

Rob's Review

St Edmundsbury Male Voice Choir
Registered Charity No. 1028123
Patron: The Rt. Hon The Earl of Iveagh
President: Paul Deane
Vice Presidents: John Balaam and Dr John Meers
Chairman: Rob Bream



St Edmundsbury
Male Voice Choir

2020

Issue No. 11

(17 August)

Under lockdown Together with the 56 million other residents of England I do my best to understand what I am actually allowed to do under lockdown because it seems to change every day, as it has today (15 August). To be fair it's a difficult call; it's a unique situation.

The committee have met twice recently in my garden under lockdown rules, to try and make some progress on a plan for a post Covid or semi Covid-free situation. All proposals will be subject to the government regulations in place at the time. Risk assessments will be carried out for each situation by Ian Cooper together with Dan Moores (External advisor).
Chairman Rob



In memory of James Recknell, Jim Beardsmore and Doug Wayman who died in the last few months. We send our sympathies and condolences to their families.

Future concerts and events

The word 'cancelled' has been much used in recent months but personally I feel the word 'postponed' is far more optimistic.

Our concerts for 2020 have now all been postponed but Men2Sing in South Woodham Ferrers want us to go there next year. Mansfield and District MVC want to come to Bury St Edmunds. Our invitation to sing in Trinity College Chapel in Cambridge is still there, as is the request to sing at Ickworth church. Life is not all doom and gloom so keep on singing in the bath; one day you'll have a bigger audience than just your toothbrush! Ivor

Quiz

The choir is proposing to run a Zoom quiz during September and beyond if the support is there. There will be a small prize for the winner each week. Everyone is invited to take part. And you thought those copies of Encyclopaedia Britannica would never be used again! Ivor

Our last concert (7 March) before lockdown was at Great Barton; organised by baritone Ken Sawyer it raised £630 each for Pancreatic Cancer and Cystic Fibrosis charities. Ken, pictured, sitting under his prized hanging baskets, displays a large cheque and letter of thanks having now returned his nurse's uniform for the time being! Many thanks Ken, great job.



Sunday 13 September - Summer Barbecue

By kind invitation of Tim and Mark, Depden Care Farm, IP29 4BU. Full details to be confirmed but please note that under current guidelines, numbers are limited to 30 including Tim and Mark.

Vienna and Salzburg Tour 2021

Postponed from April this year, we now suggest going from **Saturday 29 May to Sunday 6 June**. Currently, working on tour details, travelling is now proposed by coach from Bury St Edmunds and on through the Channel Tunnel. The tour is extended by two days from the original plan, stopping in the Rhine valley on the outward and return journeys.

There will be refunds from the hotels for those who have cancelled from the 2020 trip but it will unfortunately take time.

Melody Music confirm that, should the 2021 tour have to be cancelled because Covid-19 is still around and we are prohibited from going, a refund for the trip will be made through Melody Music.

Dates for your Diary

W 19 August - Ivor's Socially-distanced Norfolk Walk and Picnic, Brancaster beach. (number restricted to 30)

Th 20 August - SEMVC AGM via Zoom

Su 13 September - Summer BBQ, Depden Care Farm, IP29 4BU. Details tbc. Be aware restricted numbers.

Su 27 September - Afternoon Concert in Ickworth Church, Ickworth Park, IP29 5QE (Postponed)

Sa 17 October - Concert with Men2Sing, William de Ferrers Centre, South Woodham Ferrers (Postponed)

Sa 7 November - Concert with Honington Military Wives Choir and Lift, The Apex, BSE (Postponed)

Sa 28 November - BSE Christmas Fayre. (Cancelled)

Th 17 December - Carols and Chips, BSE Rugby Club ???
2021

Sa 25 September - Concert with Mansfield and District MVC, St John's Church, BSE, IP33 3QW. (Tbc)

Su 5 December - Concert at Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ, with Lauren Hoskins.

**Remember the Annual General Meeting via Zoom
Thursday 20 August at 7.30 pm**

Important message from Musical Director Mark

If you have read my recent annual report to the choir, you will know that both the Music Team and Committee have been looking at ways that we can maintain a much-needed presence to our followers and, arguably more importantly, ourselves as members of the choir family. Personally, I have found lockdown difficult and I know that I am not alone in feeling this. The theme of my report was *'What Would I Do Without My Music'* and continuing on those lines I'd like to outline some of the ideas that the Music Team and Committee are currently working on, particularly as some of our virtual projects start this week.

Please do consider each of our plans carefully, particularly the Apex and the Outdoor Virtual Choir projects venture and pass your feedback to Rob as soon as possible. In relation to these two projects, it is crucial that we ascertain the viability of the plans in terms of attendance before we take the next steps. So please let Rob know as soon as you feel able; you can contact Rob via email robbream@btinternet.com.

THE APEX PROPOSAL

This, in its current form, is a proposal only, aimed at gauging the current feeling of the choir. Its goal is to begin to move the choir back to a rehearsal system from September, albeit in a much reduced and socially distanced form. In light of most Apex events having been cancelled, I have approached the venue and asked for their support to use a building large enough for a small group of singers to rehearse with an adequate amount of social distance and safety guidelines in place.

To outline the plan, our average rehearsal attendance is 60, so the strategy is to halve that number to form two smaller choirs of no more than 30 who rehearse on a two-week rotation system i.e. Choir A on one Thursday and Choir B the following Thursday, rotating throughout the term.

- Members wishing to take part in the scheme would need to sign up beforehand.
- Members attempting to attend the sessions without signing up would not be allowed entry.
- Individual members would be given dedicated times of arrival which would be staggered and strictly adhered to, to prevent large groups entering/moving through the building together.
- Music – either hard or electronic copies will not be allowed in the rehearsal apart from the Music Team.
- All chairs in the auditorium will be removed, apart from those in the upper and lower balconies where the choir will sit -
 - Baritones – front left balconies
 - First Tenors – rear left balconies
 - Second Tenors - rear right balconies
 - Bass – front right balconiesThis will allow at least 3 metres distance between each singer.

- Calvin and I will lead the rehearsal from the centre of the empty stage area.
- **ALL** participating members will agree to take part in the government's Track and Trace system and sign to that effect as they enter the building.
- Temperatures will be also be taken on entry to the building.
- Members will only be allowed to take part in the scheme after a declaration that they are, and have been, free from COVID symptoms for 14 days.
- Members will also not be allowed to participate in the scheme if they, or anybody within their family bubble, have had contact with a person who is known to have contracted the virus within the last 14 days.

So the next steps. As you can see, to begin to undertake such a scheme is going to take some logistical challenges; challenges for which we may not need to begin to plan. It is vital, before we begin to make unnecessary plans, that we get some idea if you feel you would like to participate in such a scheme at this early stage in the pandemic.

Please let Rob know, within the next few days, if you would like to be considered to take part in this small, staged return to singing. Even if you have strong feelings against the idea, please do email and let us know. The Committee are working for you and with your safety as its priority – without the necessary guidance in place the Committee will not proceed with this option.

OUTDOOR VIRTUAL CHOIR

The aim of this project is to create a full choir, audio-visual performance of *What Would I Do Without My Music*. The recording sessions will take place on one day, outdoors, in Rob's garden (St. Andrew's Street South, BSE). The outside area provides adequate social distancing and ventilation.

It is anticipated that -

- Each section would attend their allocated recording session which will last no more than an hour.
- Everyone will be required to wear choir 'blacks'.
- Each section will sing to a pre-recorded piano accompaniment.
- Each recording will be engineered by a professional sound engineer, a role that has been costed as part of the project's planning. The resulting four audio and video files will be mixed into one final presentation where the choir sings together.

Participants will be required to

- *understand that there will be no facilities for car parking at the recording venue.*
- *Choristers and/or Music Team **MUST NOT** attend if they have COVID-19 symptoms, they have been in contact with anyone with the disease in the last 14 days or they have been contacted by health officials from any **Test, Trace, Isolate (TTI)** system.*

- have their temperatures taken on entry to the recording venue
- sign up to the Government's Track and Trace system on entering the venue
- bring their own hand sanitiser and use it before and after the event
- stand three metres apart and not facing other choristers while singing
- agree not to bring music scores or tablets to the recording
- consider their own personal needs as neither refreshments nor toilets will be available at or during the recording session.

VIRTUAL CHOIR II

Thank you to all of those who took part in our first virtual choir performance of *When I Need A Friend*. A number of you who couldn't take part for various reasons have spoken to me since to say they wished they had. Our first performance has been watched by over 2,000 people and shared as far afield as Australia!

This week sees the launch of our second project '*Virtually One Day Like This*' – but before you give this one the 'Elbow' (see what I did there!?) just remember there are numerous members who have participated in the first one and can share their experiences and tell you how easy it was to complete and send back.

The instruction videos are still on our YouTube Channel **SEMVC Virtual Choir** so why not quell your growing excitement of waiting for your next backing track to arrive by watching the instruction videos and maybe having a chat with your fellow choristers who took part in Virtual Choir I.

SUFFOLK-WIDE VIRTUAL PROJECT

We have been invited by Chris Parsons (conductor of Thetford Singers, Newmarket Chamber Orchestra and Bury St Edmunds Friendly Orchestra) to take part in a virtual performance of *Jerusalem* with the above-mentioned ensembles. I have met with Chris to plan this joint venture and already both orchestras are busy recording their individual tracks for completion by the end of August.

During the first few days of September the orchestral track will be presented by both Chris and I and uploaded to our YouTube channel, as per our own virtual choir performances. You will then have a week to return your audio files to me which I will then edit and mix together with those files from the Thetford Singers, resulting in a mass orchestral and choral performance. You will only be required to provide an audio file as the number of participants prohibits the use of video - instead of video you will be asked to forward a photograph of yourself which will then form a photo montage of the massed choirs accompanied by various photographs of Suffolk during lockdown, provided by a local professional photographer who has agreed to take part in the

project.

Jerusalem was chosen for two reasons -

- it is a relatively easy sing and known to many
- the project's release will coincide with *Last Night of the Proms* season.

CONDUCTOR'S VIDEO DIARY

It has been suggested by members that I upload a weekly video diary to our YouTube channel concentrating on one piece of our repertoire per week. This 'vlog' will consist of some background to the piece, its composition, some of its peculiar musical challenges in performance and other general insights into the piece. This will range from some of our traditional pieces to those that are brand new to our repertoire.

With the video diary will be a piano accompaniment and score for each piece for your own personal use at home and a short video presentation on lyrics and how to learn them from our very own memory man, Nick. The idea is that the vlog sessions are fun and informative. These will start with a session concentrating on a brand-new piece in our repertoire – *Windmills of Your Mind*.

A NEW LEARNING PROJECT

You will know how successful Glen Warriner's arrangement of *The Look of Love* has turned out to be. It is a while now since Glen approached me to ask if he could look at attempting another arrangement – of course I said yes.

This new arrangement is slightly different in that Glen and I have worked collaboratively, and, during lockdown, *Windmills of Your Mind* has been knocking backwards and forwards between us like a tennis ball. Our 'Lennon and McCartney' relationship has brought forth something that we both feel is quite different and original. To celebrate its launch, *Windmills* will be the theme of my first 'vlog' this week – with special guest star Glen Warriner!

As with all of my video blogs, the score and piano accompaniment will be available to download from both our YouTube channel and the Members Area on the website.

Mark

Please send your reports and pictures to:-
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