

Dear fellow members,

On behalf of the Committee, I'd like to wish you all a very Happy Easter. But it's not the Easter as we expected when we were last together. We should now be enjoying our break from rehearsals, reflecting on our performance of the *St Matthew Passion* and looking forward to preparing for our Gala concert in the summer. All is changed. Changed utterly. We do not know when we will be able to meet to sing together again but that day *will* come and we must be ready for it when it does.

I hope that you are all managing to cope with the restrictions we all have to live with now. The "new normal" is very odd indeed, with some of us facing the prospect of living in relative isolation for at least three months and all of us having to cope with limitations to our lives at the moment. All those ordinary things we took for granted seem very special now. When all this is over, I am sure that we will count our blessings and appreciate what a privilege it is to lead an "ordinary life". An ordinary life that for us includes the wonderful experience of singing together. I'm sure that you are missing the singing and the fellowship as much as I am. I fear we may be in for a long haul and I'm anxious that while the choir is unable to meet up we should try to keep in touch by other means. There will be periodic emails like this to keep you up to date with what is happening but the committee would welcome your ideas about how else we might engage with each other. Set up a closed group on Facebook perhaps? Use Twitter? It would be nice if there were a forum where we could share ideas and links to other sites or resources. I know that many of us are a bit technophobic but I'm sure that many of us have become more familiar with communication platforms than we were. I've discovered ZOOM and we plan to use this so that we can continue to hold regular committee meetings. I used it to take part in an on line discussion last week organised by Music Matters, sharing ideas and concerns with representatives from forty other societies. We all had similar problems and concerns, chief amongst which was the need to keep members in touch with each other. I have booked a place on future meetings and will steal as many good ideas as I can! I'll keep you informed.

Many of you have expressed concerns about the financial state of the society. I'm pleased to report that the situation is not as bleak as we feared it might be. This is largely due to the hard work and negotiating skills of Mike Tweedie, the persuasive efforts of Jonathan Brown and the goodwill of performers and organisations. We are all in their debt. Negotiations were predicated on our intention that the centenary concert was postponed rather than cancelled and we look forward to rescheduling our concerts when possible. In this connection also I should like to reassure those who requested ticket refunds that the cheques will be in the post to you shortly.

We were all disappointed that our centenary concert was cancelled. Cancelling the concert at such short notice was a big decision and as I said in my last email we are very grateful for the support for it that we have received since. Nonetheless I remain very disappointed that Jonathan was unable to enjoy the fruits of his labours. He had put so much into preparing us for the concert. He has had a difficult and challenging time since, dealing with problems at school following government decisions and managing the fallout from the decision to cancel public exams. He will be sharing his ideas for the future with us once things settle down a bit.

I hope this finds you well, though I know some of you have already experienced symptoms consistent with COVID19 infection. If you are suffering, I hope you'll make a speedy recovery. I'm afraid that many of us will encounter the virus before we meet again as a choir. It's easy to feel helpless in the face of this. One of the things I've found useful and positive is taking part in a study that's being organised by a team at King's College London. This enables participants to log their symptoms on a daily basis, whether they have COVID19 infection or not, via a simple App. Early outcomes of the study include the identification of "hot spots" and common symptoms of the disease that hitherto haven't been generally recognised. One limitation of the study is that people over the age of 60 are poorly represented. Should you wish to take part in the study, the "COVID19 symptom tracker" can be downloaded for free from one to the App stores. <https://covid.joinzoe.com>

Finally, a bit of fun and distraction. I've attached a Ditloid quiz, which Bridget has sent me. Solutions to Bridget please! I will donate a bottle of something fizzy for the first correct answer.

Stay safe.

Best wishes

Kevin