**Convening #2 of the Greater Boston Choral Community re: COVID-19 (via Zoom)  
5/7/2020, 7:00pm – 8:30pm EST**

**Facilitated by GBCC board members Brad Dumont and Jamie Hillman**

**Key topic questions for meeting:**

- What’s worked well for your choirs these past 7 weeks?

- How are your choirs planning to move forward currently?

- What ideas are there if we cannot return to singing this year?

**Webinar of discussion**, led by The National Association of Teachers of Singing on 5.5.2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFl3GsVzj6Q>

**Brief recap of webinar by Jamie Hillman:**

* It is unsafe to sing/rehearse as a choir at the moment
* Unless there is a vaccine that can be given to people in choirs, there will be 1-2 years until there is normal choral activity

**Brad Dumont’s thoughts and questions from the webinar:**

* What are your thoughts and solutions for moving forward with the information that we have now (recognizing that things may get better in the next few months)?
* What are things that have worked well for your choirs? / What have you done with your choirs over the past 6 weeks that has been successful?

**Answers:**

* Convening at normal rehearsal time
* “watch parties” of past concerts or available documentaries with live chats
* Vincent James of Masterworks Chorale – said that their choir has weekly Zoom meetings with Kevin Leong for about an hour
* Peter Smith of the Back Bay Chorale – calls during rehearsal time (including alumni and friends) with conductor and a guest person
  + People were engaged
  + Having “guest speakers” at these convenings (about the music you were doing - historical, vocal health in general); Back Bay Chorale gave stipends for these
  + Learned about past performances
* Kiara Zani of the Metropolitan Chorale – also did Zoom calls
  + Watched documentaries together
  + Open mic night with Kiara’s church choir (sign up beforehand) – mix of styles of music, helps people stay connected
* Joshua Jacobson of Zamir Chorale – weekly meetings with the chorus
  + Sectional meetings – working on repertoire
  + Watched a lecture from Brandeis
  + Meetings with everyone – everyone is on mute, can hear the music, but can sing along
  + Close to 100% attendance each week
  + Alumni joined (additional 50-60 people) and sang with the choir
  + Staying connected with outside community (concert attendees) by posting videos of performances and being active on social media
* Danica Buckley of Choral Arts Society of the South Shore and Cape Cod Chorus – she has meetings to chat with both community choruses
  + Meet once a week – have a check in
  + “Music Sunday” at her church – pulled some recordings from past Sundays with a reflections section on the performances by choral members
* Pamela Mindell – Cambridge Community Chorus and directs a children’s choir in Worchester
  + Had sectional choir practices
  + Warmup videos to access on-demand
  + Series of songs of recent repertoire that they had already done
  + Watched a past concert
  + Family singalong for children’s choir on Mother’s Day
* Nick Page of the Mystic Chorale – preparing to create 6 virtual choir videos
  + Using Zoom to record virtual choirs
  + 6-week sessions where they prepare 4-5 videos
  + Adapting by being creative (it’s not the survival of the fittest, but the survival of those who can adapt)
  + 250 people going to sing along (open to all) each week – Nick places the words of the songs on the screen so that guests can join in on the singing
  + Creating a community (Tuesday rehearsals – sectionals and breakout sections)
* Tori Cook – recommended Dr. Sarah Langworthy of the National Lutheran Choir – she helps with organizing virtual choirs
  + <https://www.developlayllc.com/virtualchoir>
  + <https://delraestudios.lpages.co/i-can-virtual-choir-and-so-can-you/>

**Two breakout rooms (led by Brad and Jamie) for members to discuss solutions for the Fall in two smaller groups:**

**Notes from Brad’s breakout room (thoughts on moving forward):**

* Tori Cook of Chorus Connection – there may be opportunities to do small group choirs
* Joshua Jacobson – difficult to book a concert at venues such as Jordan Hall
  + Decide – When are you planning concerts?
  + How can you effectively plan a venue with so much going on?
* Kathleen O’Donnell – how do you front the money for a venue that may cancel?
* Sara Glidden – your choir will probably get its money back for a venue, if the venue cancels
  + Mission of your chorus – challenges
  + Choirs with smaller budgets may need to make a budget to serve participates (keep that engagement strong)
  + Audience engagement can be something to focus on, the following year
* Brad Dumont – Jordan Hall did a complete refund for his choir’s canceled concert
* Nick Page – spaces will need new ventilation systems so that air will be constantly leaving the space
* Mary Cunningham – Will be difficult to get choirs back together until there is a vaccine
  + Going to make plans for the Fall, but may have to keeping moving the plans forward
* Brad Dumont – Many choral directors have written on social media that we should focus on being flexible, so that we will be ready to [put on concerts again] when the time is right
  + There may be people in choirs that won’t understand why things have to change – directors/conductors have to be the educators for concert protocol
* John Salisbury – maybe split up your choral season over more concerts
  + Treat your audience like they are a member of your choir
* Katie DeBonville of Boston Baroque – how can we remain a presence during a time of no live performances?
  + Boston Baroque has been placing archived performances online
  + Positive response of audience members who have been wanting to see a concert
* Tori Cook of Chorus Connection – have a mission that explains why you do what you do, rather than what you do
  + Ask the question – How can we deliver our mission?
* Joshua Jacobson – budget/salaries
  + Working with board members
  + Not having ticket sales, decreased donations
  + Working with 2-3 budgets for the future
* Nick Page – creates videos of himself singing a specific choir part and then sends the video and music to the choir member
  + The choir member opens Zoom and records themselves singing along with the video
  + They clap twice during the video (once at the start of the song, and once at the end of the song(?)
  + They then end the meeting on Zoom and change the title of their video to their name and the name of the song, and then place their video in Dropbox
  + Nick takes all of the choir member’s videos and lines them up at the start of the song (signified by their clapping hands) so that he can edit them all at the same part
  + The Mystic Chorale will have online concerts in the Fall
  + Commentary and solos from different people
  + Working with their mission – “Music is an act of compassion”
* Brad Dumont – virtual choirs are difficult but are worth it if you are willing to work at it (Boston Children’s Chorus has been successful with this)

**Ended break out rooms at 8:05pm**

* Brad Dumont – main points from breakout room:
  + Focus on the mission and intent of choirs and finding ways to still do that
  + Talked about Tuesday’s webinar
  + San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus – wrote a helpful article about returning to your concert season: <https://www.chorusamerica.org/sites/default/files/resources/COVIDRehearsalGuide_Seelig_Final.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0mRf7lmfW0GEXOg7sgL-C4caf7NxOiH3fdDUfRG0uGWhkDrxunCHwe1hM>
* **Jamie Hillman’s breakout session highlights:**
  + Choir members who are not able to use current technologies
    - Have a tech person on your choir who can volunteer to help everyone with technology for virtual choirs
  + Discussed dues – reducing the dues for the Fall to retain people
  + Interim artistic director searches

**Final positive thoughts/things people are looking forward to:**

* Nick Page – When we get back to singing in groups, we’ll have an appreciation of group singing like never before. “How magnificent singing is.”
* Eric Christopher Perry – Importance of taking it slow [as a choir] (like growing pumpkins)
* Tori Cook – will be releasing a “risk assessment guide” next week
  + GBCC will distribute it soon
  + Focused on bringing *value* to our community, not “promoting” something. This is the best kind of marketing we can do, always.
* Kiara Zani – “Plan for what you can”
  + Don’t get too hooked on timelines. Keep up with the science. “roller skates” mentality
* Amanda Simeone – Asked if others are participating in the “Self-Isolation Choir,” led by Ben England
* Brad Dumont – share with your choirs and friends that we are here as a resource
  + GBCC will continue hosting these events
  + We want to hear how the consortium can be helpful to you
* Nick Page – public service announcement reminding people to wear masks in public
  + *Guide to good diction* with Nick Page
* BSR and GBCC are both happy to feature your videos on their newsletters
  + Margaret Felice – [info@bostonsingersresource.org](mailto:info@bostonsingersresource.org) (send choir videos to be on the BSR subscriber calendar)