

SingYourJoy Young Adult Chorus  
Co-Directors Annual Report  
A Year of Challenge and Change  
July 2019 to June 2020



When our year started in July 2019, we never expected that we would be taking our bows early, with no certainty of a return date to the stage. *Golden Slumbers* by The Beatles and our gentle “and I will sing a lullaby” ending the concert with silent bowed heads became a poignant foreshadowing of the months that followed.

Our ***Beautiful & Beyond 2019/2020*** year was themed to anticipate our 10th anniversary celebrations in 2020/2021. Our music was a mix of some older favourites and some new and more sophisticated repertoire, selected to inspire and challenge our singers while highlighting the musical growth the chorus has achieved over the years.

This year’s Co-Directors report, out of necessity will look at: **1)** July 1 through mid-March season, **2)** navigating ‘first wave’ COVID-19, and **3)** what and how we are preparing for the future. We can’t express enough gratitude for our highly-skilled Board of Directors who have encouraged and guided us through these ‘unprecedented times’.

With respect,

Christine Y. Chepyha  
Gordon C. Miller  
Co-Founders and Directors,  
SingYourJoy Young Adult Chorus  
**Annual Report: Submitted July 2020**

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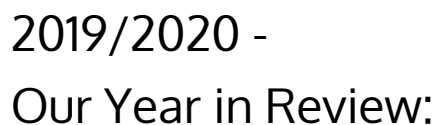
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We welcomed singers this year with the super fun activity of **button making** and enjoyed designing the original messages

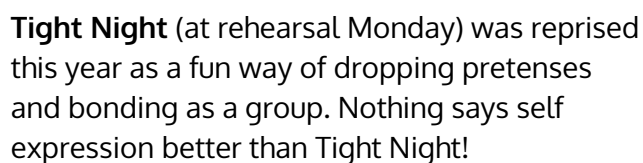
to be affixed to the buttons. New and returning singers were delighted with the welcome feeling that activity provided. Thanks to Oak Bay United Church for the loan of their creative machine.

	Online Pre-Registration	New	Returning	At Concert
September	58	26	32	45
January	68	26	42	n/a

## Brian Tate Commission

In anticipation of our 10th anniversary season ( 2020/2021), SingYourJoy approached the acclaimed composer Brian Tate to create a new song to celebrate this milestone. Funding for this original music was received through the CRD Arts Commission through the Arts & Culture Support Service.

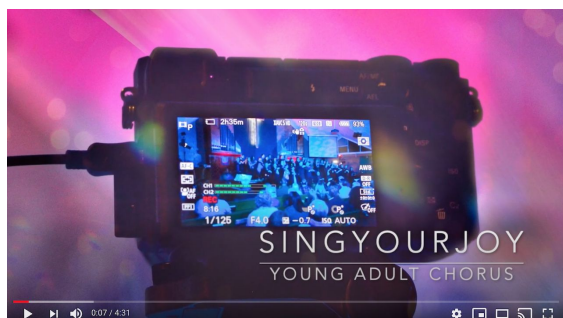
To help facilitate the lyrics to this commissioned piece, we invited Brian to meet with our singers at our September community building dinner. Joined by colleague Ross Gilchrist, our singers shared valuable insight and input with Brian and Ross on the meaning and value of SingYourJoy to their lives.



Our pre-planning work coupled with a very talented group of committed singers saw us reaching our dress rehearsal date more prepared than in previous seasons. And our singers agreed to an extra rehearsal at St. Aidan's, so we were able to prepare some choreography and well-oriented to the space come concert time.

The **December 6th concert** was marked by a very full house, where we presented new-to-SingYourJoy pieces (including a new work of Brian Tates called "Connected") along with some of our favourites. This was to be the first half of a two-part year themed *"Beautiful &*

*Beyond"*. We also captured some good audio and video of the concert which we have been able to use in promotional pieces as the year progressed.



The video material also sparked us to refocus on our YouTube channel as an arm of our Social Media promotions. ([have you subscribed?](#))

[Click here to see Golden Slumbers](#)

Our **'winter' season** started January 6, 2020 with a larger group of singers, including many returning from previous seasons in addition to another strong new singer core. The season would feature two concerts presented in our rehearsal home of Oak Bay United Church on April 4 and 5, with a new time of a Sunday afternoon matinee. We engaged Neko Smart, Victoria's latest Youth Poet Laureate to be our guest artist, and worked on collaborative pieces of spoken word combined with our concert repertoire to highlight the theme 'Beautiful & Beyond'. New repertoire for this concert included "Don't BE Afraid", a piece Christine first heard at Podium 2014 in Halifax.

The "Don't BE Afraid" message was born out of overwhelming fear. In October 2013, Scott Jones was left paralyzed after being attacked in his hometown of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. In the following weeks, Scott was afraid. His family and friends were afraid. And, his community was afraid. But, instead of dissolving into this fear, Scott chose to emerge with a strong and hopeful message: "Don't BE Afraid." The message became the launching point for the Don't BE Afraid: LGBTQ Awareness Society, a non-profit organization. Don't BE Afraid works to eliminate fear surrounding homophobia and transphobia and promote acceptance for all through honest conversation and creative expression.

Soloists and small groups were selected and working on their parts in anticipation of the concert weekend. We were excited about the prospect of our new SingYourJoy WestShore choir making a presentation of a couple of songs and joining the mass choir on stage in celebration of our successful expansion. On the Monday following our concert dates, we had scheduled a special visit/performance to Parkwood Place, the new home of our honorary patrons, Ted and Helen Hughes.

On March 13, 2020 the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and at a meeting of the SingYourJoy board on March 15, the decision was made to cancel in-person rehearsals and April concerts.

# SingYourJoy WestShore

**From 2018/2019 Directors' Report:** *"Taking the SingYourJoy Chorus mandate beyond Victoria proper and UVic/Camosun catchments has been an expansion conversation with the SYJ Board for the past year. Some work has gone into imagining the components required to take the step of starting a satellite choir on the Westshore, including budget planning, seeking potential rehearsal locations, imagining joint concert scenarios and applying for program grants for this specific work. We are ready to move ahead with next steps as soon as we find a grant or community partner willing to fund a major part of our first season. Active efforts are currently being made by our fundraising team to make this a reality."*

## Grant Application for West Shore Expansion

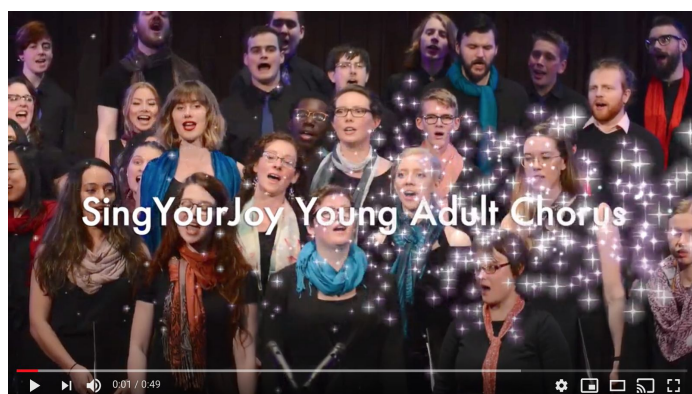
We were thrilled to receive notice in mid December that we had been granted \$26,000 from the Victoria Foundation through the Woodsome Fund, the Anonymous Fund and the Larch Fund. This allowed us to proceed to finalize tentative discussions with various partners to arrange a mid-February 2020 start-up in Langford.

## Redeemer Lutheran

Over the summer months we had approached Pastor Phillip Washeim of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Langford with the idea of hosting SingYourJoy WestShore in their newly-built space on Jacklin Road. In late December the governing council of Redeemer Lutheran approved our request to use the community hall for Thursday evening SingYourJoy WestShore rehearsals.

## West Shore Arts Council/City of Langford

In late January we met with Donna Petrie, Manager of Business Development and Events, City of



Langford, and Steffen Preusser, Chief Operating Officer, West Shore Arts Council (WSAC), to introduce the SingYourJoy concept to them. Our discussions were extremely positive, and the city was able to assist in some late advertising on their electronic signage. The WSAC sent out directed emails to their membership announcing the start of the chorus.

[Click here to see our start up promotional video.](#)

The value of the SingYourJoy program to the western communities and their goal of expanded arts programming in the region became evident when the WSAC approached SingYourJoy to develop a joint application to the BC Arts Council for an Arts Based Community Development grant. We are excited by the potential in this rapidly expanding area of southern Vancouver Island.

The timing of the grant notification left us with a very short timeframe for publicity in the western communities before the season start-up. We made use of local facebook groups, and significant advertising in the local print media, the Goldstream Gazette.

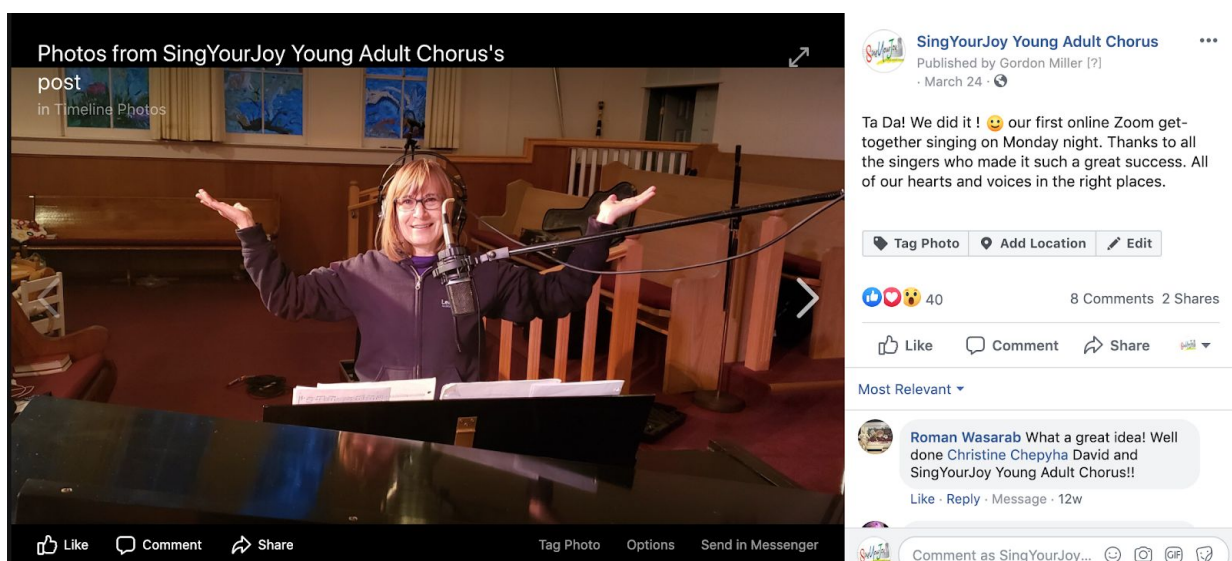
We realized that starting mid-season was going to be a challenge but pressed on believing that any traction gained would serve us well in the months and years to come. We had 7 singers join SingYourJoy WestShore and they came faithfully to all rehearsals until we were forced to shut down in March due to the COVID-19 closure. The learning from this first experience and the relationships and partnerships that we are developing gives us an excellent foothold for a restart of the WestShore choir as soon as we are able.

## Navigating 'first wave' COVID-19

As COVID-19 became the primary focus, we worked closely with our Board Chair Peter Scales and assisted our board in understanding the implications for the choral community, developing a SingYourJoy specific response -- including the cancellation of our in-person rehearsals and April concerts.

On March 16, singers were invited to return their music binders and to sing briefly together. Allowing for individual choice regarding health concerns, 20 singers chose to stay and sing (physically-distanced) for a brief time.

The move to distance-delivered rehearsals/meetings was facilitated through the use of Zoom technology, microphones/headsets/soundboards/computers to allow the two directors to plan and lead sessions from their own home studios.



**Our Zoom rehearsals** helped keep singers connected and maintained their sense of community as we all grieved the loss of our concerts and season ending celebrations. For some of our singers it was their last year in Victoria and this made the abrupt ending even more challenging. Each week for 10 weeks we met online with the first 30 minutes set aside for visiting and conversation. In the rehearsal time we introduced a variety of vocal warm-up techniques including expert video material developed for distanced online learning. We carefully crafted our online rehearsals: to keep our singers engaged; to test various online techniques and tools; and to maximize the learning opportunity with a balance of fun and skill development. Much was learned during this period that has SingYourJoy well positioned for a successful fall start-up, blending in-person and online tools to rebuild the chorus.

Concurrently while developing weekly Zoom sessions for SingYourJoy, **Christine continued her volunteer work with the BC Choral Federation, developing 4 provincial town hall sessions to assist the choral community understand the implications of COVID-19 to the arts sector.**

Research into the effects of singing in groups and the transmission of the virus has been happening for the past few months, and various organizations have been working on possible protocols for returning to rehearsing/performing around the world. The volume of information is often overwhelming but necessary to read, absorb and act upon. Based on our experience of offering Zoom rehearsals, Gordon will be one of the presenters at a BCCF-sponsored Town Hall session on July 9th.

Just as self-isolation was starting in BC, we were approached by the West Shore Arts Council representative to develop a **BC Arts Council grant application** to further support the SingYourJoy WestShore program. Thanks to Stephen Tyler for the time invested in preparing our application which was submitted May 12. Notification will happen in late fall.

With the cancellation of two concerts and resulting funding shortfall, we launched a **fundraising campaign** for June. As we anticipate a reduction in income for the balance of calendar 2020,

these funds will be vital to assure the continuance of the chorus while we remain physically-distanced.



Welcome to SingYourJoy Young Adult Chorus!

The June campaign successfully raised **\$5,500** in new funds and will be ongoing for the balance of the year. What we learned from this work in June will help us continue to encourage donor support in the months and years ahead.

The opportunity for a **website revamp** became a reality with the excellent volunteer support of Nicole Bottles, singer/alumna. Her skills allowed us to improve readability, navigation and overall enhance the site. We encourage you to [visit](#).

**Acting Treasurer Heather Sowden** and Gordon worked together to clean up posting errors in our previous bookkeeping software and standardize our reporting procedures. We made the decision to NOT continue to use Quick Books accounting software. A simple Excel Spreadsheet was developed with linked reporting documents that are easy to share quarterly with our board. Much gratitude to Heather

for her work and we look forward to ratifying her nomination as Treasurer at our July 6th Board Meeting.

**February 2021 marks the 10th anniversary of SingYourJoy.** Plans have been underway for some time, including the successful CRD grant for the Brian Tate commissioned piece. A celebration weekend for March 26 -28, 2021 would include an alumni choir rehearsal/social activity, commemorative 'bling' and a gala concert with both SingYourJoy choruses and alumni performing together. Brian Tate has been approached to be the guest conductor for this weekend celebration.



## Increased Private Donations

Private donations have continued to increase since the Chorus achieved Charitable Status with the Canada Revenue Agency.

	Online donations	Donations by Cheque	Monthly donations (online)	Total donations
2016-2017	\$795	\$7,290	n/a	<b>\$8,085</b>
2017-2018	\$3,098.30* * with charitable status our Canada Helps page provides a different level of donation data - these numbers reflect the Canada Helps fees taken from online donations	\$9,590	Total for year = \$1,138.74 1 in place from November 2017 (\$120.63 per month) 2 currently in place, for a monthly deposit of \$149.58 (from January 2018 on)	<b>\$13,827.04</b>
2018-2019	\$3,308.60	\$9,980	Total for year = \$1,794.96 2 currently in place, for a monthly deposit of \$149.58.	<b>\$15,083.56</b>
2019 - 2020	\$3,930.16	\$16,885	Total for year = \$1,939.68	<b>\$22,754.84</b>

## Old/New Board Members

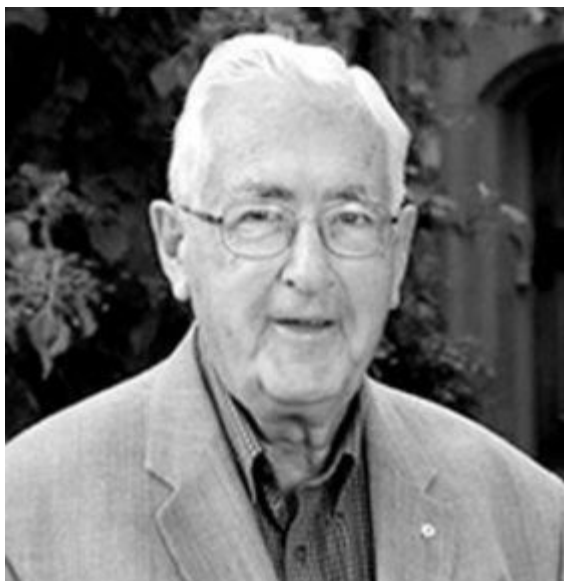
**Long-time Vice Chair and alumnus Logan Richards** left the Board in September 2019. His time with the board included work on constitution and bylaws, and assistance with the charitable status application of 2017.

**Treasurer Shelly Xia** left the Board after a one-year term due to family and time pressure issues. Kira Mauriks completed her University of Victoria career and moved away from Victoria. Jade Hill left the Board to continue work on her studies.

We welcomed **Jessie Hunter** and **Heather Sowden** to the roles of Choral Representatives. Heather assumed the role of acting Treasurer in January 2020.

Once again, we had a **full complement of Choral Representatives** to the board, thus maintaining the positive contributions to weekly rehearsal preparation and creative idea development. We appreciated and acted on their contributions.

## In Remembrance



On January 17, 2020, Edward Norman (Ted) Hughes passed away. SingYourJoy was introduced to Ted and Helen Hughes by our then Board Chair, the late Paul Fraser. We have been incredibly fortunate to have both Ted and Helen involved with the chorus - not only have they allowed their names to be associated with us as Honourary Patrons, but they have been financial contributors and inspirational supporters to us as co-directors and to the singers overall. Our April 2020 concerts were to have been dedicated to Ted's memory, and we will look for additional ways to honour his memory and legacy at future performances. Our heartfelt condolences go to Helen and his family.

## Singing in the community

### Singer-led Initiative: Christmas Caroling



Once again our singers initiated an evening of carol singing in the downtown core. The seasonal downpour did nothing to deter their spirits and song.

## Christmas Lights Across Canada

SingYourJoy was thrilled to participate once more at the annual Christmas Lights Across Canada event at the BC Legislature in December. This year SingYourJoy was originally invited into the Upper Rotunda to entertain visitors. The day before the performance, organizers contacted us with a request to also perform on the steps during the actual light-up ceremony to replace a cancelled group. We were happy to accommodate their request and enjoyed the dual performance opportunity that evening. (we always enjoy the marshmallow hot chocolate and cookies provided by the Legislature's Caterers)



# Our Thanks!

We cannot exist without the help of many people and our heartfelt thanks goes out to:

## Ted and Helen Hughes, our Honourary Patrons

### Patrons:

Anonymous (4) / Nicole & Sean Ebert /  
/ Allen and Sharon Evans / Barb Wellington Foster /  
/ Robin and Paul Fraser / Ted and Helen Hughes /  
/ Sherry Ridout / Maja and Richard Sloan /  
/ Helen and Harvey Waddell / Scott Wall /

### and:

- our individual donors, whose gifts provide financial stability to our organization
- our audiences, those who return every season and those just discovering us.
  - SingYourJoy Young Adult Chorus Society Board of Directors
  - our Alumni AND Our Singers
  - Oak Bay United Church: our Victoria rehearsal home
- Redeemer Lutheran Church: our Western Communities rehearsal home
- Member Churches of the United Church of Canada in Victoria
  - West Shore Arts Council

### Major Funding Partners:

SingYourJoy WestShore is grateful for the generous support of the Woodsome Fund, the Anonymous Fund and the Larch Fund,  
all through the **Victoria Foundation** Community grant program.  
SingYourJoy is commissioning a special 10th-anniversary choral work by acclaimed composer Brian Tate, and we acknowledge the generous support of the **CRD Arts Commission** through the Arts & Culture Support Service.

### 2019/2020 Concert Sponsor:



### Community Partners:

Brad Edwards Photography  
Croy & Co. Stage Lighting Ltd.  
Court & Spark Community Choir  
Top Shelf Bookkeeping Ltd.

We are grateful to local businesses for their understanding of how important music can be in the life of a young person making their way.

## 2019 - 2020 Board of Directors

**Chair:** Peter Scales

**Vice Chair:** Vacant

**Acting Treasurer:** Heather Sowden

**Secretary:** Coreen Mason

**Fundraising:** Stephen Tyler

**Concert/Event Coordinator:** Suzanne Ashwell

**Choral Representatives:**

Frankie Pryor, Heather Sowden, Jessie Hunter, Liam Cline

**Ex-Officio:** Christine Chepyha (Co-Artistic Director)

**Ex-Officio:** Gordon Miller (Co-Artistic Director)



*Beautiful & Beyond - SYJ in Concert St. Aidan's United Church Victoria BC December, 2019*

## Videos We Love

Solstice Song - [https://youtu.be/\\_3aijnH4vAQ](https://youtu.be/_3aijnH4vAQ)

Golden Slumbers/Carry That Weight - <https://youtu.be/leBwyTuHKn>