

CHOIR REPORTS FOR EADCA MEETING: 4.9.21

<p>Bexhill Choral Society</p>	<p>After over a year restricted to Zoom rehearsals, which about half the choir attended, Bexhill Choral has been rehearsing weekly in person since June 23rd. We don't usually rehearse in July or August but felt it was worth doing so this year, after so long without rehearsals. This has been indoors in a large high-ceilinged hall with a stage and good ventilation, and space for 40 with Covid spacing. Because some people have been away on family visits, holidays etc each week, we have only had about 30-35 at each rehearsal, so this worked very well. We are still insisting on spacing, doors and windows open, and extra hygiene; until July 19th masks were worn throughout, but can now be removed when singing. The precautions have needed a bit more 'policing' over the past few weeks as people have started to relax and think things are going back to normal, despite rising cases.</p> <p>Initially we rehearsed for only an hour, but a couple of weeks ago we began rehearsing for one and a half hours, without a break, and this has been popular. People have really enjoyed rehearsing, and our conductor and accompanist are both delighted to be back in person. A few people continue to join via Zoom (one from France!) although over the past weeks more Zoomers have come back to live rehearsals, and we place the Zoom recordings on our YouTube channel. We managed to hold an in person/Zoom AGM last week, as well as a short rehearsal. It was agreed at this meeting that we'd start to charge subscriptions again from September, since we are now incurring costs again.</p> <p>We are rehearsing for a concert on 16th October: Fauré <i>Requiem</i>, Vivaldi <i>Credo</i> and Corrette <i>Laudate Dominum</i>, which is a setting of Vivaldi's 'Spring'. This is planned for St Barnabas church which is large (also draughty, so we hope well-ventilated!), and has chairs rather than pews, although how we manage layout and spacing for choir, orchestra and audience remains to be seen! We have lost a few members, who decided this was the time to give up, and some still don't feel ready/able to return, so we are down to around 40, although we have recruited a few new members and a few more people hope to return after October. As always, we have fewer in the lower voices, although fortunately one new member is a very good tenor. We have the usual Christmas concert planned for 11th December and hope our May 2020 concert at the De La Warr Pavilion may finally take place in May 2022!</p> <p>Jenny Meteyard</p>
<p>Concentus</p>	<p>We continued with zoom rehearsals until the end of May. After placing banners around the area earlier this year, we were pleased to welcome some new members. On 1st August around 35 members met for a picnic at Bates Green Farm and we were able to enjoy singing together after 16 months.</p> <p>Our full rehearsals start again in September in our new 'home' at Willingdon School, keeping to the recommended guidelines, and we will continue to use zoom for those who are not yet ready to return in person.</p>

	<p>We were invited to sing at the Seaford Mayor's Charity event this month and we will be singing with Paul Potts at the Royal Hippodrome Theatre in the charity concert for the Chestnut Tree Hospice. We will then look forward to our usual Christmas Concerts in Seaford on 11th December and in Eastbourne on 18th December.</p> <p>Sue Dickinson</p>
Downland Singers	<p>We have continued with Zoom sessions throughout the Spring and Summer on a fortnightly basis. The uptake was low but those who did join in felt the time was very well spent and enjoyed learning a variety of new pieces. The regular attendees were mainly people living alone who not only wanted to sing but also maintain social interaction with other members.</p> <p>Newsletters and phone calls have continued to be the main point of contact with members.</p> <p>We were able to hold an in-person AGM in July and it was encouraging that all but 2 members attended. Unfortunately, just 4 days prior to the meeting we unexpectedly received the Treasurer's resignation. Our chairman has worked hard over the summer to sort the finances and we have just received the news that another member has stepped up and taken over the role which is a great relief.</p> <p>Future plans are to hold a committee meeting at the beginning of September when arrangements will be made for the start of full choir rehearsals at the end of the month. Hopefully it is now a case of – onwards and upwards!</p> <p>Jennie Macfadyen</p>
Eastbourne Choral Society	<p>As for all choirs its has been a very strange time for which to write a report! Last term we continued with weekly Zoom sessions and finished for the summer in June. Over the year we had 26 Zoom sessions, singing a variety of choral music, which we enjoyed as far as Zoom goes. Over all there were about 38 choir members who came along, but apart from the Christmas Special, not all those attended at the same time. We all agreed though that John, our MD, had done a really good job of making the hour long "rehearsals" as interesting, informative and as much fun as possible.</p> <p>So now back to in person rehearsals. We ran a "Sing Mozart Requiem" afternoon on Saturday 21st August (postponed from 3rd July) at Trinity Church Willingdon. Our grateful thanks to Jenny for facilitating this, as our usual venue was not taking bookings until September. We had a wonderful time! Forty people signed up to come and forty people all turned up! Choir members were asked to arrive within a twenty minute period to avoid a crush at the entrance. They were met outside by our secretary who registered everyone in. Hand sanitiser was ready for them to use. Committee members showed people where each section was seated. The church is very easy to ventilate and, on that balmy afternoon, we could all feel a lovely breeze all of the time. I am advised that it is not permissible to ask individuals if they are vaccinated or have taken a test as this is storing medical information, which is not permitted</p>

	<p>under GDPR. When I sent details to choir, I did say that we assumed everyone has been fully vaccinated and please not to come if they felt at all unwell. I also told them that, as masks are no longer mandatory, it was their choice as to when to wear one and that I would not be wearing one when singing, but I would take a lateral flow test beforehand. Most people arrived with masks and others told me, voluntarily, that they had taken a test, but this was not noted down in any official way. We placed chairs about a metre apart, but people were permitted to sit closer to a singing friend if they wished. There was also space for people to sit further away if they wished. We are all adults!! We all faced forwards, not in our usual horse shoe shape formation. To avoid a loo queue at the break I suggested that people popped out as needed. Everyone seemed very relaxed and thrilled to be together again at all times. John was on excellent form and somehow managed to make our rendering of Mozart Requiem acceptable, even though we all thought our voices were rather “rusty!” Nick played the organ superbly, as always, and somehow it was a very moving experience. I was quite touched at the end of the afternoon when, having told the choir that all the furniture that we had used would need to be cleaned and we did have wipes there, I turned round to see literally everyone very industriously cleaning their chairs!! After all the challenges of the past months, it was a bit of a leap of faith, but in the end, so rewarding and uplifting. Thanks again to Jenny for her help and to Alistair for letting us use the church organ and for taking the time to meet up with Nick beforehand.</p> <p>Now onwards with Rutter Magnificat and part one of Messiah for a concert (hopefully) in November.</p> <p>Good luck everyone and I am sorry that I can't be at the meeting on 4th September.</p> <p>Liz Barker</p>
<p>Eastbourne Symphony Chorus</p>	<p>The ESO is essentially an orchestra which performs one choral concert a year (in May in 2022) hence our wish to be included in the EADCA for which thanks!</p> <p>John Thornley</p>
<p>Hailsham Choral</p>	<p>HCS has been slowly returning to some sort of ‘new’ normality and ended the year with two outdoor rehearsals in our Chair’s large garden. The weather was damp, but we had a wonderful time singing the songs we’d been learning online and seeing each other again. It reminded us why we enjoy singing in a choir!! Socialising is an important part in all this, so we also had a garden party in the Chair’s garden, which was lovely. We even raised some unexpected funds!</p> <p>We began planning for a return to in-person rehearsals in September, encouraged by the responses to an online survey. The Community hall, where we rehearse, is large and airy, and we worked together to create a risk assessment and mitigation plan. We will have had our first rehearsal on Thursday, 2 September.</p>

	<p>The choir had been invited to sing at the Hailsham Festival's Mayor's concert, which was planned for 11 September and would have given us two rehearsals, tight but doable. Unfortunately they moved the date of the concert and it is now taking place this afternoon! We feel a bit apprehensive, unsurprisingly, but decided we need to support this event, as we have done so in the past.</p> <p>We will be rehearsing Messiah for our 60th Anniversary concert, which will be in March 2022 and hope we will have enough singers to make it a joyful occasion! Alongside Messiah we will prepare for a Christmas concert at Hailsham Parish Church on 16 December.</p> <p>Milly Clark</p>
Heathfield Choral Society	<p>Following our well received outdoor performance of Mozart's Requiem in July, Heathfield Choral are planning to resume in-person rehearsals from September 6th. We will stay in our temporary location (Horam Village Hall) for the time being as this allows more spacing and better ventilation. We will not be requiring masks or temperature checks, but as well as keeping windows and doors open (while the weather allows! we will operate on whatever increased chair spacing the hall allows. We will sing from 7.30 to 9pm with only a short (seated) break to avoid clusters of people to start with, but we hope to return to a normal tea break at some point during the term. We are encouraging members to take lateral flow tests, but we cannot enforce this, and even suggesting it has caused some contention!</p> <p>We will be singing Messiah as it's popular with choir and audience alike, and hopefully will encourage lots of both to return. We plan to hold the concert in December, assuming no further restrictions are imposed!</p> <p>Chris Thompson</p>
Phoenix	<p>At Phoenix we were planning to get together for rehearsals from our usual date in early September. Along with ECS we have had some discussions with All Saints' over the summer about a 50% rent increase for the hall. Without any prior warning and after nearly ten years at the venue we were informed just two weeks before our start date that our rehearsal venue is no longer available on a Wednesday and that we are being moved into the church for rehearsals. There are all sorts of reasons why that does not suit us as a long term proposition so we have no choice but to start looking elsewhere. Needless to say the last week has been a very stressful time coupled with the start of the school term.</p> <p>We are planning to resume rehearsals for the Bach B Minor Mass – with a very good practice aid and some extra sectional rehearsals but are taking no decisions about performances yet. We'll see how the land lies, both with the membership (confidence and getting singing again) and with Covid. Planning for rehearsals is one thing but performances is quite another!</p> <p>Fiona Evans</p>

Seaford Choral Society

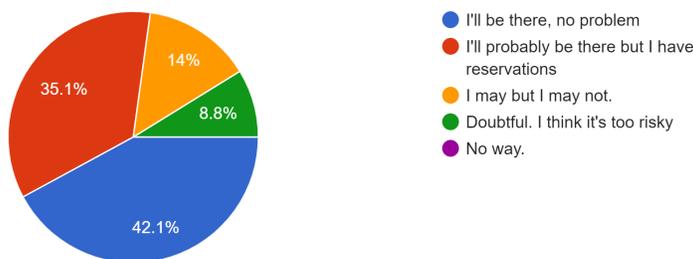
A core of members has Zoomed its way through the year. The jury is out on how useful it has been for singing but it has kept us going and together. The weekly Zoom link also provided an excuse for a regular news update. As a member of the local Patient Participation Group I have also used these as an opportunity to pass on the latest Covid vaccs updates.

Many members have continued to pay subs throughout and this has enabled us to continue paying the musicians.

It was good to meet up on the beach on a couple of occasions as a choir. We didn't sing but we did enjoy some Holy Cow ice cream. We also held our first live committee meeting in a garden. Some attended via Zoom.

In July we sent out a Google Forms survey to assess members' attitudes to returning.

How do you feel about returning to singing on 6th September?
57 responses



So we will be returning on 6 September. We decided to make the first rehearsal a concert. We had been rehearsing one of our old favourites, Vivaldi's Gloria so this will be our rousing start. No audience but who cares? Risk assessment is done and all mitigations worked out. We will try to Zoom rehearsals for those who are not yet ready to sing together. We are fortunate to have an excellent venue for rehearsals, at the local Baptist church. It allows excellent ventilation. We have warned members that coats and gloves will be needed later in the term.

We always have an Autumn concert at the end of November, which usually includes Christmas music. Our MD is uncomfortable with Christmas in November so we are planning to sing our Vivaldi and Haydn's St Nic. We have added a Christmas concert at "The Cathedral of the South Downs" in Alfriston. The probability of this happening is waning.

We appear to have come through this crisis in a healthy position. Funds have held up reasonably well, members have stuck with us, we seem to be picking up quite a few more and we have recruited some great new committee members. The AGM is at the end of September and we look to be building the most complete committee for a long time.

Steve Machan

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