

Ensemble Laude COVID Strategy

The novel coronavirus pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges for choral organizations, Ensemble Laude included.

The Ensemble Laude board has a responsibility to make decisions in the best interests of the society, manage risks, ensure ethical and sound use of finances, ensure compliance with all applicable laws, and provide oversight for all activities to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

This situation will be a challenge to the long term viability of our organization, and we take our responsibilities as a board seriously.

We value the safety of our people – our contractors, singers, audience, volunteers, and all those involved in fulfilling Ensemble Laude’s purposes:

- To establish, maintain and carry on ENSEMBLE LAUDE as an ensemble of choral singers for the preparation and performance of choral music;
- To have ENSEMBLE LAUDE prepare, rehearse, perform and record a variety of choral repertoire for the enjoyment and edification of audiences and listeners, with the purpose of cultivating and expanding the appreciation of choral music;
- To present concerts of choral music and concerts of a variety of music featuring ENSEMBLE LAUDE in collaboration with other singers, instrumentalists and choral and instrumental groups;
- To have ENSEMBLE LAUDE perform in concerts presented by others;
- To promote and encourage the performance of choral music; and
- To educate, encourage and engage youth in the appreciation and creation of choral music.

The following document outlines our organizations’ actions to date and recommended approach and strategy as of June 2020. The strategy will be updated as needed as conditions change.

Actions to Date:

On March 10th, 2020 the choir rehearsed and used extra precautions determined by the Artistic Director, such as handwashing reminders, staying home if sick reminders, extra physical distancing, and suspension of shared snack.

On March 15, 2020, we came to agreement between the Board and the Artistic Director to suspend in person rehearsals and performances. The motion from the extraordinary board meeting read:

“In response to the call to “flatten the curve” of novel coronavirus transmission, knowing that singing is a high risk activity given how the corona virus spreads, and given that our concerts will involve groups larger than 250 people, which has recently been banned by the BC Health Officer, effective immediately we will suspend Laude activities, including rehearsals, the retreat, and May performances. In cooperation, the Board and Artistic Director will resume Laude activities when deemed appropriate given updates from the BC Centre for Disease Control and other official sources. “

At the same meeting, the board further resolved to honour the contracts for the AD, GM, and EAs to the end of June, 2020, the end of our fiscal year.

Throughout April, the board and Artistic Director reviewed public health guidelines and looked into financial scenarios for different hiatus lengths.

The sponsorship team checked in with our sponsors regarding cancelled concerts and with ArtsVest about the pandemic response and made arrangements.

At the April board meeting, the AD and President co-presented a report recommending an unpaid leave of absence begin for the AD at the end of June 2020, and that plans for touring be suspended. We further agreed to move our September AGM online.

In April, the HR committee and the General Manager agreed to amend the GM contract to move to an hourly rate to reflect the reduced work demand during the hiatus.

In May, the HR committee proposed to the Emerging Artists that we agree to end their contracts early, and directed them to available government support.

At the May board meeting, the Governance and Nominations Committee presented a draft strategy recommending the Board and Artistic Director confirm overall strategy approach from among the options below, with Option A being the preferred option:

- A. "Wait it out" strategy, including reducing overhead costs and increasing fundraising efforts.
- B. Transitioning to an online choir model. (Not preferred by AD, singers, not recommended)
- C. Transitioning to a physically distancing model. (Not clearly allowed by Chief Medical Officer, not preferred by AD, safety issues make this a very dangerous proposition and it is not recommended)
- D. Dissolving the society, since we cannot fulfill the purposes for which we were incorporated for an unknown and potentially lengthy period of time. (Unknown response by our stakeholders)
- E. Other options as proposed by the board, AD, GM, and singers/stakeholders.

The board affirmed the COVID strategy, Option A, and the following actions to support Option A:

1. Board, through the HR and G&N committee, and the Artistic Director develop a policy, following the best available public health guidance, to guide our safe return to singing.
2. HR committee and Artistic Director develop a letter of understanding regarding the terms of the leave of absence.
3. The Board, AD, and GM work toward maintaining the financial viability of the organization during the hiatus imposed by the pandemic by reducing overhead costs and actively fundraising. Specifically:
 - a. The Board adopt the draft **Financial Committee** Terms of Reference and be tasked with:
 - i. Developing and presenting budget scenarios to the board.
 - ii. Recommending options for lowering overhead costs during hiatus.

- iii. Recommending options for maintaining an adequate contingency fund in different scenarios.
 - iv. Recommended financial threshold beyond which society should be dissolved if our financial situation no longer allows us to continue.
 - b. The Board recruit a **Fundraising Committee** per their terms of reference and task them with proposing fundraising activities that are safe and appropriate during a pandemic, presenting them to the board and AD for approval, and working with the General Manager to implement the plan.
 - c. Pursue other fundraising options as they arise.
- 4. The Board task the **Grants Committee** with seeking grants available to our organization during COVID that can support us during the pandemic hiatus.
- 5. The **board** continue to meet monthly during the hiatus to review and update the strategy as needed.