**Round Table #1**

**Children’s Choirs**

**July 23rd, 2020**

Panelists:

Diana Clark, *Artistic Director - Coastal Sound /* Sarona Mynhardt, *Artistic Director - In Spirito /*

Fiona Blackburn, *Artistic Director - BC Girls’ Choir /* Nina Horvath, *Executive Director - Vancouver Bach Choirs*

Facilitator: Brigid Coult, *Project Manager & Administrative Assistant – BC Choral Federation*

Diana Clark acknowledged that we all have a lot of questions right now and hoped that the following documents, *“Guidance for Faith-based Choirs in BC”* put out by the BC CDC and *“Let’s Sing Safely”* created by herself along with Carrie Tennant, could help answer some of those questions. Using information collated from BC Centre for Disease Control, BC Ministry of Health, Worksafe BC, BC Return to Sport and current research *“Let’s Sing Safely”* gives guidelines for planning to restart in-person choral singing.

Diana led us through a quick tour of the document, touching on all of the important aspects.

Consider liability – BCCF is beginning a campaign to have a Ministerial Order protecting arts organizations who follow procedural guidelines (there’s already a similar order for sports organizations)

Keep rehearsal periods brief.

PPC – masks are good; face-shields alone are not sufficient

BC Girls’ Choir – varied scenarios

Challenges with outdoor singing

Uncertain of return rate, BC Girls’ Choir plans to rehearse in a gymnasium with 15-18 grades 2/3; 20-25 grades 4-7; and 20-25 teenagers. No grade 1.

Sarona: emotional needs and vulnerability of children,, be calm and keep our musical communities together. By shifting focus from performance to a meaningful musical experience we can still teach important values. A hybrid model allows access to those children who might have underlying medical conditions. Instead of long-term planning, opt for modular teaching in smaller segments, taking the opportunity to teach things like sight-singing, spoken chorus, rap, rhythm, body percussion, and listening to music.

Heidi Epp shared the successes she’s had on Zoom with Kodaly, body percussion, solfege, and humming songs. She recommended the app “Musico” as being a useful teaching tool with promising technology.

Diana Clark referenced the aerosol simulator tool named in the “Let’s Sing Safely” document as useful for formulating the square footage required per child.

“Virtual Choir” experience – not choral, but a final product

Sarona Mynhardt encouraged us all to be enthusiastic about the online learning and to create a sense of “fear of missing out” .

In an effort to keep kids accustomed to singing with the screen, Diana Clark has continued with Tuesday evening “Campfire Sing-alongs” throughout the summer. In the fall, 2 hour rehearsal will be 1 hour, 90 minutes will be 50. Zoom rehearsals will be simple and use things like rounds, a looper (so they can do things in parts), and Jam Board in Google in an effort to keep it fun and engaging.

The importance of the social benefits of these online activities can’t be understated. Nina Horvath has found that even if kids don’t like the medium, they will still participate just to see their friends. Some attrition is inevitable.

Brigid Coult suggested that usual expectations around attendance should not apply now as some kids are really struggling. We should communicate with families to learn about their online environment and help them to find the best solution for focussed engagement.

As we are all in this together, across the world, Sarona Mynhardt encouraged us to remember that we will get through it, together.

Heidi Epp advocated connecting with directors around the globe and inviting them to your online rehearsal to share their experience and lead a warm-up.