



# SiME NEWSLETTER



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## Dear SiME Friends!

By Motje Wolf

We sing through turbulent times. Since the last newsletter more lockdowns were imposed on many European Country. Our thoughts are with all of you where joint music making was impacted. Diwali, Hanukkah, Christmas... many religious festivals are impacted, too. We, as SiME steering committee, are mindful of the difficulties you experience and the sterling work that you're all doing out in the field.

Therefore, we invited you to share with us your stories of making music in lockdown. We received only one, very hopeful, story from Heike Henning. So we have also written down our experiences: Sanna from Finland, Johann from Italy, Helmut from Austria and myself from England. We hope (actually, we don't!) that these reports mirror your experiences.]

We also have good news about the upcoming EAS conference, as our symposium was accepted. This means that we will be able to discuss with you additionally to our open space. We hope many of you are planning to attend the conference.

We wish you a peaceful break. If you celebrate Christmas, have a good one. And for all of you a more happy 2021 filled with song!



fltr: Sanna, Johann, Helmut, Motje

## Updates

### SiME Facebook Group

by SiME Steering Committee

SiME has its own Facebook group. You can join it by following this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/165083438168254/> or by typing “EAS: Singing in Music Education” into the Facebook search bar. It is a space to share ideas, comments and questions around Singing in Music Education. All members and interested friends are welcome to the group. Come and join our discussions!

### Next EAS conference

by SiME Steering Committee

Come and join our SiME sessions during the EAS conference 2021. We are looking forward to "seeing" you all there. We will have an open space where we will be joined by Richard Jeffreys (UK) as our special guest and hold a symposium to talk about Singing in Covid times. Here is more information <https://eas-music.org/2021-freiburg/>

### Next Newsletter

by SiME Steering Committee

Our next newsletter will come out around July 2021. We will be looking for reports from the EAS conference. We are also still looking for book reviews (get in touch if you're interested).

If you have something you'd like to share with the members of SiME, please email it until 15 June 2021 to Motje Wolf ([mwolf@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:mwolf@dmu.ac.uk)). Thank you.

## Singing in Times of Corona

### Reports from Europe

by SiME Steering Committee

Following on from our sessions in the EAS online networking event in the summer, we asked you how you are and what the state of singing is in your respective country. In the following, we have five personal reflections on what's happening in Austria, England, Finland and Italy.

### No Choir because of Covid? – Not with us!

by Heike Henning

We are a young choir, not only because teens between 9 and 18 years are participating. Also, the Chorgemeinschaft ConTakt e.V. – our official club name – was just founded in 2020 in the middle of this global pandemic. Earlier this year, we were part of a bigger choir club. We decided to found our own club to have the ideal structure and to fit our needs the best as possible. Now we meet every Wednesday for our online rehearsals with our music director Prof. Dr. Heike Henning. It was born out of necessity of the pandemic and for sure, singing as a choir online has some downsides: we had to overcome technical issues at the beginning. We also cannot hear us as a group together in the video calls, and this is what we really miss! On the other side we stay in contact, we keep on singing and keep on our voice training and Prof. Dr. Heike Henning give us individual feedback. Our Choir & the music help us to get through this problematic time. In our short history we already won a contest with a song about bees, composed for us, further we composed a rap song with our music director Prof. Dr. Heike Henning and prepared a first concert set. We burn for this first concert which hopefully can take place sooner than later. We will sing and rock the stages again. We are interested in finding partner choirs. Perhaps someone will meet us online to sing together? And we want to invite everyone to sing an international version of "silent night" on december 24th with us. If you are interested in this, please contact us at [mail@heike-henning.com](mailto:mail@heike-henning.com)

## Singing in times of Corona

### Austria

by Helmut Schaumberger

Dear friends and colleagues! As in other European countries, Austria was facing a second lockdown until recently. All schools were closed, as well as shops and restaurants. The whole country is struggling with this situation, but there are also many people who became very creative in dealing with this situation. As far as I can see, Austrian music teachers are already very good in teaching music via digital tools, they do their best and started implementing a lot of new material and tools into their work. One interesting effect of this pandemic was that from the beginning of the winter term all Austrian school books (and even music books) were accessible for free in digital versions. However, when I look at the singing activities in and outside schools, I have to admit that the situation is sad. Many choirs do not practice any more and when I look at the first month of this school year, I have to report that many teachers did not dare singing with their children any more. They were frightened and started replacing singing through other activities. I personally think, that we right now need three measures to cope with the situation: 1) making sure that the Pandemic is defeated, 2) making sure, that music teachers and choir conductors stay in touch with their singing groups and 3) finding ways to not let the motivation slip.

### England

by Motje Wolf

Here in England, we have just come out of a second full lockdown. Professional choirs had already been rehearsing for a few weeks after the summer, but non-professional choirs had just started to rehearse again in person and then the lockdown made us all go back to Zoom. There was a lot of feeling of despair and hopelessness amongst the choir director community. I started a new position as Director of Music at All Saints Church in Loughborough leading an adult and a children's choir and being in charge of the music generally in the Church the week the second lockdown began. So the beginning of my job meant producing audio recordings of the choirs, rehearsing on Zoom, singing live broadcast Services on my own and updating risk assessments, all that while planning for Advent and Christmas Services which were uncertain to include music.



## Singing in times of Corona

### England continued...

Both my choirs have taken it in their stride with the adult choir seriously rehearsing on Zoom and regularly feeding back how important their regular rehearsal is for them. The children's choir is so engaged over the Internet and even learnt some new repertoire (in Spanish and German!) which they successfully recorded to be played at the second of Advent Service.

On 2nd Dec we came out of Lockdown, my region went straight into the highest tier (tier 3) of restrictions which are not much different to the actual lockdown. Guidance trickled through bit by bit and choir singing is now allowed again provided social distancing is in place and people do not mingle afterwards. In tier 3, a further risk assessment is needed based on the individual circumstances. So, as we would like to be certain that our choir singers are healthy for Christmas, we took the difficult decision to prolong our quiet Services and Zoom rehearsals. We will be singing live for the Mayor's carol Service on Monday 21st of December and that will be the first time I will hear the choir! This Service will also be the first performance with my professional ensemble that I founded just before the first lockdown. We kept going with the odd rehearsal when we were allowed. Even on the professional level, this was very difficult with different singers coming from different regions with different restrictions. Schools and universities have been open throughout the second lockdown.

Teachers have been incredibly active to share resources with and without singing. Facebook groups sprung to life and there is a real sense of support within the community which is a very positive outcome of the situation.

It still will be a very different Christmas (as it was for Diwali and Hanukkah) with restrictions that could be brought in at any time. There are critical voices that question the government's decision of easing the lockdown during the Christmas Period. The government guidance on Carol Singing, which is now allowed with the congregation as long as that is done outside and social distancing is in place, has been welcomed by many people, though, and will help the feel of some Christmas cheer. Interestingly, I'm following many discussions on local groups, where voices are louder and louder asking for the formation of new choirs and collective singing. I'm wondering if people start to appreciate the power of singing more?

## Singing in times of Corona

### Finland

by Sanna Salminen, conductor of Vox Aurea

Greetings from Jyväskylä, Finland! In Vox Aurea -choir the singers are 11-18 years old. Our regulations for pandemic have changed throughout the whole period. We have tried online-rehearsals for a three months period, singing outdoors, singing in small groups, singing with safety distance, singing with masks on and a hybrid solution: some choristers online and some in rehearsals in a big space with safety distance and masks on. This all and constant changes have been very demotivating for the choristers. During singing with masks on we have noticed the relevance of facial expressions for the feelings of belonging and musical expression. Anyway, we experienced a miracle in August: as the choir came together after a long period of distant working for a five days' intensive rehearsal and a CD-recording it was easy to feel the kind of flow and belonging that made it possible to record the whole CD in one weekend. The atmosphere in music became very intensive. The choristers had really longed for singing together! We have as well had a collaboration with Piedmont East Bay Childrens' Choir from San Francisco and sung a streamed workshop-concert online in a choir laboratorium in Lithuania. Right now vocal ensembles from our choir are touring on the back yards of senior citizens singing Christmas songs. So, we have tried to welcome all possibilities for singing although it has demanded a lot of imagination and extra effort. Hoping to get back to as normal times as possible soon! This autumn the schools have been open in Finland. Some areas made restrictions for singing in schools but in most places it has been allowed to sing and play instruments as long as safety is taken into account (distances, disinfections, group sizes etc.). The music teachers' groups in social media have been active in producing and sharing new material for changing situations. It has been heartwarming to notice the collegial good will and culture of helping to take place in the middle of hardships!

## Singing in times of Corona

### Italy

by Johann van der Sandt

Much of Italy is now in lockdown after the Covid-19 death toll hit a new record. Italy is now split into three zones: red for high risk, then orange and yellow. The national lockdown is proving to bear results, but the forecast for the Christmas time is indeed bleak. Shops and restaurants are open, but with limited hours and services. No Christmas markets, no musical activities, no theatre and no artistic activities may be held. It is indeed an artistic (vocal) drought!

The situation is of course also different from region to region, but with pretty much the same situation for all: no singing!

Because of COVID-19, Italian singers from all ages can only continue to work online by using live streaming. The situation that we are in, the absence of direct contact with one's singing community is being transformed by banning the silence and substituting it with zooming, skyping.... all in an effort to make music, and remain in contact with each other through singing – this can be seen as an outing of Italy's inner emotions embodying a quality that is emblematic of the time. The fact that singing and musicking are more ideally done in the presence of others, is not even an issue, everyone accepts the situation that we are in, and tries to make the best out of it. It is as if the 2nd lockdown brought about a better understanding and acceptance of the situation.

In schools (if in presence teaching is happening), there are to be no singing or no band practices. The many amateur brass bands and many church and amateur choirs' voices have been silenced. There are some groups that are rehearsing online, and try to keep the singers' spirits up, and work on projects that might continue in the new year when there is hope again on normalizing our lives.

But for now, we are again in lockdown and singing online, many virtual concerts are again to be heard, shared via social media and the internet.

Singing is indeed stronger than the virus!



unibzVoices singing "We are not alone" as a token of solidarity with all singers worldwide.