



Zoom rehearsals success



At least 46 men managed to 'zoom in' for a rehearsal on Monday. Good camaraderie and some singing, too. Well done **Chris** and **Thom** for keeping it working so well.



Zoom-based rehearsals, supplementing the website tutorials are still quite new to Choir members but Chris and Thom will be quite pleased by how many of us got the software going. (Apologies, by the way, if VotV missed a couple of attendees in the montage.)

Here's **David Rodgers**, first tenor. He's clearly printed out his score and is studying it whilst singing his part.

And below, this is **Chris Rigg**, one of the basses, likewise focusing on the score.



Here's the plan, says Thom...

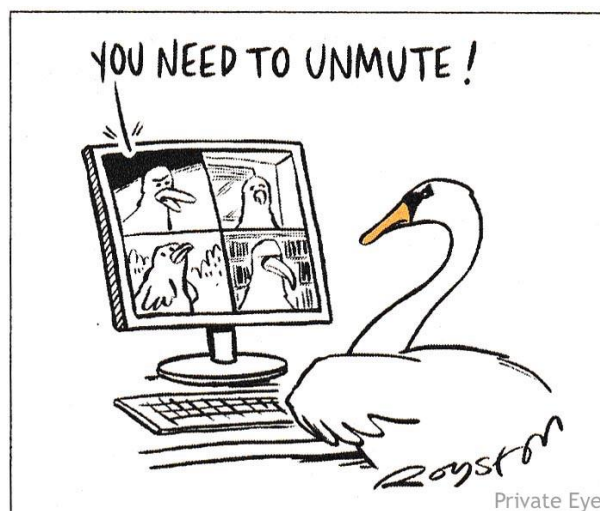
'We are going to run both tenor groups together every second week and in between joint rehearsals of baritones and basses.



That gives us the scope for a longer rehearsal - a one hour session.

Of, course the fist tenors can sing their parts when I'm rehearsing the second tenors etc, because singers will normally be 'muted'. That is, they'll hear me and the backing track but not each other. At the moment the technology doesn't allow us to be synched.

It's a long way short of meeting up in real life but, as you tell me - and I agree - it's a lot better than not meeting up at all.'



The next rehearsals will run as follows:-

Monday 27th July - Baritones & Basses

7.30 - 8.45pm

Monday 3rd August - T1 and T2 -same time

(These sessions will include a warm up from 7.30 to 7.45pm which any member can join, if he wishes.)

Good news ...

Second tenor, **Tom Law**, has been in touch.




*"Just to let you know we had a little boy born Thursday 16th July at 6:37pm in HRI and weighing 7 pound 9. We've called him **Freddie** Thomas Law.*

Both Emma and Freddie are doing fine and Betsy is 'bedsores' with him."

Congratulations

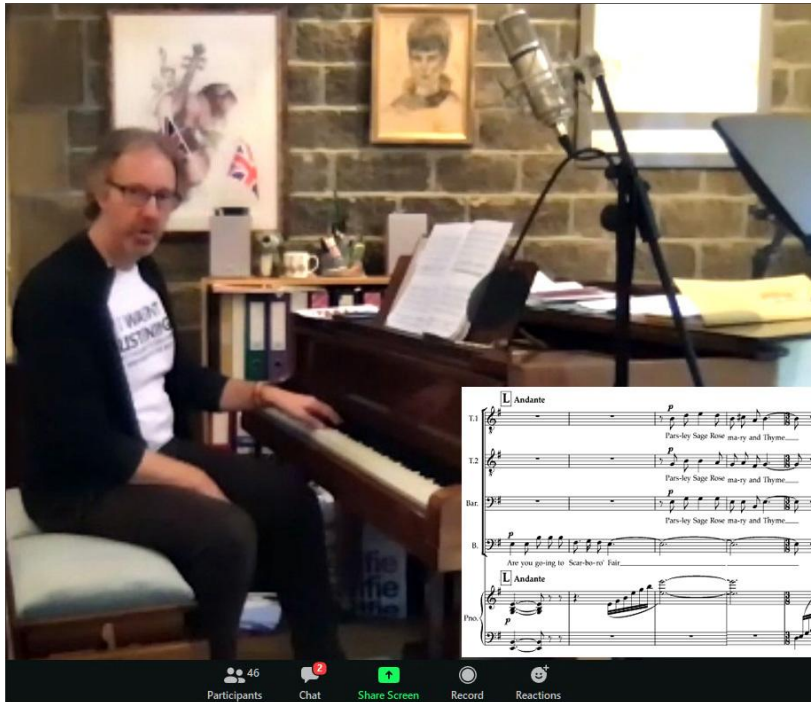


...and Town are staying up, too

Championship: the following day - Friday 17th			Full-time	
	2	–	1	
Huddersfield				West Brom
C. Willock 4'				D. O'Shea 42'
E. S. Rowe 86'				



Scarborough Fair



One of Thom and Chris's main tasks in the full choir rehearsal was to introduce the '**Yorkshire Medley**' to members. He told us, that while it's a mostly familiar set of melodies, the version we are to learn includes not only a fiendishly difficult and inventive piano part for Chris to grapple with, but also a range of harmonies that will not be familiar to most.

He took us through an initial run-through of the piece, drawing our attention to some of the chords and suspensions that give the piece its structure, drama and musical interest. And we got to sing through it, too!

As Thom took us through the piece, taking particular notice of the new setting to the old folk song, '**Scarborough Fair**' it triggered for your editor another wave of melancholy that the Choir's annual trip to perform in Scarborough won't be happening this year.

We were to be at the seaside on August 22nd singing at Scarborough Music Festival in the hall at Queen Street, as the guests of social entrepreneur and arts dynamo, **Christine Cox**. Ah well, it'll have to be 2021.

Should have been singing by the seaside ...

This picture shows the Scarborough sea front in 1891. It's a clip from a super 'time travelling' video by a chap called **James Fox**, which starts with various contemporary features of the town then travels back to show us what they used to be like.

Give it a look.

It's terrific.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1prlUHdujQ&list=PLj4f3q5G7Djc41ityjed9WLMJgooyDMEx&index=63&t=0s>



Lockdown reprieve

Got to within 6 feet of our delightful third granddaughter, **Cleo**, on Sunday for the first time in several months

Lovely!

I guess half the Choir has been feeling similar separation pains.



Sing into the funnel please: inside the Covid-19 lab hoping to declare singing safe

Britain's 40,000 choirs have all been silenced, brass and woodwind players too. The Guardian meets the scientists racing to find out exactly how dangerous blowing instruments and singing are.



Now do a jazz version of Happy Birthday ... aerosol science researcher Marina Finnermore taking part in the project.
Photographs: Christian Sinibaldi/The Guardian

Declan Costello, an ear, nose and throat surgeon with an interest in voice disorders and a side career as a tenor, is looking back on the year. "Six months ago, if you'd said, 'You're not going to be doing any clinical work or singing, and your mates who are professional singers are going to be driving Tesco vans instead, and you're going to be in an orthopaedic theatre on a Sunday morning watching flutes being played into funnels', I would have thought you were mad."

On this particular Sunday we are indeed in an operating theatre dressed in scrubs. No one's on the operating table, though. Instead, Sue Thomas, a player with the London Philharmonic is playing Happy Birthday into devices that are measuring the size and number of droplets and aerosol particles she generates. Around her hover researchers led by aerosol specialist **Jonathan Reid**, professor of chemistry at Bristol University. As Thomas plays, they carefully reposition the funnels and take measurements.



'Higher risk?' ... researchers assess the dangers of saxophone-playing.

All of this is to discover how dangerous singing and playing woodwind and brass instruments are in the spread of Covid 19. Serious outbreaks of the virus were linked to choirs from countries including South Korea and the Netherlands this spring. Most notable was the terrible case of a choir rehearsal in Skagit County, Washington state, on 10 March. Out of 61 attending practice, 52 people fell ill. Two died.

Given these tragic events, singing, as well as woodwind and brass playing, have been regarded as “higher risk” in England and by many other administrations. And, although professional rehearsals and outdoor performances are now allowed under strictly limited circumstances in England – somewhat lagging behind other parts of Europe – the guidelines issued earlier this month specifically forbid amateurs from “singing in groups or in front of audiences”.

Yet there is no secure, peer-reviewed data on the dangers of singing itself – taken in isolation, that is, from other potential contributors to outbreaks, such as close contact, shared drinks and snacks, as well as poor ventilation. It is a question on which the livelihoods of professional musicians and the enjoyment of audiences depend, not to mention the wellbeing and emotional health of thousands of amateur singers in Britain.



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

The study that Costello has set up with Reid and other colleagues – funded by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and sponsored by Public Health England – aims to insert some facts into the discussion. The researchers hope to publish their findings in a matter of weeks – incredibly fast by the usual standards of peer-reviewed academic publishing.

“At the moment,” says Costello, “the government are having to operate on a pretty precautionary principle. No sound science has been done in this area. They saw these clusters in choirs at the beginning of the pandemic, and, as public health experts, it was obviously their duty to make sure none of that was replicated elsewhere. So they felt they had to lock down singing. Trying to persuade them to unlock singing will be determined by what the science tells us.”

There’s even less known for sure about droplets and aerosol particles produced by woodwind and brass, bar one piece of work on the vuvuzela (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0020086>), and a couple of other recent studies that were neither peer-reviewed nor published in scientific journals. Costello, Reid and their collaborators hope to provide much needed data in this area, too.

Twenty-five professional singers are being tested during the experiments, and 15 wind and brass players. The instrumentalists are also gamely singing for the researchers, doubling up as the experiment’s sample of untrained vocalists. “I don’t mind,” says Sue Thomas before she launches into song. “I’m Welsh.” The reason we are in an orthopaedic theatre is that researchers are taking



advantage of its “laminar” air flow, an exceptionally clean system that helps prevent infections in a surgical setting. It means the team can be sure that every particle detected comes from the singing or playing itself, since there is nothing else floating about in the atmosphere.

There are high hopes that the study will result in a further unlocking of singing.



Leslie East, president of the Association of British Choral Directors, says there are 40,000 choirs in Britain.

For a lot of people, says East, especially the elderly, belonging to a choir is the most important thing in their life: “Choirs bind communities together.” Singing is a lifelong practice, enjoyed by everyone from young children to those in their 90s. It’s a world in which amateur and professional cannot easily be untangled..

“Choirs are like families,” says **David Crown**, who conducts several, including the 110-strong Cheltenham Bach Choir. He had been preparing them for a performance of **Rachmaninov’s Vespers** (CVMVC sings the ‘**Bogoroditse Devo**’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNW2bSG0EXs> from this, quite regularly.) in Tewkesbury Abbey when lockdown came. “Choirs are such a huge part of the musical fabric of this country,” he says. “I always say that there’s a choir for everyone, you can always find your slot.”

Large-scale choral societies operate by funding a professional conductor and soloists out of subscriptions paid by amateur members. A 110-member choral society, subject to ordinary social distancing and with some elderly or vulnerable members, sounds like a tricky proposition at the moment. And that’s even before you factor in the possible risk posed by aerosol particles.



Singing is so important to people, spiritually, emotionally and physically. **Tom Daggett** works in St Paul’s Cathedral and also runs **Hackney Children’s Choir**. During lockdown he’s been working with 70 children a week on Zoom. But it’s not the same: fatigue is setting in. If the pandemic hadn’t struck, the children would have been singing at the cathedral for a group of African bishops. “There’s a physical absence,” he says. “There’s a buzz you get from making music in a shared space.”



The stakes are high, then, for the research project. People across the UK long to sing together again. But Costello is keen to manage expectations. “Spiritually, emotionally, physically,” he says, “singing is so important to people. But it all depends on the results. “I myself would dearly love to be able to sing again,” he says, “but in a safe way. The results of this study will be entirely objective and the process for peer review will mean that everything is open. Although I would be upset if singing were locked down even more, it’s my duty to make sure the results are as transparent as they can be. If it turns out singing is dangerous, we need to know about it.”

Edited extract from Guardian G2 of July 22nd 2020



Colne Valley Male Voice Choir stuck in limbo
no live rehearsals - no performances

“Tous les choses, c’est du rythme”

‘**Everything is rhythm**’ says the chap who introduces this fabulous film about traditional music in West Africa.

CVMVC use the ‘**Djembe**’ **drums** in various of our performances. See how these ‘talking drums’ are made and how people with rhythm in their very bones, with skills learned from their earliest childhoods, articulate their daily life in music and dance.

It’s quite a long snippet - and one suspects - much of this village culture is disappearing but it’s a super watch.

This film is set in one-time francophone West Africa. It portrays the people of Baro, a rural area in eastern-central **Guinea**. We are with the **Malinke** people.



Your Editor and his partner, Cate, spent three years in Northern Nigeria, where English was one of the official languages. As in the film, the people were mainly Muslim but many older tribal cultures were retained and integrated. So much of this film evokes, for him, warm memories of Kontagora in the 1970’s.



Photos: John Clark



To view click here or on the screen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVPLluBy9CY>

Flashmob thanks health care workers with Nessun Dorma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt1qsloRFcM&feature=youtu.be>



A tenor, leads in a flash mob to the courtyard of a hospital and begins to sing.

Medical workers start to open the windows to enjoy a terrific performance of one of Puccini's best-loved arias from his opera Turandot. The performers - opera singers with a chorus of medical doctors want to express their thanks to all the health care staff at work in the hospital.

It was a message from bass, **Brian Fairclough** that led VotV to unearth this gem. Brian thought it was Italians thanking their health workers but it turns out that it was a tenor, **Leszek Świdziński** from the **Polish Royal Opera** accompanied by **Medicantus Medical Doctors' Choir** serenading at a hospital in the capital's **Bielany** district of the Polish Capital of **Warsaw**.

No matter the geography - the sentiment that moved the health staff to tears - would have been understandable anywhere the pandemic has struck.

Giacomo Puccini's aria climaxes with the soaring proclamation: "I will win! I will win! I will win!" considered to be a fitting rallying cry in the battle against coronavirus.

Andrzej Matusiak, director of the Stołeczna Estrada cultural institution which organised the event, said: "We know that many words of thanks have been said to medical staff, but in the current situation there is never too much recognition."



Michael advises: make time

'With stress and confusion around us in this difficult period of our lives...', suggests baritone, **Michael Parkinson** '... it is encouraging to have a reminder to stop and think of better things and better times.

Now you could claim we've had too much time on our hands just lately. But maybe - as Michael reckons - we should focus less on our daily anxieties and more on the beauty that surrounds us.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?

No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep and cows:

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:

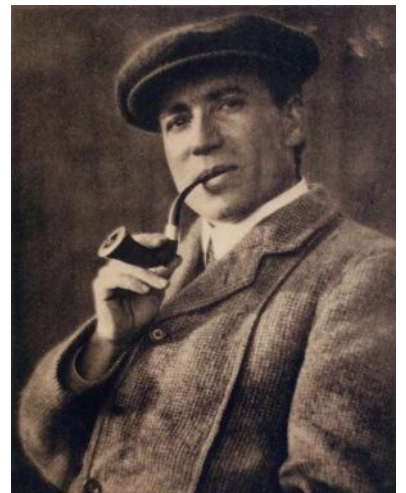
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance:

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began?

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Welsh poet **William Henry Davies** or W H Davies (1871 - 1940) was born in Newport, Monmouthshire, Wales, the son of a publican. After an apprenticeship as a picture-frame maker and a series of labouring jobs, he travelled to America, first to New York and then to the **Klondike**. He returned to England after having lost a foot jumping a train in Canada, where he led a poverty-stricken life in London lodging houses and as a pedlar in the country. He married in 1923, Emma, who was much younger than he was. His first poems were published when he was 34. Most of his poetry is on the subject of nature or life on the road and exhibits a natural simple, earthy style.



I'm sorry I haven't a clue

Very few episodes of this most enjoyable Radio 4 Show were ever filmed. Tim Brooke-Taylor died in April this year and two of his co-performers, Jeremy Hardy and host, Humphrey Lyttleton are long since departed .

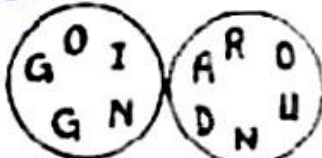


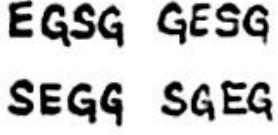


Enjoy classic innuendo and sheer fun

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ohQt_P_wpU

August Quiz

Can you find the hidden phrases in these 16 little pictures? I've given you the first one

1. <u>stand</u> <u>I</u> <u>I understand</u>	2. <u>man</u> <u>board</u> _____	3. <u>cover</u> <u>agent</u> _____	4. <u>wear</u> <u>long</u> _____
5. <u>EZ</u> <u>iiii</u> _____	6. <u>i</u> <u>8</u> _____	7. <u>his iii</u> <u>O</u> _____	8.  _____
9. CHAIR _____	10. TIRE _____	11. T O W N _____	12.  _____
13. b sick ed _____	14. DKI _____	15.  _____	16.  _____

Music Hubs

These kids are learning to play the djembe. They are doing it through their **Arts Council** supported 'Music Hub'



Head of **Musica Kirklees**, our very own **Thom Meredith**, does sterling work keeping music education in our area going against a challenging national funding background.

Musica Kirklees delivers tuition to over 5000 pupils in Kirklees through Whole Class Ensemble Tuition and a further 2400 pupils in small group instrumental tuition. Twice a year our teachers form recital or 'Learn to play' demo groups and give live performances in schools, bringing live music to a further 6000 pupils. It has over 70 members of staff, most teachers, with a small administrative team based at the offices in Beast Market, Huddersfield.

For this year it seems Musica Kirklees has secured an allocation of £666,802, which seems a generous contribution. But as soon as your editor begins to think about it, he realises it's way short and other funding streams, probably equally pressured, are required - particularly if the service is to meet the needs of **all** our sons and daughters not just those of the children of more affluent.

See the music hub picture from their promo.
<https://youtu.be/XI5ATH3eXCo>



Been a bit wet up Wessendon

Many Choir members like to tramp the moors around the Colne Valley. This picture shows that this summer has been quite wet so far. But as the saying goes, 'There's no such thing as bad weather - only bad clothing'.



More of the August picture - just for the pleasure of it



Photo Lendl Sifaka

Send me a picture, tell me your news....



At this time of social isolation, VotV readers, whether singers or audience-members, can no longer meet each other.

But we can keep in touch.



Let the VotV Editor know if something happens to you, that might be of interest and has some - connection - however tenuous - to the Choir. Doesn't matter if you are not very confident writing, I'll help you put into publishable shape.

Voice of the Valley Editor: John C Clark
Ring Choir Secretary, Jenny, on 01484 645192
to join us or join our Readers' List or for other queries

And see our website to get the full story

colnevalleymvc.org.uk