

**Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 76**

**Is your organization a 501(c)3 nonprofit?**

Yes

**According to your 501(c)3 letter, in what town is your official office located?**

New Britain

**Where will your project be performed or exhibited?**

New Britain

**Will this activity occur after August 1, 2023?**

Yes

**Are you a recent grantee?**

Yes

**Enter your Report Code**

105227-Roberts2020

**Organization Name**

Connecticut Choral Artists (CONCORA)

**Organization's IRS Tax ID #**

222755473

**Principal Contact Name**

John Avignone

**Title**

Grant writer

**Email**

[johnavig@aol.com](mailto:johnavig@aol.com)

**Phone**

(860) 543-9478

**Address**

90 Main Street  
New Britain, Connecticut 06051  
United States  
[Map It](#)

**Website**

<http://concora.org>

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### Amount requested this application

\$7,500.00

### What is the organization's mission/vision statement?

CONCORA, acknowledging that music transforms and enriches people's lives, perpetuates and performs with excellence choral music of the highest quality for the broadest possible audience.

### Provide a brief history of your organization and its activities.

CONCORA continues to enjoy the distinction of being the premier choral group in Connecticut. At the conclusion of our 45<sup>th</sup> season, CONCORA realizes a solid reputation for artistic excellence, and is well known for its wonderful sound and intense professionalism. Richard Coffey, CONCORA's founder, stepped down as Artistic Director at the end of the 2013-2014 season. CONCORA conducted an international search for his successor; in February 2015 we announced that Dr. Chris Shepard would succeed him as our second Artistic Director. Chris has just completed his six season with CONCORA great acclaim. Chris attracts audience members from Worcester, where he conducts the Worcester Chorus, and New Jersey, where he conducts the Masterwork Chorus. In addition, CONCORA attracts audiences from throughout Connecticut, southern Massachusetts, eastern New York.

**Performance Activities:** CONCORA typically presents five or six mainstage choral concerts each season. Most are accompanied by piano and/or organ, occasionally with orchestral accompaniment; and some are performed *a cappella*. Throughout its long history, CONCORA has consistently performed multiple concerts per season, many of which take place in New Britain and West Hartford. Measurable outcomes include responses on two audience surveys recently conducted at the Broadway and Bach concerts this season which showed 93% of those surveyed were satisfied/highly satisfied with the quality of CONCORA's performances, 99% agreed that the ticket prices were "just right," and that they would return for future performances.

**Education & Outreach:** Through 2019, CONCORA-to-GO, our mobile quartet, performed in CT public schools, providing school children with an informative and educational experience with quality choral music and instruments from around the world. The group received extremely positive evaluations from educators as well as notes/ artwork from the students whose families may not be able to afford the cost of a concert ticket for themselves and their families. Other measurable outcomes are reflected in the continued invitations from Hartford, East Hartford, Berlin, and East Windsor school systems to return annually and the consistent foundation support CONCORA-to-Go continues to receive in support of these educational outreach efforts.

Choral music is an important part of the cultural fabric of our region. It offers the highest artistic and spiritual expression of ideals, both familiar and inspiring, to most members of society. Countless members of every community sing in an amateur choir, at church or in the community. Choral music that is sung by professionals in one's own community has an even higher value, as the conductor and singers are accessible, not just visiting performers, or heard in recorded and digitized form.

CONCORA has presented "Music with a Mission" by collaborating with community partners in programs such as "Considering Matthew Shepard." Commissioned to honor the young gay man killed in a hate crime in Laramie, Wyoming, this new work was performed in Hartford in 2018 to benefit to the outreach, support, and advocacy efforts led by True Colors of Connecticut for the LGBT community.

Having performed often with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, CONCORA enjoys an ongoing collaboration with the musicians of the HSO, annually performing the works of J.S. Bach. CONCORA has also performed frequently with Orchestra New England; together the two groups recorded The Six Motets of J.S. Bach. In addition, CONCORA has produced nine other recordings including Made in USA, A Sacred Sampler, Christmas with CONCORA, Christmas in Our Time, A Retro Christmas with CONCORA, Sing, My Soul featuring the choral works of Ned Rorem, The Men of CONCORA, Songs and Stories of Liberation, and our most recent recording, made possible by Dr. Nathan Zullinger as part of his doctoral studies at Boston University, "In Delightful Company: Choral Works by Charles Fussell" with additional selections by Debussy, Ives, Thomson, Brahms and Britten.

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### **Describe the demographics of your audience/people served by your activities.**

Population Served: CONCORA's audience for has totaled 2500-3000 people, including audiences attending the mainstage concerts, elementary school audiences for CONCORA-to-Go education programs, audiences for concerts in other parts of the state (runouts), and the audience for the annual Summer Festival concert. CONCORA's audience comes primarily from greater Hartford area with contingents from other parts of Connecticut and New England.

### **Describe your organization's governance.**

CONCORA's Board currently has 11 members. Several long-time members retired at the end of their term. Three new members were added in FY20. The Board sets policy, approves the budget, evaluates and approves salaries for the performers and staff, and is responsible for all legal and financial oversight. The Board typically meets monthly; the Executive Committee meets as needed. Attendance at Board meetings is approximately 90%, held by ZOOM in the last year.

### **Describe the diversity of your board.**

Of the 11 board members, 6 are female. Our one board member of color, an African American, completed her term in June and rotated off the board. We realize improving the diversity of our board is critical. As the pandemic may affect us for another 12-18 months, we are focused on producing an abridged concert season. Currently without an Executive Director, we are discussing hire of a consultant to address issues relating to long-term funding, audience development, and leadership diversity.

### **What percentage of your board makes personal financial contributions to your organization?**

ALL of our board members contribute a gift to CONCORA's annual fund. Last year board gifts totaled \$10,000 - or about 25% of the annual fund.

### **Project Name**

Mainstage concerts

### **Project Description**

CONCORA will present three main concerts in 2021 – to be recorded and streamed.

1) Side By Side By Sondheim, February 2021 at Trinity on Main, New Britain.

In solos and small ensembles, our versatile singers will perform favorite songs from Stephen Sondheim's early stage works.

2) Bach's Motets, Sunday, March 28, 4pm, St. Patrick & St. Anthony's Church, Hartford. Although Bach wrote nearly 300 cantatas and several important concert-length choral works, he only wrote six motets, all of which are major pieces in the choral repertoire. A concert of all six motets on a single program is possible only for professional choirs like CONCORA or very accomplished amateur choirs.

• Ivory, Wood and Steel: Music for Choir and Percussion, Sunday, April 26, 4pm, First Congregational Church, New Britain. A number of choral composers in the twentieth century turned to piano and percussion to provide colorful, rhythmically vital and highly varied accompaniments for choral works.

### **Total estimated project budget**

\$89,000.00

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 76**

### **Project start/opening**

02/01/2021

### **Project end/closing**

04/25/2021

### **Project venue**

multiple venues as outlined above

### **Project town**

New Britain, Hartford

### **Admission fees, attendance, and activity details**

Last year our actual ticket revenue was \$25,309 for the four concerts presented (as two were cancelled). This year we have budgeted \$9,500 in ticket revenue for three. Tickets – or access to a virtual concert – will likely be capped at \$20, which is about half of last year’s average ticket price. Last year our average concert audience was 150 persons. We anticipate reaching a larger audience with streaming concerts, as local churches have done through their worship services.

### **How do you intend to promote/market this project?**

The concerts will be featured on our web site and in bi-weekly emails to 8,000 supporters.

A detailed press release will be sent to our extensive list of media contacts to reach audiences throughout New England and beyond who appreciate early music, choral, classical, sacred, and Broadway music.

Our Friends of Bach membership exceeds 1,000 supporters and friends.

We are currently build a network of schools, community partners, and senior living communities for our virtual programs.

### **How is your organization going to use Roberts funding?**

Funding from the Roberts Foundation will be used to support the production of our concerts, including the salary of our Artistic Director and compensation to our singers and musicians. Grant funding will also be applied toward space rental and music.

### **How will Roberts support be recognized?**

As in past years, CONCORA will recognize the support of the Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation on our web site, in emails and e-newsletters to ticket buyers and donors, in pre-concert announcements, and in our concert programs – in pdf format made available online.

### **What is your organization’s definition of artistic excellence?**

CONCORA consistently sets and meets the highest standards of excellence in its programming, musicality and professionalism. CONCORA has never sounded better than under the musical guidance of Chris Shepard. He creates a unique vision for our singers. His direction elevates the singers to achieve the highest level of artistry. Our singers speak of their joy in rehearsals and performances. Our singers apply a mastery of skills and techniques. Together, the director and singers combine their professional approaches to process and presentation. Audience feedback is consistently extremely positive.

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 76**

John Zeugner of *The Worcester Telegram & Gazette* reviewed CONCORA's 2017 Bach performance of cantatas 29, 190 and 19 on April 23, 2017: "The blend worked magically, intoxicating the near capacity crowd at WAMSworx whose standing ovation was so insistent and thunderous that Shepherd finally had to beg the audience, shouting "Time to go home!"

### **How does this project align with that definition, and how does it advance your mission?**

CONCORA's leadership, singers, repertoire, and programs represent the highest standards of choral music. Choral music is an important part of the cultural fabric of a region. It offers the highest artistic and spiritual expression of ideals, both familiar and inspiring to most members of society. Choral music that is sung by people in one's own community has an even higher value as the conductor and singers are accessible, not just passing through as performers, or heard in recorded and digitized form.

### **How will your audience and the community benefit from this project?**

CONCORA's performances provide an enriching experience for audiences. Music has the power to culturally, morally, and emotionally influence our society. Whether the audience is in-person or virtual, choral music elevates mood, spirit, and call to action through a shared community experience.

In addition, many avocational choral singers in the area seek out CONCORA concerts to hear professional singers performing some of the works that they have sung with community and church choirs. In this sense, our concerts provide continuing education for them.

Furthermore, listening to choral and classical music provides emotional and psychological benefits that cannot be underestimated. Given the current state of our world, there is an even greater need for CONCORA's performances. Studies have shown that listening to classical music can reduce stress and anxiety, promote relaxation, improve memory, and stabilize heart rate and overall health. (Harvard Health Publishing, July 2011.)

### **How will this project be evaluated?**

Our mainstage series will be evaluated by ticket sales, audience feedback, media reviews, and the artistic consensus of the Artistic Director, CONCORA singers, and audience members. CONCORA will conduct an audience survey for our concerts this season to obtain their feedback on the experience, artistry, and program, as well as demographics, ticket pricing, and marketing reach.

### **Cover letter**

- [Att-1-Roberts-Fdn-Cover-letter-due-11-2-2020-CONCORA.pdf](#)

### **Board list**

- [Att-2-Board-Roster-2020-2021-CONCORA.pdf](#)

### **IRS 501(c)3 determination letter**

- [Att-3-CONCORA-IRS-Letter.pdf](#)

### **Financial statement**

- [Att-4-CONCORA-990.pdf](#)

## **Excellence in the Arts : Entry # 76**

### **Last year operational budget**

- [Att-5-6-CONCORA-Budgets-for-FY-2020-2021.pdf](#)

### **Current year operational budget**

- [Att-5-6-CONCORA-Budgets-for-FY-2020-20211.pdf](#)

### **Balance sheet**

- [Att-7-CONCORA-cash-flow-chart.pdf](#)

### **Project budget**

- [Att-8-CONCORA-mainstage-concert-budget-2021.pdf](#)

### **Does your organization produce an annual report?**

No

### **Has your organization adopted a strategic plan?**

No

### **Grant Report**

- [Connecticut-Choral-Artists-CONCORA-Grantee-Reporting-Form- -Entry-74.pdf](#)

### **Other materials?**

- [Att-11-Final-Report-Budget-CONCORA-2019-20-11-2-2020.pdf](#)

After submitting the final report, I realized the final report budget was incorrect. The correct version is attached under "Other materials" above.

### **Have you contacted the Executive Director by email or phone to discuss this proposal?**

Yes

### **Is your cover letter signed by your senior executive? on your letterhead? with your official office address?**

Yes