



NEWBURYPORT CHORAL SOCIETY MUSIC DIRECTOR SEARCH PROCESS SUMMARY REPORT

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Search Committee Co-Chairs

After being informed by NCS Music Director Dr. George Case that the 2019-20 music season would be his last, the NCS Board of Directors formally initiated a search process for a new Music Director in April 2019. Vice President Mary Ann Lachat and Outreach Director Maryellen Moreland were asked to Co-Chair the search process. Initial steps in the process included updating of all of the materials that had been effectively used in the previous 2014 Music Director search process. Materials included: Music Director Application; Contact List for referrals; Candidate Matrix for Profiling Applicant Materials; Interview Protocols and Assessment Form; Chorus Survey; and Candidate Rehearsal form. All materials were updated by the end of May, 2019.

KEY PROCESS STEPS and RESULTS

Establishing a Search Committee

A Search Committee was established whose members would work as a team in sharing the multiple tasks of comprehensively assessing candidate qualifications and making a final recommendation to the NCS Board of Directors. Key tasks were: participate in the review of candidate application materials and the evaluation of qualifications; select candidates for the interview process; participate in the interview process and select finalists for the Candidate Rehearsal; participate in the Candidate Rehearsals and analyze summary review of rehearsal performance by chorus members; review analysis of application materials, the interview process, and the candidate rehearsal results and make a recommendation of the final selection of Music Director of the Newburyport Choral Society to the Board of Directors.

The Search Committee was comprised of ten members, 6 from the Board and 4 non-Board. Selection was also intended to reflect representation of the different sections of the Chorus. Committee members were: Co-Chairs, Mary Ann Lachat and Maryellen Moreland, and Brian Greenberg, Sue Murphy, Sandra Starr, and Carol Yunker from the Board; and Steve Cohen Laurie Curran, Penny Lazarus, and Jack Plimpton as non-Board members. As President, Solomon Berman served as an Ex Officio member and Ralph Johnson, a long term member of NCS served in an advisory capacity.

Outreach

Starting in June, 2019 an extensive outreach campaign was conducted. Information and the MD application were emailed to: contacts in the Music Departments of the region's Colleges and Universities with conducting/vocal music programs; Music Directors of MA and NH choral groups; members of the Greater Boston Choral Consortium (GBCC), and many other pertinent/personal contacts. NCS Music Director Dr. George Case was engaged in the search process and we sought advice from NCS accompanist Dr. Kirsten Helgeland. Applications were specifically emailed to potential candidates who were identified and responses were made to those who had questions. Follow-up emails were again sent in August.

The Application deadline was October 18, 2019

Application Review Results

Music Director Applications were received from 10 applicants. These were reviewed and profiled on the Candidate Matrix form to allow an efficient comparison across the following areas: Education and Training; Teaching and Other Experience; Number, Type, and Size of Choruses Conducted; Choral Repertoire – Experience with different periods and types of music; and Voice part and whether a soloist. In addition the applicant's Cover Letter was rated in terms of interest in applying, description of strengths, vision for NCS, and professional expectations for NCS.

Based on the review, four of the candidates were eliminated -3 for not sufficiently meeting the application requirements and one who was not considered a good match for NCS. Six candidates were thus selected to be interviewed.

Candidate Interviews

Four candidate interviews were conducted on November 9 and two on November 16, 2019. The interviews focused on the following areas: Leadership; Program Planning; Board Relationships; Vision for NCS; Connections to Youth; Resource Connections; Knowledge of Sound Rehearsal Techniques; Knowledge of Sound Vocal Techniques; Communication Skills; Ability to Lead NCS through Transition/Change; Impact of other Commitments; and Longevity –Probability of staying with NCS 5 years or more. The Search Committee rated candidate responses to the above areas on a 3 point scale – Excellent, Good, or Fair/Poor.

Based on the interview assessment, four candidates were selected as finalists: Dr. Jason Bishop, Daniel Mahoney, Dr. Krishan Oberoi, and Ryan Turner. Dr. Bishop subsequently withdrew because of other personal commitments and a decision not to relocate to the Boston area.

The Chorus Survey

NCS conducted a Chorus Survey of its members to acquire input that would guide the future of the chorus. The survey was designed to acquire feedback on significant aspects of NCS and on the qualities most valued by members in a new Music Director. There was a high participation rate in the survey process with 100 chorus members or 78% responding. The number of responses reflected an amazing balance across the sections: Altos-36; Sopranos-36; Basses-14; and Tenors-14.

Responses indicated strong singer preferences for an outstanding teacher in demonstrating choral singing techniques, a skilled experienced conductor with the ability to move diverse amateur singers to high quality concert performance, and a leader with positive interpersonal skills and a charismatic and innovative vision.

Candidate Rehearsal

Nearly 100 NCS members attended a Candidate Rehearsal on Saturday January 25, 2020 where Daniel Mahoney, Dr. Krishan Oberoi, and Ryan Turner each conducted a 45 minute rehearsal that included a warm up, a piece from Handel's *Messiah*, and a piece by Aaron Copland. The high attendance was a very positive reflection of the dedication of our chorus to the future of NCS and there was considerable feedback that the event was a wonderful experience with three highly skilled conductors. Chorus members had a rating sheet that allowed them to rate each candidate on various aspects of the rehearsal process. Members were then asked to indicate their 1st and 2nd choice based on rehearsal performance.

Based on the responses of 93 members who completed the Candidate Rehearsal Form, Ryan Turner was the 1st choice of 75% of NCS singers. Ryan Turner was also the clear 1st Choice of all sections of the chorus: Altos -79%; Sopranos -71%; Tenors/Basses -75%.

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD

Based on a review of all of the evidence the Search Committee recommends to the NCS Board of Directors that Ryan Turner be approved as the next Music Director of the Newburyport Choral Society.

Evidence Supporting the Selection of Ryan Turner

Education, Training and Experience

Ryan Turner brings outstanding and varied experience as a conductor. His conducting repertoire is extensive -- choral, choral/orchestra, orchestra, opera, and musical theater. His performance as a tenor soloist includes oratorio, concert recital, opera, and musical theater. Ryan is currently the Artistic Director of Emanuel Music in Boston, and previously conducted the Concord Chorale and Chamber Orchestra and the Concord Chorus, and served as the Director of Choral Studies at Phillips Exeter academy. He has served on the Voice faculty of several colleges and universities and he has experience in both vocal and orchestra arrangements.

Chorus Candidate Selection

Ryan Turner was the 1st choice of 75% of NCS singers. Ryan Turner was also the clear 1st Choice of all sections of the chorus: Altos -79%; Sopranos -71%; Tenors/Basses -75%.

Interview Results

A majority of the Search Committee rated Ryan Turner as “Excellent” in his responses to the areas explored in the interview process. Leadership; Program Planning; Board Relationships; Vision for NCS; Connections to Youth; Resource Connections; Communication Skills; Ability to Lead NCS through Transition/Change; and Longevity –Probability of staying with NCS 5 years or more.

While the Candidate Rehearsal provided insight into Ryan’s skills in working with a chorus, the interview process also provided insights about how Ryan might bring new energy and commitment to representing NCS in the community.

Interview Excerpt:

I think the Music Director is the ambassador to the community. So much as it relates to being in the community and getting financial support and cultivating relationships. There should be a face of the organization that is meeting people. I want to get to know more people in the community and see what the current media presence is and how we can do more to let people know about who we are.

References

Ryan Turner’s references were highly credible professionals who had known him in varied aspects of his career. His references were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic in their comments and recommendations that he would be an outstanding choice and excellent match for the Newburyport Choral Society.

Summary: Across all of the areas examined in the process of choosing a new Music Director of the Newburyport Choral Society, the evidence overwhelmingly supported the selection of Ryan Turner.