



Nonesuch Orchestra Update - June 2020

Hi everyone,

I trust everyone is in good health during the gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions. It has been 3 months since the orchestra had to cancel all its plans due to the corona virus. Many of us have had to 'shield', 'self-isolate' or follow the instructions to stay at home as much as possible during this time. Although recent partial lifting has enabled specific members of the population to meet under certain conditions (eg social distancing) it still remains a question when larger gatherings will be permissible and when orchestras can once again meet to play.

The committee will continue to monitor the situation and communicate our plans accordingly. For now, we are hopeful that restrictions may have lifted enough to continue with the September 16th Play Day. When the likelihood of this event increases, we will send out registration instructions nearer the date.

Meanwhile we have enjoyed socialising together at our fortnightly zoom 'Virtual Tea Breaks'. They have been an enjoyable event and made more enjoyable recently by including some music sharing; first with Steph and Enrico playing a very moving and emotional arrangement of "We'll Meet Again". We were privileged to hear the first performance of this arrangement by Steph, and who would have predicted that Dame Vera Lynn would sadly pass away, hitting headlines a few weeks afterwards? The following meeting Joe treated us to a fabulous cello trio recorded with his friends. Thanks to all performers for bringing back the music into our meetings.

Feeling ever more confident with audio-visual teleconferencing, I was delighted to see everyone enjoy themselves at our first ever 'virtual rehearsal'. This gave everyone the opportunity to bring the music back to our meetings. Yes there were internet problems, and hardware issues but our session, intended and planned to last about 10 minutes, continued for a full 50 minutes before I brought it to a close. I was bowled over with all the preparation that Dan, Steph and Joe had put in, both on the day and in the Dvorak Labs (pre-work) beforehand. My expectations were vastly exceeded. I was also surprised I managed to get everyone into the correct breakout room on the day. That was the first time I had assigned participants to break out rooms, rather than let Zoom do its random allocation.

I think lockdown has given us all the opportunity to learn new things. Some of you have participated in virtual performances, recorded yourselves on mobile devices and submitted your entry to be part of a wider performance. Some have performed 'live' over the internet. Some have indulged in non-musical activities (including home schooling!). Nonesuch Orchestra has participated in the on-line Waterloo Festival, even becoming partners of the Festival.

When I was elected by the current committee to act as Chair, I never thought I'd be chairing an orchestra that was forbidden to meet. But that's exactly what happened. During this time we have established our orchestra WhatsApp group to share and communicate with each other. We've had the Virtual Tea Breaks that help keep us connected to one another. And each month I write these short "Updates" to keep everyone up to speed on what is going on. We have the fantastic Dvorak

Labs to keep us busy over the summer. I hope everyone feels engaged and continues that 'sense of belonging' with Nonesuch Orchestra.

Although we are coming to the end of our planned summer term I will shortly send out a survey to our membership to ascertain how best the committee can support you. This will be your opportunity to inform us if you'd like to continue the 'virtual meetings' or take a summer break. Watch out for the survey which will be sent by email. As has always been the case, we understand that not everyone can participate in these events due to other priorities clashing at the same time. For those that are available, it's also an optional event if you would like to participate.

The committee also need some help. Are you a confident user of social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook? If so, we are looking for a volunteer to help Jean with managing our content on these platforms. Please contact any member of the committee if you can help.

We do look forward to meeting again next term (hopefully), and our most recent member survey has informed us of the concerns you have. We will take these onboard as we continue our plans for the Autumn term and beyond.

James
(Acting Chair)