



## Bytown Voices Community Choir President's Report for 2020-2021

What a year it has been! Our last rehearsal together was 10 March 2020, and we have all had to learn new ways to sing. We have had three choral sessions, each carefully put together by our Director, Joan Fearnley, with specific purposes in mind to suit the time and conditions, with well over 80 individuals taking part in one or more sessions. And this is despite losing some longstanding choir friends who preferred to wait for a time when we can all sing together again.

We are hoping we will be able to sing together again in September in some form- and perhaps even before that out of doors. We have already started discussions with St Basil's Church to see how this may be done, and what the safety protocols will be. Our return is going to be dependent on the battle between Ontario's rate of vaccination and the rate of new infections arising from the Delta variant of Covid. We expect that, by September, the government's rules will allow perhaps 30 or 40 singers to meet indoors. It seems much less likely that 60 or 70 will be allowed. This is leading us to plan for a hybrid rehearsal model where half the choir can meet at any one time. We recognise that we will need to be flexible to react to changes in that battle, and we will need to use masks, spacing, ventilation and technical tools to maximise safety and the possibilities of singing together.

Our three sessions- September to December, January to March, and April to June, have kept our choir together despite the fear everyone has of singing alone. And keeping our choir together has rested firmly on the extraordinary work of Joan and her superb sectional coaches Carla, Risa and Lyndsay. They faced a considerable challenge to be able to coach us. How do you coach choristers that you cannot hear? As consummate, talented musicians with highly trained ears, this must have been an immense hurdle. But they succeeded. We were shown the tricky bits, the tempo changes, the awkward jumps that are hard to get- all the things the best coaches show you while, apparently, they play all four parts and sing one or two parts all at once! And all this was done with great good humour and patience.

Our Choir has weathered the calamity of this pandemic better than we could possibly have expected. This is primarily due to Joan's care, thoughtfulness, planning and enthusiasm in putting these three sessions together.

Our Treasurer, Jon Jones, has spent a great deal of time and effort keeping our finances in good order; purchasing our music on-line, controlling the ZOOM we've used for rehearsals and producing three virtual choir productions.

Our website is up-to-date. This has not been a simple task with three sessions this year. We have maintained contact with our longtime members who are waiting for the moment when we will all be singing together again.

We have published a regular *BV Connect* note for our members with all sorts of fun material to help keep our members cheerful when “Stay at home” got a bit tedious.

To ensure continuity for the future, we have decided that we should add two more positions to the Executive Committee for “Members at Large” without specific portfolios, but to bring their enthusiasm for the continued success of our Choir.

We are constituting a “Hybrid Rehearsal Committee” to help Joan and Jon plan and implement a rehearsal model that will be able to take maximum advantage of the changing status of the pandemic.

We all know these are stressful times. I believe the Bytown Voices Choir program has helped us all to mitigate some of that stress.

Have a great summer!

*John Waddington*

President