



Newsletter  
October 2020

## Introduction

Kevin Ilsley

During one of the on-line *Making Music* workshops I took part in early in the summer, participants were asked what effects the pandemic had had on their choral programmes. The lockdown had, of course, meant that many concerts had had to be cancelled but some choir members were very hopeful that they might be able to resume singing in the autumn. “We’ve got a concert in October” one of them said “and I’m sure the doctors will have got things sorted out by then”! If only.

Shortly after lockdown was imposed at the end of March, the incidence of Covid 19 began to fall and continued its sharp glissando throughout April before levelling out in May. Many hoped that it would continue this trajectory until a vaccine became available and that we might avoid a “second wave”.

Unfortunately, as we are now all too well aware, infection numbers began to rise again at the beginning of September and continue to climb, though at differing rates across the UK. Once again our social activities are being curtailed significantly and parts of the UK are in lockdown again. And now the days are getting shorter. It’s all rather depressing. When *will* we be able to sing together again?

There are reasons to be hopeful. We know more about the virus than we did at the beginning of the year. There are effective measures that can be taken to limit its spread. Risk can be mitigated.

Last month I took part in a *Making Music* webinar about risk management for choirs, which was presented by Professor Martin Ashley. We were reminded that there were a number of countries where choral singing had continued despite the pandemic – Norway, Sweden and Germany for instance – and empirical evidence was emerging from these countries about the steps that need to be taken to avoid

infection. Singing generates aerosols and droplets that can carry the virus and some people produce significantly more aerosols when singing than others. These “super-spreaders” pose a particular risk, but they can’t be easily identified, so every singer should be regarded as potentially being one of these. Contrary to earlier “expert” opinion, we now know that masks reduce the risk of transmitting the virus, as long as they are worn properly. They must be worn when singing and a number of firms are now making masks specifically for singers, which keep the mask material away from the face. Visors on the other hand are as useful as a chocolate teapot; they’re ineffective because they don’t stop droplets falling onto surfaces, where the virus can lurk for up to 72 hours.

If we take appropriate precautions, we should be able to sing together again, albeit in smaller numbers than we used to because of the need to spread out at a safe distance from one another. We will also need to limit the time we spend together indoors, to ensure that rooms are adequately ventilated, that surfaces are cleaned properly and that we wash or sanitise our hands frequently. After rehearsals, we will have to disperse without socialising, which I know will be difficult for many of us!

Problems occur when we drop our guard. We’re all becoming tired of dealing with this wretched virus and it’s easy to forget that it’s just as virulent and dangerous as it was in March. We may become careless and overconfident; the confusing messages that we sometimes get from the government encourage some people to believe that the risk of infection is exaggerated. If choirs are to start singing together again, Prof Ashley said, the rules must be clear, followed and enforced.

There are some other uncomfortable facts we now know about Covid 19. The older you are, the more likely you are to suffer serious harm if you get it. Many of us were taken aback when Prof Ashley said “The most effective risk strategy choirs can adopt is to discourage people who are over 70 from singing together”. There was a flurry of comments to the effect that if that were enforced, most choirs would collapse. It’s not just the older singers who are at risk though. A small but significant number of people of any age may suffer from the symptoms of “long Covid”, with a myriad of debilitating symptoms that can last for months. The message I took away from the webinar was that as singers we must all make our own judgements about the risks we’re prepared to take, but our committee has a duty of care to members. We have to adopt a rigorous approach to risk management that is clear and transparent. I

wonder if we should be appointing a “Risk Management Officer”? Or a “Risk Management Subcommittee”?

We are living in strange times. Who would have thought, as we prepared excitedly for our centenary concert in March, that by October we would have to consider the risks our joyful singing might pose to our health? But of course, the fact that we’re *not* singing together poses risks too – risks to our mental health and our sense of well-being. I’m very grateful to Jonathan and to Penny for starting our weekly Zoom rehearsals, which have kept many of us connected and in touch with our music. I know that some of us have joined a number of virtual choirs as well and that others are singing in church choirs again, following guidance issued by *The Royal School of Church Music* in mid-September. Interestingly, the RSCM advises that masks should be worn when entering and leaving the church but can be removed when singing, advice that is contrary to that given by Making Music.

There are some choirs that have decided to go into suspended animation, choosing not to do anything at all until a vaccine appears and we can get back to normal. I’m not sure that the “normal life” we will enjoy then will be the same as the one we had before, nor am I sure that those choirs that have disbanded temporarily will ever reform. I’m grateful to everyone who has made it possible for us to maintain contact with each other and to all the members who have taken advantage of this. I know that the Zoom experience does not suit everyone and that there are others who would like to take part but whose internet speeds are little faster than surface mail. But we intend to continue to keep in touch with everyone via email, via our website and with newsletters like this. We must stay optimistic and cheerful. There will be better days. We will survive!

**Kevin Ilsley, Chairman**

**27<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

### **MAKING THE BEST OF ZOOM!**

**Penny Vere**

To my great surprise, I am really enjoying our rehearsals on Zoom. Okay, we all know that Zoom can never be as good as a real, live rehearsal, but I believe that there are still lots of positives that make it all worthwhile.....

First of all, we get to see a good number of our singing friends and even get to have a bit of a chat with them before and after the rehearsal.....this gives us a good feeling of all being in this together, and.....above all.....**we are MAKING MUSIC!!!!**

We are getting stuck into some really interesting music. If some of it, such as the Armed Man, is new to us, and maybe challenging, we are able, in the sectional rehearsals, to really get to grips with the notes and sort out those tricky bits! And it doesn't matter if we sing wrong notes, because only our own family (and the dog) can hear us! But that is the frustrating part for Jonathan and me, because we can't hear how you are getting on, to know better how to help you. So, a way of overcoming that problem could be for us to pause the rehearsal at regular intervals and unmute everyone, so that you can tell us about any passages that you would like to go over again, to make them more familiar.

I will certainly be including more pauses in rehearsals to come, to open things up to your questions in the future. It would be a good idea to have a pencil at the ready, to make a note of any passage you want to re-visit. Then wave at the screen to get my attention and unmute yourself. A quick way of un-muting yourself is to rest your finger on the space bar while you speak.

But **please** don't be shy about asking us to repeat awkward passages. You can be sure that other people have also found them difficult, and they will be relieved that someone has spoken up! And I, as conductor, would be very glad to have your feed-back, so I can know better how to help. So be bold and let us know what help you need.

As I said at our last rehearsal, there are lots of performances of our music that you can listen to online, on YouTube, which I use a lot. Jackie Tolliday puts links to excellent performances on our MFC Website, on the Members Page, so follow these links and sing along with other musicians.....it's a really helpful way of getting familiar with the music and above all, it is FUN!!!

**So, let's go on having fun**

**and make the best of things together! Penny.**

## MY CYCLE RIDE

Eileen Tomlin

Early in the 'lock-down' I started going out on daily cycle rides at 7 a.m., enjoying the peace of the countryside. I reclaimed the quiet country lanes which I'd known as a child, heard bird-song and watched the tree buds and flowers unfurling into their Spring attire. These wonderful rides gave me energy to face the day's work, leading my Parish Pastoral Care Team.

Sometimes I covered 20 miles on various routes, which inspired me to plan a sponsored cycle ride in memory of my sister, Joan. She died in August 1980, after a brave battle against cancer, which started with breast cancer and spread throughout her body. Neither her husband, her two small daughters, aged 6 and 3, nor our parents were offered bereavement support, in common with most people at the time. The Hospice movement was in its infancy and when Joan was admitted to hospital for her last days, she was placed in a side-ward, and was given the treatment available at the time, but sadly she died completely alone. Nowadays many bereaved people receive some support, although during the current pandemic, it's not easy and my heart goes out to them and to their families and to those who seek to support them in whatever way they can.

I decided to challenge myself to cycle a distance which marked Joan's age of 32 and my current age of 70, and to support Acorns, the Children's Hospice in Worcester. I settled on 7 rounds (on separate days) of 32 miles, as it seemed impractical to try 70 rounds. By a bit of measuring on maps I created different routes, avoiding too many hilly climbs and most of the main roads, which by July were becoming busier.

In 1963 we were given almost adult-size bikes, and 57 years later I'm still riding Joan's – mine needs some repairs – with Sturmey-Archer 3-speed gears! I set out by 7 a.m. and took in some of the most glorious countryside: Northend Lane, Jennet Tree Lane, Halfkey Road, Honeypots Lane, Chapel Lane, Wells Common, Little Malvern, the lanes around Leigh Sinton, Suckley, Leigh and Bransford. I was fortunate as the weather was warm and quiet; I certainly got fitter and could climb hills more easily – now I'm already out of practice, having less time to cycle except for transport. My own church has been very supportive with donations so for my last 'round', I set out to pass every household of our church members – so the route was weird, interesting, and took me up and down 'cul de sacs' and was about 50 miles! Only the family in Worcester and the one in Whitborne were left out – they understood my reason!

I was utterly amazed when money started to pour in via the 'Virgin-giving' site and also with cheques and cash through my letter-box and in the post. The total rose and it really gave me the encouragement to carry on. The final total amounted to £6,680.15, although a few more donations have come since then and there should also be some Gift Aid.

I am immensely grateful to everyone who supported me and gave generously. It is humbling to realise that this money is a tiny proportion of the total cost of running a Hospice, which costs millions of pounds each year. However, every bit helps!

Thank-you to you all. Keep safe!  
Eileen Tomlin

**From our online singing enthusiast**

**Joy Black**

OK, I admit it! I may have, in a fit of enthusiasm, bitten off considerably more than I can chew. Yet it was all just TOO enticing to refuse. I'll admit that I am greedy. If I really like something, I'm not one of those who can carefully control themselves to just one or two and be content. I'm far more your grab it while it's there sort of puppy, bit like greyhounds, 'cause you never know if it's going to be there tomorrow.

So that's how I came to be both rehearsing, and recording, in one 6 week period [deep breath, because we all know breathing is the key].....Vivaldi Gloria, Jenkins Armed Man, Faure Requiem, Brahms German Requiem, Tallis' Spem in Allium – choir 7, final movement of Mahler's 2<sup>nd</sup> symphony, African Sanctus, Durufle Requiem. PLUS rehearsing with MFC. rehearsing Elijah and about to start on Bach's St John Passion with the Self-Isolation Choir.

It would seem that I have become addicted to singing online. Now that's something that came as a surprise, since I was not at all sure about it, way back in March when I first experimented. I couldn't get used to being on my own, yodelling away in my sitting room, and with no feedback around me finding it VERY difficult to pitch correctly. The tech' had me in knots of frustration and the sound of my own voice was a definite horror – was that what the poor souls round me in the Chorus had to listen to week by week? I could only beg their forgiveness, and thank them for their tolerance.

And yet, and yet.....slowly, imperceptibly it grew on me. It became the new normal. It allowed me to hurtle from one rehearsal to another in seconds, giving me access to more than one choir, something that in the 'real' world was impossible. Sing Spem in Allium with a summer school in Switzerland – why not? Mahler introduction in the morning in London, and Record Vivaldi in the evening when it's all quiet in Malvern – not a problem. Apart from singing top F#/ G at the end of the exquisite Mahler, which was a bit of a squawk I admit!

To all of you still unsure if it's for you, that are frustrated with the technology, are as horrified as I was/ still am by the sound of your own voice, or have decided it isn't for you please, please keep at it. Try again. And again. And again. No new skill is immediate. It is a new form of singing, and, sadly, it seems it will be with us for quite some time. Unless we all keep singing, the magnificent and ancient choral tradition that this country is known for across the world is going to wither and die. We keep searching for ways to bring more people to the joys of singing, to the camaraderie, the physical well-being it engenders.....I believe that this new trend is doing that. Just look at the youth choirs on YouTube. But if we choirs and choristers are not there when the physical singing can finally resume – and it will, eventually – where will they go?

Right. Back to Spem in Allium – I'm getting rather good at counting! Oh, by the way, did you know that the Muppets are prophets? Check this out from 10 years ago. Take it away Beaker!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnT7pT6zCcA>

### **Dates for your diary**

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020. 7.15 for 7.30 pm      Zoom rehearsals recommence after half term

ANSWERS to the Commercial Break Quiz in September's newsletter.

1. .... have a Kitkat
2. .... Bisto
3. .... you brush your teeth with Pepsodent
4. Polo
5. .... Strand (cigarettes)
6. Kelloggs Frosties
7. Tesco
8. .... Specsavers
9. BMW
10. Milky Way
11. Domestos
12. Guinness
13. Turkish Delight
14. Midland
15. Foxes Glacier Mints
16. Esso
17. Nike
18. .... mild green Fairy Liquid
19. .... Milk Tray
20. Sanatogen
21. Andrex toilet tissue
22. Heineken Lager
23. Mars bar
24. 24.Wickes
25. British Airways
26. Opal fruits
27. Carlsberg
28. Lucozade
29. Marmite
30. Mr Kipling

### **Editor's note**

Thank you once again to all the contributors.

We are intending that future newsletters will follow, and we would be very grateful to have your ideas about what you would like to have included. If you have any links to interesting articles, performances and recordings that you think other members would be interested in, please send them to me. If you would like to edit the next one, let me know. I hope you enjoy the Autumn and Harvest quiz.

**Please can I have your best/worst cracker jokes for the November or December Newsletter!**

Bridget

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## AUTUMN, HARVESTS and CROPS

- The clocks are adjusted by one hour in Autumn. Do they go forward or back?  
A). Forward B). Back
- In the northern hemisphere the first day of autumn is in which month?  
A). August B). September C). October
- What is the German word for Autumn?  
A). Herbst B). Hans C). Fernweh
- "Autumn Sonata" is a Swedish film starring Ingrid Bergman in her final film. When was it released?  
A). 1968 B). 1978 C). 1988
- "Forever Autumn" is a song from Jeff Wayne's album "War of the Worlds" based on the novel of the same name by HG Wells. When was the album released?  
A). 1965 B). 1970 C). 1978
- "Autumn Mist" was the code name for which battle that started at the end of 1944?  
A). Battle of the Bulge B). Battle of Hastings C). Battle of the Somme
- The Canadian, Autumn Kelly, married which of the Queen's grandchildren in 2008?  
A). Peter Philips B). Jack Brooksbank C). James Mountbatten-Windsor
- What is an Autumn Hawkbit?  
A). Mushroom B). Bird C). Flower
- "The falling leaves drift by my window, the falling leaves ....."? How does the second line end in the 1945 song "Autumn Leaves"?  
A). of all the trees B). are all aglow C). of red and gold
- What do the Americans call Autumn?  
A). Flutter B). Drop C). Fall
- Which of these is a description of trees that lose their leaves in Autumn?  
A). Coniferous B). Deciduous C). Omnivorous
- The Autumn Fashion Week takes place in 4 countries, UK, France and USA are 3, what is the fourth?  
A). Spain B). Greece C). Italy
- The poem "To Autumn" was written in 1819 by which poet?  
A). Roger McGough B). William Shakespeare C). John Keats
- What Autumn farming practice has been banned since 1993?  
A). Building haystacks B). Stubble burning C). Crop rotation
- Since 1965, the World Conker Championships take place each year, in which county?  
A). Nottinghamshire B). Norfolk C). Northamptonshire
- The 2000 American film "Autumn in New York" starred Richard Gere and which actress?  
A). Katharine Hepburn B). Hayley Mills C). Winona Ryder
- The 1967 song "Autumn Almanac" was sung by which of these rock bands?  
A). The Kinks B). The Supremes C). The Beach Boys
- Harvests in Autumn have been celebrated since pagan times. When did they start to be celebrated in churches?  
A). 1843 B). 1893 C). 1903
- Nowadays how is the date for the Harvest Festival church service chosen?  
A). Second Sunday in September B). the full moon nearest the Autumn Equinox  
C). the Sunday nearest Lammas Day
- What is the name of the moon that comes after the Harvest Moon?  
A). Blue Moon B). Red Moon C). Hunter's Moon
- Which Poet Laureate wrote the poem "The Harvest Moon" in 1975?  
A). John Masefield B). Ted Hughes C). Carol Ann Duffy
- Which of these descriptions is true for the Harvest Mouse?  
A). UK's biggest mouse B). Europe's smallest mouse C). World's furriest mouse

23. Who was the Greek god of the grape harvest?  
A). Dionysus B). Poseidon C). Zeus
24. The 1942 film "Random Harvest" starred Ronald Coleman and which actress?  
A). Glen Close B). Greer Garson C). Greta Garbo
25. Barclay James Harvest is a band formed in 1966. What sort of music do they play?  
A). Rock B). Jazz C). Country
26. What is a Harvestman?  
A). Spider B). Bee C). Moth
27. A famous April Fool's Day hoax report on TV by the BBC in 1957 showed "spaghetti crops" being harvested in which country?  
A). Italy B). Switzerland C). Australia
28. Traditionally at the end of the hop harvest, a swag of hops would be hung for good luck in which of these local buildings?  
A). Pubs B). Fire Stations C). Town Halls
29. The song "Shine on, Harvest Moon" comes from a film of the same name. When was the film released?  
A). 1944 B). 1955 C). 1965
30. The song "Shine on, Harvest Moon" has been sung over the years by many singers. What is the last line of the chorus that follows "Shine on, Shine on harvest moon"?  
A). And then we can spoon B). For me and my gal C). To light up the way
31. "Harvest" was the name of a best-selling album in 1972 by which singer?  
A). Neil Young B). Paul Young C). Neil Sedaka
32. Before 1900 the Harvest Supper would be shared with all the farm workers who helped with the harvest, on the last day. What was this meal sometimes called?  
A). Crop n'Chop B). Last Supper C). Mell-supper
33. Who sang "I've got a brand new combine harvester" in 1976?  
A). Chas and Dave B). The Wurzels C). The Corrs
34. "Harvest in Provence" is a painting by which artist?  
A). Damien Hirst B). Leonardo da Vinci C). Vincent Van Gogh
35. For roughly how many years have humans cultivated and harvested wheat?  
A). 15,000 B). 10,000 C). 5,000
36. In 1972 an episode of Dad's Army was set at harvest time. What was it called?  
A). Harvest Home B). All is safely gathered in C). Lord of the Harvest
37. Which English artist painted "The Haywain" in 1921?  
A). Picasso B). Turner C). Constable
38. The Barley Mow is the name of many pubs! But what is a barley mow?  
A). Stack of barley B). A sweet C). A hair style
39. David Haye nick named "The Hayemaker" became famous in which sport?  
A). Rugby B). Hockey C). Boxing
40. Giant Haystacks was the nick name of Martin Austin Ruane. What was his profession?  
A). Boxer B). Wrestler C). Weight lifter
41. In the nursery rhyme who was "under the haystack fast asleep" "when he should have been looking after the sheep"?  
A). Little Tommy Tucker B). Little Boy Blue C). Little Jack Horner
42. What name is given to the small items that are made using straw from the harvest and kept till next spring to ensure a good harvest?  
A). Corn Dollies B). Hay Ladies C). Wicker Men
43. Jack Straw was a Member of Parliament with which political party?  
A). Conservative B). Labour C). The Green Party
44. What colour is a Cornflower?  
A). Yellow B). Blue C). Red