**Keep Your Choir Singing...With Virtual Choir Rehearsals!**

**By Author Unknown**

* Welcome to this special how-to page for leading virtual choir rehearsals!
* Find steps to leading a choir rehearsal online, ideas and helpful tips from ministry leaders.
* Why? Times are different! Here are a few reasons to do virtual choir rehearsals:
* Keep choir members connected
* Something to look forward to each week
* Keep the energy, excitement, and passion alive within your choir
* Be prepared to sing when churches open again
* Maintain a sense of community and fellowship

1. Know What You're Working With

Now is the time to get to know your device and how you can best utilize it to lead your choir in an online choir rehearsal!

First, take stock of what you have. Does your laptop or desktop have a camera? Will you be using a cell phone or a tablet? You really only need one device to make this successful!

It will be beneficial to familiarize yourself with the capabilities of your device.

2. Determine Your Leadership Team

Who will be leading your rehearsals? Depending on how you plan to run your rehearsals, you may need to appoint a leadership team (such as a media director, accompanist, section leaders, etc.).

Worship Pastor of First Baptist Woodstock, Cliff Duren, has a great example of this type of workflow. Cliff leads his rehearsal, but he has a designated team member from the media team who initiates and monitors the rehearsal through an online platform, primarily to watch the chat room and ensure everyone in attendance stays muted throughout.

3. Choose Your Online Platform

Once you have established the "who," it's time to establish the "how." There are so many options for gathering your choir online that are compatible with any device...but which is the best for you?

There are several different platforms available, but the two most widely used for this purpose are Zoom and Facebook Live.

Zoom allows you to have up to 100 participants and rehearse for 40 minutes free of charge. It also provides a chat room you can use throughout your rehearsal and an option to mute the group. There is also a paid option if you have more than 100 participants and/or need to run your rehearsals longer than 40 minutes.

Another popular resource among worship leaders is Facebook Live. Many of your choir members will be familiar with Facebook and know how to access its features.

David Hasker, Worship Pastor for First Baptist Church in Melbourne, FL and Charles Darus, Worship Pastor for First Baptist Church in Kissimmee, FL have both found great success in using Facebook Live for rehearsals. Pastor Charles has even seen ministry outreach and choir growth using Facebook Live! Choir members can invite others to join the closed group, allowing them a "behind the scenes" rehearsal experience. Some of these "guests" have ultimately joined the choir!

Pro-Tip: You can use the paid version of Zoom to break out your choir into sections and bring them all back together at a specific time.

4. Plan Your Process

Once you have established which online platform is best for your choir members, you can plan the process. Determine how long rehearsals will last, how you will set up your own space for leading the rehearsal, and if you will answer questions throughout or keep everyone muted during the rehearsal. You may also want to consider including a devotional or prayer time. You can make this process simple, or you can add as many layers as you would like to enhance the rehearsal.

A simple way of leading a rehearsal would be to encourage everyone to follow their own music (see Step 6 for details), mute everyone in the online conference platform, and place your laptop on the piano to begin. You might consider adding a mic, using an additional audio program, or using multiple devices.

Here are some helpful tips from some of your peers:

- Cliff Duren suggests playing your choral demos through iTunes for audio quality. He finds this works best when the host's computer is the one playing the audio. Additionally, his choir is fully digital, meaning that all choir members use tablets and log into their Planning Center Music Stand app to view their music. Planning Center Music Stand is also compatible with phones if your members do not have tablets.

- David Hasker leads with a TV next to him while running accompaniment tracks and displaying the music on screen. An accompanist plays parts on the piano as needed, while an additional assistant manages the chat room during the rehearsal.

- Worship Pastor, Jonathan Sawyer, from First Assembly of God in Fort Myers, FL has found that running his SM58 vocal microphone into his laptop for Zoom through a Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 works perfectly for his group.

There are many ways, from simple to advanced, to lead online rehearsals. Explore all the options and do what is best for your situation.

5. Test the Process

What comes after nailing down your process? Testing the online experience.

We suggest testing your online platform ahead of time to make sure all of your devices, internet or Wifi, and platforms are working properly. Experiment with the placement of your devices, the lighting, the camera, and check the audio. Finally, reach out to your ministry team, select choir members, or even family members to help you give your test rehearsal a spin!

6. Communication is Key

You have a leader. You have a platform. You have tested the process. Now comes the most important step... Telling your choir!

Communicate your date and time well in advance to all of your members, and send them any "how-to" information on the platform you have chosen. Most of the online conference platforms are user-friendly, only requiring your attendees to click a link.

Determine how your choir members will follow along in the music. If they do not have their own physical anthems and choir books, you may purchase digital versions as an option. Be sure to purchase enough digital versions for each member of your choir.

Patience is a virtue. This is a new experience for many people, so ensure your communication is full of details. Anticipate any questions your choir members may have, and be encouraging to any who are not "tech-savvy."

Pro-Tip: Consider adding a tech-savvy individual to your leadership team to instruct those who need help figuring out the technology.

7. Run Your Rehearsal

You've chosen your platform, tested your device options, sent the invitations... Now it's time to run your virtual choir rehearsal!

Make sure you give yourself plenty of time for set up. Be prepared for questions. This is a new and very different experience, so don't expect it to be perfect at first.

Above all, remember why you're doing this. The experience will not only keep your choir singing, but it will also give them encouragement, hope, and peace through these times.

"Go ye now therefore and experience virtual choir!"

<http://spotlight.wordchoralclub.com/pages/1790961/22049?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=READ%20MORE&utm_campaign=UA-114954107-1>

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This article may not be written by an Apostolic author, but it contains many excellent principles and concepts that can be adapted to most churches. As the old saying goes, “Eat the meat. Throw away the bones.”