



VIVA SINGERS TORONTO INCLUSION TEAM 2021 - 2022

Last updated September 6, 2021

VIVA Singers Toronto is a progressive arts organization achieving artistic excellence through a singer-centered and collaborative choral community since 2000. VIVA embraces the coexistence of a high level of artistic and educational engagement while fostering a truly inclusive environment. The first model for VIVA's Inclusion Team, founded in 2010, centered on supporting singers with disabilities. In 2020, the Inclusion Team was expanded to support broader inclusion and diversity initiatives within the organization.

VIVA Inclusion Team's Statement of Purpose:

We, the VIVA Inclusion Team, are working to:

- 1) build upon and extend VIVA's long-standing inclusion practices into broader definitions of inclusion (including, but not limited to, ability and disability, race, socioeconomic diversity, gender and sexual diversity).
- 2) examine, reflect on and advise inclusion and equity practices within the entire VIVA organization to ensure we are truly living out our motto of "every voice matters."

Current Areas of Focus:

(generated from VIVA-wide survey results and Inclusion Team discussion)

1) EDUCATION:

As an arts organization with a strong educational component, we will educate and engage both our staff and choristers of all ages, as well as our audiences and broader community, in these ever-evolving and essential conversations about inclusion and equity topics in appropriate and authentic ways.

What has been done:

- Formation of an expanded Inclusion team
- Annual inclusion presentations for choristers at arts camps

- Annual inclusion training for staff at year's opening meeting
- 20 year Bursary program for those needing financial support
- 19/20 Season - guest speaker Camille Rogers presented about transgender singers
- Artistic staff presenting and representing VIVA at OMEA, Choral Canada, ISME, ACDA

What we will do:

- Developing an ongoing relationship with an Equity consultant
- Nurture connections between the different choirs within our organization
- Maintain the ongoing work of the Inclusion Team

2) COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

As a well established and growing arts organization, we will connect our community with other choral and arts communities across Toronto in ways that matter.

What has been done:

- participation in the Junior Treble Festival and Senior Treble Festival (performing for other children's choirs, in the mass choir, work with clinicians);
- Collaboration with Jumblies Theatre, Toronto Consort, National Ballet, etc.
- Guest Artists (this year, spoken word artist Britta B. and Soundtrap expert Lloyd McArton with Main Chorus);
- Däle Burnette-Splude visited the Prep, Junior, and Main Choruses during Black History Month to share a story
- Prep/Junior Choruses singing at Seniors residence;
- Chamber Singers relationship with Elmer Iseler Singers

What we will do:

- Continue to connect with each other within the VIVA community (ie. social gatherings for all choirs, camp)
- Increase performances as outreach to different communities in an ongoing manner (e.g. all choirs looking to connect and perform with seniors homes)
- Collaborate with other choirs and arts groups, possibly on an ongoing basis, to produce a common performance or product

3) EXAMINING & DECONSTRUCTING the CHORAL MUSIC MEDIUM:

As a choral music organization, we will acknowledge the blindspots and inequalities in the artistic medium that we operate in. We will be aware of what voices are being heard or favoured, what voices are missing, and will actively and continuously work to facilitate changes in these areas in a collaborative and inclusive manner.

What has been done:

- Partnerships with Guest Artists and other arts organizations: L'Arche Sol Express (dance group); Andrew Balfour (Indigenous composer); Autorickshaw (traditional South Indian classical musicians); Britta B. (spoken word artist); Veronica Johnny (Cree musician and friend)
- Annual Inclusion Sessions at Camp
- Exploring music-creation (i.e., technology, Soundtrap; Orff programming) and celebrating singers as creators
- When touring, exploration of, and introduction to, the various artforms from the cultures we're visiting (e.g. Flamenco dance before visiting Spain)

What we will do:

- Maintain a focus on building positive interactions within our community, and also with other communities (e.g. Senior Treble Chorus members attending EVM rehearsal and Chamber Singers rehearsal to build connections)
- Choose dynamic pieces and projects that allow for longterm connection and, simultaneously, great art-making
- Keeping relationships first while being conscious of the artistic process and the product
- Continue to ask critical questions about diversity and inclusion within the organization to allow for progressive, ongoing dialogue leading to practical actions (e.g. hiring, recruitment, artistic activity, partnerships)