

Firstly, I am going to remind everyone who is on the 'HYC team'. I am the Manager & Administrator for Henley Youth Choir. I work very closely with our wonderful HYC committee, namely:

- Jo Dickson who: organises our volunteers' rota; writes the agenda & minutes for our half-termly meetings & shares our news with Henley Standard & Henley Herald;
- Wendy Hawkins is our HYC librarian & a volunteer at rehearsals;
- Maureen Smith is a volunteer at rehearsals & assists with projection of words for the Juniors;
- Jan French is another wonderful HYC volunteer who often helps the youngsters in rehearsals & chaperones them at their performances;
- Melissa Maple is our HYC Treasurer, working closely with the HCS Treasurer, Mark Turner;
- And Arthur Weir is HCS/HYC liaison rep who often comes to listen to HYC rehearsals & performances.

Until Coronavirus, Nicky Norminton had also kindly volunteered at HYC Junior rehearsals, assisting with projection & chaperoning too.

Many thanks to all of those mentioned for their voluntary hard work. We really couldn't keep Youth Choir going without them!

Thanks should also go to all the HCS Trustees for their continuous support of HYC. Finally, thanks to Cath Reynolds & Angela Law for their continuing help in updating the HYC information on the HCS website. Our Henley Youth Choir Facebook page has also been up & running for 3 years now, so please can I ask you to go on & 'like' & 'share' us with your Facebook friends if you haven't already. It's a great platform for communicating with our members & also publicising our existence & performances.

Obviously, a huge vote of thanks must be given to our Musical Director of two years, Jessica Norton, & also to Anita D'Attellis (our accompanist) who inspire our youngsters & always try to bring out the best in them.

Last season, 2019-2020, was our sixth, very exciting & successful year for Henley Youth Choir.

On Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November, HYC sang carols to the residents of at Acacia Lodge nursing home late afternoon, followed by a performance at Henley Christmas Festival in Henley town early evening on the same day. Thank you to those of you who came to support HYC by the Christmas tree!

Both HYC choirs then joined forces with HCS at St. Mary's Church in Henley on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December for our afternoon & evening HCS Christmas concerts. We were very excited to be joined by Anna Del Nevo's Henley Suzuki Violin Group in the afternoon.

In the Spring term, HYC had a successful Come and Sing on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2020 including a greatly enjoyed informal performance to parents & pizza to keep them going throughout the event!

We were then due to have an informal HYC Spring Showcase on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March in d:two, following our rehearsals, however Lockdown meant that that couldn't go ahead. Our last in-person rehearsal was on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

During the Summer term, we turned to online HYC rehearsals. They have been a huge success, at what was a difficult time, with a lovely variety of repertoire & good pace to each session. The focus has been members having fun, which is the priority. I have received lots of positive feedback from parents & youngsters. One member of Senior choir commented, "I have really enjoyed the online singing sessions this term as it has helped to stay hopeful during a strange time." & another Senior said, "It's so nice to keep singing during lockdown and to see friends and familiar faces is lovely! And also, being a part of something and still going and having fun is why I have enjoyed it so much!"

Subs were reduced substantially in order to cover our core costs, while we trialled the new online format.

On Thursday 2nd July, HYC held a virtual performance including 6 HYC recordings (2 Junior, 2 Senior, 2 Joint) & 5 live, solo performances. The recordings were brilliantly edited together by Jess and all contributions were very well received by the 57 participants who joined the Zoom! We had invited HCS members, HCS Friends & past HYC members along, together with the current HYC member & their families. The Mayor and Mayoress of Henley – Ken and Dorothy Arlett – thoroughly enjoyed the performance and afterwards they congratulated the Youth Choirs saying, "what a wealth of talent we have in Henley; it was a brilliant evening."

Jessica Norton said, "The Henley Youth Choir this term have shown more commitment and enthusiasm than I ever could have hoped for. It has been wonderful to see their smiling faces at every virtual rehearsal, and to hear their fantastic recordings for our virtual performance! To have over 50 devices tune in to our online concert on Thursday shows the overwhelming support the choir has for their hard work this term. I am so proud of each and every singer who encapsulates how important and joyful singing is."

The HCS Trustees & HYC Committee agreed that HYC sessions should continue online for this Autumn half term but we intend to start Covid-safe in-person rehearsals after half term in November. No decision has been made yet on what will happen at Christmas, however, Henley Festival have asked if we will perform (as we were going to this year) at the Family Day again next July (2021).

On a rather sombre note, HYC has been running at a loss for the last two years and funds continue to diminish. At last count HYC has capital of circa £4000, which (in a normal situation and with the top up from subs) would allow HYC to self-fund for a further year. Given the current situation, it is difficult to know what to predict going forward. However, as funding

opportunities reopen post-pandemic, we are intending to apply for local support & funding opportunities.

We always welcome new members coming along to trial either Juniors or Seniors so, if you know of any youngsters who you think would like to join, then please don't hesitate to encourage them to get in touch. On being asked if they would recommend HYC to their friends, one Senior choir member replied, "DEFINITELY! I love how you don't have to audition, you can make new friends and it's so fun - no pressure and you can actually improve your singing with Jess's AMAZING tips!"

For those of you who didn't manage to join us for our Virtual Summer Performance, I'd like to share a short, snap shot version of the zoom concert, to show you how much fun HYC have managed to have online!

Thank you.