

SongFest/ANCA Webinar June 24th

“Strategies for singing with and without COVID”

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Choirs in Schools > WA

Role of the School

The key point is that the students belong to the school and the school must have a Covid 19 Plan. The Choir Directors then follow the school plan and directives, knowing they will be supported in their decisions and requests. The school will:

- Provide a rehearsal space where there is enough space for appropriate social distancing > undercover area (in warmer weather); gymnasium; lecture theatre; dance studio; drama studio; etc.
- Provide hand sanitiser and spray sanitiser with paper towels
- Have a policy on school attendance where the student is unwell > request students do not attend school if they are unwell and/or showing any cold or flu symptoms

WA Students back to school 04 May – Week 2, Term 2

- Government and Non-Government schools returned to all ensembles rehearsing with a variety of strategies, but all aiming to continue the rehearsal life of the ensemble
 - Full rehearsal with all singers in a larger space where social distancing is possible
 - Some large choirs have not yet resumed rehearsals, but it is anticipated that Term 3 may see a change to that
 - Sectional rehearsals are proving to be popular with the directors and the singers > where a larger space is unavailable
 - Focus on learning parts and technique for a section of the choir e.g. Trebles > go week about with the other section
 - For experienced senior choirs > possible cross sectional rehearsals with a small group of singers from each section of the choir

Rehearsal Strategies > some suggestions

- Social Distancing
 - establish what distance is expected at the first rehearsal – set a precedent. Consider pre-setting the chairs before the singers arrive. *It hopefully won't need to be pre-set for future rehearsals as the precedent has been set*
 - discourage hugging, sharing music, leaning in to each other to hear each other singing a tricky part

- Copies of Music > discourage or have NO SHARING of music/music stands > each singer to have their own copy of the music
- All sit/stand facing the front in straight rows > no arcs (and definitely no circles) > project exhaling forward and not towards each other
- Director > maintain DISTANCE from the singers > create this space from the outset and try to maintain. If possible, ensure that air currents from fans and air-conditioners aren't direction the flow of air at the director
- Ventilation > if it's not too cold, try and rehearse with open windows/doors
- Use warm-ups avoiding the use of fricatives (*denoting a type of consonant made by the friction of breath in a narrow opening, producing a turbulent air flow e.g. F, V, Th, S*) > advise against using lip-trills, but tongue trills are okay > humming and ooo are particularly good
- Use of hand sanitiser and cleaning before and after rehearsal (it is also respectful of others who may use the space after you – as well as being a Covid Plan for the building/school). Remember to wipe the piano keyboard before and after rehearsal for the accompanist
- In schools, the cleaning staff will clean the chairs at the end of the day, and sometimes during the day. It is advisable to wipe the music stands before and after rehearsal (ready for the next group to use)
- Staggered entry and exit to and from the rehearsal space > a wish, but not always achievable. Students use hand sanitiser at entry and exit

Practice Strategies > suggestions

- Upload rehearsal tracks into an accessible drive (in WA Government Schools that is Connect). Some directors are also using OneDrive or similar
- Find Youtube performances of a high standard singing the same arrangement of the repertoire for choir members to sing along with
- Singers attending the rehearsal record themselves singing their part while the whole choir is singing (hear their part in context) – Barbershop learning technique. *If there are any singers absent, perhaps they could forward the recording to them so they can practice at home.*
- Ongoing engagement for those unable to attend rehearsals due to illness, etc. > possible suggestions
 - Use Practice strategies above
 - Create a Zoom (or similar) meeting for the rehearsal, invite them to attend the meeting – ON MUTE. They can then sing with the whole choir, hear discussion, pointers from the director, rehearse problem spots with the choir section, etc.