Online teaching and rehearsal during COVID-19 Lockdown: Frideswide Voices

April 2020

Outline

During the period of shutdown, while FV 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 and repertoire learning
2. Online sectional rehearsals and discussion (small groups)
3. Singing lessons (one-to-one)
4. Theory lessons (one-to-one)
5. Online resource centre to support private practice, host teaching materials, and rehearsal links, and provide direction for extension work

Online full rehearsals

- All choristers, probationers and pre-probationers

We will aim to mirror as closely as possible the usual routine of the choristers, meeting at least once a week to look at the repertoire we would typically be learning for services.

I. a warm-up and session on how to look after vocal health at home
II. repertoire (responses, canticles, an anthem and a mass movement each week)
III. social activity - e.g. games, chat etc.

Session duration: 45 mins
Private prep/homework: 30 mins  TOTAL: 1 hr 15
Online sectional rehearsals

- Year 3 pre-probationers (with Laura Ashby)
- Year 4 probationers
- Year 5 & 6
- Year 7+

We will also offer small group rehearsals to better support the range of abilities and goals amongst the chorister cohort:

I. some further repertoire work (e.g. core repertoire for probationers, extension for seniors)
II. repertoire discussion, basic liturgical knowledge
III. preparation work for RSCM exams (where relevant)

Session duration: 30 mins
Private prep/homework: 30 mins TOTAL: 1 hr

Singing tuition

Each chorister will be offered a one-to-one singing lesson with a FV vocal tutor - where possible with their current tutor. The aim will be to cover singing technique (as far as is possible through online lessons) and some repertoire work where appropriate.

Session duration: 20-30 mins
Private prep/homework: 30 mins TOTAL: 1 hr

Theory tuition

Each chorister will be offered a one-to-one theory lesson each week with a FV theory tutor. Choristers will be working towards taking an ABRSM Music Theory exam in November 2020 (ultimately the aim is that all FV choristers will have passed Grade 5 Theory before the end of their time as choristers).

Homework will be set as usual through a combination of work in ABRSM workbooks, which can then be photographed and uploaded to the choir’s Google Classroom (see below), and the theory app Muso (already in use by some chorister families).

A regular, online theory drop-in session, led by Sarah Coatsworth, will also be offered to help choristers with their theory work.

Session duration: 20-30 mins
Private prep/homework: 30 mins TOTAL: 1 hr
Tools and online platform

We intend to use Google Classroom as our platform for hosting materials and communicating with chorister families. Classroom is a powerful and popular tool for educational establishments across the world and we are confident that it will support our needs. It is easy to use, intuitive, free and secure. Choristers will need their own Gmail account to access the Classroom, which should be created and monitored by a parent or guardian. FV staff will not use these accounts to communicate with choristers directly - all contact will be in the usual way through parents.

The Classroom will be used to host:

- sheet music for choristers’ private practice and group rehearsals;
- theory homework assignments (choristers can submit their work securely);
- rehearsal links to Zoom meetings;
- video and audio clips;
- other learning materials.

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
- a free, basic Gmail account (set up and monitored by a parent or guardian)
- 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 will be asked to provide specific, written consent (naming the software to be used) for their children to take part in online activities.

Staff

- Online provision will be delivered by existing FV staff members.
- Overall co-ordination will continue to be undertaken by Tanya Simpson (FV Administrator) and Helen Smee (FV Director)
- Staff will not use personal accounts to log onto the Google Classroom. Specific FV accounts will be created for this purpose, and used solely for FV work.
- Staff will never email choristers directly. All email communication will be through parents and guardians.
- FV chaperones will continue to support the chorister’s activities as far as possible, including being present in some full and sectional rehearsals

Online lessons and rehearsals

- All lessons and rehearsals will be scheduled in advance and logged on the Classroom’s calendar
- Zoom meeting links will be displayed on the calendar in order that any member of FV staff, or Christ Church music department staff, may drop in to a lesson or rehearsal at any time
- 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 recordings 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 Classroom’s calendar; staff should not amend or delete details of online activity after they have taken place
Guidance for Staff, choristers and parents

Staff

Some guidelines

- You will need a basic Gmail account to access the Google Classroom: even if you already use a Gmail account for work purposes, you must create a new account for FV work. Please ensure that this follows the format firstname.lastname.frideswide@gmail.com. This account should only be used for FV work, and will be monitored by the FV Administrator.

- 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 and FV Gmail account should be professional and use an appropriate profile image. Your Zoom user name must be your full name, and not a nickname.

- You should never email a chorister directly. All communication should be through parents/guardians, using your FV Gmail account. You may leave messages about homework, assignments, singing lesson preparation etc. on the Google Classroom (this will be visible to all other FV staff).

- 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. If sharing e.g. a video during a rehearsal, either upload the link to the Classroom and share it from there, or have the tab set up and ready to go. 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 Code of Conduct in place for FV staff.

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
  - a basic Gmail account (format: firstname.lastname.frideswide@gmail.com)
  - to have logged on to the Google Classroom using your FV Gmail address.

- Further technical set-up can be found in Appendix 1

- Please spend some time in the first few lessons with each chorister making sure that they understand where in the Classroom they can find their homework assignment,
how they should submit any work, and that they have grasped what you would like them to complete. Ideally this should all be included in their homework notes too.

After each lesson

• Provide follow-up comments, links etc on the Classroom, under the correct topic and tagged with the relevant chorister’s name (this is covered in more detail in Appendix 1).
• Remember that younger choristers may not be proficient in note-taking. You will almost certainly need to make some notes on what you have covered or provide some hints and tips for their homework - the best way to do this is in the instructions section of their homework assignment.
• 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 in exactly the same way as during normal FV activity.

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 (we will experiment with this in our first rehearsal so you can hear the problem!)
• 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.
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- **Year 7+:** you may want to set yourself a challenge of singing a different part (probably alto!) now and then, once you’re confident with the treble line.

- 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 your own personal use only and you must not post them online or send them to anyone; if your teacher asks you to, you must delete the recording.

**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?
  - Do you know what work you’ve been asked to do, and how to submit it?
  - 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 basic, free Gmail account (set up and monitored by parents/guardians)
  - 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 homework and practice (your theory tutor will provide more information on this)
- the FV Google Classroom

- Please contact Tanya Simpson if your daughter might be prevented from joining FV’s online provision because of a lack of resources (e.g. computer/webcam etc). It may be possible for us to source some equipment in some cases.
- Please read through the section above, Guidance for Choristers, with your daughter before her first lesson or rehearsal.
- Please have a look at the FV Google Classroom with your daughter, and get a feel for how it is organised and where to find things.
- You will be contacted to arrange times for theory and singing lessons (one-to-one) - please help us to co-ordinate our busy staff team by replying as quickly as possible.
- Please return a completed online teaching consent form to Tanya Simpson.
- 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 daughter and say a quick hello to the tutor teaching the lesson.
- You will need to sign into the call using a password; this is to make our rehearsals as secure as possible.
- You should stay within earshot of the lesson or rehearsal for its duration - and of course you’re welcome to stay in the room.