



*Helping people to live happier, healthier lives
through musical participation.*

“The spirit of Christmas exists in harmonious carols”

- Richelle E. Goodrich

This year has been a melee of uncertainty, but one thing that everyone seems to agree on is the necessity of carol singing at Christmas, and whether it be the more traditional type or good old-fashioned Slade ‘bangers’, Abby, Charlotte and Fiona were delighted to sing them all in our recent Christmas revival of ‘MC on the Road’. Dressed in their most festive outfits and armed



with numerous hats, gloves, umbrellas, and hot water bottles, they visited over 30 of our members and six of City of York Council’s independent living communities for some doorstep carolling. Whilst the weather was typically British - arctic rainstorms, freezing



winds and bitter cold - everyone had a great time catching up with each other and joining in with the singing. Thank you to all of our members who so gamely joined us in the pouring rain, provided us with little Christmas treats, offered us generous donations or kept us warm with refills of coffee - the Christmas spirit was truly flowing everywhere that we went!

How Many Sleeps 'til Christmas?

In an effort to brighten those cold December mornings, we created a Musical Connections digital advent calendar filled with festive surprises. We included contributions from our members, the musicians, the trustees, university students and even a little feature from some local GPs, and people have been thoroughly enjoying watching as the door magically opens every morning at 8am. It might not be chocolate, but we can definitely promise you a sweet treat! For those of you reading this online, you can use the following link to get involved in the musical countdown to Christmas:

<http://www.musicalconnections.org.uk/mc-online/advent-calendar/>

We May Be Apart, But We're Connected At Heart!

Our Connected at Christmas project has involved sharing a booklet of addresses belonging to members who were keen to exchange Christmas cards this year. Rolling Tones member, Jim, designed the artwork on the front cover - a seemingly simple drawing with an extremely special meaning: the Christmas tree relates to Jim's tree-selling days, a gentle nod to a time when he provided most of Yorkshire with a Christmas tree; the robin is singing the words to 'Silent Night', the sheet music for which is painted on the tree; the hands at the bottom of the drawing are socially distanced, but joined by the efforts of Musical Connections, and lastly, the thumbs of the hands are tossing money into the bucket underneath the tree, symbolising people giving generously to the charity - £20 notes according to Jim!



Luck of the Draw Has Raised £700... and More!

If you're anything like us, there's no such thing as too soon when it comes to listening to Christmas music - and what better way to get started than joining in with our online Christmas song raffle! From cheesy pop to timeless classics, Emma chose a selection of 100 of the best Christmas songs, and encouraged members to get involved with the festive fun. Not surprisingly, all of the songs 'rushed off the shelves' and we raised a grand total of £190. This month's lucky winner was Barstow House and Rolling Tones regular, David Flack, with 'The First Nowell'. A HUGE 'thank you' to everyone who has taken part in our online raffles over the last few months - they've been such a big success and have raised nearly £750 for the charity - a fantastic achievement!

A Virtual – and Intergenerational – Christmas Concert

Christmas is a time when we'd normally be busy running numerous concerts, fundraisers, Big Sings and Little Sings with local schoolchildren and students, but as we're unable to do that, we decided to enlist our wider Musical Connections family to help us spread some 'virtual' Christmas cheer. Children from St Aelred's and Scarcroft primary schools, Vale of York Academy and students from the



University of York all rose to the challenge alongside our members, to enable us to screen a fantastic intergenerational concert, which included readings, poetry, a string quartet and even some 'flash-mob' style virtual dis-dancing! Whilst we'd much prefer to be celebrating in person, it was a wonderful opportunity for us to collaborate with our

intergenerational partners, and another timely reminder that our musical family will always be firmly united in song!



Our Musical Family... OUT NOW!

The end of November marked the much-anticipated release of our new CD, 'Our Musical Family', which we've been selling in the run-up to Christmas! It features a selection of our favourite group recordings, plus some new ones from Musical Connections musicians and members, students from the University of York and a handful of local GPs. Together, the ten tracks encapsulate our musical journey over the last nine months, opening with 'Times Like These' - a reflection on the importance of human connection and mutual support - and finishing with 'These Days' - a reminder that 'someday we'll sit down together and laugh with each other about these days'!

The CDs cost £8 each and you can order them online via our website, drop us an email or give us a call!



A Christmas Reflection

2020 has undoubtedly been a challenging year, but we're so grateful that we have been able to support each other through it all. We always call ourselves a family - and family is truly what we've become; whether it be chatting on the phone, disdancing on Singstream, rehearsing via FaceTime or laughing over Zoom, our members, musicians and volunteers have shared this whole experience together and we're really looking forward to being able to enjoy a new 'normal' with everyone in 2021. None of this would have been possible without the unfailing support of our funders and, with that in mind, we'd like to say a heartfelt 'thank you' to them for their flexibility and encouragement in enabling us to adapt our work, and for stepping in to help us plug the shortfall in our income - their ongoing support and goodwill, and that of our members and volunteers, has made such a difference to us as we have faced the challenges of an unforgettable year!



Photograph of Christmas robin in York Museum Gardens courtesy of Rolling Tones member, Adrian

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Wishing you all the best Christmas possible and a very happy and healthy New Year!