

Stage	Action points (not necessarily in order)	Who	Deadline	Progress
1.On-line rehearsals From July 2020 Use Zoom, trial first, not compulsory but expected. Messiah & Rachmaninov. Minimal risk (some risk to those singing alone in their home) but Risk Assessment (RA) still required. 6:15: MG starts meeting; DB, RF, MM, AA, RC join, made co-hosts 7:00: RC welcome 7:02: Maggie warm up 7:15: Darius welcome, first half 7:45: Questions 7:48: Anne notices 7:50: Break in breakout rooms 7:57: Second half 8:20: Questions 8.25: Party (7 min repeated breakout rooms)	1.1 Compile Zoom instructions	MG	June 2020	DONE
	1.2 Send out instruction and invitation to trial	AA	18.06.2020	DONE
	1.3 Compile RA for online rehearsals	JO PH		DONE
	1.4 Prepare hosting details	MG		DONE
	1.5 Prepare recording, voice part playing details	RF		DONE
	1.6 Prepare conducting & accompanying details	DB		DONE
	1.7 Prepare warm-up exercises	MM		DONE
	1.8 Conduct trial on Zoom	all		DONE 23 June 2020
	1.9 Review trial, list issues (via email or Zoom meeting)	all		DONE. Key points: People enjoyed it. Make clear can't hear one another in link email. Advise use of headphones. Keep rehearsal short, pace slow, more repetition. Enforced "mute all" best way to ensure no interruptions. Rachel F to share her screen for the recorded parts. Co-hosts to sign in 6.15. Ben S, Anne A, Annie P to monitor chat.
	1.10 Solve issues, agree whether rehearsals weekly	all		DONE Two more in July. Two voice coaching session in August
	1.11 Amend online rehearsals RA if necessary	JO PH		DONE
	1.12 Run first rehearsal	all	30.06.2020	DONE
	1.13 Determine further music, scores required for summer rehearsals	DB		DONE. Messiah, Rachmaninov
	1.14 Determine music, scores required for Sept	DB	21.08.2020	DONE – Rachmaninov, new DB arrangement, maybe Brahms

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	1.15 Arrange how folk can get scores for Sept	AA & DB	31.08.2020	DONE SPC purchased 40, AA arranging collection. Brahms and DB piece distributed via downloads
2. Combined on-line / live rehearsals: small socially distanced group live with DG and RF, rest of choir at same rehearsal via Zoom From October 2020 (trial run first) Prep prior to this At KES or suitably spacious alternative Site visit first to measure distances and map out routes, signage requirements, discover any changed layouts and other difficulties etc No gathering so no refreshments or notice board. Careful planning needed re provision of scores Very thorough Risk Assessment (RA) based on all relevant Government instructions, RA must be signed off by committee before proceeding.	2.1 Prep: Ask KES if available for Stage 2 & under what circumstances	AA	end July	DONE. KES not hiring in September; reviewing at October half term
	2.2 Prep: find alternative venue for Stage 2. AA ask members for suggestions. Cathedral (PH) Upper Chapel (AA/RE), Montgom, St Matt (AA) Vic Hall (GD) St Marks (JO)	AA JO GD PH	21 August 2020	DONE. Members suggested Wesley Chapel, St Augustine's. PH contacted them, both suitable. Visits arranged.
	2.3 Prep: Survey members using MM questions plus some of our own	AA	End Aug 2020	DONE MM survey questions copied, survey via Typeform. 141 responses. List of volunteers produced
	2.4 Prep: Check venue measures eg entry and exit routes, distancing markings etc	PH JO AA	End Aug 2020	DONE. PH, JO & AA Visited 2 venues, examined their RA, chose Wesley Chapel, Crookes
	2.5 Prep: Decide how to tackle issue of scores	cttee	End Aug 2020	DONE. Allow scores to rest for 3 days, distribute via collection & post, handled with gloves and mask.
	2.6 Prep: Compile RA framework using all relevant Gov guidelines	AA	end August 2020	DONE: Making Music template used instead, asent to PH & JO
	2.7 Prep: Complete Risk Assessment, including consultation with venue re its own measures	JO & PH	15 Sep 2020	DONE. Instruction for Chorus included. Trustees approved Oct 2020
	2.8 Prep: sort out tech issues involved in a combined rehearsal	DB & RF	End Sep 2020	DONE Site visit / trial run to follow
	2.8 Prep: compile list of rehearsal tracks etc	AA	15 Sep 2020	DONE. On website
	2.9 Prep: Site visit to work out any extra (in addition to venue) requirements re distancing, layout, routes through building etc	PH & JO	mid Oct 2020	DONE in combination with trial run visit on 8 Oct 2020

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	2.10 Produce signage, arrows, marks etc	PH	Mid Oct 2020	DONE for 20 October 2020
	2.11 Compile instructions, including any extra technical guidance required, send to Chorus	JO, PH	Mid Oct 2020	DONE Included on What To Expect document sent with Risk Assessment
	2.12 Conduct trial run combined rehearsal	various	Mid Oct 2020	DONE. Trial run on 8 Oct 2020, small group at rehearsal, another testing from home. Went well.
	2.15 Review trial, amend procedures as appropriate	all	Mid Oct 2020	DONE at Trustee meeting October 2020. What to Expect document and RA sent to all members.
3. Larger socially distanced groups in staged live rehearsals When official advice enables (prep may be done prior to this) 90 minutes for each section	3.1 Prep: map out routes, feasible distancing, layout issues etc in accordance with new circumstances			
	3.2 Prep: Decide how to tackle any issues re scores			
	3.3 Prep: Complete new Risk Assessment			
	3.4 Produce required signage, arrows, markings etc			
	Compile list of instructions and send to Chorus			
	Conduct live rehearsal			
	Review live rehearsal, amend procedures as appropriate			
4. Full live rehearsals with advised precautions When official advice enables (prep may be done prior to this) Restrictions lifted sufficient to enable full attendance at KES, possibly with	4.1 Prep: map out routes, feasible distancing, layout issues etc in accordance with new circumstances			
	4.2 Prep: Decide how to tackle any issues re scores			
	4.3 Prep: Complete new Risk Assessment			

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some precautions eg no gathering in foyer, no drinks at break	4.4 Produce required signage, arrows, markings etc			
	Compile list of instructions and send to Chorus			
	Conduct full live rehearsal			
	Review live rehearsal, amend procedures as appropriate			
5. Full rehearsals as pre-Covid When official advice enables (prep may be done prior to this) All restrictions lifted and RA agrees no further risk. Retain any new practices we want to keep.	5.1 Prep: Complete new Risk Assessment			

Updated DCMS guidance (as of 15 October 2020)

From 12 October the government introduced a COVID level alert system with three alert levels:

- Medium
- High
- Very High

Medium and High alert level areas

Groups operating in Medium and High alert level areas can continue to meet and rehearse in COVID Secure venues.

The detailed guidance for both levels allows for activities of more than 6 people to take place and for COVID secure venues to host more than 6 people:

Medium alert level: “Other activities, such as organised indoor sport, indoor exercise classes and other activity groups can continue with more than 6 people present provided that groups of more than 6 do not mix. Where it is likely that groups will mix, these activities must not go ahead.” And

“Venues following COVID-secure guidance can host more people in total, but no one must mix indoors in groups larger than 6, unless you all live together, or are in the same support bubble.”

High alert level: “Other activities, such as indoor exercise classes and other activity groups can only continue provided that households or support bubbles do not mix. Where it is likely that groups will mix, these activities must not go ahead.” And

“Venues following COVID-secure guidance can host more people in total, but no one must mix indoors with anyone who they do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) unless exemptions apply. Outdoors, you can meet in groups of up to 6 people.”

This means groups can meet to rehearse – but that social interactions must be limited. See ‘Meeting to rehearse’ below for more information on what this means in practice.

Groups should also bear in mind that people living in a Very High alert level area will not be able to travel to a high or medium area to rehearse.

Very High alert level

It is unlikely groups in Very High alert level areas will be able to meet. There are baseline national restrictions that will apply to all [Very High alert level](#) areas. This does contain a provision for venues to host more than 6 people (as the Medium and High alert levels guidance does). However, it does not have a provision that allows for group activities of larger groups - unlike the Medium and High alert levels, which do specially allow this.

We think this means groups in Very High alert level cannot meet to rehearse.

Note: there is a provision for supervised activities for children so youth groups could meet. See ‘Meeting to rehearse’ below for more information on what this means in practice. Additionally, a Very High alert level area will most probably have extra local measures on top of the baseline national measures. One possibility here is closing venues such community centres – which may mean groups might not have a venue to meet in. Groups in Very High alert level areas should refer to the local measures to get the full picture and make a decision. But generally speaking, we think it is unlikely groups in Very High alert level areas will be able to meet. If you are in a Very High alert level area you can contact us for help.

Find out more about the [alert level system](#) and [what level applies in your area](#).

Meeting to rehearse

Music groups meeting to rehearse and perform should do so in line with the government’s existing [Performing Arts – Working Safely During Coronavirus guidance](#), which was updated on 17 September and explicitly states:

“Confirmed that from 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.” (new section in Introduction)

The ‘sub-groups of no more than 6’ are causing some confusion when related to rehearsals. It is clearer for performances – you should not take a group booking of more than 6, and that group then needs to be socially distanced from the next sub-group.

In rehearsals, however, you should think of your ‘sub-groups’ as sub-groups of 1 attending your rehearsal (unless they are parent/child or partners or flatmates from same household). In other words, **every single person in a rehearsal should be socially distanced (2 metres) at all times from every single other person in a rehearsal – and during breaks, arrival, departure and bathroom queue.** See our [guidance and risk assessment template](#) for more detail.

The DCMS guidance says *"both professionals and non-professionals (meaning those participating in performing arts other than for work purposes), or groups which include non-professionals, should refer to this guidance for their activities."* And:

"Within this guidance there are no set limits on the numbers who can be involved in planned non-professional activity taking place outside and/or in a Covid-secure venue..." "However, organisations must ensure an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment is carried out and that the numbers of individuals involved are able to be socially distanced at all times. Organisations and venues will want to minimise the risk as far as possible and this guidance sets out a number of mitigations that should be considered when doing so."

Social distancing

"Non-professional activities should not take place that require social distancing to be compromised." (Introduction section). And:

"Non-professionals are restricted by rules on meeting with others safely. This means that non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than 6 at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than 6 (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place."

This wording is stronger than the previous version and emphasises what is referred to in the FAQ quoted above, namely that **there is to be absolutely no mingling. If there is any mingling, activity cannot take place.**

The 7 priority actions you must take as an organisation

1. Complete a COVID-19 risk assessment. Share it with all your stakeholders.
2. Clean more often. Increase how often you clean surfaces, especially those that are being touched a lot. Ask your participants, professionals and volunteers to use hand sanitiser and wash their hands frequently.
3. Ask your participants to wear face coverings in any indoor space or where required to do so by law...Some exemptions apply. [Check when to wear one, exemptions, and how to make your own.](#)
4. Make sure everyone is social distancing. Make it easy for everyone to do so by putting up signs or introducing a one way system that they can follow.
5. Increase ventilation by keeping doors and windows open where possible and running ventilation systems at all times.
6. Take part in NHS Test and Trace by keeping a record of all your attendees for 21 days. From 18 September, this will be enforced in law. Some exemptions apply. Check [Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#) for details. *Please note: you must register for an official NHS QR code and display the official NHS QR poster from 24 September 2020. [Find out how on the government's website](#)*
7. Turn people with coronavirus symptoms away. If an attendee (or someone in their household) has a persistent cough, a high temperature or has lost their sense of taste or smell, they should be isolating.

Community facilities guidance

There is other government guidance specific to community groups and community activity (that the DCMS guidance does not specifically refer to):

Section 2a (Covering core principles) states: *“Community facilities following COVID-19 Secure guidance can host more than 6 people in total, but no one should visit or socialise in a group of greater than 6.”*

Later on section 3.c (specifically about recreation / leisure activities) repeats this point and refers back to the DCMS performing arts guidelines: *“COVID-secure community facilities are permitted to hold social groups, clubs and activities in groups of no more than 6. Community facilities can host multiple groups of 6, subject to capacity, but groups must not mix socially or form larger groups.*

“However, for activities and social groups where there is a significant likelihood of groups mixing and socialising (and where it will be difficult to prevent mingling and therefore breaking the law) should not take place in a community facility. These may include but are not limited to:

- *formal or informal clubs and hobby clubs (e.g. women’s institute, veteran’s associations, freemasons, sewing clubs, book clubs, crafts clubs, reading groups)*
- *amateur choirs and orchestras*
- *informally organised sport activities on facilities grounds (professionally organised sport activities are exempt)*

It later says:

“Community facilities are now permitted to host socially distanced indoor and outdoor performances in line with the performing arts guidance.” (which currently has professionals and non-professionals on an equal footing) And

“Both professionals and non-professionals can now engage in singing, wind and brass in line with the performing arts guidance.”

This guidance could be clearer, but it is consistent with DCMS guidance. The key take-aways are:

- You can meet in community centres for music activities in groups larger than 6
- You cannot socialise or mingle in groups larger than 6 (and as per our recommendation above it is simplest to think of sub-groups of 1, instead of groups of 6)
- Whilst the guidance does specifically mention amateur choirs and orchestras in relation to a significant likelihood of socialising, that doesn’t mean you can’t meet. It means you have to have done a thorough risk assessment, have measures in place and be using a COVID secure venue, to reduce the likelihood of socialising and manage the risk.

ACRE (Action in Communities in Rural England) have issued guidance to the village halls in their membership that they can host community groups, including amateur music groups, provided there is strict social distancing.

What can music groups do?

Very High alert level areas

It is very unlikely groups in these areas cannot meet to rehearse. But groups should refer to local measures and information. They can also [contact us](#) for help.

Medium and High alert level areas

Groups can host in-person rehearsals, indoors or outdoors, provided they undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and put in place strong risk mitigation measures. Specifically, groups need to spell out that there is to be no social interaction (no mingling) and put measures in place to prevent this happening. It is crucial in order to ensure for continuing permission to meet for individual groups and for the whole sector that groups avoid any mingling (=social interaction at less than 2 metres distance) during their rehearsals.

New is also the mandatory requirement from 24 September to display an NHS Test & Trace poster with a QR code relating to your event(s) (read: rehearsals). You can [generate the code and poster online](#). You still have an obligation to collect information offline for people without a smartphone or who do not wish to use the NHS app.

You should at the very least be implementing the 7 priority actions now listed at the beginning of the [DCMS performing arts guidance](#).

Please refer to Making Music's [risk assessment and guidance](#) for full details

Things to consider in drawing up and implementing the plan

Points below are based on advice drawn up by Making Music using a range of sources but in particular the University of Freiburg's [a risk assessment for musical activity](#).

General transmission of COVID-19

- Via **droplets** which are heavier than air and thus fall down. If they land on a surface which we then touch with our hands (e.g. table), we may pick them up. Subsequently touching our face could then lead to infection
 - General prevention measures: wash hands frequently, do not touch face, clean surfaces often, wear gloves if handling items which may be touched by several people is unavoidable
- Via **aerosols**; these are much lighter than droplets and can therefore linger in the air, for up to 3 hours, researchers say, if there is no ventilation or draft. This makes it more likely that someone else walks through and inhales this virus 'cloud'.
 - General prevention: face coverings, meet in large spaces, social distancing, good and frequent ventilation
- Via **other secretions** from mouth/nose (sneezes, mucus, saliva)
 - General prevention: sneeze into a tissue and dispose of it; cough/ sneeze into crook of arm; do not share items/wear gloves

Music-specific risk-minimisation

Reduce risk at entry point by excluding:

- those in high risk groups
- anyone who has been in contact with someone with symptoms of Covid-19 in the previous 5-6 days
- anyone who has symptoms
- anyone with a temperature above 37.5C

How?

- Questionnaire prior to rehearsal for each attendee

- Measure temperature at entrance to rehearsal each time
- Neither of these will be completely reliable or exclude all potential carriers of Covid-19, but both will keep everyone's awareness raised and therefore also support compliance with other measures

Reduce risk by creating low risk environment:

- Play/sing outside: current research suggests that, provided recommended distances between people are kept, this is a low risk activity; follow official guidance re size of group allowed to gather
- If in a building:
 - Frequent ventilation, ideally from windows, rather than mechanical
 - Use much larger rooms than you might usually, so that social distancing is possible to current guidance
 - Shorten rehearsals: length overall, but also rehearse in 15 min bouts, interspersed with ventilating the room
 - Ensure social distancing also possible at break times

Reduce risk through safety measures applied to individuals:

- Face coverings: only medical grade will prevent you from picking up the virus, but all face coverings will reduce the chance that the wearer emits aerosols and droplets; they must be well-fitted and worn to be effective
- Distance between people: at least 2m radius around each singer or player (general – see specifics below)
- Frequent handwashing or hand sanitising; consider gloves also, and masks when not singing

Singing

- Other forms of transmission present no larger risk than for other musicians, but whether there is increased risk of aerosol transmission for singers is not currently sufficiently well researched; there may be higher risk due to increased output of aerosols by singers combined with deeper in-breaths
- Report on choir in US referenced, where 53 of 61 choir members were infected, 3 were hospitalised and 2 died; aerosol transmission is discussed in the report, but other factors may have contributed: median age of choir 69; all 3 hospitalised cases had pre-existing health conditions; distance between chairs was only 15-25cms; the rehearsal lasted 2.5 hours with one 15 minute break; furthermore, the person suspected of having spread the infection had had symptoms for 3 days before the rehearsal and had also attended the previous week (before having symptoms, but potentially already infectious)
- Rigorous **application of all suggested measures above and particularly social distancing and face coverings**

Pianists/accompanists

- Instruments cleaned/disinfected between players
- Any player before starting should wash hands for at least 30 seconds
- Remember 2m distance to anyone else in the room/group

Other matters to consider

These are missing from the German risk assessment, but consider:

- Travel to rehearsals; can people drive, walk or cycle and thus avoid the risks associated with public transport? Is there parking and/or secure cycle storage at your usual or temporary (e.g. park) rehearsal venue
- Toilets; are there enough in your rehearsal venue; how often/when will they be cleaned – should you pay for additional cleaning before and after your session from the rehearsal venue's team; what about during rehearsals; what happens if someone needs the toilet whilst rehearsals are going on – how do they reach the bathrooms; what about rehearsing outside – are there public toilets nearby, are they open again
- Break times; where will people spend the break, are they still able to stick to social distancing? You may have to remind them often
- Refreshments; probably easiest not to provide and to ask everyone to bring their own water/coffee/biscuits
- Equipment and instruments; these should not be shared or handled by more than one person ideally, so the poor percussionist may have to set up their kit on their own for now, with no help from the rest of the group; ensure people bring their own music stands etc.; do rehearsal chairs need cleaning? Can everyone set up their own chair, rather than one or two people setting out chairs for a rehearsal? How will they be cleaned at the end? It is currently not entirely clear how long droplets can last on different surfaces, so better to err on the side of too much cleaning.
- Music; everyone should have a set of music and not share; consider therefore the handing out of music at rehearsals or whether you can avoid that; can people take music home for now and be in charge of their own set of sheet music?

Your venue

- Is your usual venue open and/or will they allow you to use it right now?
- What conditions might they have in place for you meeting at the moment?
- Parking/access for pedestrians/cyclists
- Large enough space for your full group? if not, can you change space; or consider rehearsals with only part of a group
- Can you ventilate the space well? Again, consider changing venue if not
- Is the venue cleaned before your rehearsal and after the last use by someone else? If not, you may wish to request this; but be aware that may incur additional cost
- The toilet situation

Everyone included?

- Maybe your group and everyone in it will return to meeting weekly, as before Covid-19, very soon. But the likelihood is that some people will not feel able to turn up immediately – they may be in a high risk category or live with someone who is, they may be a key worker who cannot risk exposing themselves to potential infection, or they may simply be fearful for themselves or others.
- So you may have a situation where some of your group return to meeting in person, but not everybody. But presumably you'd like to make those who can't yet attend still feel part of your group, so think about what you could do. Can you live-stream the rehearsal? Carry on with some online meet-ups/rehearsals? Broadcast a message from the absentees to the rest of the group? Keep in contact via email, post or telephone?
- You will likely have other ideas and also of course will know your group. Just remember, in some way, those who may be stuck at home for longer than the rest.

Other informative articles

- Barbershop Harmony Society, [Science and the near-term future of singing](#) - interesting, although aimed at a US context
- The Guardian, [Did singing together spread coronavirus?](#) - questions whether it was the singing which caused these choirs to get ill, rather than the close proximity of people to each other.
- The Scotsman, [How Scotland's orchestras are planning for life after lockdown](#) - how professional orchestras in Scotland envisage post-Covid-19 future
- Professor Erin Bromage, [The Risks - Know Them - Avoid Them](#) - informative in general about transmission of Covid-19
- Church Times, [Singing might not be so great a risk, after all.](#)