3 for more), and holding our Sing-a-Bration camp online.



Equally important, success requires sound organizational stewardship and fiscal management. CYC has worked diligently this year to minimize the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on CYC’s long-term viability. With so many activities cancelled, we lost over \$140,000 of income. Although expenses also decreased, cost cutting measures had to be taken. Several contractors took voluntary furlough as they were able to apply for and received PPP loans from the CARES Act, which reduced our contractor expense by \$45,000. Even so, we had to let go our newly hired program assistant. We’ve also cut discretionary spending, such as sheet music purchases. Concurrently, we worked hard to grow our charitable funding. We are pleased to report that grant funding was 25% higher than last year, and individual donations grew by 13%. We thank the Ohio Arts Council, ArtsWave, Louise Dieterle Nippert Musical Arts Fund, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the Hatton Foundation, and the Scripps Howard Foundation for their support. As we head into the 20-21 season, with rehearsals still online, we remain determined to ensure CYC comes out the other side of this pandemic as strong as possible. We look forward to your support in this effort!

**CYC 27<sup>th</sup> Season Expenses: \$ 436,370**

**CYC 27<sup>th</sup> Season Income: \$ 436,674**



- Contractors (52%)
- In-Kind\* (16%)
- Board Designated Fund (10%)
- Administrative (9%)
- Concerts and Uniforms (4%)
- Tuition Assistance (4%)
- Marketing (3%)
- Choir Activities and Travel (2%)
- Grants (60%)
- In-Kind\* (30%)
- Donations (10%)

- Tuition (68%)
- Other Program Income (14%)
- Program Book Revenue (11%)
- Concert Income (tickets and venue fees) (7%)

\* In-Kind expenses reflect rehearsal and performance space provided through In-Kind support from CPS and UC-CCM.



# Cincinnati Youth Choir Stories

CYC'S purpose has always been to bring young singers together to learn, and grow, and perform sublime music, but the impact of our work goes so much farther. We hope you enjoy these stories from our 27<sup>th</sup> season that demonstrate the importance of our mission on a personal, group, and societal level.

## When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Get Going!

Last December, Cincinnati Choral Academy students from Rees E. Price and Carson elementary schools sang at the Price Hill Holiday on the Hill Festival, the first public performance for many of them. The concert featured a challenging repertoire which the students sang from memory -- the spirited Dodi Li, a love song from the Old Testament with complex rhythms, two-part harmony, and lyrics completely in Hebrew; I Heard a Bird Sing a sweet and slow ballad with beautiful harmony and several solos; and a selection of Christmas favorites, including Deck the Halls and Jingle Bells.



For CCA singer LaFrance Kidd, it was a doubly special occasion as his favorite teacher, Mrs. Keller, had come to hear him sing. He was so focused on singing well for her that he forgot the lyrics in the middle of his solo! With encouragement from the choir director, LaFrance steeled his nerves, channeled his creativity, and continued by confidently singing some beautiful open vowels. Mrs. Keller later told us that she really enjoys seeing her students perform and that hearing LaFrance's beautiful singing actually made her tear up!



Not every student will have LaFrance's bravery, presence of mind, and creativity, but his fellow singers all learned an invaluable lesson that day -- when you make a mistake, even a big one, don't give up, with a little courage and some ingenuity you can turn things around, get back on track and everything will turn out ok.

## One Voice Virtual Performance Video

When our two spring concerts were cancelled by the Covid19 pandemic, we knew it was a big blow to our students who had worked so hard learning their parts. So, we decided to create a virtual performance of *One Voice* by Ruth Moody, a song that all our CYC students would have performed together at our May concert. This proved to be both a very challenging and incredibly rewarding project!

We had discovered that you can't effectively sing as a choir over Zoom -- different internet speeds, lag times, and poor sound quality make for terrible results -- so we did some research and found Adobe Premier Pro Editing Software that would help us create a collated video.

First, we had to create a "click track" -- a recording that each singer listened to while filming themselves singing their part so that that tempo, rhythm and pitch matched perfectly across all the videos. Then we invited all our Resident Choir singers to participate. 80 of our singers recorded a video at home and emailed it to us (no doubt with a lot of parental help).



CYC Virtual Choir - One Voice, written by: Ruth Moody & The Wailin' Jennys

Our staff edited each video individually and then combined them to make a final, compiled video. The editing process took over 80 hours and the compiling process took another 48 hours! Kudos to our staff for learning a new program and maintaining CYC's high standards while saving us the expense of hiring outside editors! We think they did an amazing job! Not only did the project provide our singers continuing engagement with the choir, but they have a lasting product they can return to time and time again. And the video was a huge hit! It has over 24,000 facebook/youtube views and was featured on WVXU, Channel 12 and Channel 19. We are so proud to have been able to give our singers such a positive experience in the middle of the chaos, confusion, and uncertainty of the Covid19 pandemic.