



CANTUS

2026-27 BIOGRAPHY

“...exalting finesse and expressive power.” – *The Washington Post*

Now in its 32nd season, the “engaging” (New Yorker) low-voice ensemble Cantus is widely known for its trademark warmth and blend, innovative programming and riveting performances of music ranging from the Renaissance to the 21st century. The Washington Post has hailed the Cantus sound as having both “exalting finesse” and “expressive power” and refers to the “spontaneous grace” of its music making. The Philadelphia Inquirer called the group nothing short of “exquisite.”

As one of the nation’s few full-time vocal ensembles, Cantus has come to prominence with its distinctive approach to creating music. Working without a conductor, the members of Cantus rehearse and perform as chamber musicians, each contributing to the entirety of the artistic process, creating programs that give voice to shared human experiences. As the Star Tribune has written, “The main hallmark of the Cantus sound has always been sheer quality and an unbroken belief in the special way that vocal music has of warming and invigorating the human spirit.”

Cantus enjoys a vigorous schedule of national and international touring, in addition to home concerts in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota. Cantus has performed at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, UCLA, San Francisco Performances, Yale Schwarzman Center, Tanglewood and Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival. Cantus also makes all of its home concerts available online. This pandemic-prompted innovation has brought the ensemble’s programs to audiences spanning 50 states and sixteen countries.

Cantus records for the UK-based Signum Classics label which has released *The Secret Letter*, *Fields of Wonder*, *Alone Together*, holiday album *Into the Light*, *Manifesto*, and the COVID-19 Sessions. Cantus also has a deep catalog of recordings released on the group’s eponymous label.

Committed to the expansion of the vocal music repertoire, Cantus actively commissions new music and seeks to unearth rarely performed repertoire for low voices. Cantus has received commissioning grants from New Music USA, the National Endowment for the Arts, Chorus America, American Composers Forum and Chamber Music America. In 2023, Cantus was honored with the Alice Parker Fund Award from Chorus America that recognizes the exemplary work of an ensemble that respectfully and authentically presents works incorporating Black and



Latinx traditions and experiences. In line with Cantus' ongoing commitment to fostering new works for tenors, baritones, and basses, the ensemble has partnered with composer and former Cantus bass Timothy C. Takach and Graphite Publishing on the Cantus Choral Series, distributing Cantus' signature arrangements and compositions for ensembles everywhere to perform and enjoy.

Cantus has a rich history of collaborations with other performing arts organizations, including the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Boston Pops, The King's Singers, Chanticleer, the Swingles, the Canadian Brass, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Lorelei Ensemble, Theater Latté Da and the James Sewell Ballet. The ensemble is heard frequently on both classical public radio nationwide and on SiriusXM Satellite Radio.

Integral to the Cantus mission is its commitment to preserve and strengthen music education in schools. Cantus works with more than 5,000 students each year in masterclass and workshop settings across the country and has been in-residence in 31 Minnesota high schools throughout the 15-year history of their award-winning High School Residency program. Cantus deepened its commitment to students in 2023 by creating the High School Mentorship program, which offers Cantus artists in-residence at one Twin Cities-based high school for the entirety of the school year. Cantus has also broadened its work by launching a yearly, statewide festival in partnership with American Choral Directors Association Minnesota catered to high school tenor and bass singers. Additionally, the ensemble hosts a biennial Cantus Commission Competition to encourage the creation of new repertoire through cash prizes, a performance, recording, and potential publication of winning composers.

OUR MISSION & VISION

Cantus engages audiences in a meaningful music experience and ensures the future of ensemble singing by mentoring young singers and educators. Cantus was founded on the ideals of collaborative music-making: artists and staff work together to reach new levels of artistic excellence, innovation and audience engagement. Our vision is to give voice to shared human experiences.

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