

# THE ROCA REPORT

The Richmond Orchestra and Chorus Association (ROCA) is a group of dedicated amateur musicians under professional leadership who believes that a rich cultural scene is essential to building a strong, healthy, and vibrant community and that music enhances the lives of both performers and audience members.

This newsletter is intended to keep all of our ROCA friends up to date on plans for the chorus and orchestra. We hope you enjoy learning a little more about the ROCA family. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us at [roca.office@gmail.com](mailto:roca.office@gmail.com).

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## Rehearsals in the time of COVID!

by Jennifer Dufour (Alto)

Well this certainly wasn't what I signed up for in 1993... Who knew that we would ever be laid so low as to be prohibited from making music together. Well never, say never about anything again.



We have kept our musical community going by using all of the virtual platforms and included some old-fashioned emails and phone calls. It has been work to keep up the enthusiasm, and work for Brigid to put together playlists, download music and conduct us on Zoom when we are all muted and out of sync with her. I, for one, have been delighted with the Sing-along Zooms, whether it was the Beatles songbook or the Canadiana, and most recently our heartfelt and meaningful sing through of the Faure *Requiem*. It has reminded us of what is possible, and just what we love most about singing.

But it has also served as a not so kindly reminder of just what we are missing, and that is the people. Some of us have known each other for over 25 years. That makes us family in my books. We have all been through so much together and been able to be each other's rocks, but when we need each other the most we are denied. When we need our musical outlet the most we are silenced. Unsettled and unsettling times.

(Continued on page 2)

# Rehearsals in the time of COVID! (Continued)

With a passion that knows no bounds, Brigid has made each step of this journey as painless as she could. Soon after we had to call a halt to our rehearsals and cancel our performances Brigid was hosting Tuesday night check-ins with something for everyone and a way to stay connected. Then came the Zoom sing-alongs and next inquiring if Frasersview would be available for rehearsals. What would Frasersview's safety requirements be and could we put together our own safety plan and try and come together? With the help of our ROCA safety committee: Jennifer as the practical deliverer, Doris as the researcher and expert and Susan as the location logistics person, we have a plan and we have had full cooperation from our fellow choristers. At this writing we have had 2 in-person rehearsals with everyone sanitizing their hands, having their temperature taken and signing a COVID-19 declaration so we have a record of our attendees.

Standing, masked and distanced in our pre-assigned groups has been interesting. There are mics around the room and we all know that many of our choir mates are viewing us live and participating even though we cannot see or hear them and they cannot see us. It is wonderful to have Brigid up on the stage conducting and critiquing and teaching as though we had never been apart. But there is still a disconnect between what we are doing and what an actual rehearsal feels like. The distancing means that while yes, you can sort of hear the people around you, it is a real stretch to say that it sounds like a choir... Except, perhaps, last week as we sang through Willan's *Rise Up My Love*, which is a piece that many of us know quite well. There were several moments where our voices did all rise up and with that we discovered that we still have hope for the future.

## Overcome

New work by Bruno Cavalca (1st Violin)

In November, the orchestra is trying something innovative, working within the limitations of the pandemic. Bruno Cavalca, 1st violinist in the orchestra, has composed a piece of music that he has titled "Overcome" that will be recorded in small groups. In the composer's own words:

*"This piece was written for the Richmond Orchestra, as a COVID-19 safe performance piece. There are no set instrumental parts, as each instrumentalist of the orchestra has the ability to choose a part, A through F, that best suits them. The piece is constructed by layering small groups of recording sessions until the finished piece finally emerges. Instructions are given as an improvisational guide, but each player should feel freedom to add their own twist to the given notes. The score acts only as a unifying document across several weeks of recording various individuals. A Conductor is useful to facilitate the recordings sessions, but is not necessary if the players feel confident. Solo improvisations and the electronics will be added in at the end, to really finish the piece off.*



*All of this to make a statement, we as artists have faced tremendous difficulty during the COVID-19 pandemic, as have all people. We will overcome. We as artists, musicians of the orchestra, composers and any kind of creative person still are here, and relevant to today. We can adapt to these hard times, and overcome together."*