

Summer 2021 £4

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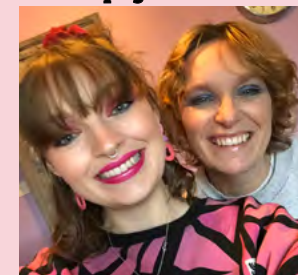
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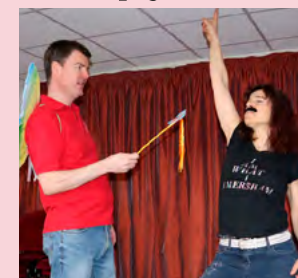
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voiceboxeditor@labbs.org.uk

Designer

Laura Orton
hello@lauraorton.com

Notes from Natalie Feddon



I come from a small chorus, Velvet Harmony, in Bromley, which doesn't compete. I have come to realise over the last two years as Vice Chair that no matter which club you sing with, we in LABBS, are equal members who all have a love of singing barbershop. I intend to be a champion of non-competing clubs to make sure that they are equally well catered for within our association.

I am hoping to follow in the footsteps of previous Chairs by visiting as many choruses as I can. In April via my computer I have visited Crystal Chords in Manchester for their social evening which was such a fun evening aided by the recipe given in advance of the Gin Cocktail. I also hopped along to Sevenoaks to see Green Street Blues and to Oxford to visit Harmony InSpires. Thank you so much to these choruses for tailoring their evenings to include me - it has been a fantastic opportunity to chat and see first-hand how choruses operate.

I intend to visit every chorus during my time as Chair, and that is made so much easier by Zoom, so please drop me a line and let me know when I can visit your Chorus. I look forward to meeting you all.

Yours In Harmony

Natalie Feddon
LABBS Chair

Hello everyone, I am delighted to be your new Chair and I would like to say a big thank you to our Immediate Past Chair, Nancy Philbin who I have worked with and learnt from during the past two years.

As the new Chair, I hit the ground running meeting with the European heads of barbershop and was delighted to meet everyone and hear about 2022 European Convention.

The restrictions of Covid have been challenging, but I have been so taken by the thoughtfulness, kindness and compassion shown to our individual members by their choruses. And the rollout of our new polecat has shown how lucky we have been to be able to take part in education sessions from the comfort of our homes.

A Kind of Magic in the Air

When Amersham A Cappella had their first date with the Cottontown Chorus at BABS back in 2017, it seemed the odds were stacked against this long-distance relationship being anything more than a quick fling.

Yet here we are, four years, one Mixed Chorus Gold medal, one engagement ring (yes, really) later and we're still having fun together as 'A Kind of Magic', with a fab new song and video ready to be premiered at Sing! 2021 in May.

"We also had to channel our inner divas".

Of course, creating a championship-worthy performance in lockdown isolation was never going to compare with mixing it up live as one super-sized, super-smashing chorus.

Instead of the thrill of harmonising in our Birmingham rehearsal venue, we had to make do with the guys crashing our Zoom party instead. Still, it meant we got to sing against Cottontown's booming basses and join in the boys' banter, which made up for it.

On top of that, we had the fun of getting our recordings in sync under the direction of our amazing MDs, Helen Lappert and Neil Firth. We also had to channel our inner divas to take some silly stills for THE video, masterminded by our choreography queen, Flash, and her team of video virtuosos.

Now we just can't wait for our rockin' video premiere party with our Cottontown other halves, in preparation for the main event - the excitement of watching our performance on the world-famous BABS Live! Show.

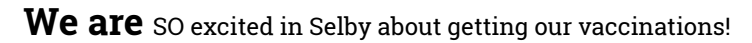
So what does the future hold for A Kind of Magic? Who knows. But you can be sure that Cottontown will be the one for Amersham for quite some time.

Hils Apicella
PRO, Amersham A Cappella



Deadline for next issue Friday 30th July 2021

Maximum 300 words plus two images if possible to voiceboxeditor@labbs.org.uk. Photographs taken on phones are usually fine, but please send direct from the photo gallery on the phone via email for maximum resolution.



It wasn't long before second vaccines started and the jabometer got a makeover, turning into a scary virus shape so that our fully vaccinated members could show off their status.

We can't wait to get back to real rehearsals, and vaccination brings us that bit closer. Well done all you jabbies everywhere!

Susan Taylor
PRO, (J)Abbey Belles Chorus

One Acchord Embracing the New Normal

One Acchord from the Scottish Borders is renowned for friendship and support, so our committee's aims during lockdown were to support all members and not to lose ground in singing quality and repertoire knowledge.

Every week, a committee member takes responsibility for keeping in contact with 4-6 members either through chats over the garden wall, Zoom/WhatsApp, good old fashioned phone calls, emails and texting, which ensured everyone got a chance to share news and ask for help, whilst the WhatsApp group provided witticisms and smiles at the darkest of times.

Our Vice-Chair Julie's Ridiculously Random Quizzes, designed so no one gets "Nil Points" are a blast, just one of many talents to emerge as we got to know each other. Her curious games on party nights included sketching each other's portraits with our non-dominant hand (commemorated in a tea-towel!) and poetry, writing our own Burn's Night odes to the haggis, and even one in perfect Haiku. Meanwhile our LABBS secretary Eileen, revealed her alter ego, the Rev IAM Jolly, in "moving" Late Call addresses.

We thought we lacked IT skills to support singing together and even though we tried singing over the phone and submitting recordings, enthusiasm flagged. But then came the LABBS Big Weekend and that changed everything.

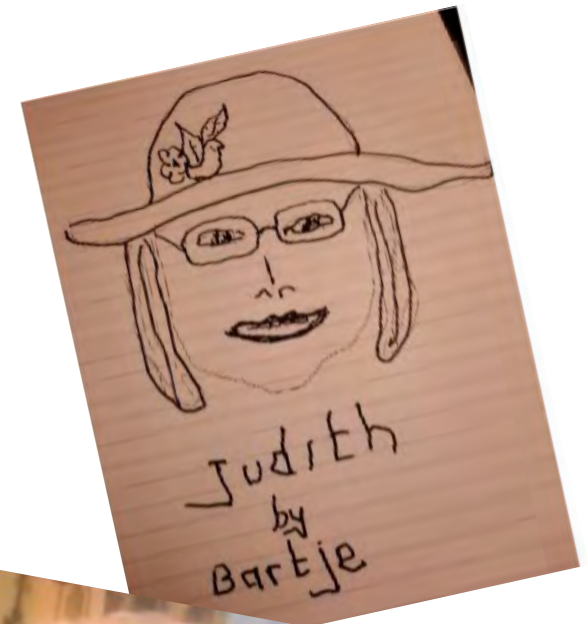
Despite still singing solo, we finally felt we were singing together – seeing animated faces and hearing the full mix sound. Buoyed by this experience, we convened a polecat Zoom sing-along straight after the Big Weekend which was really well attended. And after that we agreed to have a full chorus rehearsal every fortnight.

We party whenever possible and since Easter, we have focussed on improving vocal health, aided by workshops, LABBS and a night with Forth Valley Chorus.

Zoom has transformed practices, and confidence has grown singing to each other.

We are sewing singing masks in anticipation of our return to singing together. This is our new normal - the good response from happy singers makes it all worthwhile.

Anne Blair
PRO, One Acchord



Saintly Fun with Junction 14

Junction 14 have been working hard to keep members engaged, supported and involved with the club as much as possible during lockdown. One of the ways that we have achieved this is through regular Zoom social events organised by our fabulous social team. We find that it mixes things up a bit and provides a focus and a challenge for those performing, and great entertainment for those who come along on the evening.



On St George's Day, Friday 23rd April, we were treated to a social evening involving fun quizzes, poetry and musical entertainment - all supplied by our incredibly talented ladies.



We had a wonderful rendition of 'Amazing Grace' and 'You Are My Sunshine' by the Amazing Ukulele Buddies,



mostly made up from the bass section and a rogue bari! Most of them had only started learning the ukulele during lockdown so we were all seriously impressed with how well they performed. We were wowed by smooth jazz singing, the humorous poems of Pam Ayers, Mother Peter's End of Term Address, a number of beautifully haunting Celtic melodies, video shenanigans of the Wannabevs and 'Over the Rainbow' sung by the Wicked Pitches quartet. The quiz masters did a fab job too so all in all a great evening.



If your chorus hasn't thought of doing something like this then I can strongly recommend it as a wonderful bonding experience. Not only were we all together watching but a lot of members had been collaborating for weeks to get their party pieces ready for the evening.

Amanda Martin
PRO, Junction 14

Red Rosettes Having a 'Hoot'



The Red Rosettes have not allowed a little thing like a pandemic to hinder our ongoing development and learning. Our weekly rehearsals have incorporated two wonderful coaching sessions from Sandra Lee-Riley and Jordan Travis no less - both so informative, entertaining and inspirational.

We also had very enjoyable collaboration evenings with the ladies of Cheshire Chord Company and also with The White Rosettes. Border skirmishes

were suspended for the evening and we called ourselves the Pink Rosettes.

We had a very interesting Zoom evening with Horus Birds of Prey and are very fortunate that our beautiful Bari Linda Walters, and her husband Paul, display birds of prey. Normally they would be appearing at all the county shows and fetes but have very cleverly adapted to provide Zoom evenings for Scouts, Guides, WI groups and the Red Rosettes. The birds are magnificent and Paul is so informative, funny and entertaining. Treat your chorus to one of these evenings if you fancy something a bit different.

We were sad to bid farewell to our former bass Mary Sheryn, who has moved to be near family. Six of the Red Rosettes donned singing masks, made by chorus members, and sang farewell in her garden. Mary is a true lady in every sense and will be sadly missed.

"Six of the Red Rosettes donned singing masks, made by chorus members, and sang farewell."

We were very honoured to host the last session of the LABBS 'You Gotta Be' polecat education sessions. It was very well attended and was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with friends from other choruses and to receive expert advice from our LABBS judges.

Remember you gotta be bad, you gotta be bold, you gotta be wiser!

Ann Atkin
PRO, The Red Rosettes

The Belles of Three Spires Groups in Lockdown

As we slowly come out of lockdown, we continue to run our various social groups as well as online rehearsals. In these, our members have discovered new talents or brushed off their long-forgotten skills. The final creations, be it flower arranging (under the tutelage of Jayne Edmonds, Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medallist), painting from Holly Dawes or baking with Alison Davies, are circulated in our social media groups to great delight.

Our Saturday night quizzes are fun, and well-attended. At our monthly online social we enjoy the talents and gain inspiration from members. Plays have been written, themed quizzes compiled, interesting family histories retold, and guest speakers invited. At our April social, Joe Novelli from the a cappella group Sons of Pitches joined us. Joe demonstrated how to produce sounds to mimic various musical instruments which was great fun; will we include this in our repertoire? Joe also answered our questions on SOP's career, competition success and future concerts. He is pictured here in pre-Covid times with Rachel Sherlock and Holly Dawes who are keen fans and whose enthusiasm organised Joe's visit. We have also benefitted from coaching by Neil Firth and Jo Braham, helping us to prepare to return to the risers.

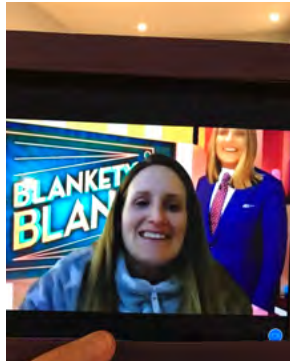
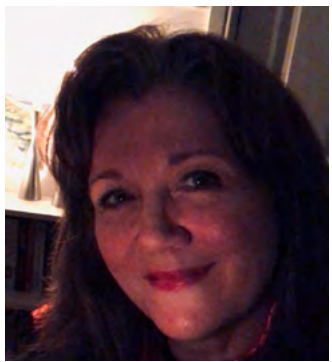
"We were invited to be part of the Earth Day initiative on 27th March."

Amanda Carter is a Belle and a member of her local Women's Institute group. We were invited to be part of the Earth Day initiative on 27th March by videoing ourselves by candlelight as part of reducing energy for the Earth Hour. The song choice was, of course, 'Jerusalem'!

As lockdown eases we are starting to meet in gardens, within the lessened restrictions. All of us are looking forward to the time when we can sing together again.

Eileen Askew

PRO, The Belles of Three Spires



Breathing, Bruce and Blue Skies

We have been working with some inspirational teachers over the past year and learning a lot more about each other.

Our rehearsal nights have evolved from a chat and a sing on Zoom to a structured session of warm-ups led by members of the chorus combined with pre-recorded sessions shared by our MD Hari. We have been learning and singing new rounds to help us remember how to sing together, sessions with other choruses and tutors, and of course singing old favourites and the new songs we have learned.

We have been very active in making sure our voices and mental health haven't suffered over the past months and Hari has invited some inspirational visitors – and some even came back for more.

Paula Taylor-Williams reminded us about posture, Quincie Snook showed us how to use yogic breathing and Jo Braham introduced some new warm-ups. Sonic were an inspiration for trying out quartetting, Craig Kehoe and Martin Proctor helped us protect and develop our voices, Signature talked about massaging feet and Room 101 (the mis'use of apostrophes's went in!!). Ian Walker talked about how to get the best out



of our recordings when we learn our new songs and Anna Shackleton led us over six weeks with bite-size vocal development work. We were also lucky to have visits from Natalie Feddon and Lynne Owen and they joined in our sharing of special songs: 'Fields of Gold' (Eva Cassidy), 'Little Donkey', 'Born to Run' (Bruce Springsteen), Vivaldi's 'Spring', 'Mr Blue Sky', 'That's What Friends Are For', 'California Dreaming', 'Come What May' (Moulin Rouge) and lots more.



We have had some wonderful social nights too – Christmas fun, film nights and a quiz to raise money for Brain Tumour Research organised by Hari (helped out by Lisa from Eggheads!) and we have worn our best and silliest hats.

Our next venture is our online Love to Sing course in June – we have 10 people signed up already! We are all learning a new song from scratch and the title is something we have really come to understand during these tricky times – 'Lean on Me'.

Meriel Lewis
PRO, Harmony InSpires

Chorus Icení - Crafting the Calm

With all the difficulties this past year has presented, something that has shown to be so important is our personal health and mental well-being.

As well as singing, crafting is an excellent way to tune out the negativity and focus entirely on creating that 'little oasis of calm' that we all thrive on.

So, with that in mind, when a celebratory date came up – we crafted! St Valentine's saw us making heart-shaped gift boxes. On St David's Day it was leek pins and daffodils, and for Easter we made bunny bookmarks and some amazingly decorated Easter bonnets.

Something that can definitely be said of the Icení girls, our chorus family has become stronger despite being apart and our Zoom rehearsals are never boring!

Wendy Buxton
Chorus Icení



Mersey Harmony



Easter Bonnets



At Mersey Harmony, we have continued to hold regular rehearsals via Zoom during this difficult year, sometimes using break-out 'rooms' to practise in our sections. So, we have continued to improve our singing, performance, and music theory skills, led by our MD, Luke Freeney, with the assistance of our Music Committee members.

We worked on several projects, eg, recording 'Happy Birthday' in harmony in time to celebrate the 90th birthday of our lovely Irene, a member of Mersey Harmony since almost its inception.

The 'I Dream of Singing Sweet Harmonies' tag was composed and arranged especially for us during the pandemic by our MD Luke. We recorded this individually and it was put together by Luke. The words are so appropriate:

**"I dream of singing sweet harmonies,
With you ... my friends,
Singing harmonies with you ... my friends."**

We progressed from that to completing a project, recording 'Little Help from My Friends', rehearsing in sections, then recording ourselves to be put together by Luke.

An accompanying video was compiled by Marianne, our assistant MD, that pays tribute to all the members of Mersey Harmony past and present. Listen and watch us on <https://youtu.be/jhXnE26DRxY>.

Get by with a little help from (our) friends."

We have kept contact throughout using our WhatsApp group, sharing anecdotes, photographs, celebrations, memories, and happy occasions ... a great Easter Bonnet compilation and Christmas tree designs come to mind! So, we are beginning to look forward to being able to meet up together for real before too long.

We really have been able to:

'Get by with a little help from (our) friends.'

**Colette MacFarlane
PRO, Mersey Harmony**

Singing in the Sunshine



More Harmony has been making the most of the sunny weather we've had recently with some small, outdoor rehearsals. First, our section leaders and MD got together for a socially distanced sing-through of our repertoire, followed a week later by a lead section rehearsal and then a mixed group of six. Singers' masks were worn, and various other precautions were in place to ensure the safety of all participants. Not only was it wonderful to see one another without the aid of a computer screen, but the sunshine meant that it was an absolute joy to be singing outside. In fact, one or two of us went home looking a little pinker than when we had when we arrived...

"The sunshine meant that it was an absolute joy to be singing outside."

We also recorded ourselves singing 'Happy Birthday,' to celebrate our bass section member Maggi hitting the big 7-0! We hope she had an incredible day and we're looking forward to getting together as a full chorus to properly mark the occasion (especially if there's cake...).

But not all our fun is being had in real life, yet. We were recently thrilled to join up with the fabulous Avon Harmony for a Zoom quiz in aid of Brain Tumour Research, a charity close to our hearts. It was a fantastic evening and we raised over £140 for a fantastic cause.

As restrictions begin to ease, our chorus is keeping an ear to the ground to ensure we're aware of any changes in the government's "roadmap." Our Chairman has updated our risk assessment, meaning we'll be ready to return to "real life" rehearsals in early June. Even though normality may be a little way off yet, we know hope is on the horizon and that makes us feel almost as bright as the glorious Cornish sunshine...

Emma Tofi
PRO, More Harmony

The Zooming Rozzers



March brought our Pink Rosettes' rehearsal, and it was so fab to cross the virtual border and have an evening with our friends in the Red Rosettes. There were dancing warm-ups, singing (of course) and we shared stories of barbershop connections between the two choruses – the adage about five degrees of separation certainly applies to barbershoppers! April also brought a fabulous joint rehearsal with our friends at Cheshire Chord Company and there were new warm-ups, tags, lots of giggles and even a talking cat.

We offered our contribution to 'AGM season' in March. Sally challenged us to wear our best hats, funny headwear, and any other fabulous head paraphernalia. We also welcomed our new/returning team: Fiona Earnshaw as Chair; Holly Parker as Vice Chair; Jane Kent as Secretary; Sally Johnson as Treasurer; Alys Galloway, Molly Martin McLean, Margaret Wharton, Frankie Stacey, Ingrid Baggaley and Heather Paterson as members; and Rachel Foster as ex-officio. It's great to have so many committee members continue and we're looking forward to building a path back to normality when we can.

Steve Stott also came to 'visit' us from across the pond in March! He delivered a great lecture on singing in the middle voice showing how the move to virtual rehearsals makes connecting so much easier.

In April, The White Rosettes were asked to lead the first LABBSe events on 'You Gotta Be', with nearly 200 participants. Our MD, Sally, led the group through some fantastic warm-ups in the main room before section breakout rooms where our fabulous section leaders and guest judges shared their tips and tricks for learning songs. The session was finished off by those brave enough to record themselves singing their part for a collaborative rendition of an inspiring and uplifting polecat! We can't wait to hear the result, but to be honest, we are looking forward to singing this in person with you at a future convention.

Keep talking, keeping singing barbershoppers - we're getting there.

Holly Parker
PRO, The White Rosettes

Singing and growing with Black Sheep

Since March 2020, Zoom has become our greatest weapon against Covid. The pandemic has been especially challenging for Black Sheep Harmony as the initial lockdown coincided with the debut of our new MD, Pete "Nooj" Nugent. He has yet to lead a physical rehearsal but has done an amazing job, keeping us together and learning, so thank you Pete. Our rehearsals are important to our members, and we've continued them throughout. Although unable to sing together as before, we can still warm up and sing along to our repertoire whilst muted (and we always sing beautifully!).

"Our rehearsals are important to our members".

But at present, the social aspect of our meetings takes priority. We include items such as desert island discs; quizzes; show and tell, and our latest – "Who are Ewe" (we love a sheep pun!) - we share something that nobody else knows. These items and the ability to chat together have been crucial, helping us feel connected and supported during this difficult year. We've even been able to continue recruitment, a real achievement in such challenging times.

We are especially proud of Zoom Into Christmas, our five week online course for women of all singing abilities in November and December 2020 which had three main aims:



The final week was a celebration of achievement with certificates being awarded. We had 80 registrants and many of the local ladies enjoyed it enough to return! We are delighted to have welcomed seven auditionees directly as a result of the course, to add to the other four who have joined us during lockdown.

To see our Christmas Choir singing Little Saint Nick, click on this link

<https://www.blacksheepharmony.com/HaveAListen>

Sue Davis
Assistant MD, Black Sheep Harmony

Spring Activities in Spinnakerland



March saw the re-election of our 2020 Board members at our AGM and with the introduction of a new role we welcomed Kath Stewart to the team as our Technical Support Officer. Kath who joined Spinnaker in 2018 is one of our boomtastic basses.

Next our Easter rehearsal was appropriately themed with bunny ears, chicks, chocolate treats, an Easter quiz and a 3-minute bonnet making challenge using paper plates, string and Sellotape. It was hilarious to see the decorative creativity achieved with limited resources in such time limits.

With the news in April that the Covid lockdown was easing we were excited to start planning for our return to face-to-face singing with a fabulous reunion get-

together at the beginning of May. Having revised our risk assessment and sourced an ideal Covid-secure location sadly our plans were postponed when we received updates from DCMS that choirs could not now meet until the latter part of May. To quell the disappointment we encouraged Spinnakerettes to arrange small-group, outdoor, meet-ups in the interim. The beautiful April weather, despite being rather chilly, facilitated a number of gatherings for chats, fun, laughter, singing and obviously plenty of tea and cake!

On Sunday 25th April we were delighted to host the final LABBS E&J 'You Gotta Be' polecat session on Zoom, with 79 members in attendance. The hugely successful and informative session featured lively physical and vocal warm-ups followed by our section leaders Cathy, Mary,

Liz and Julia leading breakout room rehearsals. Faculty judges Kirsty Williams (Performance), Sarah Netherton, Karen Lillywhite (Singing) and Alex de Buin (Music) rotated around each room passing on their excellent coaching tips. Finally, to conclude the session our very own musical wizard JP (MD) directed a mass sing of 'You Gotta Be' as it was videoed.

Huge thanks to LABBS, our own fab Music Team and amazing Zoominators, Tracey, Kathryn and Kath who together enabled this brilliant event to run so smoothly.

Tracy Daniel
PRO, Spinnaker

Who Doesn't Love a Good Tag?

Steel City Voices added a new feature to our Zoom rehearsals during lockdown and it has gone down a storm. Each month, the music team have been inviting a special guest to join us and teach us a tag of their choice.

Initially, some of our chorus members, who are well established in the barbershop world, our MD Hannah Briggs, Jo Braham (Cheshire Chord Company) and Ros Kipps (Sheffield Harmony), tagged in and took us through some beautiful harmonies.

Next up, we were lucky enough to meet the vivacious Michaela Johnston from award winning Double Date and ClassRing. Michaela joined us from across the pond in Florida to teach us a wonderful and uplifting tag. A very special moment. It definitely brought us some much-needed sunshine!

Following that, the Bryant brothers Peter and Nick from Spirit of Harmony led us in consecutive rehearsals showing off their impressive range whilst teaching all four parts of the tags they chose for us. Impressively, Nick had written the tag he shared.

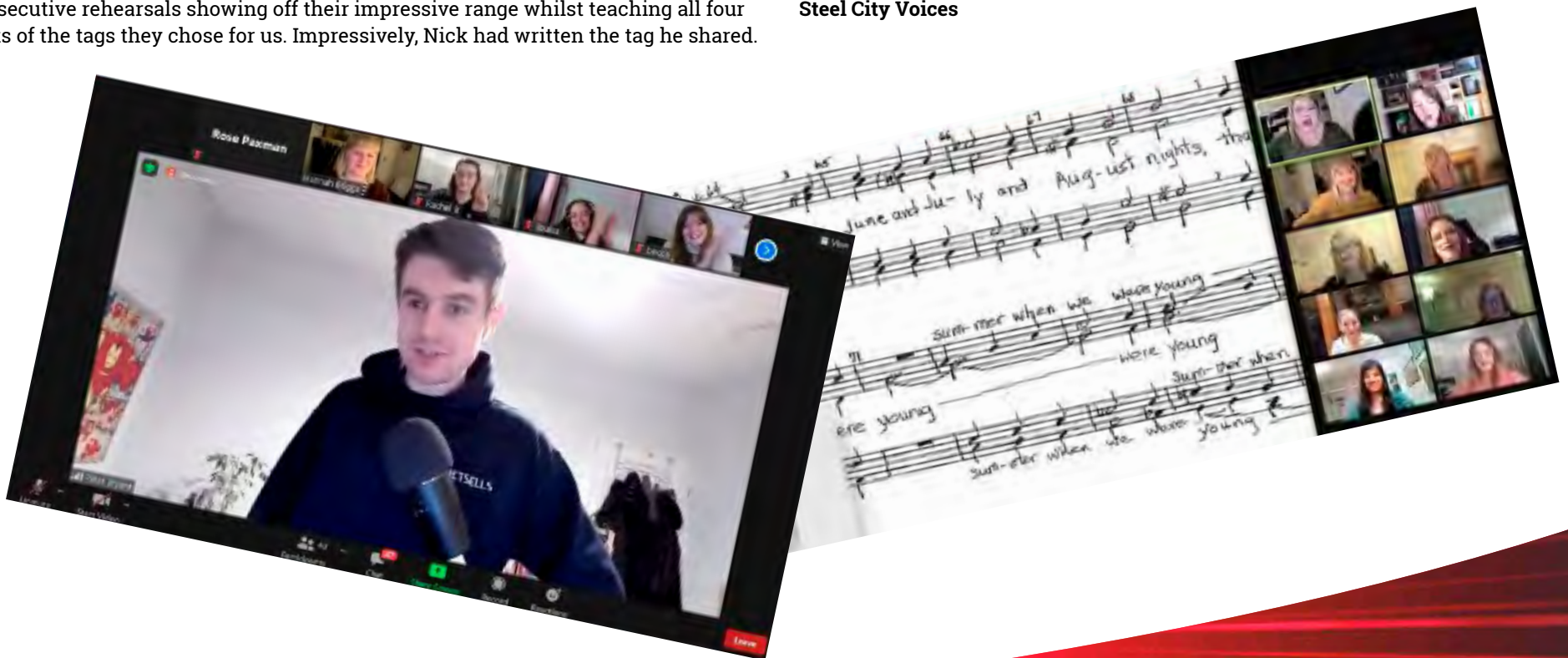
We all really enjoyed them both.

Sam Hubbard, a member of Hallmark of Harmony also joined us to take us through one of his favourites and it was a great experience for all involved. Such good fun!

Each month, we end our rehearsal with a new tag; it has become a firm highlight for many members. Jadyn Johnston from Adrenaline is set to join us for next month's tag and needless to say, we are really looking forward to it.

A big thank you to all our tag guests so far! We can't wait for the next afterglow where we will finally be able to sing what we have learned together, drink in hand, to celebrate.

Beth Marsden
Steel City Voices



Television Stars

The first part of 2021 has been all about publicity for Cheshire Chord Company! We may not have actually been together but we've certainly made sure everyone knows about us and British Barbershop. At the beginning of March, our Lockdown Legacy song – 'I Couldn't Live Without Your Love' (arranged by Fran Carter) was played on BBC Radio 5 after a request for music groups to send in their lockdown projects. How lovely it was to receive so many messages from listeners that morning, sending their praise and enjoyment at listening to our song!

As a result of this, we were then asked to appear on BBC Look North West. To be able to spread the barbershop love across the country is important, particularly in these difficult times. The day we can get back together and sing will be a very special one!

As well as all this fabulous publicity, we have managed to squeeze in some coaching, education sessions and a joint

rehearsal night. Thursday nights are our virtual nights and this year we have already been lucky enough to welcome Liz Garnett who talked about the very interesting process of arranging music. We were also joined by Rachel Small from Heartbeat chorus who talked to us about the importance of mental wellbeing. A really great educational session and much food for thought. The middle of March saw us joining forces with Preston-based Red Rosettes. An evening of screen sharing, Tag Times and even a virtual pub - what more could you want? Fingers crossed our next one will be in person.

As restrictions start to ease a little, we look to the future with the hope of seeing many of you soon. Remember, you can always see what we've been up to virtually by visiting www.cheshirechord.co.uk.

Julie Phillips
PRO, Cheshire Chord Company



"An evening of screen sharing, Tag Times and even a virtual pub".

Bristol MDs Striking Their Own Chord



In October of 2020, the four LABBS choruses of Bristol, [Avon Harmony](#), [Black Sheep Harmony](#), [Bristol Fashion](#) and of course us, [Fascinating Rhythm](#), had our annual get-together to enjoy an evening of polecat singing, coaching sessions and a good old catch-up. Even though it was held virtually this year, it was still expertly assembled by our wonderful Musical Directors, Mary, Craig, Nooj and Jo.

However, little did we know that when they were devising this evening, they had also hatched a top-secret plan for their very own musical lockdown project. Nobody had an inkling until one recent Thursday evening, Jo tantalisingly revealed she had a secret to share with us all. After keeping us waiting for a while, she finally put our wandering minds at rest and shared this excellent creation with us: [Lockdown Project- Somewhere Only We Know](#).

"We miss each other".

All four videos and audios were recorded independently, and then they were deftly mixed by [Nooj](#). We love the breakaway from a cappella with a great drumbeat and do we hear a guitar or two? It turns out that they sing well for Musical Directors! Created with stunning visuals, this is a project to be proud of.

We were thrilled to see Jo and the other MDs put their talents to the forefront and it seems they relished the project too. Jo said, "The project has connected us in what has been a pretty isolating time", and Nooj added, "We're all good friends but we've been apart some time and we miss each other".

Hear hear to that!
Roll on Convention 2022!

Erica Smith
SM Lead, Fascinating Rhythm

Natalie Feddon - LABBS Chair

Introducing Natalie, our new LABBS Chair. Natalie sings lead with Velvet Harmony in Bromley, Kent and here we find out a little more about this lovely lady.

Tell us about yourself!

I have lived in our house in Orpington for the past 30 years where I have brought up our four children. We still have two children living with us which has been a godsend during COVID.

When did you first know you loved singing?

I really enjoyed singing in the choir at school and now as a Pre-School Teacher I love singing with the small children. I used to sing in the kitchen when I was cooking, and my husband prefers silence and so told me to be quiet. I told him I was happy when I was singing, and he later bought me a singing lesson to give me the confidence to join a group. A friend introduced me to Velvet Harmony and I was immediately hooked. Very quickly I became the LABBS rep, then Chair of Velvet Harmony which included putting on concerts, taking the girls to Harmony College and organising a trip to Lithuania.

The previous chair, Nancy Philbin asked me to consider applying for the position of vice chair in 2018, and I wasn't sure as Velvet Harmony is a non-competing chorus. However, I was told, and it is so true, that every member of LABBS is valued and has a different interpretation of what LABBS can bring to our membership and I was sold.

What do you love about LABBS?

I love the friendliness and the opportunities it offers.

What is your most embarrassing singing experience?

Probably on the London Tube. We had been singing for charity at Christmas at Liverpool Street Station and some of us were catching the tube home. We got into a sing off with some Irish guys singing Xmas Carols. It was so much fun but seeing as we had been to the pub in the interim, I don't know that our singing was the best.

What do you hope to achieve as LABBS chair?

I am very conscious that every member pays a fee and that we need to be giving good value to all. I would like to see more opportunities for non-competing clubs and as a Board we are working on that already.



2015 my first Christmas sing out in Keston



My lovely family



Bournemouth EBC 2017

Tash Nickson – Director for Diversity & Inclusion



Quick-fire Qs

Ketchup or brown sauce?

Ketchup but I usually go for BBQ.

Coriander yes or no?

YES!

Beach or mountain?

Beach

Book or movie?

Audio book.

Dinner in or dinner out?

Dinner in.

Disco or ballet?

Disco, love a good boogie!

How long have you been singing and who do you sing with?

I have been singing for almost three years, before barbershop I didn't sing at all. My mum, Celia, has been singing barbershop since I was little, but I was never drawn to it until I met the lovely people at Bristol Fashion through her, and I've been singing with them since. I also sing with the LABBS Youth Chorus which I joined in 2019.

Where is home?

I live in Bristol with my cat Sammy. We moved in January from Brighton and I'm very excited to have a much shorter journey to chorus.

When did you start to sing?

I started singing with Bristol Fashion just under 3 years ago. I love it for the social aspect and the endorphins we feel when singing in a group. I find it accomplishing to learn more and improve.

What attracted you to the D&I role at LABBS?

I was drawn to the role immediately as I had already considered the lack of diversity in what I had seen of British Barbershop. Diversity and Inclusion is something I had previously raised with my chorus when Lamorna and I spoke to them about the Black Lives Matter protests happening at the time. I am encouraged by all the support I have already received and hope to help make British barbershop an inclusive space for everyone.

What is your favourite warm-up?

One I learnt at the over 18s Youth Chorus: I rattled my bottles at Rolexes yard.

Do you have any hobbies outside singing?

Outside of singing I enjoy yoga which I like to do most mornings. I also really enjoy surfing which I am hoping to be able to do more now that I live closer to Devon.

Please welcome your new Board! A big thank you to all these lovely ladies who generously give their time for us all.



Natalie Feddon

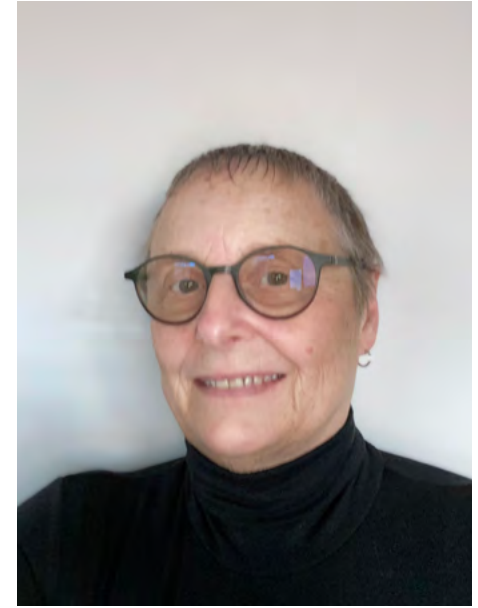
Chair

I am so proud to be the Chair of LABBS in its 45th year, helping it to grow even stronger with the great team beside me. I appreciate the differences between our choruses and recognise that each one has a cherished place within the LABBS family. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can whether in person or over Zoom over the next two years.

Sue Ranson

Vice Chair

Hello everyone, I'm a member of Cheshire Chord Company and I'm really happy to be joining the Board as Vice Chair. I'll be learning a lot but will do my best to support Natalie and the Board at this challenging but exciting time.



Meet the Board

Jill Cook

Membership Director

I've always loved music but it's singing in harmony that brings me most joy - although as a baritone my practice sessions at home aren't always popular! I'm excited to be part of the LABBS Board at a time of great change and opportunity - I'm focussed on making our Association an even stronger community where everyone can be themselves and share the joy of singing whatever their background.



Hannah Barber

Secretary

Hi, I'm Hannah and I've been singing barbershop for around 15 years now. Originally with the Harmonichs in Germany, then with The White Rosettes and now with SoundHouse quartet (2017 LABBS and European champions). I am looking forward to supporting the Board over the next few years and contributing in every way I can.



Lamorna Hooker

Youth Director

My name is Lamorna, and I am the LABBS Youth Coordinator, newly appointed as Youth Director onto the LABBS Board. I have been singing barbershop for two years, and I sing with Bristol Fashion as well as singing with and running the LABBS Youth Chorus. I'm excited that the Board has expanded to be more diverse and am looking forward to bringing a young person's perspective to LABBS.



Tasha Nickson

Director of Diversity & Inclusion

I sing lead with Bristol Fashion and the Youth Chorus and am extremely excited to join the LABBS Board to grow diversity and inclusion within the organisation. I am very keen to get started in celebrating the current diversity as well as being more inclusive to diversify across the organisation.



Julie Dugdale

Events Director

I'm a member of Affinity Show Chorus and have been since 2015 and sing Lead. I've been involved with LABBS Convention Team for the last few years in the capacity of Registrations Manager and I'm looking forward to starting in my role as Events Director. Hopefully we'll be able to meet up at an event in person soon and if that's not possible then it'll be virtually.



Alys Galloway

Finance Director

I've been on the LABBS Board since 2014 and before that was the E&J Treasurer from 2006 so have been around for a while! I joined The White Rosettes in 1999 and although it took me until my twenties to start singing, I've known about barbershop since the tender age of three when my father started singing with the Chesham Buckaneers – it's a bit of a family affair as my brother and family are also barbershoppers. I'm looking forward to working with the Board in moving the LABBS strategy forward – exciting times.

Dream Team!

Alison Zdzykowski Rita Hulands

Education Director

I have been singing barbershop since 1987 with various choruses and a brief dalliance into quartetting. I qualified as a Presentation Judge, now Performance, in 2003 and have judged and trained in Canada, America and the Netherlands as well as on many LABBS and BABS panels. I am the current Education Director in my 4th year on the Board as well as leading the Education and Judging Team. I am so proud of all the online education events we have been able to provide over the last year and look forward to organising real life events as soon as we can.



Marketing & Communications Director

Hi, I have been in the role of Marketing and Communication Director since 2015, supported by a fabulous team of volunteers. I am hoping to carry forward all that we have learned during lockdown to provide the best support to our singers as we emerge. I sing with GEM Connection (Baritone) and Ruby Tuesday quartet and when I'm not singing with them or LUX Acappella mixed chorus or The Collective virtual choir, I can be found cuddling my dogs and planning my next holiday.



Nancy Philbin

Immediate Past Chair

Hi - I sing Baritone with Crystal Chords, I am the Immediate past Chair of LABBS and am looking forward to supporting Natalie and the Board during 2021. I work full time for HMRC, have two grown up sons, two gorgeous granddaughters and a two new baby grandsons, born just four months apart. Spare time (non-barbershop related!) hobbies are reading, travelling, and spending time with my family.



LABBS/BHS Alliance



Great news! For many years LABBS has maintained a friendship with the Barbershop Harmony Society in USA and you will know that discussions had been ongoing with BHS for several months and I am pleased to report that, following meetings with their CEO and Exec team, LABBS finally became a recognised alliance partner of BHS with effect from 1st March. The formal joint announcement can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/YWRtsQyBeDE>

Benefits for LABBS include access to Music Educator Guides, provision of competitive pricing arrangement clearance services, access to technical expertise and, importantly, our judges will be able to continue to take advantage of the excellent BHS judging programme, which in turn will maintain the high standard of their judging in our own LABBS contests. There will also be an opportunity for our top choruses and quartets to travel to USA to represent LABBS in BHS International Contest. LABBS is now acknowledged as an official alliance partner on the BHS website at www.barbershop.org

We have created a comprehensive FAQs page, so please do take some time to find out more about the opportunities offered to LABBS members through this ground-breaking alliance with BHS.

Nancy Philbin
LABBS' Immediate Past Chair

Virtual Benefits



When Lockdown hit us last year, our first reaction was shock as we were separated from our singing community. A LABBS member asked if we could create a singing opportunity online and LABBSi was born. This was quickly followed by Alternative Prelims, a full programme of online education from our fab E&J community and of course the cherry on the cake - LABBS Big Weekend.

As we edge towards better times, we know that whilst some of our members will be desperate to meet up and start singing, others will be more wary, so some of our tactical solutions will be needed for some time.

However, we have learned so much over the last year and much of it has pointed us to solutions which can add value going forward.

Nothing can ever replace singing together in person, but we are appreciating the greater ability to be inclusive and of course the cost savings that virtual engagement has allowed.

The Board regularly reviews our virtual offerings to ensure they add value, and these are our latest findings.

Rita Hulands
LABBS Marketing & Communications Director



LABBSi

- ★ Our very popular LABBSi will continue
- ★ Our judges have benefitted from education from BHS Mentors across the pond without the expense or hassle of flights and accommodation so we will definitely be keeping that!
- ★ We also joined a Zoom session with Harmony Inc on cultural differences - facilitating convenient sharing and learning
- ★ LABBSi – our online education on demand will continue alongside in-person education when it becomes possible
- ★ We instigated a Chairs forum and a closed Facebook group to improve our contact with clubs. This community has grown in strength, sharing ideas, resources and supporting each other.
- ★ We have adopted a similar approach with a closed group to get closer to our CAL (Club At Large) members
- ★ Our Board meeting had already moved to a hybrid of virtual and in-person meetings pre pandemic and we are looking at extending this to our council meetings and AGM
- ★ The LABBS Board has used lockdown to devote more time to our strategic goals, resulting in short- and medium-term plans which include sharing experiences to collaborate more actively with other organisations

End of an Era...

We were so disappointed to learn of Anne and David Withnall's decision to step down from running the LABBS Raffle.

Over many years they gave generously of their time not only at Conventions but throughout the year, making sure that we all had tickets to sell and then collecting the money in, not to mention folding thousands of tickets...always with a smile!

Anne and David ran the raffle with such professionalism and the proceeds from the raffle while under their leadership amounted to around **£37,000**. The money has been used for Learn to Sing courses, Chorus and Quartet grants and Education grants. It has been an amazing achievement and we thank them for all their hard work and dedication.

Anne said "We started out in 2009 at Cheltenham and thoroughly enjoyed our 11 years. This is not a decision we have taken lightly but we feel that this is the right time to step back."

We send our love and thanks to Anne and David for all they have done for LABBS and wish them both well in the future.

Nancy Philbin and Alys Galloway
LABBS Board



Thank you Anne and David!

GEM'S Guide to Be



Clare has been a valued member of GEM Connection's Baritone Section for a number of years now after joining us from a Love-to-Sing Course.

Clare started raising puppies for the Guide Dog Association back in 2006 and has successfully raised three puppies so far. She also spends time short term boarding while their full-time owners take holidays. Sabre is her fourth puppy and has been with Clare for seven months. As a lockdown treat for us all, Clare has shared how she came to care for Sabre and what lies ahead for this gorgeous dog.

"Sabre came to us, aged just seven weeks, as a gorgeous bundle of pure Andrex puppy. Now, at seven months, he weighs 30kg and is an almost fully grown Golden Labrador/Retriever who is still very much a puppy at heart!"

"As volunteer puppy raisers for Guide Dogs, we will look after Sabre until he's about 15 months, at which point he will move on to full time advanced training. Our job is to give Sabre loads of love (not difficult!), carry out lots of basic training, and introduce him to a range of environments, from supermarkets to train stations, shopping centres to buses, hairdressers to pub gardens."

"The question we are most frequently asked: how can you bear to part with him? The answer: It will, of course, be a wrench when he goes, but we've always known he's not ours."

"We are just proud and privileged to be able to set him on the road to his life as a guide dog. And we will look forward to hearing, in due course, that he has qualified, and become a life changing companion and support for someone who will love him to pieces too."

Well done Clare – we are proud of you and of Sabre too!

Rachel Watson
GEM Connection



Birthday Celebrations at Arun

Members of Arun A Cappella (previously The Arun Sounds) celebrate a Big Birthday this year, 40 lovely years of singing, competing in the UK and Ireland, charity fundraising, putting on shows and making friends - a fabulous time with a mass of wonderful memories.

We plan to have a weekend of coaching and relaxation at a local hotel later in the year to celebrate, if we're allowed. All this is down to our creator, June Bryant, who set up the chorus in the beginning and continues to sing. She is now our Assistant Musical Director, our Club Chairman and she is an all-round amazing woman to whom we owe everything.

June also celebrates a Mega Big Birthday this summer. Happy Birthday wishes and all our love to you June for all you've done.

Joyce Stroud
PRO, Arun A Cappella



Arun A Capella



June with Arun A Cappella and Gail Grainger (June far left)



Arun A Cappella, mid 1980s, with June (centre).

Chordettes Acappella Chorus are Out and About Again

We love a walk – as long as coffee and cake are involved!

As soon as restrictions were eased to allow six people to meet up, on went the walking boots. We are very lucky to live in Teignbridge in South Devon which is a beautiful part of the UK and we certainly like to make the most of the opportunity to get out in the countryside and enjoy each other's company. A few groups of Chordettes have been out and about lately covering the whole range of our county from "moor to sea". And no Chordettes walk is complete without coffee and yummy home-made cake at the end.

Three of our members entered the 2021 Race for Life "At Home" completing a very hilly 5k run around the Devon lanes on Sunday 24th April. Running in memory of some dear family and friends lost to this awful pandemic, they raised almost £500 between them. And guess what – coffee and cake at the end!

Like many of our sister choruses we are tentatively working towards small groups getting back to singing together in person again, but in the meantime we keep Zooming. We were delighted to be joined by the amazing Sally McLean at a recent rehearsal. Sally's positivity and enthusiasm always inspires, so thank you for coming to "see" us. Next time in person – hopefully!

Amy Hedger
PRO, The Chordettes



Panto fun with the Crystals



In March both Nancy Philbin and Caroline Poole stepped down from their recent LABBS Board positions as Chair and Secretary. Crystal Chords are incredibly proud of them and the work they have done on the Board in the last 3–4 years and would like to publicly say ‘thank you’ from all of us. As a chorus we have had a number of ladies step onto the Board or in other roles to help LABBS and we know how much these volunteers are needed for our Association as well as how much time they give.

Other time-giving ventures have recently included our fabulous sections each taking a turn to host a social night on Zoom for our chorus members. The Basses kicked us off with a murder mystery hosted by a very engaging Belgian detective who helped the chorus uncover over a couple of hours that the murderer was none other than your very own Crystals Voice Box contributor.... Misty Visions aka Alison Liddell (Boo!!! It was a fix I tell you, I was framed!). After such fun the Tenors took over the following month and helped us get our movie quizzing hats on before the Leads hosted the pantomime of the century ‘Princess Pitchpipe and the Dragon’. With songs and outrageous costumes we were delighted to be joined for the evening by the new LABBS Chair Natalie Feddon. We only hope we didn’t scare her off!

Hopefully we will be coming together as a chorus for a sing soon too but for now as lockdown eases, we have had a few meet-ups start to happen – sometimes the weather has been a challenge but it has not held us back and we can’t wait for more!

Alison Liddell
PRO, Crystal Chords

'Gotta Be' with Bristol Fashion and How Love Saved the Day!



Reflecting on hosting of a Zoom Education Day I marvel at the brilliant Zoominators, Education Judges and our own Music and Performance Team as they navigated the sea of faces, breakout rooms, log-ins and screen sharing necessary to bring over 80 delegates together on a sunny Sunday morning in April.

Like every Bristol Fashion rehearsal we got things going with a physical warm-up. The Musical Milkshake moves were literally bananas and everyone was whisked up to a noisy froth.

Judges Zoomed in and out creating a treasure trove of music, singing and performance gems.

Our Assistant MD, Caro, really did 'gotta be cool and calmer' as she led the vocal warm up. For when sound

and screen sharing failed she barely blinked before teaching us the remarkably apt lyrics of a new round - 'I am enough, just as I am.'

After moving to breakout rooms we encountered another mini Zoom glitch where 40 seconds later we were all back in the 'auditorium' and laughter filled the soundwaves. The Zoominators swiftly sent us back to our sectionals with the Bristol Fashion MPT. We are all proud of these ladies; they have big hearts and a generosity with their time and it was wonderful to see them 'be wiser' as they shared their knowledge and good humour in equal measure. Time flew.

Moving on, Captain of the BF Ship, Craig Kehoe kept everyone in 'alignment' with breathing and rhythm whilst the Judges zoomed in and out creating a treasure trove of music, singing and performance gems.

Finally we were back in the virtual auditorium for the performance.

And then, standing there, the words resonating with so much meaning - be wiser, stronger, so much tougher. It was our year - summed up in a single song. We realised a love for our art form, for our friendships, for that beautiful sound of harmony and all things beyond singing - a love that has kept us going for a whole year on-line, a love that sustains us as we prepare to finally return - that LOVE -well, it really has saved the day!

Debbie Trotman
Bristol Fashion (feeling a tad emotional)

Returning to Vocal Health with Bristol Fashion



Before Christmas I started to get a bee in my bonnet.

I kept reading about the LABBS membership and other barbershop associations' concerns about returning to our former confidence and voice quality after lockdown – and none of us expected to be out of action for this long.

Zoom has been great at keeping us in touch and connected, we've even managed to learn some new songs, but how frustrating is it not being able to hear how it sounds?

I decided to give myself some focus for the new year and create some positivity around preparing our voices to return to full vocal fitness before we can meet in person again as a whole chorus.

I wanted to create a holistic approach including preparing to sing, vocal techniques, and mindfulness.

I've used a combination of resources in three sections

- Preparing to Sing
- Vocal Warm Ups
- Resources

Some are already available (links available at the

end of the presentation) and others are 'in house' Bristol Fashion vocal warm ups, video demos of straw phonation, Pilates and Tai Chi exercises.

I created a WhatsApp group and send out exercises on Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We now link them to which technique is being covered in Thursday rehearsals. All exercises and resources are available on our website and a reminder is included in weekly Notices.

Please see link to BF Road Map and RTVH presentation - <https://bit.ly/3uZsRYx>

We have created our own road map and we have already started with mini section rehearsals and we plan to gradually build up the groups from six in a section, to duet sectionals, mini choruses, and then finally full chorus, all with adherence to government guidelines of course and we are making good use of the Making Music information.

One thing for sure – WE CAN'T WAIT TO SING TOGETHER AGAIN.

Janis Smith
PRO and Lead Section Leader



Cornish Holiday

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you will never want
to go home!*



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St Columb Major



3 BEDROOM HOUSE

Hengar Manor, St Tudy
(Close to Port Isaac)



4 BEDROOM BEACH HOUSE

Bodannon, Porthtowan

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Advertise in Voice Box

Voice Box is sent to every LABBS member, so it's an ideal way to let your fellow members know what you are up to, to sell items or to advertise your goods and services. Advertisements do not have to be barbershop-related – we are happy to share hobby or work messages.

There are discounts for all LABBS members, and you can make savings by booking more than one ad at a time.

Adverts in Voice Box are charged at the following rates. A discount will be available for an ad run – details to be agreed on application.

	LABBS*	NON-MEMBERS
FULL-PAGE	£65	£85
HALF-PAGE	£35	£65
QUARTER PAGE	£25	£35

* LABBS rates are applicable to all LABBS members and clubs/quartets

Send your advertisement to voicebox@labbs.org.uk

Wet your Whistle Ladies!

As spring arrived in Aberdeenshire, so too did news from the Scottish Government announcing the release of some social restrictions. Albacappella ladies greeted the news with joy and anticipation that soon we may meet and sing together. "The chorus has already started to discuss how this might happen", said Liz McRobbie, chair of the management committee. "We are proud of what we have achieved this year, but getting together in person needs careful planning. We have lots of ideas in the pipeline. Meanwhile, we are entering Aberdeen's online music festival with a new song, and continuing our successful recruitment drive".

A big challenge for all singers right now is keeping our voices healthy. So we were delighted to be reminded of how to keep on top form by an expert in singing and vocal health, Martin Proctor. Martin is an experienced singing judge and section leader with the Great Western Chorus, and with the award-winning Bagatelle quartet. In his Zoom presentation "The aging voice", Martin reminded us about the greats such as Ella Fitzgerald and Tony Bennett - still performing at 94 - and what we need to do to adapt as we age. And when Martin was persuaded to give his absolute top tip, it was to lubricate! "Hydration is possibly the best thing we can all do for our voices, especially as we get older, and you need a lot – at least eight glasses of water a day", he added. The online social event was organised by our pals, the Aberdeen men's harmony Granite City Chorus. 'Hydrate to lubricate' is slightly ironic for us, surrounded by lochs, rivers and the sea! But as the social evening coincided with news about the change in social restrictions Martin's advice had us raising our (water) glasses to hope, health and hydration.

Judith Robson
PRO, Albacappella



LABBS Polecats Roundup

Following the successful LABBS E&J/Music Category programme of introducing a brand new polecat every year since 2012, which has now changed to every two years, we've ended up with quite a long list of songs!

We've received feedback from new clubs and new members that it's a little overwhelming and they don't know which to prioritise. So, to help with this, we have decided to group them according to both popularity and recency - it makes sense for new members to first learn the polecats that are most likely to be sung in a mass sing or afterglow.

The [Polecats page on the website](#) shows the new groupings, otherwise all the information is the same as before. As always, you will need to know the username and password for the Polecats page, if you're unsure what this is your chorus LABBS rep or secretary should be able to help you.

Debi Cox
LABBS E&J Music Category Director| Web Manager



“Current” repertoire-friendly Polecats

**You Gotta Be
Make Your Own Kind of Music
Anthem
If I Can Dream
Bohemian Rhapsody
Let Me Be There
Lazy Day
Heart of My Heart**

“Older favourites”

**Give Me a Barbershop Song
Java Jive
Let's Get Together Again/ Keep
the Whole World Singing
Let's Sing Again
Little Things Mean a Lot
San Francisco Bay Blues
Under the Boardwalk**

Fun Facts with Sound Central

During the last year, it has been difficult to keep positive as we should be reporting that we had a wonderful time at SABS in Spain in April ... but of course we are not! We'd love to report about the wonderful time we had at the Europeans in May ... but we can't!

However we're not going to moan about what might have been, we're looking forward to what's going to happen in the future and to getting together once again to work hard, oh, and to have loads of laughs on the way!

So in the absence of any news we thought we'd put together a quick quiz featuring a few crazy facts about Sound Central. All you need to do is match the singer to the fact.

The members of Sound Central are as follows:

- A - Sarah Bolton (Baritone)
- B - Suzanne Mansfield (Lead)
- C - Bev Mackenzie (Bass)
- D - Jen Crooks (Tenor)

Our fun facts are:

1 - Is qualified to fly a hand glider

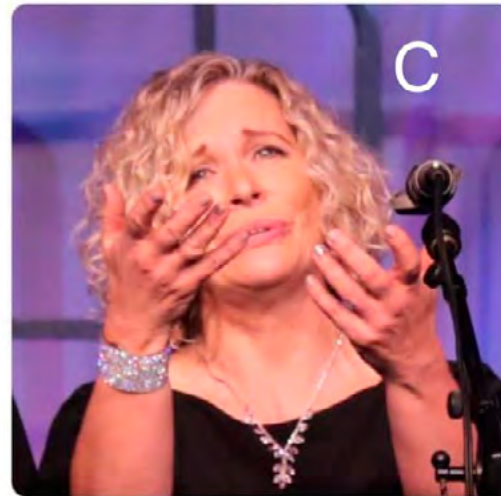
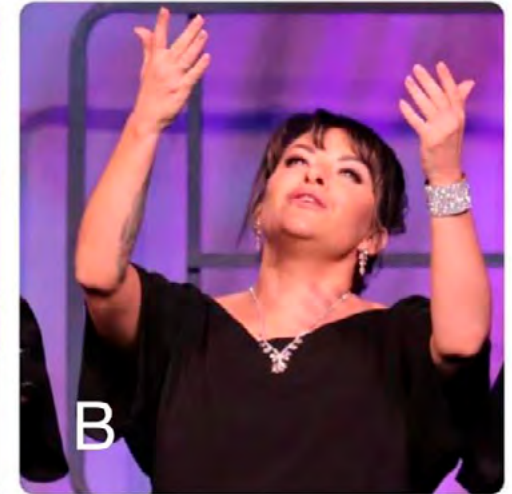
2 - Used to work in the office next to Boris Johnson

3 - Has worked as an extra on Emmerdale, Coronation Street and Hollyoaks

4 - Has done a skydive to raise money for RNIB

So get matching away and have fun. Look after yourselves until we all meet again!

Answers on the next page....



Puppy Power



While the last few weeks have provided a fab opportunity for us Rubies to meet in person for a sing, we've had an extra motivation to get together as two of us have acquired new puppies in recent weeks! Little Joe has joined the Hulands household, and Lily the golden retriever has got a new home on the farm with tenor Paula – our outdoor rehearsal venue!

A fine distraction from the job of refreshing rusty songs and getting our singing muscles working again... and as you can see from the pics, Lily might even be replacing Rach as our Stunt Lead! It's even prompted a name change – as Rita's plaits get a little bit shorter every week and Paula's slippers keep going missing, we thought Ruby Chewsday might be more appropriate...

Rachel Watson
Ruby Tuesday Quartet



Answers to the Sound Central quiz on page 37.

1 – C | 2 – D
3 – B | 4 – A

How many did you get right?

The Hills are Alive!



A lovely sunny April Sunday at Dovestone Reservoir was the most recent location for IN HOUSE's longed for meet-up. With restrictions easing and being allowed to meet outside, we made the most of the great outdoors and went for a gorgeous walk where the hills were quite literally alive with the sound of music!

"There's nothing better than a sing in real life!"

This was our first meetup since December where we sat outside a motorway Starbucks, hugging our warm drinks to keep from the cold! Thankfully this day was much warmer. With our walking layers on, back packs full of food, Buffy the dog and singing voices ready, we set off into the hills around the Oldham based reservoir.

With such beautiful surroundings it was really quite special and we hope that fellow passers by thought the same!

With the wonders of technology, we have still been meeting regularly on Jamulus and Zoom but there's nothing better than a sing in real life!

Fingers crossed for more of the same in the coming months! We're looking forward to sharing with you our most recent project. By the time this goes to print, it should be uploaded to our [website](#) and social media accounts so make a visit now! @ [INHOUSEquartet](#)

Julie Phillips
IN HOUSE