



## St. Olaf Choir Fact Sheet

- The St. Olaf Choir, founded in 1912, has been singing for capacity audiences in major venues across America, and around the globe for more than 100 years, sharing the finest sacred choral repertoire, inspiring people of all faiths, garnering immense critical acclaim, and setting new standards for choral excellence.
- Dr. Anton Armstrong is celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> year as conductor of the St. Olaf Choir, only the fourth to lead the ensemble during its 108-year history. In addition to his role as a professor of music at St. Olaf College, he is in demand in the international choral scene as a guest conductor and lecturer. Like his three predecessors, Armstrong carries forward the international reputation of the St. Olaf Choir, an ensemble that is rooted in St. Olaf College's tradition of faith and commitment to a global perspective.
- In June 2019, the St. Olaf Choir and the St. Olaf Orchestra combined forces in Norway in June 2019 and shared the stage during four joint concerts in Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, and in Oslo where King Harald V of Norway attended at the Oslo Opera House.
- The St. Olaf Choir is internationally renowned for a unique combination of superior choral singing and the presentation of challenging choral programming with a vast repertoire encompassing the entire history of Western music, from Renaissance polyphony to new music. The St. Olaf Choir transcended America's limited early 20<sup>th</sup> Century choral tradition with the introduction of a cappella singing of the highest level, creating a new model for the widespread choral growth that followed.
- The 75-voice St. Olaf Choir is the premier choral ensemble of St. Olaf College from Northfield, Minnesota. St. Olaf College is a four-year, co-educational liberal arts college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with students from across the United States, as well as from 75 countries. St. Olaf College is recognized worldwide for the exceptional breadth and depth of its music program.
- St. Olaf Choir members are full-time, undergraduate students. Their commitment to the St. Olaf Choir involves rehearsing five days a week in addition to completing a full schedule of academic and musical studies.
- The St. Olaf Choir is perhaps best known for its annual performances in the St. Olaf Christmas Festival, one of the oldest Christmas musical celebrations in the United States. Aired on national and international radio and television for nearly 40 years, the St. Olaf Christmas Festival achieved another major milestone when *Christmas at St. Olaf: Where Peace and Love and Hope Abide* was simulcast to more than 180 movie theaters across the nation on December 2, 2007. The PBS premiere of the one-hour highlights program produced by Twin Cities Public Television aired on Wednesday, December 19, 2007, and reached 2.5 million people, according to Nielsen Media Research. *The 100<sup>th</sup> St. Olaf Christmas Festival Rejoice, Give Thanks, and Sing* was simulcast to 372 movie theaters across America on Dec. 4, 2011. In March 2017, The St. Olaf Christmas Festival was featured by invitation in two major performances at the National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association at Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis, MN.

- On Dec. 23, 2013, PBS premiered *Christmas in Norway with the St. Olaf Choir*, which was filmed at the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway in June 2013, and won two regional Emmy® Awards in 2014.
- The St. Olaf Choir's current discography features 28 discs. All recordings are available through St. Olaf Records at [stolafrecords.com](http://stolafrecords.com).
- Extraordinary sales of the first volume of *Great Hymns of Faith* recording surpassed 270,000, and in honor of two past Memorial Days (2003 and 2004), St. Olaf College donated more than 4,000 copies of the first two Great Hymns volumes to the U.S. military chaplaincy for worship services among troops in Iraq and around the globe.
- In 2005 the St. Olaf Choir was invited to perform at the White House on May 5 for President George W. Bush, First Lady Laura Bush and guests to commemorate The National Day of Prayer.
- Armstrong and the St. Olaf Choir performed in the final concerts of the 2005 National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) in Los Angeles, which included singing at the Walt Disney Concert Hall and sharing the stage with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. The next day the ensemble flew across the country and sang in an acclaimed performance at New York City's Carnegie Hall, where the St. Olaf Choir has performed 11 times in its history.
- The St. Olaf Choir has also performed at prestigious festivals around the world, including the Seoul Olympic Arts Festival, the Strasbourg and Bergen Music Festivals, and the closing concert of the Sixth World Symposium on Choral Music in Minneapolis. The ensemble has performed at the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Conference and, together with the St. Olaf Band and St. Olaf Orchestra, presented the highly lauded opening gala concert of the 59th Music Educators National Conference.
- Celebrating both the Centennial of Norway's 100 years of independence from Sweden as well as 100 years of friendship and historical legacy between St. Olaf College and Norway in June 2005, the St. Olaf Choir with the St. Olaf Orchestra and the St. Olaf Band took an unprecedented three-week tour to Norway performing jointly in Oslo, Bergen, Molde and Trondheim, with each ensemble presenting additional concerts throughout the country.
- The St. Olaf Choir continues to attract capacity audiences at top venues around the country including Carnegie Hall, Philadelphia's Verizon Hall, the Kennedy Center, Cleveland's Severance Hall, Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, and the Orchestra Halls of both Chicago and Minneapolis.
- Founded in 1912 by distinguished Norwegian musician F. Melius Christiansen, the St. Olaf Choir is credited with contributing to the transformation of American choral music. Founding director F. Melius Christiansen was the first of only four conductors of the St. Olaf Choir. He was succeeded by his son, Olaf Christiansen, in 1943; Kenneth Jennings in 1968; and current conductor Anton Armstrong in 1990.
- In January 2006, Baylor University selected Anton Armstrong from a field of 118 distinguished nominees to receive the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching. The award is designed to honor great teachers, to stimulate discussion in the academy about the value of teaching, and to encourage departments and institutions to value their own great teachers.