



Summer 2020
Vol. 19, No. 12 (#228)
www.bigchiefchorus.org



A Different Time

By Eric Domke, BCC President

The Summer of Singing... that Wasn't

As "Super-Spreaders" we enthusiastic barbershop singers have been sidelined by an invisible foe. With our sing-outs and shows cancelled for the foreseeable future the diehards in our tribe have turned to Zoom to regain a virtual sense of normal. It isn't working. Chords don't ring the same and bandwidth discrepancies make syncing our lyrics impossible. This barbershopper, for one, misses the sublime joys of singing live with my harmonious brothers.

Zooming, though not ideal, has been a helpful venue for continuing rehearsals. We are able to learn some music together and keep up a bit with each other's news and personal goings on. Attendance has actually been pretty steady in our zoom meetings and it is good to see each other's facial hair growing. Director Tom Blue has been hosting our Zoom meetings and preparing song lists while Jeff Doig has been providing audio and video of our songs so we can sync our voices individually to them.

Quartets aren't rehearsing together either. OverTime has been zooming, and discussing loose future plans, but since we can't get together and really be productive developing our craft, the enthusiasm is waning and the rust is accumulating. To hold some of the rust at bay we can sing on our own and keep learning our tracks, but getting back together sooner rather than later is definitely the hope.

We really can't say when it will be safe to resume in-person rehearsals and display our artform in public. There has been no guidance as to when choruses can resume normal rehearsals, and concerning choruses with an average age around 70, it may mean precautions need to continue for quite a while.

For those who are able and would like to join a virtual chorus, our own southern gentleman, John Cowlshaw, would like to hear from you.



Yes this is a different time we are going through. Never have we experienced a pandemic of this kind before. It has been a challenge for everyone to experience the isolation and the uncertainty of where things will go next.

I believe things will work out and we will move on. Will the Covid-19 go away? No but neither will the flu. Will there be a vaccine? Yes but there is a flu vaccine as well and people still get the flu. The flu vaccines every year are a guesstimate of what strains are most likely to be around. This educated guess is the strain that the flu shot should protect against. I believe it will be the same situation with the Covid vaccine. It may protect against some strains but not others.

Will we be able to meet once again to sing together? It depends on our confidence in the belief that we can stay safe. Life is a risk. Every time we drive somewhere we take a risk. When we approached a girl we took a risk – will she like me? Will she marry me? Should I buy that car? That stock? Should I reach out to others and show them I care? Will I be accepted?

Know that sooner or later we must decide what is safe? Will a vaccine give me safety?

Every one of us needs to feel appreciated and cared for. I care for every one of you as a Big Chief Chorus member. I am so grateful to have a big circle of friends like you, like my neighbors, like my church family. It is a comfort to know I can reach out for help – via knowledge shared, a friend to snowmobile with, sing with, help fix my burned up electrical wires in my home, do a financial audit with or meet for a chorus Zoom meeting.

Speaking of our Zoom meetings – it was nice to have 23 singers this Tuesday 7-24 participate in the Big Chief Chorus Zoom meeting. I took a screen shot of our Zoom meeting 5-12-20 and noticed a Battie Mixon was attending. There is a Battie Mixon Fishing Rodeo story in the 2017 Cumberland Times. It appears as though the Battie Mixon Fishing Rodeo is an annual event in Maryland. Also a Michael Mixon is in the Barbershop Harmony Society, but no Battie Mixon.

It is interesting how others learn of our meetings and may attend. Maybe he is now a local friend and is considering joining us when we get back together. I am forever the optimist. Stay positive and we'll be together again.

How to Take Care of your Voice During Quarantine

<https://bandzoogleg.com/blog/how-to-take-care-of-your-voice-during-quarantine>

posted on June 4, 2020 by Ellisa Sun
in [Music Career Advice](#)

submitted by Tom Blue

I know we say this a lot, but at this point there's really no doubt about it: musicians are living in a new "normal." We're limiting our time in (or banished altogether from) public spaces, Zoom-ing instead of meeting for coffee dates, and live streaming our concerts. It's easy to lose track of what day it is, so it's inevitably easy to lose track of our physical, mental, and emotional health too. If you've lost sense of routine or you've been feeling low lately, that's also normal—and *it's okay*. I'm right there with you, and we're all feeling it. Enter: the healing power of singing! Singing is a natural antidepressant and known to help with stress, anxiety, and your immune system. The important thing is to ultimately work towards a sense of routine in order to stay healthy and keep your voice in shape during quarantine. So here are a few tips for you.

Hydrate

"Make sure you're drinking lots of water and hydrating, plus hot tea and honey always help. I recommend Traditional Medicinals throat coat tea with manuka honey because manuka honey kills bacteria on the vocal cords," says Nashville-based soul/jazz artist and vocal coach MELD. MELD has a weekly live teaching series on Instagram, covering topics like vocal techniques,

songwriting, and career advice for musicians. So she knows what she's talking about. You can also drink melon water, brothy soups, and eat water-rich fruits and foods like cucumbers, iceberg lettuce, strawberries, grapes, etc. And especially now that the summer is coming—where sweating a lot can threaten your body with grave water loss—pick up a humidifier to keep the air around you moist.

Warm up (but don't overdo it)

Warming up is crucial for singers. As much as you want to though, waking up and immediately belting out Whitney Houston tunes is never good for your vocal cords. So resist all your urges to pair Whitney with your morning coffee. Lip trills and "mms" are a good place to start; then consider singing through a straw (more on that below). "These exercises don't stress the cords; but rather help to massage and strengthen the muscles around the cords so they're extra strong for when you sing!" says MELD. Keeping your warm ups gentle will be better for your voice overall. Remember, your voice is a muscle (literally and figuratively!). You wouldn't do 500 squats before running a marathon. Instead, do some gentle stretching and mobility exercises first to ease into it.

Ease up on drinking and smoking

Speaking of easing into things... You might have to cut back on those quarantine vices we've come to rely on to get us through the stress. I'm talking about alcohol, which decreases your body's antidiuretic hormone production and dries you up, and smoking, which fills your lungs with toxins (among other things). "Drinking and smoking are two of the worst things for your vocal cords. They dry out your cords and make them swollen. When vocal cords are swollen, they cannot stretch and expand as well to help you hit higher notes. Dry vocal cords don't phonate (move to produce sound) as well, resulting in a scratchier sounding voice," says Gracie Calvaneso, holistic vocal coach and singer/songwriter based in Nashville. If you're going to drink, remember to hydrate, hydrate, and hydrate.

Sing through a straw

If you've never heard of this technique, you're about to have your mind blown. I was first introduced to straw exercises from my teacher Whitney Nichole as a vocal instructor at Songbird Studios. This is a tool many public speakers use when their voices get tired from projecting and speaking all day. In the simplest terms, singing different pitches through a small straw helps to recalibrate your vocal cords and "trick" them into a

resting state. Sing through a straw throughout the day to keep your vocal cords feeling rested and fabulous. Do these exercises before and after singing songs or playing shows. Check out this video from professor Ingo Titze for an introduction to straw exercises. When you're ready to try it and you want to go the eco-friendly route, check out Whitney's stainless steel singing straws.

Be kind to yourself

No, seriously. "Most importantly, this is a stressful time. So, make sure you're meditating and relaxing as much as possible," MELD tells me. "The more we can stretch, relax and calm our bodies—the more we can find ease when we sing." Finally, here's a tip from yours truly: as a vocal coach with 7+ years of experience, I've learned to treat my voice like a dear friend. I find that when my mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being is in harmony, my voice feels at its best. Our unique voices are part of our unique bodies, and everyone is different. Listen to yourself and honor your needs.

Ellisa Sun cuts out her heart and leaves it on the stage, which is why she never wears white. Her music is a unique blend of genres spanning R&B, jazz, and pop that creates a soulful, textured sound. Ellisa is originally from Los Angeles and now resides in Nashville, TN.

Virtual Choirs

By John Cowlshaw

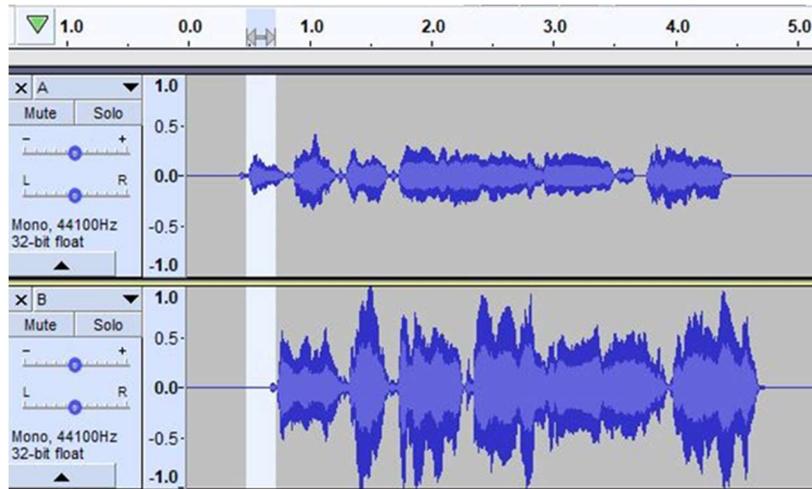
The combined choirs of the Unitarian Universalist fellowships of Coastal Georgia and Statesboro Georgia sang 12 anthems this spring as a virtual choir. How did we pull it off?

In a "real" physical choir everyone hears the others singing and watches the director directing. In a virtual choir, everyone is at home singing alone. The hearing and watching must be replaced by listening to a recording they can match, as they sing along. I call this the "template" track. It may be a professional recording, or it may be me laying down a track. Sometimes multi-tracks.

So they listen to that track and sing along to it and record their voice on a cell phone, perhaps using the app "Voice Recorder." Then they email the track to me.

As I receive the tracks, I put them into a program called Audacity. (Other possibilities are Garage Band or Reaper.)

Here is a screen shot of two singers singing "Twinkle, twinkle little star."



You can see that singer "B" is too late and too loud compared to singer "A." With the tools of Audacity I can move singer B's track 0.25 seconds to the left, and I can reduce his volume by about 6 db.

That may be all I do. Depends on how much time I want to spend.

- (a) B's 1st syllable "Twink-" is almost twice as long as A's; Audacity has a tempo tool where I can compress the length by half.
- (b) This picture doesn't show pitch, but listening to the two tracks individually, I can tell that A was a little sharp on star; I can adjust that pitch.

Finally, I can add a little "reverb" to sound like we're singing in a cathedral. Or maybe just an auditorium.

A good tutorial is at <https://delraestudios.lpages.co/i-can-virtual-choir-and-so-can-you/>

One problem. When the singer listens and sings, the track he/she is listening to will be heard on their recording...unless they wear earphones.

All this is about forming an audio choir. A video choir requires an additional level, recorded during or after the audio recording. I have gone half-way by posting static selfies of all the vocalists singing "loo."

If you have an article or pictures you would like to submit for a future newsletter, please email them to: jknappslbc@att.net

Remembering Bill Dabbs

June 20, 2020



Bill's musical training began with the trumpet, in the church orchestra at Christian Missionary Alliance. This taught him to read and transpose music. In 1971 he saw an ad – Men, Do You Like to Sing? The Pontiac

barbershop chorus was meeting in the old Metropolitan Club on Baldwin at that time. Bill sang Lead for seventeen years. John Smith, noting his pitch problems on high notes, suggested Baritone. But Bill couldn't get the hang of it, until he taught himself the bass clef, and until Dick Johnson helped him out. Now he prefers Baritone, because "you can hear the chords." Bill has served on the Executive Board more years than he can recall – as secretary, treasurer, and as president. Bill's primary quartet experience was the registered Model A Ford, with Larry Hornsby as Lead, Bill Nevaux singing Tenor, and Bob Woodward at Bass. Recently, he had a ball singing with Celebration (Bruce Brede – Lead, Greg Moss – Bass, and Jack Teuber – Tenor). The house Bill and Betty built in 1956 in Waterford remains Bill's residence to this day, though his handyman hobby has resulted in a number of modifications. Bill has two daughters, Diane, a psychiatric nurse in Pa, and Karen, in NJ, whose husband's role as a pilot for Spirit Airline yields some free flights for Bill. When he's not singing, Bill is a volunteer at St. Joe's Hospital, and enjoys reading – science fiction, mysteries, and the many magazines he receives. ~ ~ John Cowlshaw

(from Smoke Signalsa)

"Bill Dabbs was a long time member of the Pontiac-Waterford Chapter. He left the chorus about six years ago to live with his daughter in New Jersey. I appreciate the time I had to spend with Bill."

~ ~ Jack Teuber

"Yes, Bill was one of the really good guys! A quiet gentlemen in all respects. He did a lot for our chapter. I don't think I was aware of this incidence regarding the Chrysler pension plan however."

~ ~ Roger Holm

Chapter Leadership...

Director: Thomas Blue (248) 705 7952

Assistant Directors: Mike Frye; Jeff Doig

Section leaders: G. Moss, R. Sturdy, J. Doig, P. Hefner

President: Eric Domke (248) 674-2323

VP-Chapter Development: Fred Pioch (248) 330-2050

VP-Marketing & PR: Jack Teuber (248) 334-3686

VP-Music & Performance, Austin Suthers (248) 722-4464

Secretary: Art Carinci (248) 939-0956

Treasurer: Jim Owens (248) 682-4311

Members at Large: Mazarra, Maxfield, Reed, Sturdy

Bulletin Editor: Jon Knapp – jknappSLBC@att.net

Chorus Calendar

Rehearsals are Tuesday's at 7:30 PM on Zoom...

<https://rochester-k12-mi-us.zoom.us/j/95095710428?pwd=Nml2T25PcEZHWUF2enBsQmE4QU9hdz09>