

Dear members,

Events are developing at a bewildering rate. It seems an age since last Friday, when your committee took the decision to cancel Saturday's concert. Thank you for the many messages of support that have been received since then; everyone who has written appreciated how difficult it was to make this decision but the general feeling was that it was prudent in the circumstances. We may have been ahead of the curve but I have no doubt that we were right to avoid risking the health of our members and our audience.

There has been a lot of correspondence between members of the committee over the last few days. Strenuous efforts have been made to try to minimise the financial loss we have suffered as a result of the cancellation and progress has been made on this. We have also been considering what we should do next term. We were supposed to discuss this at our committee meeting this evening but I decided that gathering closely together for three hours or so was a risk we should avoid. We have therefore been in close contact by email and telephone throughout today. We were minded to recommend that the Gala concert should be postponed and that we should not meet again until September but before sharing this decision with you I felt we should wait to hear what the Prime Minister had to say at his press conference this evening. He and his advisers now agree with us, it appears. It is now an official edict: we must avoid social contact, particularly if we are over 70 or belong to another "at risk" group. So, all rehearsals are suspended until further notice, with the hope and intention that we start again in the autumn. This is of course dependent on the way in which the current pandemic develops. We will keep you updated.

What about next year's programme? Following consultation with Jonathan, we have agreed that we should regard next year as a celebratory one, the start of our next hundred years. We intend to capitalise on the preparatory work we have done for the *St Matthew Passion* and perform it next year in some form. As yet we're not sure of the location or timing. We will also stage our gala concert and are considering putting on an additional concert. We're also hoping to put on another "Come and Sing" event, perhaps towards the end of next year's season. There's still a lot of uncertainty about programme content, venues and timings but we are determined to build on the commitment and enthusiasm members have demonstrated over the past several months.

Our most pressing need is to organise the return of scores to Bridget. We have agreed that although there is no rehearsal this week, we should arrange for members to deliver their cleaned scores to Bridget at the Chase School on Tuesday evening (17th). Bridget and her team will be available from 7.15 to 8.30 pm. In order to avoid crowding we would like you to stagger your visits according to the initial letter of your surname as follows:

7.15-7.30 A to D, 7.30-7.45 E to H, 7.45-8.00 I to L, 8.00-8.15 M to P, 8.15-8.30 Q to T, 8.30-8.45 U to Z .

You will be asked to give the number of your score to the team and then to deposit the score itself in a box. The scores are capable of carrying viable viruses for up to six days so we want to avoid them being handled by anyone other than the member to whom they've been issued. It's highly unlikely any of them will be contaminated but unfortunately someone with a coronavirus infection can shed the virus for about fourteen days before illness becomes

apparent so we should be cautious. Once you have handed over your score please don't linger, tempting though it is to socialise.

Thank you all for your patience and understanding. Without your commitment there would be no MFC. Do not despair. With your support we will rise from the ashes.

Best wishes,

Kevin

Dr Kevin Ilsley
Chairman