

Amabilis Singers Report for 2019-2020

2020 is an important year for the Amabilis Singers as it's their 40th anniversary. A Gala concert was planned for May 9, as well as a three day tour to Kelowna a week later, Obviously, much to our great disappointment, these much anticipated events had to be cancelled because of Covid-19.

Before this "other world" set in we were able to perform the first part of our planned season. In November we joined the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in the *World Premiere* of THE POLAR EXPRESS IN CONCERT- FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA. This was a completely new experience for us, quite different from anything else we had done. Never had we rehearsed by singing along with a Christmas video 17 times with stopwatch in hand, nor counted (masses of) empty bars with such ferocity before entering on a totally exposed high F# (not just once but about 12 times!) Yet having the opportunity to be part of a very high-octane musical performance on the stage at the Orpheum Theatre was pretty heady stuff.

Our Christmas concerts *Night of Wonder*, on December 13 and 14, were filled to capacity. For many people our Christmas concert signals for them the beginning of the Christmas season.

It was immense good fortune that we were able to perform our next concert *Magnificat*, on February 29, just before all live entertainment ceased. This work, by the young Norwegian composer Kim Andre Arnesen, is scored for choir, soprano solo, strings, piano and organ. It is a wonderful work which is a remarkable, heartfelt journey supported by beautiful melodic writing, radiant harmonies and exquisite tenderness. It is a memory that we have held close in the months since.

We haven't sung as a choir since the end of February but have kept in touch via Zoom. At first we just kept ourselves informed about what we were doing and how we were coping. Our Board has met frequently and kept us up to date on plans for the future. We have also had a few Musical Bingo sessions on Zoom, planned by Ramona Luengen, our amazing director. These sessions were good fun, a test of our musical memories and ending in a virtual pub night. On a more serious side Ramona has so far presented two truly excellent seminars, again via Zoom, one on the *Birth of Choral Music*, and the other, *Ear Opener*, about appreciating George Crumb and his music. Coming up we have *Demands on the Singer* and in December, *Christmas Carols*, when we can sing our hearts out as we sing along to the recording of our last Christmas concert.

The choir has also been fund raising throughout the pandemic which has allowed us to keep our Artistic Director on contract to prepare the many activities we are now enjoying.

It has certainly been a strange and difficult year for everyone involved with the Arts but especially for choirs such as Amabilis. (Unfortunately choral singing is now deemed a high risk activity!) We fervently hope that by next year's AGM the outlook for all of us will have improved significantly.

Joyce Jackson (for Amabilis Singers)