



# Nanaimo Sings Notes – July 2020

Contact us at:

[www.nanaimosings.com](http://www.nanaimosings.com)

[nanaimosings@gmail.com](mailto:nanaimosings@gmail.com)

Our sponsor:



*When things are challenging, a friend of mine always says, “We will stagger forth rejoicing”. I think we are doing that right now! We are not sure what lies ahead but there is no doubt that in the coming months, we will lay the groundwork for the future of choral music-making.*

*Greek Philosopher, Epictetus, says: “The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.” He identifies four stoic virtues that are applicable for us as we move forward:*

**Wisdom:** Gather information to make decisions, reach out and work with each other to learn and adjust.

**Morality:** Treat fellow choristers and each other with integrity, kindness and compassion.

**Courage:** Reach out to others for inspiration and support ... stagger forth rejoicing ... keep on keeping on.

**Moderation:** Take a breath and then move forward with measured optimism. Be proactive. Set goals that are realistic.

*In this issue, we focus on the world of virtual music-making. Virtual rehearsals will never be the same as in-person rehearsals, but they do provide a way to sing together, see each other and experience the feeling of community that we are missing right now. If you haven't already, I hope you'll give it a try. In any case, keep singing! - Linda Dier, Chair of Nanaimo Sings! (with thanks to Fiona Blackburn for the introduction to Epictetus)*

## Update from Nanaimo Sings!

- Linda Dier has written a letter to Dr. Bonnie Henry on behalf of Nanaimo Sings! requesting guidelines for safe choral singing. A link to this letter is provided [here](#).
- The planning committee has been considering new ideas to celebrate singing and connection during the upcoming fall and winter months.
- The planning committee will take a summer break and resume operations in late August, beginning with a virtual Annual General Meeting scheduled for 10:30 am, August 29<sup>th</sup>.

## Update from the BC Choral Federation (BCCF)

- The BCCF recently held a webinar entitled “Same Storm, Different Boats: Choirs Navigating Business and Finance”. Charitable status, government subsidies and grants, insurance, waivers, budgeting, contracts, fundraising, online performances and licencing were discussed. Summary notes by Linda Dier are available at this [link](#). A YouTube video of this Town Hall Session is available at this link: <http://www.bcchoralfed.com/>

## Update from Choral Canada – Canada Chorale

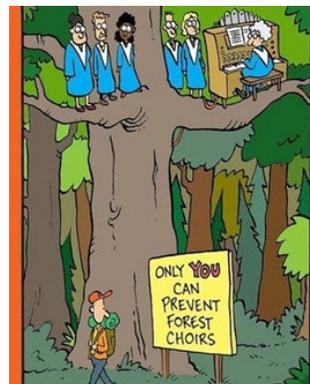
- Choral Canada sent an Open Letter to policy makers requesting science-based decision-making and policy implementation. A link to this letter is provided [here](#).

## Quotes of note

*If I cannot fly, let me sing.* - Stephen Sondheim, from the musical *Sweeney Todd*

*I can't understand why people are frightened of new ideas. I'm frightened of the old ones.* - John Cage, composer

*Some days there won't be a song in your heart - sing anyway.* - Emory Austin, motivational speaker



### A Virtual Choir Experience

Virtual choirs were first popularized by Eric Whitacre about 10 years ago, and have come to prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic. This choir concept is new to many of us, so we are providing some background and sharing our experiences.

#### **What is a virtual choir?**

A virtual choir is a group of individuals who record their own audio/video parts at home, usually to a click track or to a conductor; from there, an editor puts together each individual's audio/video tracks and makes a cohesive final recording.

#### **What equipment do you need?**

Two electronic devices (any of the following: smart phone, tablet, laptop);

Headphones that can plug into your device;

Printer to print out your music (or send elsewhere for printing and pick up).

#### **What's the process?**

Search for virtual choirs online and join one.

Print out your music and learn it and/or sing along to rehearsal tracks and participate in on-line rehearsals and sectionals (watch and sing along by yourself).

To record yourself, use one electronic device to watch the conductor and hear the soundtrack (using headphones) and use the other device to record yourself singing. It may be more efficient to use a smartphone or tablet for recording your singing, so that you automatically have the correct recording speed and file compression when uploading. The virtual choir website should have instructions on how to provide a good quality video recording.

Go to the virtual choir website using the device you used for recording your singing, and upload your video following the website's instructions.

Expect to wait a couple of months until production is complete and it is released online, then enjoy the show!

Right about now, you might be thinking this ...



Before you decide, perhaps take a moment to read about the Virtual Choir experiences of some of our members:

*There are some wonderful virtual choir performances out there, and as a chorister it's tempting to want to be a part of one. Virtual choirs are not, however, choirs; they are a collection of solo recordings linked together by a technician. This means that the feeling of singing together with your colleagues is entirely absent, so it's not the same thing as a live performance. This is not to say that it's not worth doing, but you have to be prepared for the difference ... The other thing you need to prepare for is the sound of your own voice, which may not be of the quality you naively thought it was. Here are a few tips to minimize that problem. Know the piece really well, so that you can be confident in your delivery. Listen really closely to whatever accompaniment there is to make sure you remain in synch. Record the piece as if you were performing ... stand up, with the music on a stand or in your hand as if you were on stage, so that your diaphragm is free to move and your throat relaxed ... Then have fun with it. - James Duthie*

*When everything ended so abruptly in March, it was shocking and many of us immediately searched around for something to fill the void. Eric Whitacre announced his Virtual Choir 6 and I decided to give it a shot. I was not immediately 'all in', I had never done much solo singing and never recorded myself singing or seen a video recording of myself singing ... Cobbling together a recording setup in my kitchen with boxes, lighting, an iPhone, iPad and MacBook proved ultimately successful. I made at least four different recordings as I worked out the 'hows' of video recording myself ... Eventually I recorded myself in a way that passed my personal standard for acceptance. I'm looking forward to seeing the final result. It was a new learning experience. - Fiona Anderson*

*Singing in a choir is often as much about community as it is about singing so my first reaction to singing virtually was to feel a lack of community. As I prepared for singing in the Virtual Choir 6 performance of Sing Gently, that feeling changed to an appreciation of a new definition of community. Rehearsing online and seeing live chat from hundreds of singers from all over the world who were doing the same thing as me ... at the same time ... was quite thrilling. I did feel part of a broader community. It was different than community as I've known it but powerful nonetheless. I would do it again! - Linda Dier*



When we begin recording, we might start off looking like the bottom photo, but take comfort, by the end of the process, we will look a lot more like the top photo. Just think of how much more natural and polished we will look when we sing live again after all that recording practice!

If virtual choirs aren't for you, and you'd like more ideas to stay connected with your own local choir, check out **5 Ideas for Keeping Your Chorus Connected During This Pandemic** by the Chorus Connection, available at this [link](#). - Heather Valsangkar

### Virtual singing from a Director's Perspective

#### From Sceptic to Fan!

Given the myriad of negatives associated with online music teaching and rehearsing - distortion, sound delays, poor internet connections 📶 - not to mention my own basic mistrust of losing all that face to face provides for music. I am surprising myself by writing in appreciation of what remote interface does have to offer!

Once I stopped wishing that online music teaching and rehearsing was something it could never be, I started to partake of its valuable uses - imparting information whether that be new notes or historical context; allowing for focus on the detail of concepts that inform musical thinking and artistic performance; providing the time to hone and refine technical and musical skills that can easily get lost in the wake of performance goals; building reading skills; learning new levels of precision through the challenges of recording and not unimportantly, providing visual/personal connection from the comfort and safety of our own homes.

Oh, how the faces and the fascinating background sounds 🎧 on the other side of the camera have made me smile for the last three and a half months and, oh, how the music-making I have heard gives me the hope that we are keeping our art alive at this strange juncture in human and musical history!! 🎵

Thank you Zoom! (and other platforms!). I am now a "remote" fan, grateful for new insights and expanded awareness! Smile for the camera everyone! 😊

-Patricia Plumley

#### **Additional information on virtual practices for existing choirs:**

**BCCF Town Hall Session #4 - Thursday, July 9, 7:30-8:30 PM** entitled **Vamp 'til Ready – Virtual rehearsals until we have a vaccine**. Join Fiona Blackburn (BC Girls Choir), Nina Horvath (Vancouver Bach Choirs), Gordon Miller (SingYourJoy Young Adult Chorus) and Liana Savard (Vancouver Orpheus Male Voice Choir) for an interactive look at online rehearsals and other community-building tools for choirs. The link is provided here: <http://www.bcchoralfed.com/>

### Links to current virtual choir opportunities

The Stay at Home choir is accepting new members for *The Armed Man* performance project. This project is five movements from Sir Karl Jenkins' iconic work: Hymn Before Action, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, Final Chorale (God Shall Wipe Away All Tears). You can find out more and register here:

<https://new.stayathomechoir.com/projects/the-armed-man>

### Links to upcoming performances

Virtual Choir 6 releases *Sing Gently* by Eric Whitacre on July 19 at 10:30 am PT at this link:

[https://m.youtube.com/ericwhitacre?uid=dR\\_-X6pbG7Zy8peXfuTBQQ](https://m.youtube.com/ericwhitacre?uid=dR_-X6pbG7Zy8peXfuTBQQ)

The Canadian Opera Company Virtual Choir performs the "Anvil Chorus" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, date in July to be announced and available at this link:

<https://www.coc.ca/virtualchoir>

Vancouver Island Symphony announces its live pop-up summer concert series, information available at this link:

<https://www.vancouverislandsymphony.com/summer-pop-up-concerts-2020>

### Links to online articles and videos

From *The Globe and Mail*, the article "Across Canada, choirs struggle to find their post-pandemic future" is available at this link:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/alberta/article-across-canada-choirs-struggle-to-find-their-postpandemic-future/>

BBC video entitled *Virtual Choir – singing together despite coronavirus* is available at this link:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?feature=youtu.be&v=28mo84ZCNUM>

### Links to online performances

Vancouver Men's chorus virtual choir performs *Anthem* by Leonard Cohen: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=wG-hnlzySqA&feature=youtu.be>

VI Symphony home-based performance by string principals of *Happy Birthday Variations* by Peter Heidrich to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the symphony:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=kbjlyvTEX00>

Choral Scholars of University College Dublin sing the traditional Irish ballad *Maid of Culmore*:

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TZH\\_IVGZF9A](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=TZH_IVGZF9A)

Voces8 sing *Le Plat Pays* by Jacques Brel :

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=SyXqmizavkw>

New York City Virtual Choir and Orchestra perform *How Can I Keep From Singing?* by Robert Wadsworth Lowry:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VLPP3XmYxXg>

Camden Voices sings *True Colors* by Cyndi Lauper:

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lqWQCWc\\_zCc](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=lqWQCWc_zCc)

Once Voice Children's Choir sings *Memories* by Maroon 5:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=XB6yjGVuzVo>

We welcome your submissions (through your director or choir contact) on upcoming or current performances and virtual choir opportunities; as well as choir photos, cartoons and quotes, and suggestions for articles.

**Wishing all of you a musical, enjoyable and healthy summer from Nanaimo Sings!**

