

Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, culture, books and more, edited by Karla Kane



Courtesy Janet Silver Ghent

Over 130 singers in the Ragazzi Boys Choir perform "We Are the Day" online.

KEEPING HARMONIES ALIVE

Pandemic spurs choirs to Zoom for togetherness

by Janet Silver Ghent

Like tiny images on a sheet of postage stamps, 130-plus boys in navy shirts join voices in the upbeat "We Are the Day." To the untrained eye, the boys in Ragazzi, an award-winning Redwood City-based choral group, look and sound as if they're singing together, as they have done for years. But each boy, ages 6 to 18, is recording alone, singing at home with earbuds or headsets, hearing only himself and his cues. While this particular choral piece, which begins with the words "We are the eyes gleaming with wonder," expresses hope and joy, it grew out of a devastating pandemic that forced chorales overnight to change the way they operate. A chorus is a group that sings together. COVID-19 made that impossible, giving choir directors a difficult choice: Adapt or disband.

"The biggest challenge that we face is having something that we love to do that brings a lot of purpose to our existences (be) dangerous," said Jennah Delp Somers, co-founder and co-artistic director of iSing Silicon Valley, which brings together 300 girls from first to 12th grade in five different choirs. "We went through a mourning period." In-person rehearsals: canceled. A choral trip to the UK: canceled. A spring concert before an audience of a thousand at Mission Santa

Clara: also canceled. The release of the choir's debut album, "Here I Stand," "was a fantastic way to end an otherwise disastrous year," Delp Somers said.

Because a choral performance or even a rehearsal is a "superspreading event" for COVID-19, choirs had to change how they operate. Instead of singing Mendelssohn's entire "Elijah" oratorio before live audiences, the Los Altos-based Schola Cantorum produced "Virtually Elijah," featuring soloists singing at home, pianists playing at home, and the entire chorus virtually joining voices in the glorious "He, Watching Over Israel."

When choral rehearsals shut down abruptly in mid-March, choral directors with little or no technical training suddenly Zoomed into electronic media. Within four days of the shutdown, Ragazzi's conductors took up the challenge of keeping their choirs alive. They created audio and videotapes to conduct singers they could neither see nor

hear, at first relying on parents and volunteers with sound and video skills to transform individual recordings into a choral performance.

"Along the way we produced three virtual choirs," said executive and artistic director Kent Jue. Among them are a dozen graduating seniors performing "Shenandoah" as their swan song, and a group of 24 singing the rhythmic "Count on Me."

"None of this was a plan. It sort of just developed," Jue added. "Once we learned we would have to cancel our season and be remote, we needed a project for the boys to focus on. We came up with these virtual choirs, which, I have to admit I was not a fan of at the beginning because there's so much work on the back end and so much work on the front end."

At the front end, the logistics involve creating instructions, collecting recordings and fielding questions. With boys as young as 6, that means parental involvement.

Ragazzi estimates that phase takes about 15 hours, not counting individual singing time. For the nearly 140 separate voice recordings that went into "We Are the Day," audio and video editing, all done in-house, took another 30 hours.

Of course, it would be simpler if choral members could sing and record simultaneously on apps like Zoom, but the sound from the home of a conductor or an accompanist does not reach 140 other homes, or even a half-dozen simultaneously. Delays of a few tenths of a second from one place to another would result in choral cacophony. That's why choir members must push their mute buttons during group rehearsals.

Jue noted that Ragazzi recently was able to record nine singers simultaneously in real time, but not on Zoom. "One of our board members is a technology genius," he said, adding that the technology, which is a "game-changer," is still in the experimental stages.

Making the transition from live to virtual is no easy undertaking. While Los Angeles conductor-composer Eric Whitacre combined 17,500 voices from all over the world in his "Sing Gently," local conductors are working on a more modest scale. Some are focusing on coaching individuals, which they don't have the opportunity to do during regular rehearsals, when the focus is on the group. By working on their own, the singers are improving.

"I'm confident that when we come out of this, and are able to rehearse in person again, we will be stronger and better," Jue said.

Delp Somers agreed. "The kids are becoming really individually savvy and responsible for learning notes and pitches," she said. "Things that they might have relied on others for in the classroom setting, they're now individually accountable in a new way. We were surprised to see so much individual growth in such a short amount of time."

In addition, although the singers are not performing before live audiences, they are finding new audiences in distant places. When Mark Burrows, the composer of "We Are the Day" who lives in Texas, heard Ragazzi singing his song on YouTube, he thanked "all of my new friends" with a YouTube recording of his own. "As a

Better singing through technology? A virtual recording only looks easy

by Janet Silver Ghent

With the voice of Aurora Singers conductor Dawn Reyen in my ear, coming through my iPhone, and an Audacity app on my computer, I attempted to record a relatively easy song, an American traditional called “Over My Head.” Easy for someone else, but not for me. After four nasal probes for COVID-19 — one inconclusive, one positive and two negative — my sinuses and nasal passages rebelled. My voice squeaked, and my breath control was pathetic. I ran out of air at the end of each phrase, and instead of “Over my head I hear music in the air,” what came out sounded like mucus in the air.

I recorded the piece five, six, seven, eight times, never satisfied, and then dispatched a recording with an apology. I felt exposed; I knew somebody would hear my naked voice and gasp.

In a chorus, I’m a blend, not a soloist, and listening to a recording of my solo voice came as a shock. That said, even soloists are not always happy with their first attempts, or even their fifth or sixth.

“It took me three hours to get a good final video and audio recording of ‘Sunshine in My Soul,’” said Aurora president Cynthia Mahood Levin, a first soprano with professional

training. “I found issues with each of my early recordings. It was also hard to get the right set-up, with a good background for the video, favorable lighting, and good sound quality and volume level. My husband had to hold up a lamp to illuminate me properly and avoid shadows. I ended up using two different iPhones — one to listen to and one to record on. It was a lot of trial and error. But, in the end, it felt incredibly satisfying to get a final recording that I was happy with, though, of course, it was not perfect.”

As for me, I had attempted to record “Sunshine in My Soul,” but in the throes of rhinitis, I gave it a rest. However, the final piece is lovely, thanks to the work of Reyen and three Aurora Singers who volunteered their time: producer John Reed, graphics designer Zana Vartanian and audio production engineer Eitan Novotny.

Vartanian, who spent about 10 to 15 hours putting together the video for “Sunshine,” said one challenge was making it look as if “the singers’ mouths move as if they’re singing simultaneously.” She used After Effects, an animation program from Adobe. “Since each singer started with a series of claps, I could see a waveform display for each singer. I lined them all up so the claps

were timed together.” The result is that the words, and the mouths, are synchronized.

For Novotny, transforming more than 30 separate recordings into a virtual choral piece took an estimated 15 to 20 hours on “Sunshine” and another 10 on “Over My Head.”

“As you might imagine, when we’re singing together, we have a natural feedback loop of listening to each other that keeps us in tune. That does not work when we’re alone, so if you sing 15 cents sharp (a fraction over pitch), and someone else sings 10 cents flat (a fraction under), it’s not going to blend well,” he said.

“Also, absent a conductor waving their arms in front of us and many hours of rehearsal, many of us cannot get the rhythms accurately enough for me to sync the tracks.”

Using a product called Melodyne, from the Celemony company, he said, “I can edit everyone’s notes both in tone, vibrato and time. I can move notes around, and make everything line up.”

So my foreshortened chords and slurred words?

“I fixed everything,” Novotny said. “I made you sound good. Besides, every voice helped to make the final piece sound good.”

He was right. ■

composer, to hear a piece in your head and then to hear it in person sound even better than the version in your head is amazing,” he said. “Thank you for being a message of hope in a world that so desperately needs hope right now.”

Hope is what keeps these choirs in harmony, even amid disappointment. In March, when Ragazzi first soprano Liam Lowitz first heard that COVID-19 would force choirs to shut down, “I started crying,” he said. Lowitz, 12, a seventh-grader at North Star Academy in Redwood City, said he “loves singing with my friends,” and not being able to sing together was unthinkable.

But tears dissipated when Ragazzi began meeting on Zoom. And when he heard the finished virtual piece of “Count on Me,” in which he has a cameo solo, “something inside of me just lit up. I think it’s really cool that we’re able to do this.”

For the Palo Alto-based Aurora Singers, Tuesday get-togethers on Zoom are reunions, drawing in former choir members living in Canada, Vermont, Colorado and New

Jersey who join the group in sing-alongs, share news and participate in virtual choir pieces, recording their parts at home. Instead of performing at senior residences, these days Aurora invites the residents to join them in Zoom sing-alongs, with songs ranging from folk to rock to Broadway. Although these events are not rehearsals, said founder-conductor Dawn Reyen, “our regular online gatherings allow us to maintain our strong sense of community, as well as maintaining good vocal habits, so that when we can resume in-person rehearsals, we will be ready to jump right back in.”

HaShirim, a Jewish community choir also based in Palo Alto, does hold virtual rehearsals on Zoom. When conductor Billie Bander-mann introduces new pieces, pianist Angela Cheng plays the individual choral parts as well as the accompaniment.

“Everybody sings a part they’re not used to, so that nobody is idle during rehearsal,” Bander-mann said. Then when the singers learn their own parts, they sing along to a professional choir’s recording, “giving them the experience of what it’s like to sing as a choir.” At the end of the rehearsal, the singers join in on pieces they know by heart, like “Old Devil Moon.”

“We miss getting together,” said Bander-mann. “As long as there is

some joy of singing together with other people, that’s what makes choral singing so infectious.”

“It’s nice that we get to socialize with each other and see each other on Zoom, but it’s not the same. It’s hard to sing by yourself,” said HaShirim first soprano Carol Emerich.

On the other hand, she said, this is a choir “without stars and divas, and everybody is so supportive of each other. That comes through for me, the sense of trust and caring about each other.”

When Emerich had a flood underneath her Cupertino townhouse that forced her to evacuate for a week, she was distraught. Emerich, who has been isolating since March, has asthma as well as other immunity issues that put her at high risk. “The idea of staying for a week in a hotel was very scary to me,” she said.

Emerich mentioned her concern during a rehearsal. Fellow soprano Ellen Beaudet offered her guest room, a separate bathroom and use of her backyard. Beaudet also prepared dinner, which they ate outside, socially distanced

Said Beaudet: “I love that HaShirim is a community! It’s wonderful to be able to help one another.” ■

Freelance writer Janet Silver Ghent can be reached at ghentwriter@gmail.com



Liam Lowitz

Courtesy Janet Silver Ghent

Marketplace

AmiCare

SERVICES INCORPORATED
Quality and affordable caregiving services right at the comfort of your home.

CALL FOR
A FREE NURSE
ASSESSMENT
(650) 709-8900

To place an ad call
650.223.6597 or
email digitalads@
paweekly.com.

express

Sign up today at
PaloAltoOnline.com/express

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME
File No. FBN666907
The following person(s)/registrant(s) has/ have abandoned the use of the fictitious business name(s). The information given below is as it appeared on the fictitious business statement that was filed at the County Clerk-Recorder's Office. FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME(S): SILICON VALLEY ALLERGY AND ASTHMA INC. 2500 Hospital Drive Building 14 Mountain View, CA 94040
FILED IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY ON: 5/18/16
UNDER FILE NO. FBN617615
REGISTRANT'S NAME(S): SILICON VALLEY ALLERGY AND ASTHMA INC. 2500 Hospital Drive Building 14 Mountain View, CA 94040
THIS BUSINESS WAS CONDUCTED BY a Corporation.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of Santa Clara County on July 20, 2020.
(PAW Aug. 14, 21, 28; Sep. 4, 2020)

THERAVIE WELLNESS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: FBN 667335
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
TheraVie Wellness, located at 2260 Wyandotte St., Apt. 6, Mountain View, CA 94043, Santa Clara County.
This business is owned by: An Individual. The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):
Rashmi Chidamand, Ph.D. 2260 Wyandotte St. Apt. 6 Mountain View, CA 94043
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 7/1/2020.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara County on August 6, 2020.
(PAW Aug. 14, 21, 28; Sep. 4, 2020)

DUTCH POET PRESS
ROBERT PERRY BOOK DESIGN
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: FBN667311
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Dutch Poet Press, 2.) Robert Perry Book Design, located at 4296C Wilkie Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306, Santa Clara County.
This business is owned by: An Individual. The name and residence address of the registrant(s) is(are):
ROBERT HAROLD PERRY 4296C Wilkie Way Palo Alto, CA 94306
Registrant began transacting business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 09/01/2015.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of Santa Clara County on August 5, 2020.
(PAW Aug. 14, 21, 28; Sep. 4, 2020)

997 All Other Legals

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
Case No.: 20CV368845
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: KATE MARIA LOUIE filed a petition

with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

KATE MARIA LOUIE to KATIE MARIE LOUIE.
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING: October 06, 2020, 8:45 a.m., Dept.: Probate of the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara, 191 N. First Street, San Jose, CA 95113.

A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county:
PALO ALTO WEEKLY
Date: August 3, 2020
/s/ _____
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(PAW Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28, 2020)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF BULK SALE (U.C.C. §6104, 6105)
ESCROW #: 0126014628-PC
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to creditors of the within named seller that a bulk sale is about to be made of the assets described below. The names and business address of the Seller(s) is/are: Speedy Gourmet LLC 530 Showers Drive, Suite 8, Mountain View, CA 94040

The location in California of the Chief Executive Office of the seller is: same as above
As listed by the seller, all other business names and addresses used by the seller within three years before the date such list was sent or delivered to the buyer are: None
The names and business address of the Buyer(s) is/are: DeMayo Restaurant Group Inc. 530 Showers Drive, Suite 8, Mountain View, CA 94040

The assets to be sold are described in general as: All stock in trade, furniture, fixtures, equipment and other property
And are located at: 530 Showers Drive, Suite 8, Mountain View, CA 94040
The business name used by the Seller(s) at those locations is: Hunan Homes Express
The anticipated date of the bulk sale is: September 10, 2020
At the office of Old Republic Title Company @ 1000 Burnett Avenue, Suite 400, Concord, CA 94520.

The bulk sale IS subject to California Uniform Commercial Code Section 6106.2. If so subject, the name and address of the person with whom claims may be filed is as follows: Old Republic Title Company @ 1000 Burnett Avenue, Suite 400, Concord, CA 94520 or E-Fax to 925-265-9040 or Fax 925-363-2276.
The last day for filing claims shall be September 8, 2020 which is the business day before the sale date specified herein.

Dated: August 17, 2020
Buyer(s):
DeMayo Restaurant Group, Inc.
/s/ By: Woody DeMayo, CEO
8/21/20
CNS-3391263#
PALO ALTO WEEKLY

Call 650-223-6578 or email asantillan@paweekly.com for legal advertising.