As we finish out the 48th season of Wisconsin Singers, I am reminded that life is full of unexpected twists and turns. We planned to enter our next chapter with a new Artistic Director to lead the troupe. Dr. Chris Cayari joined us on July 1 and was immediately immersed in the logistics of getting to know the students, the show *Simply Classic!* (already written at the time of his hire), and the immense responsibility of learning how to direct and manage what has become an “entertainment business” of great magnitude.

Change is not an easy thing for most and it speaks to the excellence of our students that they were willing to be patient with the process. Having had the same Director/producer for 25 years, the Singers has evolved from a School of Music /Wisconsin Alumni Association sponsored program to a music business that educates musicians/technicians/interns, trains future leaders, and raises more than $250,000 annually to support the entirety of the Wisconsin Singers experience.

Never having been responsible for transitioning to new management, the Executive Board, Dr. Cayari, and our students faced a huge learning curve. I remained with the program as a consultant.

The year was filled with many successes. Under Dr. Cayari’s direction, the show grew to realize its full potential and *So Classic!* was received with enthusiasm and appreciation as the troupe traveled the state and nation. Our annual On Campus shows at the newly renovated Wisconsin Union Theater was made even more special as we celebrated my retirement. Workshops with junior and senior high students continued to inspire young musicians to consider the importance of music and of pursuing a college education. I am consistently impressed with how sincere, honest and articulate our students are as they answer questions at the end of each workshop about life on campus and balancing involvement with academics.

Working again with Janesville Adaptive Music students remained a highlight of the year as the Singers take the stage with more than a dozen high school age children, many of whom are non-verbal, and give up the spotlight to them so they can feel like the “stars” of the show. Spring tour took them to The Villages in Florida where we worked with a new sponsor as Singers parent, Bob Torgerson, retired from managing the show after many years of hard work and strong support.
The student staff worked closely with participants to ensure that Dr. Cayari had the support he needed. It was a thought provoking journey handled with patience, open hearts and a willingness to look ahead, not back.

Dr. Cayari turned in his resignation in mid-March, citing his desire to move into a more academic music education position at Purdue University allowing him the opportunity to earn tenure. Despite my intention to retire, I moved back into the Director position full time to see the troupe through to the end of the season.

We learned a lot about the program’s needs during this first year of change. We found that the business side of the program – the bookings, marketing/promotions, and relationship building – must be prioritized alongside the importance of music education. We learned that with the loss of our funding 23 years ago, our program has grown beyond what any one professional can handle alone and look towards adding another part time position to our professional staff. But, most importantly, we learned that our students are not only talented but resilient, proving yet again that the Singers program is much more than what we take on to stage.

Robin Whitty Novotny
Wisconsin Singers 1972-1974
Director/Producer 1990 - 2015
THE WISCONSIN SINGERS’ MISSION STATEMENT

The Wisconsin Singers provides quality music education to collegiate level musicians without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation or identity.

We specialize in teaching music in performance through a variety of American Pop genres.

We supply professional stage performance and teaching experiences nationwide.

We serve many diverse communities and audiences that include public and private school K-12 music students, University of Wisconsin Alumni groups, and community service organizations, as well as the entertainment needs of select corporate patrons.

Education

Wisconsin Singers provides a unique, high quality, educational experience in the staged performance of American popular music that is both career focused and leadership oriented.

Outreach

Wisconsin Singers provides a dynamic connection between the University of Wisconsin-Madison and in-state and out-of-state high school music education programs by conducting workshops, master classes, and through concerts and public performances.

Public Relations

For forty-eight years, the Wisconsin Singers has promoted a positive public image for the University of Wisconsin–Madison. It supports the UW’s educational prominence through its delivery of a superior level of learning, entertainment, and public service as well as providing significant student employment and scholarship opportunities.
2015 – 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice President – Singers Alum

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Member at Large – Parent of Singers Alum

Mark Kueppers
Member at Large – Liaison to ODOS

Robin Whitty Novotny
Director, Wisconsin Singers
WISCONSIN SINGERS 15-16 FACTS

- Singers completed their 48th anniversary season in existence at the UW.
- 34 students participated in Wisconsin Singers, representing over 25 different majors.
- Performers spent approximately 350 hours this performing season in rehearsal.
- Performers spent more than 400 hours this academic year traveling and performing in more than 30 different venues - plus another 40 hours during the summer.
- The troupe toured during spring break to do 2 shows for alumni chapters in the Villages in Florida.
- Performers donated over 50 hours of time to shows for campus events.
- Our 8 Interns worked 6-10 hours per week throughout the academic year and student staff members who double as performers donated another 4-6 hours per week.
- Singers cliniced and shared the stage with over 430 K-12 students in workshops geared to improve performance skills, followed by a question and answer session where WS students articulated information about their Wisconsin Experience.
- Performers entertained more than 30,000 throughout the state and nation.
- The Singers again hosted On Campus at the Memorial Union Theater, attaining over 94% attendance at both performances.
- The program raised more than $22,000 in scholarship funds for UW students.
- Singers remained financially independent from the UW for the 23nd year.
- Wisconsin Singers continued to bring guest artists from New York/Broadway to create and choreograph the show.

2015-2016 NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Director / Position Appointment Split

Our Producer / Director hire (Christopher Cayari) was not a good match for the Wisconsin Singers. Chris wanted to focus more on research and operating in an academic environment, whereas we needed more of a business oriented focus to keep the program running in conjunction with the educational elements. As a result, the Executive Board has decided to split the position into two separate appointments.

The first will be the Artistic Director position. This will be a UW appointment – funded by the Friends of Wisconsin Singers – and will manage the artistic and curricular elements of the program.

The second will be the Executive Producer position. This will be an independent consultant position reporting directly to the Friends of Wisconsin Singers. The EP will be in charge of all operations of the program as a whole, including booking, fundraising, culture, and integration and management of all aspects of the troupe.

We hope that by splitting the position, we can find individuals with specific expertise that can help ensure Singers survival and success.
I stated in last year’s “year end review”, that I thought the 2015-2016 season would be a place holding year for the Wisconsin Singers, and it turns out that was exactly the case. The replacement of Robin at the helm of the program left a huge learning vacuum for the new Producer / Director, and with that hire not working out for us, it was a bit of a scramble to try to keep the ship afloat and finish the year.

We are forever thankful to Robin for never really stepping into retirement, and immediately moving from training and mentoring back to leading the troupe through the tail end of the season. Without her efforts, we would not be in any position to be looking forward to our 49th season next year.

Financially, everything was “kind of the same” as the 14-15 fiscal year. Certain line items went up or down, but overall, we stayed fairly static – and solvent – to complete our 48th year here at the UW. However, the Director changes and the interactions that happened during this fiscal year will have repercussions. We have had many long time customers who felt their relationship with the Singers program was damaged this year, and are not booking again because of that changed experience. We expected some change and turnover as a result of it being a leadership transition year, but with the incorrect person ultimately being hired for that critical role, we have had some more transition pains than we expected. This did not have a huge financial impact on this year’s accounting, but may have some additional ramifications for the 16-17 season.

Bottom line, we have some work to do to rebuild and regrow our show partnership base. To that end, we are splitting the job into two positions, an Artistic Director to run the class, and an Executive Producer to handle all of the business elements, oversight, and relationships of the Singers program.

We are excited to welcome Georgi Edgington – our long time concert sponsor from Hayward – as our new Executive Producer, and have every confidence that she will be able to build our concert base back to a full schedule. She understands the group, shares our culture and passion, and will be great at developing and growing those business relationships while helping to educate our students.

In the meantime, we continue to be blessed by our donors and audience members who support the efforts of the Wisconsin Singers, and have stood behind us as we continue to work through this transition. We have just finished year one of what I believe will be a three-year transition. We may be a bit more battered and bruised than expected, but as always, we are still standing and still making music thanks to your belief in this program and what it brings to the UW, the performers, and to our audiences around the state and nation.

We truly thank you for your continued support and encouragement.

On Wisconsin!

Christopher Novotny
Director of Business Operations
Wisconsin Singers Alumnus 1993 – 1997
## FINANCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Performances</td>
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<td>Donations / Grants</td>
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<td>Scholarship Matches</td>
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<td>Merchandise Sales</td>
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**Merchandise sales include wristbands (on site).**

** Decreased program service expenses due to reduced transportation and other costs associated with fewer performances on the calendar.

**Donations / Grants includes increase from Robin’s retirement celebration donations.**
2015-2016 REVENUE

- Performances: $148,400 (60.77%)
- Donations: $67,740 (27.74%)
- Scholarship Matches: $18,045 (7.39%)
- Merchandise Sales: $10,000 (4.10%)

Total Revenue: $148,400
2015-2016 EXPENSES
2015-2016 DONORS

Ambassador $1000+
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