

WOMEN'S VOICES RISING by the SEA

ChoralFest at the Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center, Saco, ME



March 2021

Ideas for scheduling for ChoralFest 2021

Although we in Massachusetts still have snow on the ground, spring is around the corner. As the weather warms and days grow longer, those of us who have attended ChoralFest for a number of years turn our thoughts to pulling into the parking lot at Ferry Beach and unloading our gear for another week of singing. Although the rapidly changing Covid 19 news seems to be more and more hopeful, few of the medical experts seem to be going out on a limb about when we singers can gather again.

We assume that many of you are wondering if ChoralFest will happen this summer and whether you should pencil the dates July 17 to 23 on your calendars. The short answer is that ChoralFest will take place and yes, you should mark down the dates. The longer answer is that until we are closer to July, we are not sure exactly how the conference will be configured.

Whatever plan is put into place, we will explore offering access to our sessions and other activities via Zoom for those who may want to attend remotely.

In the meantime, we would like to share the ideas that the conference committee is considering. We will continue to search on-line for guidance about resuming singing in person and this guidance will influence which of the following plans we decide to implement. Here are some of the tentative plans we are considering.

Plan A

All of us who wish to attend in person have been vaccinated and experts have assured us that we cannot become seriously ill or die from the virus. We follow whatever guidelines Ferry Beach or the state of Maine have in place for sleeping arrangements and food consumption, but we feel safe to meet in Dolphin to sing for two hours most mornings from 10:00 to 12:00 noon and then again in the afternoon from 3:30 to 5:00. We prepare one or two pieces to sing at the Thursday night Talent Show and four or five pieces for chapel on Friday morning.

Perhaps this describes a real outside chance, but we can dream, can't we?

Plan B

Many of us have been vaccinated but there are some attendees who have not as yet. Medical experts are still issuing warnings about the dangers of singing in person and have provided some guidelines to mitigate the risks. Depending on these guidelines we might do some or all of the following:

- We hold all of our rehearsals out of doors. Ferry Beach is discussing plans to acquire several tents to move as many conference workshops as possible into these tents.
- We limit the time we are singing together by shortening the rehearsal times and adding more breaks.
- We wear masks and set up our chairs at least 6 feet apart.

- We divide into small groups to learn our individual parts and we come together for only a short time to blend the parts.
- To have more time together as a group, we schedule chat sessions or other programs where we are socially distanced and wearing masks.

It's not perfect but we are singing together!

Plan C

Singing is still considered too risky an activity for groups. Some of us who are vaccinated and feel safe spend the week at Ferry Beach following strict guidelines and enjoying the beach and each other's company. All of the rehearsals are organized around Zoom and those of us on site sit far apart and/or wear masks or Zoom alone from different locations.

Part of the group will Zoom in but some of us would be safely together and vacationing at the beach!



ChoralFest 2021
July 17 to 23
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