Online teaching and rehearsal during COVID-19 Lockdown: Christ Church Cathedral Choir

April 2020

Outline
During the period of shutdown, while choristers can no longer attend rehearsals and lessons in person, we intend to provide the following framework to support their continued development:

1. Online full rehearsals
2. Online sectional rehearsals and discussion (small groups)
3. Singing lessons (one-to-one)
4. Theory lessons for Form 4 (one-to-one or in small groups)
5. Online resource centre to support private practice, host teaching materials, and rehearsal links, and provide direction for extension work.

Online full rehearsals
We will aim to mirror features of the choristers’ usual routine, including a daily short morning warm-up for the whole group between 08:30 and 08:40. On Monday and Friday mornings, these warm-ups will be open to choristers from Pembroke College, and Frideswide Voices.

In the evening, between 16:30-17:30 Monday-Friday, each child will have one individual 30 minute lesson per week with either Prof. Grahl, Mr Sheen or Mr Hogan. In addition, from week commencing May 4, each child will have two individual 20 minute lessons each week with an allocated lay clerk teacher. Each child will be encouraged to undertake some individual singing practice each week with the help of the resources in the Dropbox folder. Some lessons, in particular those for Forms 4 and 5 may be in small groups.

Music theory for Form 4 will be covered by Mr Sheen, and for the remaining year groups Ms Biddell will offer provision in school time.
Tools and online platform

We intend to use a Dropbox folder to share useful materials and links. Staff (including colleagues at CCCS) will have editing rights, and the boys will have viewing rights.

We intend to use Zoom for online rehearsals. Having looked at all available options, we feel that Zoom offers the best combination of flexibility, good sound quality (when configured for music rather than speech), and easy user interface. Furthermore, it provides the greatest level of control for the host (in this case conductor) of the meeting, enabling screen-sharing from a variety of devices, breakout ‘spaces’, password-protected meeting etc.

Choristers will be asked to join meetings with a user name that is clearly theirs (i.e. not a nickname), and meetings will be password-protected.

Choristers will need access to:

- the internet
- a computer or tablet with a microphone and speaker
- Zoom video conferencing software and a Zoom account
- Their school email address
- a Muso account (set up by a parent).
General Safeguarding principles for online provision

All Safeguarding principles, procedures and policies in place at Christ Church apply to online teaching and rehearsing. Safeguarding remains at the heart of all FV activity, and it is, as ever, the responsibility of all adults involved with leading FV to ensure the highest standards are adhered to.

Any Safeguarding concerns will be reported in line with Christ Church Cathedral’s existing Safeguarding policy, with suitable records kept.

Parental consent

• Parents/guardians have provided consent to Christ Church Cathedral School for their children to take part in online activities.

Staff

• Online provision will be delivered by existing Christ Church Staff. Additional teaching and safeguarding training will be provided to Lay Clerks.
• Overall co-ordination will continue to be undertaken by Steven Grah, supported by Benjamin Sheen and Florence Maskell.
• Staff will use Christ Church email accounts, and will inform parents via email about meetings and lessons. All contact with the choristers’ school emails addresses will be from or copied to the email address choristers@chch.ox.ac.uk
• Sessions with large numbers of children will be staffed by two teachers.

Online lessons and rehearsals

• All lessons and rehearsals will be scheduled in advance and logged on a spreadsheet where the listed meeting codes will allow Christ Church music department and school staff to drop into a lesson or rehearsal.
• Where possible, one-to-one lessons should be arranged to take place at the same time each week.
• During online lessons and rehearsals, a responsible adult should be within earshot of the call - if in a different room, the door must remain open.
• Choristers must not record group rehearsals.
• One-to-one lessons may be recorded with the permission of the teacher leading the session and held by the chorister’s parent/guardian. These recording must not be shared and must be deleted at the request of the teacher.
• A record of all lessons and rehearsals will be available on the on the central spreadsheet. Only lessons listed there may take place.
**Guidance for Staff, choristers and parents**

**Staff**

*Some guidelines*

- You will need also use a Christ Church email address for the scheduling of meetings.
- You should ensure that your personal details are not compromised when teaching - be careful not to share personal information, email address, social media profiles etc.
- Your Zoom profile should be professional and use an appropriate profile image. Your Zoom user name must be your full name, and not a nickname.
- You should use the school email address for contact with choristers, copying in choristers@chch.ox.ac.uk and the parent/guardian.
- You must wear appropriate clothing, and behave as if you were delivering face-to-face teaching. If you have no option but to teach in a bedroom, please ensure that the camera view is appropriate.
- Before you start teaching, close all browser tabs and programmes which are not relevant to the lesson. Be aware of what you may be making visible to your student if you use screen-sharing. Be aware that your search history may be visible if you ‘Google’ something during a lesson.
- You should conduct yourself as you would in a face-to-face environment, including adhering to the Safeguarding Policy.

*Technical advice*

- Teaching online can be much more tiring than in person. You may want to consider scheduling your sessions with more breaks, or in smaller blocks, than usual.
- Please allow an extra few minutes in your timetable to deal with technical issues - at least 5 mins per lesson.
- You will need, at a minimum:
  - a computer or tablet
  - access to the internet
  - a Zoom account
- Further technical set-up can be found in Appendix 1
- The priority in each lesson is that the child enjoys learning. Teachers should use their judgement to achieve this aim.

*After each lesson*

- Make a note of anything which went especially well, or which didn’t work (!), or anything which happened during the lesson which was a cause for concern. Reporting of Safeguarding concerns should take place as laid out in the staff handbook and safeguarding policy.

**Choristers**
Before each lesson

• Make sure you spend a few minutes before your lesson or rehearsal gathering your materials (theory books, a pencil, some water) and getting comfortable at your computer;

• You need to be in a public room in your house (e.g. your living room or kitchen) and not your bedroom or a bathroom.

• You should be dressed as if you were at a normal choir rehearsal - no pyjamas!

• Ask one of your parents or a guardian to start the Zoom call for you, and say a quick hello to the person leading the session. They should be nearby, able to listen in, during your lesson.

• If you are having a singing lesson, your tutor might want you to stand up for a warm-up or for your whole lesson - make sure you can be seen!

• If you are having a theory lesson, your tutor might want you to hold up your work to the screen.

• During lessons and rehearsals, you will sometimes need to read music from your computer or tablet screen. Try to find somewhere you can sit or stand and still see the screen.

During rehearsals

• Your microphone will be muted by the conductor. This is because the way the internet processes the call means that we can’t all sing in time together.

• It will feel strange at first to sing with everyone but feel on your own. Just do your best and keep practising. It is very important that you stand or sit well and think about how you are using your voice.

• You should behave just as well (or better!) as you do during rehearsals at Christ Church - remember that we are all still working as a team.

• You must not record or photograph group rehearsals.

• If you want to ask a question, or contribute something, please put up your hand - you can even do this electronically on Zoom! The conductor will then un-mute you so everyone can hear - wait until they’ve done this before you answer.

• Think about your body language and what it might be saying to the conductor - online rehearsals are a bit different to real-life ones, and you might not realise how you are coming across.

During lessons

• Your microphone will be on for one-to-one lessons or small group rehearsals. You can ask questions as if you were in a normal theory lesson.

• Although you must not record group rehearsals, you may record your one-to-one singing or theory lessons if (and only if) your teacher gives you permission. These recordings are for
After each lesson or rehearsal

- Although you might be busy, tired, hungry etc., try to spend a minute or two thinking about the lesson or rehearsal you’ve just had.
  - What were the main things you discussed or worked on with your tutor or conductor?
  - Is there anything you need to write down to remember for your homework or preparation session?
  - If you were going to sing the music we’ve just practised in the Cathedral, how would that feel? Try to imagine your way through singing Evensong featuring those pieces!

Parents

Before the first session

- Choristers will need to have access to the following:
  - a school email account
  - access to a Zoom account (this should be in their name, with their full name as a user name)
  - access to a computer or tablet with a microphone and camera (smart phones are not recommended as they will need to read sheet music from the screen during rehearsals)
  - internet access
  - a Muso account for theory practice
  - the choristers Dropbox Folder.

- Please contact choristers@chch.ox.ac.uk if there are difficulties with technology or timetable.

- Please read through the section above, Guidance for Choristers, with your son before his first lesson or rehearsal
- If you are confident with technology, you may like to try enabling ‘original sound’ on Zoom (there are a number of helpful guides online outlining how to do this). This results in better sound quality for singing (rather than speech).

Before each lesson

- Please start off each Zoom call for your son and say a quick hello to the tutor teaching the lesson.

- You should stay within earshot of the lesson or rehearsal for its duration - and of course you’re welcome to stay in the room.