

## Kinnara Ensemble: A Project-Based Choir

# TEACHER NOTES

### Learning Objectives

- Summarize the idea of a project-based model for an arts organization.
- Articulate the benefits and limitations of sourcing local and national talent.
- Recognize administrative choices for improving the artistic product.
- Develop strategies or models for stabilizing an arts organization's public funding.

### Topics For Discussion

#### Project-Based Model

The case concerns the structure and activities of Kinnara Ensemble, a medium-size professional choir of around 32 voices, whose mission is “to engage the public in exemplary choral experiences that speak to the modern soul.” Led by J.D. Burnett, Kinnara began as a local cohort of alumni from Westminster Choir College, but has since transformed into a group drawing on a wider and more varied network of singers. As concert series and recordings became “project-based” arrangements, members’ volunteer status has steadily developed into paid choir positions.

- Ask students to define the “project-based” model, as they understand it. What are its key qualities? Are students aware of other musical arts organizations that function similarly?
- Kinnara’s experiment with project-based work had an effect on the makeup of the chamber choir. With each program and roster independently conceived *ad hoc*, the director could determine exactly which singers—and how many—would be ideal for each project undertaking. The case highlights how this can be a “dream scenario” for a director. Project-based organizations allow the director to tailor each program to its specific vocal needs, rather than be hamstrung with an equally balanced voice parts, which may not reflect the program complexion.
  - ♦ Discuss the merits of the *ad hoc* ensemble (like a revolving door of artistic personnel) versus an unchanging (or slowly changing) one.
  - ♦ What are some unintended consequences of drastic shifts to a roster to suit the needs of a program or other undertaking?