

KING'S LYNN FESTIVAL CHORUS

www.kingslynnfestivalchorus.co.uk

King's Lynn Festival Chorus is a registered charity No 292455

June 2020

COVID 19 update

In March, King's Lynn Festival Chorus suspended all face to face rehearsals in line with Government directives.

Consequently, our April 2020 concert of St Matthew Passion was postponed until early 2021 when we hoped the pandemic risk would have subsided to acceptable levels. However, there is no real clarity about when this will happen and the safety of our choir members, audience and supporters remains paramount.

For this reason, KLFC have decided to cancel the St Matthew Passion concert.

We appreciate all the support and fundraising that went into preparing for this particular programme and we assure you, your efforts and contributions will not be wasted. We shall return to perform in concert as soon as it is safe to do so.

If you are holding on to a ticket for the St Matthew Passion Concert and wish for a refund, please contact the King's Lynn Corn Exchange Box Office. Tel 01553 764864 www.kingslynncornexchange.co.uk

EASYFUNDRAISING®

A huge 'thank you' to those of you who are using this platform to do your online shopping.

At a time when non-essential shopping is closed to all, many more of us are discovering the convenience (or frustrations?) of online shopping. Indeed, whilst most shopping outlets, independent or otherwise, are in dire straits at the moment, the same cannot be said for the online sector.

When shopping online, why not do it from the platform of: www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/klfchorus on which over 400 traders are registered. At no extra cost to you, the purchaser, online traders will donate a small amount to our funds. At this time, more than ever, when all cultural activities have shut down and are in limbo in so many ways, every little does really help!

King's Lynn Festival Chorus NEWSLETTER #8

What strange times we are in; a situation that no one could have predicted 6 months ago, where so many are touched by sadness and loss.

The fellowship and camaraderie of music-making in whatever form, gathering in a group to enjoy each other's company had been taken away overnight. We were bereft.

But being the Festival Chorus that we are, with our multi-talented membership, we have found ways of overcoming that mere inconvenience.

Thanks to the huge efforts of Mike Walker and Jim McGarrick, we have recorded 6 motets and a madrigal to date (more in the pipeline). All are currently available to listen to from the links on our webpage.

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In fact, our first virtual singing piece was the first chorale (Herzliebster, Jesu) from of St Matthew Passion which we should have performed on April 4th. The recording was broadcast on Radio Norfolk on Easter Sunday. That, together with the interview of Mike and Jim on air, is also available to listen to on our website.

Life may have hit the 'Pause' button for the moment, but we look forward to meeting up again..... somehow.....

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. In spite of the present situation there are some positives - we've been able to really appreciate and cherish the beautiful sights and sounds that surround us, rediscover simple pleasures and realise there are more important things in life than rushing around and getting stressed out! Also, that being able to help others brings great joy.

Finally to those of you battling, in whatever capacity, this dreadful invisible intruder and its troublesome attendants, a collective heartfelt thank you from all of us.

Thank you for being on our mailing list.

Please be assured that your details are secure with us and will not be given to nor used by third parties. If your details are incorrect or you no longer wish to remain on our mailing list, please contact us via the website www.kingslynnfestivalchorus.co.uk

For this month's Newsletter, we asked our Music Director, Tom Appleton and our Assistant Music Director, Ben Horden, for their views on life in 'lockdown'. We weren't disappointed....

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

By Tom Appleton

Nelson Mandela; Martin Johnson; Winston Churchill; Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Celebrated leaders one and all. Although in very different fields, all those listed above have known when and how to act for the good of their cause. Things didn't always run smoothly for them, but they had a clear goal and were experts at bringing others along in order to achieve it.

Much has been made of curves at the daily Downing Street press conferences. I am pleased that KLFC were slightly ahead of the curve in seeing Covid-19 coming early and acting, at all times, with the health and safety of our community at the fore. Whilst Veronica, our Chairman, and the rest of our leadership team would balk at being listed in the same company as above, I am so proud of our Committee who have acted swiftly, calmly and with good reason to cancel/reschedule our weekly rehearsals and forthcoming concerts over the last few months.

That said, it hurts! We had all worked so hard to prepare for a truly memorable *Matthew Passion* on April 4th and were looking forward to performing in the King's Lynn Festival again this summer. The fact we can't bring those events to our friends and families is a major sore.

We don't know how long we'll be out of action for. In reality, for a variety of reasons, we're likely to need a vaccine before we can ensure the full safety of our members and that looks some way off. So, what can we do instead!?

Well, choral singing is about so much more than just the noise we create. Groups like KLFC play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of their community. We provide people with a voice. We educate, inspire, energise and most of all we unite.

In the coming months we'll have to change our business model in order to carry out those objectives, but we certainly won't be silenced. NOT A CHANCE!

Tom Appleton

[Artistic Director and Co-Founder: The Come and Sing Company](#)

[Music Director: King's Lynn Festival Chorus](#)

[Music Director: Aldeburgh Music Club](#)

LIFE THROUGH COVID-TINTED GLASSES.

By Ben Horden

The current situation has posed challenges for us all, probably some that couldn't have been anticipated. I occasionally find myself wondering whether this is all, in fact, a dream... or nightmare!

In my professional capacity, the concern has shifted from the money and work I have lost and am losing to the work I am going to lose in the future. As the current situation becomes more protracted, a return to 'normal' is pushed further and further away. It seems that, for the foreseeable future, the work I had previously considered soon dispensable, and perhaps the most musically unrewarding, will provide my sole income; namely, playing funeral services.

On a personal level, this situation has presented many challenges, and continues to do so, not all of them obvious or tangible. I am, of course, missing seeing friends and family, and have missed out on saying goodbye to now lost friends and welcoming new ones into the world! I am fortunate enough to have maintained good health myself, with the exception of being recently attacked by an infection in a tooth. The strength of antibiotic is taking effect, despite making me feel a little squiffy. Worse still, it demands my not drinking alcohol! To quote Basil Fawlty, that's another "avenue of pleasure closed off!". At the end of this month, I am moving out of my flat in Peterborough and temporarily moving in with my parents. That itself has, and will present challenges, and will require an adjustment on a number of levels.

I am missing hugely making music and all that goes with it. Whilst sorting through some files, I rediscovered some recordings of past concert performances with my York-based group 'Spectrum', now disbanded. It reminded me just how much of a void has been left by not being able to be involved with music in the recent months and just how lucky I am, and how much I love having the skills and abilities to share music with others.

I am lucky too to have many other positive aspects in my life, and many wonderful and supportive family, friends and colleagues, with all of whom I am very much looking forward to reconnecting. I'm finding it helpful to set my sights on what I hope I can look forward to in the coming months, whether that be a trip to see my best friend in the South West, a holiday abroad or long sought after hair cut! However long we are required to tolerate the current enforced distancing and crushing abnormality, I hope that when the time comes, we are able to unite to strive to revive what has been temporarily lost.

You all remain in my thoughts, and I continue to wish you all well and hope that you are staying sane and occupied. For now, I'll leave you with this quote from one of my favourite poems.

*Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*

from 'Ulysses'
— Tennyson

Ben Horden
www.benhorden.com

KING'S LYNN FESTIVAL (VIRTUAL) CHORUS: Q and A

Our own **Mike Walker (MW)** and **Jim McGarrick (JM)** have been really busy launching our Virtual choir with a recording of the first chorale of St. Matthew Passion (Herzliebster, Jesu) dedicated to the memory of Sue Stewart.

In the event that some of you on the mailing list may like to have more detailed technical conversations with Mike or Jim, please contact them through the 'Contact' page of our website.

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What was the inspiration to set up the Virtual Choir?

MW: Noticing how other choirs were singing 'virtually' together, I contacted Jim at the end of March to discuss the technicalities and, therefore feasibility of combining individual voices together if they were sent to him.

JM: I had been fascinated by Eric Whitacre's Virtual choir a few years back and worked out how he did it, so it only took a nudge from Mike for me to say YES, we can do this, following on the heels of Gareth Malone and other Virtual choirs springing up in the lockdown.

Do you have to have fairly sophisticated machinery to do this?

MW: It was clear that one needed software and hardware that could provide various learning aids for the participants, like the backing track in a separate audio file, music notation that included dynamic markings, practice tracks for individual voices as well as printing pdfs of the score.

JM: To a certain extent yes, you will need a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) that can be very costly at the professional end. However, there are very affordable ones around. Some computer devices have GarageBand built in. I use its big brother Logic Pro for our projects.

(DAW works like a word processor for sound. Each voice clip can be displayed like a horizontal ribbon that can be adjusted and tidied up.)

A machine is only as good as its operator.....were you both in these fields during your working life previously?

MW: It helps ... I have always been in computer technology at University as well as in my science-based working life; on occasion the latter involved writing my own software tools to perform specialist tasks. Luckily Janet and I have always been 'early adopters' of technology (though I did have to ask Tom about Zoom!)

JM: No, although I've programmed and used computers in academic research into cine x-ray motion and electromyography (electrical signals from contracting muscles) not unlike audio signals. However, I've had a life-long interest in sound engineering, having recorded singing and playing with my brother as a lad.

Roughly what's was involved before sending out the practice tapes and then the compilation of individual tracks as they came in?

MW: The project is in 3 task sections, the third task being Jim's.

Firstly, once the music is selected based on interest, availability and technical feasibility, a software version is prepared, an MP3 backing track is made with adjustments if necessary .

Practice tracks are then prepared with individual voice parts, using music notation software and entering each note on a midi keyboard, adding dynamics, tempo, metronome 'clicks' etc. Then a PDF of the score is prepared to send to members.

Secondly, singers listen to and practise their parts on one device before recording their final 'take' on another – this avoids recording the backing track. Its then sent over to Jim to work his magic of putting it all together.

JM: Finally, once a sound file arrives from a member all I need to do is to load it onto the Logic screen. The software will automatically generate a new track and pop the audio file on to it. Some alignment and adjustment is done (not much) like volume and stereo imaging. And a touch of reverb effect to model an appropriate acoustic.

What's planned next down the line ?

MW: Our intention initially was to record the first chorale of the Matthew Passion (Herzliebster Jesu) for our dear friend and colleague Sue Stewart who sadly passed away in early April. But it proved a popular exercise in its own right and we're now on our 7th project! We hope in the future to include some 'live' backing tracks involving Tom and Ben, and potentially incorporate these instrumental parts in the recording watch this space!

JM : Ideally, the ability to sing 'live' together online but the challenges of variable delays and current technology manipulating, amongst other factors, lip synchrony, it's not going to happen just yet. I'm just getting into video editing as I watch the slow download of iMovie as I write. Anyone like to join in?

(Interested readers on the mailing list who may like to join in the party please contact Jim through the website!)

COFFEE TIME CATCH-UP

Here are some snippets of news from our members, a catch-up as to what's been happening in their lives since we stopped meeting. Some have been touched by loss, others have become Grand and Great grand-parents.

Condolences and congratulations in equal measure.

Here's a selection: -

Jan Clubb Loss of father suddenly in Cheshire.(so sorry to hear that) Unable to go to Italy as usual to visit family, so the garden is benefiting and a bumper crop of beans and tomato is hoped for from plants raised from seed I'm loving it.

Sara Barnes Making sets of scrubs and visiting vulnerable people (*we salute you!*). Completing for customers, tapestries and embroideries some of which are 50 years old! Piano practising and editing mother's wartime letters.

Nina Rye Birdwatching..... 'thrilling with sightings with pair of Marsh Harriers hunting in river valley behind QEH'. Also 'climbing' up Mt Kilimanjaro for the fourth time via the stairs at home to raise £500 for her chosen charity (Child Bereavement UK) so very nearly reaching the target now. Donations welcome.

Ruth Mason Baby sitting at school drawing variations of rainbows! Constructed a wildlife pond, decorated the house, family time with table tennis and ABBA songs! Gardening.

Lissa Kinsey Loving being locked down in deepest Norfolk but missing singing and the company. Painting in watercolours. See right ->

Veronica HutchbyRevisiting Thomas Hardy novels, and found that the Pedlar/ Tinker of Swaffham is referred to. Gardening with gusto.

Adrian Johnson Produced a one-person Les Miserables story both narrative and songs and eating lots! As well as piano practising, exercising and golfing in the garden!



Hazel Richards Over enthusiastic gardening sums up my lockdown life so far who knew that veg could provoke such emotion! (young plants caught by late frost!) Resting a pulled muscle!

Yodah Galloway.... 'Out with the old and in with the new.' New kitchen and extension completed during lockdown, plus the constant thrill and joy of a new (first) grandson.

Johanna WillsonNow practising on 3 recorders (having found long lost descant) as well as teaching grandson the piano and Dutch folk songs.

Please send us more of '*what I did in the lockdown*': new interests, skills, hobbies, or pastimes revisited. Mailing list members please make contact via the website.

FAREWELL

Sue Stewart, a much loved and hugely respected founder member of the Festival Chorus sadly passed away on Sunday 5th April. Sue's devotion to the Chorus was absolute, through thick and thin, right from its first inaugural concert in 1977. Her roles were varied through the years, stepping in where needed, ranging from Secretary to offering storage for our music library and some time as tea lady! An excellent musician who had a large reservoir of musical knowledge and experience, she sang almost to the end, always giving much valued support and leadership to those singing around her.

She was generous in spirit, steadfast of faith and when she spoke, we listened! We will miss her wisdom, humour and good sense.

Our first Virtual Festival Chorus broadcast was dedicated to her memory.

Ruht wohl, dear friend.

Pat Pressling - after a long illness. Many of you will remember Pat as the driving force behind an excellent local children's choir that began in the 1970s/80s. After much success at home and abroad they became the West Norfolk Youth Choir and they performed Carmina Burana with us in 2003.

We're proud to have 'inherited' one of her grown up youth members, Alistair Legg, who was also our baritone soloist at our Christmas concert last year.

Pat was a long standing member of the Chorus and was joined in later years by her daughter Andy Yaxley.

Rest well, dear Pat.

For more information about King's Lynn Festival Chorus, please email the Secretary: secretary@kingslynnfestivalchorus.co.uk Alternatively message via Facebook or Twitter @kl_festchorus, or on the CONTACT page of our website www.kingslynnfestivalchorus.co.uk