

Dear Spirito! Friends and Families,

I think of my singers every single day and miss them terribly. My last “official” day with Spirito! was Friday, May 29, 2020. However, I will be “around” until I can complete our Ragazze year-end theory assessments (which are all taking place virtually.) Our Ragazze girls have been continuing with their weekly theory classes via Zoom throughout the coronavirus crisis. Our classes wrapped up last week. It has been wonderful to see my Ragazze girls each week and they have been amazing virtual theory students! I will also be working with our graduating seniors this summer to put together their senior songs via a virtual performance. Finally, several of our Bravura singers have volunteered to submit a recital piece, vocal or instrumental for a virtual concert that will be held this summer. (Stay tuned for details!) So, some of you are stuck with me for a bit longer!

I wanted to let you know that Mary Jean and I along with Carling FitzSimmons, our new Artistic Director have been working hard to determine our best course of action for the fall. During the process, several proposals have come and gone as we have stewed, studied and researched to come up with the safest decision. Ultimately, the Spirito! Board of Directors voted on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 to offer virtual classes for our fall term. I want you to know that all of us at Spirito! are heartbroken that we cannot be together for onsite rehearsals this fall. I want our families to know that this decision has been made via careful research and in collaboration with numerous choral experts around the country. It has become clear that there is no way for us to safely return to group ensemble singing this fall, and I would like to share with you just a few scientific facts so that you understand our decision. However, before I do, I want to assure everyone that we have a dynamic season planned for next year! The fall will be “different” but productive and creative regardless!

**Here is a brief synopsis of our 2020-2021 season:**

**Fall, 2020 Semester**

- A variety of virtual classes will be offered a la carte, including the Ragazze Theory Classes
- Some of the course options will be Music Theory, Vocal Pedagogy, Music Composition, and Music Technology
- Families will pay tuition for the a la carte class(es) they choose.
- The schedule for our Fall, 2020 Virtual Classes will be published by July 1, 2020.

### **January 2021 Semester**

- We plan to return to in person ensemble rehearsals after the Christmas break with proper precautions in place.
- Registration for the January 2021 semester will open in November with a set tuition for the semester.
- We will be SO HAPPY to be singing TOGETHER once again!

### **So, here are just a few scientific facts so that you understand our decision:**

On Tuesday, May 5, 2020, The National Association of Teachers of Singing in collaboration with the American Choral Directors' Association and Chorus America, brought together an online panel discussion of scientists and medical professionals to assess how the coronavirus will affect choirs. "There is no safe way for singers to rehearse together until there is a COVID-19 vaccine or a significantly effective treatment in place," said Dr. Lucinda Halstead, president of the Performing Arts Medical Association, and the medical director of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of South Carolina.

### **Why singing poses special hazards?**

Scientists concur that the primary transmission of the coronavirus comes from aerosol transmission of the virus when droplets of the virus go directly into the respiratory system. Certainly, transmission can take place from contaminated surfaces, but there no longer appears to be much debate that respiratory transmission is the overwhelming culprit.

The amount of droplets emitted when someone sings is magnified and is even more dangerous when a group of people sing together in the same room.

An April 4, 2020 article in the New England Journal of Medicine states, “Aerosolized particles of the virus are about five microns in size and impossible to see. (For reference, a human hair is 100 microns). Aerosolized particles can survive in aerosol form for about three hours.” Dr. William Ristenpart, PhD, a professor of chemical engineering at the University of California, Davis states, “Ordinary breathing and speech both emit large quantities of aerosol particles. However, the amount of aerosol particles emitted by singing is about six times more than that. The louder you are, the more particles you emit and the greater risk you would infect the people near you.” Ristenpart explains the mechanism: “When you exhale, mucosal fluid forms a film deep in your contracting lungs. When you inhale and your lung walls expand, the film bursts, creating aerosol particles that are then breathed out into the world. The rate at which you inhale or exhale affects the number of particles you emit. Deep, slow breathing followed by a fast exhale would produce the fewest particles. The greatest number would come from quick inhalation (causing a more violent film burst) followed by slow and prolonged exhaling.” (Credit: Choirs are a secret lifeblood of our country by Sara Austin, May 6, 2020 Publication by Elemental Science)

Slow and prolonged exhaling is exactly what singers are trained to do. In terms of the coronavirus, singing is more dangerous than coughing since singing at rehearsals takes place over an extended period of time. And, the six foot distancing

rule does not apply to singing, an activity that spreads the aerosolized particles much farther than that. Therefore, researchers and experts in the field have determined that there is no way to sing in large groups for the next several months.

We are all so disappointed, but our responsibility for our singers and their families must come first. We know our singers are fatigued from “Zooming” and I don’t blame them. I hope that the summer break will refresh them and they will look forward to continuing their musical studies with us in the fall. It is important that both our Ragazze and Bravura singers continue with their musical training. I have always told my girls that I expect them to be intelligent singers, and musicianship and music theory is key to reaching that goal. Our fantastic new Artistic Director is creating some amazing virtual opportunities for our singers! Carling has begun her work with Spirito! and you will be hearing a lot more about these classes shortly.

Beginning Monday, June 1, 2020, Artistic questions can be directed to Carling FitzSimmons at: [cfitzsimmons@spiritosingers.org](mailto:cfitzsimmons@spiritosingers.org). I am beyond excited for our girls to work with Carling. She is incredibly talented and has the passion and creativity to introduce our singers to exciting new experiences and to continue and enhance the Spirito! tradition of great choral performances! As always, you can reach Mary Jean Adkins at [mjadkins@spiritosingers.org](mailto:mjadkins@spiritosingers.org) and Sharon Whiteside at [swhiteside@spiritosingers.org](mailto:swhiteside@spiritosingers.org). My Spirito! e-mail address will remain active for the next several months so please don’t hesitate to reach out if you just want to say “Hi.” I will always enjoy hearing from you.

Thank you for your never-ending support. It has been my great blessing to work with all of you.

Gratefully,

Molly