**Round Table #5**

**Senior Choirs**

**August 20th , 2020**

*[notes]*

Panelists:

Liana Savard, *Director Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir*

Gale Lindenthaler, *Director Kent Street Choristers*

Phyllis Papineau, *Director Peachland Variety Singers*

Nicholas Kelly, *Director Penticton Tune-Agers*

Facilitator: Janette Walker, *Past President and Seniors Portfolio Chair – BC Choral Federation*

JW: Welcome, introductions, introductions, acknowledgements, discussion of highlights from last round table: importance of building community and maintaining safety with online rehearsals

Christine Chepyha: Zoom etiquette

JW: introduction of BCCF Board Members present: Willi Zwozdesky and Paul Cummings

Brigid Coult: exhaled moisture from our breath, lungs, throats, and mouths can spread to others around us. Two types of mediums are dangerous for transmission: large droplets that fall to the floor within 2 metres and tiny droplets that float and can drift for some time. Viral load of aerosols is unknown as is the amount it takes to cause infection. Seniors more liable to become sick but all age-ranges affected. People with underlying health conditions are more at risk. We all have to assess our own risk but boards and directors have the responsibility for their singers. Most recent research from Colorado suggests for those wishing to sing in person:

* you should all mask – and make sure it’s well-fitting (mention the Singers Mask)
* CDC recommends at least 6’ distance all round (8’ is better) – whether inside or outside
* no more than 30 minutes of rehearsal before you leave the room for a complete room air change
* outdoors is best; failing that HEPA filtration or determined ACH rates (Air Change per Hour)
* hygiene – sanitizing, not sharing music, etc

older venues likely to have insufficient ACH. Resources on the BCCF page include NCCEH and BC CDC statements as well as the “Let’s Sing” document compiled by Diana Clark and Carrie Tenant which covers:

1) Processes to return to in-person singing safely;

2) Measures to keep people safe to avoid further outbreaks; and

3) A plan in the event that a case or an outbreak should occur

If we don’t feel ok to rehearse in person, we have to decide whether we meet online or cease to meet. Community factors prominently for most choirs and meeting online is one way to retain this aspect.

Richmond Chorus will mostly be meeting online, focusing on journey, not destination. Will work on singing technique, reading skills, unison with some part repertoire, watch parties/discussions and possibly a Virtual Choir project. In person meeting will depend on venue, ways to livestream to remaining people at home, employing full mitigating protocols etc. Goal is to come out of Covid period as bonded choir that is supportive of each other.

PP: Peachland disappointed when Covid forced cancellation of concerts. Further bad news struck when accompanist, treasurer, and secretary all moving – each having lost their spouses in previous year. Had a June picnic with 22 members to say farewell. Close-knit group as most have bonded over having lost a spouse. A replacement accompanist seemed to fall into place. Over the summer kept in touch through emails and phone calls. New accompanist fell through. Parameters of job make it difficult to find accompanist. September 7 will have another picnic. Recently awarded a civic award from municipality for lifetime achievement award for community service. Membership is very hesitant to sign up for Zoom rehearsals. So important to keep together because choir is family.

GL: When Covid shut things down the first priority was to keep the group together. 6 or 7 without email. Started a newsletter with member input that came out once a week on rehearsal day. First one was 8 pages. Members can write about anything they want to write about. “Sing Out Kent Street Choristers” became the name. Wide variety of topics. It became 12 pages. By 8 weeks of doing this there were 20 pages of contributions. The point of this was to stay together. We have assembled a copy of all newsletters and put in a binder for archives. Another project was to assemble a compilation of what song people happened to be singing on a given day. Members were encouraged to write about the song. These thoughts and submissions were all put together, a verse for each song was included and emailed out to all members with the instruction to sing at least one verse of each song that was mentioned. No choir for this fall as Zoom seems too much of a challenge. But we will find other ways to stay together.

NK: Felt unprepared for Covid and Tune-Agers was about to celebrate their 50th anniversary. It’s ok to feel like you don’t know what you’re doing but don’t be afraid to ask for help. Throughout spring we did Zoom sessions just to stay connected. Did some online sectionals for the people who felt like they wanted to keep singing. Attendance was really good. Some pressure from members to do a Virtual Choir video. After an experimental project we realized this was manageable and so plan to do a larger project in the fall. Going ahead with online rehearsals only for the fall. Hoping to choose two or three pieces for virtual choir videos. Participation is optional for videos. Some members found recording themselves too challenging. Unearthed hidden resources within group when finding that one member had connections to a former Hollywood videographer. High advocate surveying your members for other such resources. Don’t be afraid to ask. Also don’t be afraid to ask colleagues for help.

LS: Vancouver Orpheus has people 50 – 90 yrs old. Missed only one week in March before getting on Zoom. Recruited a tech team to help with Zoom. Before first rehearsal each section met for 30 minutes. The remainder of the spring we tried different techniques. Surveyed membership on how they’d like to proceed forward after trying a number of different things over the summer. 36 of 43 are committed to online season. With the looming second wave and the desire to stick together decision was made to be entirely online this fall. Will re-assess in November for the remainder of the season. I’ve created a possible general template for a Zoom rehearsal:

7:00 – 7:30 – arrival time, meet and greet

7:30-9:30 rehearsal

15 mins – Welcome, warm-up, physical, vocal (pre-record then live accompanist while spotlighting director)

\*\*20 mins – Zoom techniques (random breakout rooms and someone from each group lists what they accomplished, after rehearsal email results to one choir member)

10 mins solfa – scale, tonic triad, follow hand signs, sing familiar tunes, sometimes sing/sometimes silent, sing on oo and singers sing (muted) and show their answer, relate to repertoire when possible, accompanist play and director show/sing answer

10 mins Rhythm (accompanist screen share rhythms and points with spotlight)

Break – 10 mins – open to chat or take break

20 mins introduce new piece (talk about piece, history, relevance, goals, sing, ask for volunteer to try call and response)

15 mins Current, old repertoire unison (\*\*member share story about it, explain musical goals, sing along with accompanist then screen share of a choir)

5 mins discuss what we heard

15 mins 2 Sectionals (accompanist/director lead individual parts by singing one part and accompanying, then sing one & play the other, save only playing their parts until weeks into the fall)

10 mins IPA (game of saying words) 2 volunteers (each representing a section)

* relate to repertoire when possible
* [lup] [mit] [se] [fla:i]

20 mins – member led rehearsals (accompanist and director drop in to help)

Breakout Options (last 30-40 mins of rehearsal):

2 week option (Sept): 30 mins MuseScore & Garage Band – prep for virtual recordings, fix mistakes

4 week option (Oct): 30 mins aural skills (director) & Theory lessons (accompanist)

5 week option (Nov): 20 mins voice lesson in pairs (director) & piano lessons in pairs (accompanist) – using choir repertoire

Special events

30 min Beer choir (once in September) during rehearsal

Guest clinician & vocalist(s)

One Virtual recording in the fall

Sing-along caroling with families/friends (sign-up to lead a piece, may prerecord audio/video a cappella app)

* During rehearsal or a different time
* Could be an opportunity to encourage donations for participation
* Could share the virtual video at this event (maybe exclusive for those who attend)

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS:**

LS: One member who is working within a bubble singing together. They have that to offer to their zoom rehearsals. Working on being physically distanced. Morna’s choir will be collaborating with another choir in their sessions. Barb has had picnics outside with choir. Ways to get guest clinicians in and collaborate with others if not affordable

AC: all of these choirs are keeping in good contact with one another. One choir sending choral YouTubes to each other. Some have tried Zoom rehearsals with hopes of hybrid model in the fall. Looking into their venue’s air exchange rates. Concern about face shields and wondering if they are useful? Welsh Men’s Choir has been very active trying out lots of different things – outdoors in parking lots with 12 people, live.

NK: everyone had been doing something online, social, rehearsal, virtual choir. How do we keep the other half engaged. How to keep membership up. None are going forward in bubbles but are encouraging to see all the great progress with Zoom.

BC: a couple of people rehearsing in small groups. Questions regarding ventilation. People want to stay together, alive, and vibrant. Mustn’t give up.