1992: Performs at White House for First Lady Hillary R. Clinton

1994: Launch second chorus division

1996: First orchestral appearance

1999: Carnegie Hall debut

2000: North American Premiere of Philip Glass’s Symphony No. 5

2001: First world premiere of an original commission


2002: Ribbon-cutting at new headquarters in Cobble Hill

2003: Records Philip Glass’s soundtrack for the film Undertow

2004: Performs with Elton John at Radio City Music Hall

2005: Wins a Grammy® Award

2006: Performs with Elton John at Radio City Music Hall

2007: Performs with New York Philharmonic

2008: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2009: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2010: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2011: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

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2013: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

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2015: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2016: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2017: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2018: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2019: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2020: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2021: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2022: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2023: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2024: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

2025: Performs with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall

Its Motion Keeps
Commissioned by Brooklyn Youth Chorus, composed by Caroline Shaw
premiered at Carnegie Hall on November 17, 2013

Crossing Boundaries Through Sound
Brooklyn Youth Chorus
25th Anniversary Campaign
In 1992, Founding Artistic Director Dianne Berkun Menaker heard an internationally-renowned youth chorus at Carnegie Hall and fell in love with the distinctive sound. An idea formed: to create an exceptional vocal music training and performance program accessible to children across New York City. Thus was born Brooklyn Youth Chorus, launched with a press conference at Borough Hall that attracted a diverse founding group of 47 choristers from across the borough, drawn together by their desire to sing, and enrolled without regard to financial circumstances.

In the 25 years since then, Brooklyn Youth Chorus has far exceeded its founding promise, teaching thousands of young New Yorkers to reach the highest levels of artistic and musical achievement. The Chorus now serves nearly 700 children in its after-school program and growing network of public school partnerships. With an emphasis on commissioning and producing new works, performed by our Grammy® Award winning ensembles, the Chorus consistently breaks new ground and redefines expectations of choral music performance.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus’s twin values of access and excellence have guided our program from the start, providing musical training of the highest caliber and enrolling all choristers regardless of financial situations. This approach has enabled us to achieve our vision of “Crossing Boundaries Through Sound” — changing young lives through the study and practice of music, reaching beyond boundaries of race and class, fostering a spirit of possibility, and exceeding expectations for artistry and excellence.

As Brooklyn Youth Chorus celebrates its 25th Anniversary, we seek to expand our base of support to ensure our continued development in line with our founding values. With our 25th Anniversary Campaign, we will secure our future and fully realize our mission by strengthening our institutional and artistic core and ensuring that the exceptional opportunities we provide remain accessible to the young people of New York City.

“Brooklyn Youth Chorus is mentoring some of the maestros of tomorrow.”
— Philip Glass
With a distinctive sound and an incredibly versatile range and repertoire, Brooklyn Youth Chorus offers students a unique educational and artistic experience. From our youngest preparatory divisions to our pre-professional teens, participants build music literacy skills and healthy vocal technique with our founder’s trademarked Cross-Choral Training® program.

Lives have been transformed through many years of this rigorous pedagogy, through performances with the greatest musicians of our time on world-class stages, and through the shared joy of making music in a diverse community of peers.
Arts education leads directly to academic and personal achievement. Study after study shows that arts-engaged students are more motivated, have better social skills and perform better academically than their peers — exhibiting stronger problem-solving skills and creative thinking than children without access to arts education. Moreover, low-income students who have intensive arts experiences in high school are three times more likely than other students to enroll in college.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus brings NYC children a robust music program that leads to transformative artistic and personal development. Brooklyn Youth Chorus’s program requires discipline and rigor. From learning basic solfege to the most complex scores, our students are challenged to perform and achieve, and are nurtured as musicians and artists. With our team of highly skilled conductors, we inspire students to pursue the highest standards and attain a high level of cognitive, artistic, social, and personal development.

In the past four years, 100% of Brooklyn Youth Chorus graduates have been admitted four-year colleges. Brooklyn Youth Chorus helps level the playing field for economically disadvantaged students. By enabling them to build an understanding of themselves as leaders while offering a program that supports future artistic, academic, and professional endeavors, and builds 21st century workforce skills, the Chorus empowers them to transcend their circumstances.

1 NEA. The Arts and Achievement in At Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies, March 2012

“Brooklyn Youth Chorus is a place where young singers find their voice and worth. With the support of the Chorus, I was able to pursue my love of music and get my degree in music education.” — Maryam, founding chorister
Brooklyn Youth Chorus is at the forefront of the youth chorus movement, having pioneered new frontiers in music education and choral performances.

The Chorus’s genre-crossing creations have defied expectations for a youth chorus, placed accomplished young voices on stage as artistic peers with Pulitzer Prize-winning composers and popular music innovators, and created a repertoire that provides our singers with music that is fresh and relevant, amplifying their bright talents.

Through collaborations with emerging and established living composers, our choristers experience what it is like to be artistic innovators, exploring areas of complexity beyond what has been written for conventional children’s choruses and performing in professional settings alongside world-class musicians and ensembles.

"Brooklyn Youth Chorus, a superb ensemble of bright singers, consistently demonstrates a polish and commitment well beyond its years when presenting contemporary work."
— The New York Times
At Brooklyn Youth Chorus, young people of all backgrounds study side-by-side, perform as equals, and are artistically interdependent and co-responsible.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus welcomes all students who have the desire and commitment to participate, regardless of ability to pay. Over 35% of our choristers come from extremely low, very low, or low-income households.

Our students reflect the racial and socioeconomic diversity of New York City. According to a 2015 survey, 58% of our students were non-white, including 30% African-American, 13% Asian-American, 13% Hispanic, and 2% other. Choristers hail from all five boroughs. Our choristers represent 71 NYC zip codes and attend over 120 public and independent schools.

“When children sing together, they can live together. When our children sing together, it turns the question mark of uncertainty into an exclamation point: We are going to be all right!”
— Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams
On average, tuition covers only 27% of our program costs. We strive to keep tuition low so as to never deter broad access to our program.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus has never turned away a child because of financial circumstances. Scholarships and financial aid ensure that our excellent educational and artistic programming is accessible to those who stand to benefit the most from it.

Currently, 40% of our choristers are on scholarship and the demand for financial assistance grows every year. During the past five years, we have almost tripled the amount of aid we award from $110,000 in 2012 to over $310,000 in 2017:

Additionally, demand for our rigorous free in-school and after-school programs is high and requires funding. Whether in the classrooms or in community centers across the city, students in underserved neighborhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Red Hook, Sunset Park, and East Flatbush are able to enjoy the benefits of Brooklyn Youth Chorus closer to home.

“So many low-income young people have never even had the opportunity to get close to a piano. Think about what music can do in these young people’s lives. It opens doors of opportunity. Brooklyn Youth Chorus exemplifies what arts and music education is about—investing in our youth.”

— Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez
With our 25th Anniversary Campaign, we seek to ignite the achievements of our next quarter century, building long-term support for our vision of creating equitable opportunities for New York City youth and strengthening our artistic core. We seek to raise $3,000,000 to achieve these goals, channeled into three critical areas.

I- INVESTING IN YOUTH
Charles J. and Irene F. Hamm Scholarship Fund
An endowed fund for scholarships as we increase our reach to low-income communities
Fundraising goal: $2,000,000

II- TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH THE CREATION OF NEW MUSIC
New Creations Fund
To commission bold new music and productions that further our creative vision
Fundraising goal: $600,000

III- BUILDING OUR FUTURE
Organizational Development Fund
For critical investments in our staff and infrastructure
Fundraising goal: $400,000

“The future of this organization relies on our ability to underwrite scholarships and productions to ensure the Chorus continues to create greatness for our children—not only by training them, but by allowing them to perform and present to you their humanism, their talent, and their love of giving and making music.”
— Charles J. Hamm
CHARLES J. AND IRENE F. HAMM SCHOLARSHIP FUND
Fundraising Goal - $2,000,000

The Charles J. and Irene F. Hamm Scholarship Fund is an endowment fund that will help answer the growing demand for financial assistance, providing a dependable source of revenue in perpetuity to support financial aid for our core program and music electives.

With the Fund, the Chorus will play an ever more active role in the Brooklyn community, enabling young people to unlock their potential through music and engaging diverse communities in excellent music education.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus recognizes the full scope of the need for financial assistance among low-income choristers. To that end, this fund will offer multiyear support for private lessons to choristers who show exceptional promise and help provide uniforms, travel subsidy, and support for tour expenses, removing obstacles to participation for many families.

“A teacher who heard me singing suggested I audition for Brooklyn Youth Chorus and that audition changed my life. Music became my survival, but Brooklyn Youth Chorus became my savior. My story could have been so different if I wasn’t blessed to be a part of this organization. I could have been another statistic in the NY courts system.”

— Rahiem, Brooklyn Youth Chorus alumnus ’15
NEW CREATIONS FUND
Fundraising Goal: $600,000

The New Creations Fund will allow Brooklyn Youth Chorus to launch a series of large-scale productions that shape our future and enhance our reputation as a commissioner and producer of innovative new works.

The Fund will be used for special projects spread over a 5-year period, allowing the Chorus to commission, record, and tour new works and productions, ensuring that our choristers have access to the transformative experience of working directly with living artists and composers, performing on the world’s stage, and touring and recording these new works in professional settings.

“I don’t think there is anything better than working with a living composer. It expands our horizons and training. We learn how to be professional on a completely different level—it becomes our responsibility to bring life to these composer's pieces and translate their thoughts and the music into sounds that everyone can understand. It’s a great responsibility that I take very seriously.”

— Sarah, Concert Ensemble, Class of ’17
Building Our Future

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND
Fundraising Goal: $400,000

As the demand for our program and services continues to grow season after season, we must ensure that our infrastructure can support our expansion.

An Organizational Development Fund will build our board reserve and support pivotal investments in human and technological capital and build capacity through staff recruitment and succession training, upgrades in expertise and technology, critical repairs to our building, and expanded artistic and educational programming in underserved communities.

“I personally felt that this program is a work of love and commitment to the personal growth of these young people.”
— Panelist, National Endowment for the Arts
In its first 25 years, Brooklyn Youth Chorus has grown steadily. As we approach our next phase, we must ensure our growth is sustainable and continues to honor our founding values of excellence and access.

The success of our 25th Anniversary Campaign is paramount. The Endowment Fund for Scholarships is long overdue and critical to ensure our rigorous and transformative training remains accessible to children across the city. The New Creations Fund will allow us to create unique artistic opportunities that will define our future and empower our students to dream big. And, the Organizational Development Fund will provide the resources and infrastructure to embrace our growth and continue to offer the highest level of service to the children of New York City.

Please join us in this extraordinary pursuit. Your gift will ignite the achievements of our next quarter century and ensure that our transformative program remains accessible to a growing and increasingly diverse spectrum of New York City children.
25th Anniversary Campaign Committee
Charles J. Hamm, Honorary Chair
Kenneth Adams and M. Salomé Galib, Campaign Co-Chairs
Dianne Berkun Menaker, Founder & Artistic Director

Special thanks to the following visionaries for their transformative commitment to the campaign: Jacqueline and Joseph Aguanno, Bob and Joan Catell, J. Barclay Collins, Marie DeRosa and Richard McNeil, Gail Erickson, Judith R. and Alan H. Fishman, Diane and Adam E. Max, Jennifer Sage and Nicolas Graber, the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, David and Jane Walentas, Dick Yancey, and Charles J. and Irene F. Hamm who have championed our vision from the start.

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Scan this QR code with your phone to listen to its Motion Keeps, commissioned by Brooklyn Youth Chorus, composed by Caroline Shaw premiered at Carnegie Hall on November 17, 2013

2006: Performs a weeklong Cross-Choral Training® Workshop at NYU
2009: Launches Men’s Ensemble
2011: Creates Neighborhood Expansion Program
2012: Co-presents Brooklyn Village
2013: Adds a program in Red Hook
2014: Premieres Black Mountain Songs at BAM’s Next Wave Festival
2015: European premiere of Black Mountain Songs at London’s The Barbican
2016: Black Mountain Songs premiere at Muziekgebouw Eindhoven in The Netherlands
2017: 25th Anniversary and Silent Voices premiere at BAM

2006: Performs Berlin with Lou Reed
2010: Launches Junior Ensemble
2011: Presents Tell the Way
2012: Performs with Barbra Streisand at Barclays Center
2013: Performs in the U.S. premiere of Joan of Arc at the Stake
2015: Men’s Ensemble sings for President Obama
2016: First chorus to be WQXR’s Artist-in-Residence