

**Buffalo Choral Arts Society**  
Board Position Candidate Form

Name : Sarah Fiegel

Date: 5/27/2024

Position: Member at-large

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors?

I have found my last two years of board service to be extremely rewarding, and would welcome the opportunity to continue the work. Our first season with David has been spectacular – transition years always have a few bumps, but I feel the choir as a whole has managed it very well. The 60th Anniversary year is also closer than we think – the planning for that season will take place in the coming year, and I'm excited about the work that the committee has already been putting together. Now that we're starting to "find our groove," so to speak, I would be honored to have a role in helping to guide the chorus into our next chapter.

2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them?

The number one concern I have as a board member is ensuring reliable streams of revenue for the chorus. A very significant part of that revenue stream is ticket sales, which have not rebounded post-pandemic in the way we would hope. The approach to managing this is twofold: continuing to leverage publicity, and exploring other streams of revenue such as grants, etc.

We also had an influx of wonderful new members this year – greater in number than anticipated! This isn't a "concern," per se, but continuing to foster opportunities for us to come together as one chorus is important. We will continue to have new members join, & finding ways to make sure all voices are included and welcome is essential.

Continuing to ensure smooth, easy communication between the board and membership is, of course, a perennial interest. The primary role of a member at-large is to act as an interface between board and membership, and I take that responsibility seriously. Continuing to foster an environment where people feel welcome to express ideas and have avenues to do so is essential to the health of the group.

3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year?

I had a few goals last year that we made some progress on, and I would love to continue expanding those. Last year, one of my goals was to increase our volunteerism in the community. We've dipped our toe into it this year with the Ride for Roswell, and I would love to expand that into other events. We also started partnering each concert with a different charity this year, and I think that is important work to continue. I would also love to see the group collaborate with other local groups, whether they be high

school or adult. The music scene in Buffalo is vast and varied. There are so many opportunities to collaborate with our community.

Somehow, I am even more excited for the coming season than I was for this year's. That's a high bar. My vision for the choir involves continuing to make beautiful music, building our social and musical connections within and outside of the choir, and increasing our presence in the region.

#### Candidate Profile

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS?

I have been a member of BCAS for eight years and a board member for two years.

2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS?

This year as a board member, I had two main roles. Over the summer, Ali & I laid out a long-term marketing plan to give us some direction. I designed all of the posters for our concerts, as well as the informational folders that were handed out to new members in the fall. I also organized all of our flyer blitzes (thank you, volunteers!), modified to be a bit more flexible in today's busy world. Although the idea was Ali's brainchild, I coordinated a radio ad campaign with 96.1 for our Christmas concert. My second role has been managing the newsletter; ensuring predictable, consistent communication with the choir at large.

Last year, the focus of my board membership was increasing our social media presence: I created and ran our TikTok, updated our Instagram, and helped leverage social media to widen our audience. I also served on the search committee that led to David's hiring.

While not directly related to music, my background as an educator has certainly had transferable skills this year. As a teacher, on any given day I have upwards of 100 stakeholders to whom I am accountable — students, parents, my teammates, administrators, etc. Very often, the interests of those stakeholders are in direct conflict with one another, as well as with my goals for what needs to be accomplished within a very tight timeframe. The time management, organization, compromise, and prioritization skills I use daily as a teacher have translated well to a board position.

3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.

For the last two years, I have been the co-runner of Sheridan Hill Elementary's musical theater club. This year (in only six sessions) we put on a production of "the Music Man (mini)" with twenty 2nd-5th graders — many of whom had no prior musical theater experience. While teaching at Mill Middle, I served as a Drama Club co-advisor, which re-started the club after twelve years of dormancy. I also served as secretary or president to several groups in high school and undergrad.

## Buffalo Choral Arts Society

### Board Position Candidate Form

Name : Jenifer Grasha

Date: 29 May 2024

Position: Board Member-At-Large

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors? I enjoy being part of groups that have the best interests of others at heart, make decisions and work toward the greater good of all involved. I would like to contribute ideas and a lifetime of experience to help create more opportunities for our Chorus to grow and endear to the community, especially as we approach our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We have a vibrant, dynamic group of people who love music and love bringing it to the community. As we bring music to the community, we become stewards to it. We not only represent music, we represent our people and the spirit of our City. I would like to help our legacy grow and evolve as our people do, continuing to invite Buffalo to share in the music with us.
2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them? The Chorus is run so well... so my concerns relate more to visibility and community presence, future ticket sales, the updating of our website to include all/current members, creating more opportunities for our members to connect on a personal level, the ability for all of us to hear David during rehearsals, and seating proximity during rehearsals. It seems like a lot but in my mind these are a lot of little things that can help our growth. As a part of the Diversity Committee, I will help to explore the ways in which we will strive to include others in the next few years and how we can become a greater presence in the community through outreach and musical selection. I will work with the Board to explore the ways in which we can become a bigger presence in the community through publicity, increased social media activity, outreach, participating in community events and giving 'to' the community, and connecting with charitable/social cause groups representing our values. Of course all of this also lends to our longevity and influences ticket sales. I would also like to discuss ideas for improvements in spacing issues and individual needs among the rows. And none of this could be done without you! If elected, I would be available to you so that any thoughts and ideas you have would be shared.
3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year? I see us exploring our legacy and future directions to a deeper degree and having an increased presence in the community, as I've stated above. I believe we can become an even more valued and beloved part of our community, because of what we bring to it. I look forward to helping plan our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, working with the Schulz family to honor Bob and his legacy, and making it a year of great celebration for all that has been accomplished!

#### Candidate Profile

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS? 1 year

2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS?

- 24 years Vocal/General Music Teacher and Choral Director, K-7
- Directed school musicals and District Summer Music Institute program (Vocal & piano portion)
- A lifetime of performance experience (Dance, Music, Musical Theatre)
- Served on many committees as a Teacher, Volunteer, Board Member and student, working with many Administrators, Staff members and local organizations (Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Town Boys and Girls Club, Female Musicians Fighting Breast Cancer, Kol Rina, Light of Truth Church, Epilepsy Association of Western New York, and more)
- 8-year Friend of the BPO ~ work with Patrons, Volunteers, Musicians, Staff, Administration, and Diversity Committee
- 3 years Usher Captain at BPO
- Maintain a large network of friends from various professional backgrounds, Musicians, music professionals, and Teachers, stretching internationally
- BCAS~ caroled at the Sabres game, am on the Venue Committee and the Diversity Committee, participated as abled to The Riv set up, and will be helping set up for picnic

On a very personal level, I understand the meaning and importance of legacy. Ultimately that's what all of us in BCAS are contributing to. Whether I'm in the role of Musician, Teacher or Volunteer, my work and passions are founded in service to others. We make ourselves the vehicle for the work which we do. The qualities I would bring to my position on the Board would be working well with others, enjoying the collaborating and teamwork, dependability, dedication, organized, into details as well as the big picture, good listener and communicator, earnestness, genuine, full of ideas, goal-oriented, keeping an open mind to possibility rather than finding reasons why something can't be done, the ability to consider all points of view, understanding on a personal and professional level what you want as a musician as well as understanding what the public wants and needs. I also have time!

3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.

For one year, I served as a Board Member for a small, community startup chorus called Kol Rina.

For 3 years, I served on the Student Senate of NCCC as both a Member and the Treasurer. During that time I served on countless committees and planned events, working closely with the College Dean, Administrators and Staff.

In addition to my work outlined above, I grew up watching my father serve on the Board for the Town Boys and Girls Club for 38 years, serving as President and running an annual golf tournament for 31 years. I saw and learned what it takes to be on and run a Board from every aspect. I helped at countless functions and attended many meetings from the time I was a child.

GAIL LEARY: APPLICATION FOR MEMBER AT-LARGE  
2024-2025 SEASON

I. EXPERIENCE:

- 30 years in BCAS (Old-timer)
- 13 years as Vice President
- 2 years as member at large
- Trip coordinator for Washington, DC and New York City trips
- Assisted with the portfolio application process for being accepted to perform at the National Cathedral, St. Patrick's Cathedral, the Kennedy Center, and Walter Reed.
- Served on budget committee for 6 years
- Campaign 100 creator which has raised over \$55,000 over the past several years
- Organizes after concert get togethers
- Worked on establishing written policies and procedures for the Board, including 5 year plan
- I have chaired the preparation process for grants from Erie County and Arts Services
- Union president of East Aurora teachers Association (union) for 6 years
- Served as co-chair of music department for many years, in addition to District Curriculum council and Wellness Committee
- Middle school band director that traveled throughout the Northeast representing Western New York in New York City, Washington,DC, Baltimore, Indianapolis, etc,
- Received the NYSUT leadership award and my band was invited to the White House.

II. GOALS FOR THE 2024-25 SEASON:

- Continue to be the coordinator of the donor campaign which is now between 700-800 names
- Coordinate after concert social events
- I would like to continue to be the Sunshine coordinator and help us support members in need of our kindness.
- Continue to keep an eye on our attendance
- Continue to put my two cents in for the good of the chorus
- Continue to support our music director and the members of the Board

III. PERSONAL COMMENTS:

- It has been a wonderful journey working for the good of this chorus. So many people have given so much of their hearts and souls and time to bring this chorus to where it is today. It has been my pleasure to give back as much as I can during this time of my life. The Board of Directors is such a dedicated group of individuals, each bringing their own skills and strengths to every task at hand. It is an honor to serve this chorus and its members as we continue to be the choral ambassadors of Western New York.
- If you decide to vote for me, I will be honest and upfront with you. I will need to do a great deal of my work for the chorus in my time at home .Much of it takes hours. I may not always attend rehearsal because of weather, etc.

## Board Position Candidate Form

Kevin Maerten Date: May 29, 2024 Position: At-Large member

### **Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors?**

I welcome the opportunity to be part of the governing body. I've had experience elevating other nonprofits by always listening to both sides of a proposal; taking consideration first and foremost what's best for the whole the Chorus aside from personal opinion. As previously mentioned in sessions an additional set of new eyes and ideas are appreciated. I can be one those eyes.

### **What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them?**

General morale appears to be a little down, even from the Fall. One could propose an occasional icebreaker now and then. Finding some fun coupled with the importance and dedication to the music. We've also spoken about keeping a positive culture and being respectful of all people. I would support the endeavors of the upcoming diversity committee, which also would help the general morale. I also understand the importance respecting copyright, along with the balance of being able to record and distribute performances. I think it's important for our future to find a compromise on this subject.

### **What is your vision for BCAS during the next year?**

Continuing to find ways to be more proficient in music, finding the fun in the practicing, and helping it translate to the stage. Increase community presence and do further nonprofit fundraising. We can best market to the ones who we support and champion and leave a lasting imprint on Niagara and Erie counties.

### **Candidate Profile**

**1. How long have you been a member of BCAS?** - Since September 2024

**2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS**

Trista Hayes invited me to audition. I have earned a Music Associates degree from SUNY Niagara and a Bachelor of Science in Critical Interpretation of Media Studies, University at Buffalo. I was fortunate to begin my BCAS involvement in September 2024. In addition to singing I continue to enjoy assisting with Stage Crew. Additionally in the October and June shows of this Season I have been honored to be apart of the research and writing of concert narration with David. I next look forward to the necessary work in planning our upcoming Meat Raffle.

**3. Do you have previous Board experience from any other organizations? Please Explain.**

I served as Evangelism chair on a Church Council, a member of the Niagara County Memory Walk Committees for Alzheimer's Association, as well as past Board member for the Niagara County Central Rotary Club. In music circles I also served several years on the Board of the Friends of Harmony Male A-cappella Chorus. While I served there, I helped to recruit members, foster fundraising, and plan designs and concepts with the Show Committee.

# Buffalo Choral Arts Society

## Board Position Candidate Form

Name : Alec Michalski

Date: 06/03/2024

Position: Member at Large

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors? I love being part of the decision-making process when it comes to the betterment and forward movement of the chorus as a whole. I also love helping and dedicating my time to do something important and for a good cause.
2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them? I feel that as a group we could use more community engagement as well as team-bonding and camaraderie amongst ourselves. We are a family and I think spending more time doing things as a family (volunteering, running a meat raffle, our post-concert hangouts) would benefit us greatly and make everyone feel more at home with each other.
3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year? I would like to see more diversity, inclusion, and progress towards our long-term goals for the group. We have the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary quickly approaching and there's lots of preparation to be done for it! I also hope we can start traveling again soon!

### Candidate Profile

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS? 7 years
2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS? I have been a Member at Large and the Director of Operations for 5 years.
3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.

No 😊

**Buffalo Choral Arts Society**  
Board Position Candidate Form

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Candidate Profile

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.

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Please send to Paula Belair at << [Storylady1970@hotmail.com](mailto:Storylady1970@hotmail.com) >> by noon on 5/23/18

**Buffalo Choral Arts Society**  
Board Position Candidate Form

Name : John Podvezko Date: 05/27/24

Position: Treasurer

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors? \_\_\_\_\_

I feel that I can contribute to the smooth, continued operation of the non-profit. ~~I have twelve years of banking experience, and Master's-level coursework in Accounting and Finance, including high proficiency with Microsoft Excel. Further, I would be excited to learn more about maintaining the financial health of a non-profit for my future interests in using businesses to solve public health problems.~~

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2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them? \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to use my specialized knowledge to perpetuate the financial health of the group. ~~While I have no current major concerns, I am eager to learn how I can help where I am able.~~

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3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year? \_\_\_\_\_

I have three hopes for BCAS that may not come to fruition in the next year, but that I believe can come true eventually:

- keeping member dues as low as possible to lower barriers to entry to the choir
- contributing to BCAS paying fair wages to our accompanists and orchestra members
- diversifying income streams to increase financial stability for the group

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### Candidate Profile

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS? \_\_\_\_\_  
1 season/ 4 concerts

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS? \_\_\_\_\_  
- 12 years in M&T Lockbox, maintaining records for audit  
- Master's coursework from the University at Buffalo in Accounting, Finance,  
and Microsoft Excel (vlookup, pivot tables, simulation)  
- President of University Choir 2015-2016 at University at Buffalo under Harold  
Rosenbaum.

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3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.  
No I have not

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Please send to Paula Belair at << [Storylady1970@hotmail.com](mailto:Storylady1970@hotmail.com) >> by noon on 5/23/18

**Buffalo Choral Arts Society**  
**Board Position Candidate Form**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_Nadine Benstead\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_5/29/24\_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_Vice President\_\_\_\_\_

1. Why do you want to be on the BCAS board of directors?

In the short time that I have served as VP, I feel there is more for me to learn, contribute and continue to uphold as part of the Board of this amazing chorus.

2. What are your major concerns, and how would you like to address them?

The ticket sales and committees are my two major concerns. It was understood that this being a transition year, we would see a difference in ticket sales. I will work with committees to take more action, not just ideas, to get our name out there. We have our standard audience. We need to be pulling from other places of interest to get that name recognition that we deserve.

3. What is your vision for BCAS during the next year?

\_Working with the Board and committees to get to the next level of recognition in Western New York. And plan for a spectacular 60th Anniversary year, for the following.

**Candidate Profile**

1. How long have you been a member of BCAS? 6 years

2. Describe your background and experiences relevant to BCAS?

Having served on this Board as a Member at Large and Vice President has shown me what has been important to the membership. It also has given me insights into the challenges that we face. In my decades of experience as a counselor, I have grown in my awareness of people. From treating them, listening and hearing them, and leading them with options and support. That, along with being an innate problem-solver, my ability to think on my feet and my professionalism are drawn from regularly while keeping a healthy air of collaboration.

3. Do you have previous Board experience from any organization? Please explain.

I have served on the Board of my previous chorus for years. I have sat on many organizing committees at work. I have developed and edited policies and procedures as part of my job for years. And I have enjoyed successes and worked through challenges.