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Issue 69



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

“Friends are the family we choose for ourselves”

- Edna Buchanan



Over the last several months, we’ve frequently found ourselves referring to our musical community as a ‘family’ - whether it’s a listening ear on the phone, laughing together over Zoom or singing along to another lively Singstream - it’s such a fitting word to describe the support network we’ve created. In recognition of this, we decided to produce a keepsake Musical Connections family album featuring seven trees which celebrate each of our community music groups and choirs, and all of their members. Starting with Barstow House, our founding

group, and ending with Tower Court and Acomb Road, the two we recently developed in collaboration with York Medical Group, the pages are intertwined with pictures, musical notes and song lyrics composed by our members - telling the story of our lovely family history. Our members have thoroughly enjoyed receiving them in the post - and have been surprised to discover how many other people there are involved - there’s been a wonderful realisation that they’re all a part of something much bigger: our very special Musical Connections family.



Raise a Cheer for our New Volunteers!

Covid-19 might have forced us into isolation, but an extraordinary wave of social solidarity has been triggered within the community as people have been looking for an opportunity to fill their new-found time, connect with others and support those in need. Taking advantage of this increase in volunteering and community spirit, we decided to advertise online and were stunned to receive almost 50



applications from people across the country - as far-reaching as Kent! After a very informal interview process with Abby and Charlotte, we've welcomed 17 people to our musical family in a variety of different roles: telephone befriender, social media support, fundraiser and music buddy. The charity



relies very heavily on volunteer support and together, with our wonderful longstanding volunteers, our new recruits will help to ensure that we can sustain our community and keep everyone connected until we can finally sing together once more - a huge welcome to the team and a very big 'thank you' too!



“Happy soul; begin and end your day with music”

- Lailah Gifty Akita

...and all the hours in between! Not surprisingly, upbeat music is having a huge surge of popularity at the moment, and whilst a three-minute song won't completely erase the doom and gloom of Covid-19, it certainly provides us with some much-needed musical medicine. Our Zoom group have been channelling this spirit in their fortnightly sessions and are currently learning 'I Can See Clearly Now' by Johnny Nash - one of the world's most recognisable reggae songs and guaranteed to put a smile on your face - it's a song of hope and courage for individuals who have experienced and overcome adversity in their lives. They've thoroughly enjoyed learning it and are now busy recording themselves at home in preparation for a group collaboration with students from the University of York's Music Education Group - all of their videos will be collated into one recording - a fortissimo reminder that it's 'gonna be a bright sunny day!' The song will also feature in our virtual concert on Thursday 25th March.

“Music is the drug that doesn’t kill you!”

We’ve always been huge believers in the power of music to improve health and wellbeing, but one of the positive legacies of Covid-19 has been the dramatic change in the public attitude to loneliness and the use of music in bringing communities together. People have spontaneously sung on their balconies, shared music over Zoom and made recordings in their homes, noticing just how effective it is in creating a sense of belonging and participation - as Fran Lebowitz said in a recent Netflix docu-series with Martin Scorsese, *‘I really think that musicians, probably musicians and cooks, are responsible for the most pleasure in human life. Music makes people happier, and it doesn’t harm them. Most things that make you feel better are harmful. It’s very unusual. It’s like a drug, that doesn’t kill you.’* She’s right - and although Boris’s recent announcement means that we have to wait a little longer before starting our groups again, we can return in the knowledge that music really is the key to happiness!

Online Raffles to Win, Wedding Photos Sent In... That’s Amore!



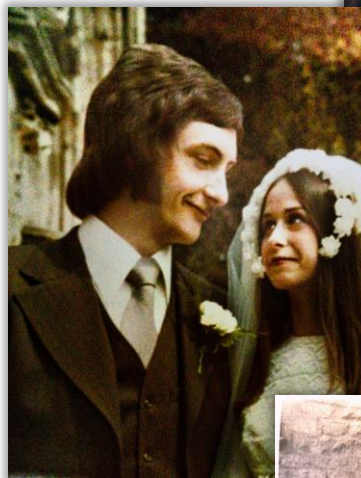
February has long been celebrated as a month of romance and with our members having numerous years of marriage between them, we thought it was the perfect time to call upon their wisdom and advice on all things ‘love’ related. During our conversations, they revealed their first memories of meeting each other, their secrets to a happy marriage and their ‘top-tips’ for making it last - for an incredible 60 years in some cases! It was a wonderful chance for everyone to reminisce on happy memories and a reminder of the importance of the little things; never go to bed on an argument, try not to sulk, show affection

to one another, give each other space, and whatever happens, always keep laughing! We collated some of these important ‘lessons in love’ into a video featuring wedding photos sent in by other members - an incredibly special capture of love, our social history and some beautiful dresses (and couples!) too.



For those of you reading this online, you can watch the video here: https://youtu.be/FbPjPh_vuNs

But the Valentine's fever didn't stop there... not surprisingly, February's online song raffle was also love themed and Emma chose 100 of the most romantic songs - from golden oldie to modern classic - for people to choose from. It was a popular theme, and the songs quickly flew off the shelves, with our members raising nearly £300 in the process! This month's lucky winner was Honeysuckle member, Annette Soothill, as her song choice, 'The Power of Love' was picked out of the bucket. Keep an eye out for the musicians' recording which will be released very soon... and enjoy our wonderful gallery of wedding photos!



Thank you for reading – keep singing and smiling!