

Running a Zoom choir, by Katie Rose - March 2020

The most important thing first is to take a deep breath and

- Accept that it is not choir - It's ok to feel mad, sad and have a little cry or rant about this. Having acknowledged that important thing, we can then focus on getting to grips with what we can do on Zoom.
- Get help/inspiration - do raid the Zoom website for learning tools before starting, and go and sing online yourself with amazing choir leaders - shout out to [Philip Read](#) [Stephen Taberner](#) [Dominic Stichbury](#) [James Sills](#) [Mark De-Lisser](#) and my fellow female NVN choir leaders.
- Stay connected - for me, this is the most important thing. This will stop us all going mad and boost our collective immunity, love and strength. Choirs are social support systems and I am so grateful that Zoom enables us to chat, laugh, sing and weather this storm together.
- Moving and breathing - We are all suddenly less able to move around and facing a virus that attacks the respiratory system. So stretches, dances, breathing/ vocal exercises and virtual hugs are all immensely valuable.
- Sing together - yes, but..... Latency (delay) means that we cannot all come in at the same time and there is also loads of background noise. So singing in harmony parts with everyone hearing each other is not possible. This is of course gutting for all of us who really love and miss that - however what we can still do is:
 - Sing long notes - layering drones in harmony works -ish.
 - Sing slowed down phrases (thank you [Stephen Taberner](#) for demonstrating this). Imagine everyone is singing on the moon, slloooooooowwww motion. At ManSong we had a go at singing a long slow version of a Russian hymn we know and love. Undoubtedly it was the strangest thing I have ever heard and made us all cry tears of laughter, but it was good to hear everyone.
 - Sing along to a leader/backing track - this means that we can learn new songs and harmony parts, keep existing repertoire ticking over, sing along with audios, sing a 2-part round where everyone comes in a phrase after the leader, etc.
 - Do a bit more in households with more than one singer - if two or more singers are self-isolating together, they can of course do more harmonising.
 - Do things in breakout rooms - I haven't tried this yet, but I've heard of choir leaders using this for section singing.
 - Solo people - spotlight a singer, an ocarina, a guitarist, a kazoo player ... it's almost possible to sync just two people singing/playing at the same time ..ish!
 - Dream up projects - folks like Mark de Lisser and Mike King are pioneering virtual recording projects. All sorts of invention, creativity and plans can be incubated.
- Useful features - Screen share is helpful for displaying lyrics, sheet music and silly pictures. You can record sessions for anyone who missed it. There's a chat box and optional fun virtual background and reactions.
- Include props/pets/people at home - surprise guest appearances from cats, family and hats add a lot of fun.
- Play games- my Welcome Choir discovered Zoom hide and seek and I hear [Philip Read](#)'s ManChoir had a pub quiz.

- Have a tea break - or something stronger for those inclined - I don't drink but feel totally smashed by the end.
- Share resources - setting up support systems and sharing survival tips (best place to score paracetamol etc).
- Laugh - who knew that toilet rolls could be so funny? Collective cheering, laughing, waving, whooping is such a good release.
- And remember by staying and singing at home you are saving lives. No it's not choir, but it's what we must all do for now and how much more beautifully, joyfully and lovingly will we sing together when this is over."