

Issue 1

March 2021

Cantemus News

L e t u s s i n g !

WELCOME

to the first issue of the new *Cantemus*



'The best way to predict the future is to create it.'
Abraham Lincoln

Unitarian Music Society



www.unitarianmusic.org.uk

Letter from the Chair



Dear Musical Friends

You do not need to be reminded that we are still living in uncertain times. The committee and the conference organising sub-group have been considering deeply how we can proceed this year.

Earlier this month I contacted Marion Baker, the Chair of The Nightingale Centre Management Committee, to ask for an update on the situation and plans for the coming months. The relevant part of Marion's reply follows:

The Nightingale Centre Management Committee are meeting by zoom on Saturday 27 February to appraise the Government's roadmap out of lockdown. We anticipate that this will include the possibility that the hospitality sector will be allowed to re-open in May. If so, we will bring staff out of furlough to do a comprehensive covid risk assessment in line with government guidelines.

It is likely that the centre will be able to host UMS in August 2021 although numbers may have to be reduced to meet covid guidelines. Stella and her staff would work with you to assist your planning and talking to participants about what accommodation is available. If singing is not permitted, it would be possible for a scaled-back conference to be held for instrumentalists to work on preparing music. It would also be possible for presentations, workshops and safe social activity and for people who are not able to meet in person to attend zoom sessions.

Having told our Members that we hoped to have news about this Summer's Conference by February, and appreciating the responsibilities of planning a three-day event, I forwarded these communications to the UMS Committee and requested their frank comments. Their responses have guided how we plan to proceed this year. Sadly there was a large majority decision not to meet at Gt Hucklow, but instead to hold a one-day virtual event.

As all of you who frequently attend appreciate, UMS is not just a very 'social' gathering but one when **every** activity involves a 'group', whether small or large, and the use of every space in the Centre; also singing is a major part of the week-end. Planning and organising this very busy three-day event is a demanding and time-consuming task and the remaining uncertainties of the coming months and what, if any, relaxation of the restrictions are in place in August - not just on social distancing but on singing - as well as the reluctance of many members to travel, were all reasons given for the decision.

The committee is desperately sad that for a second year we cannot plan to meet for what is always a very happy week-end at The Nightingale Centre. We have regretfully cancelled our provisional booking for the 13-16 August 2021.

A virtual one-day 'Zoom' event, open and free to all, is being planned; hopefully this will attract new interest and new people, so that future conferences will be as popular and well-attended as they have been in previous years. In addition to this we have been invited to have a slot in the Zoom Societies Day in June. We will keep you informed of the dates and programmes and hope that you will join us.

Please see Elizabeth's report on the planning sub-group's activities.

Of course, we all look forward to the return to 'normal' times when not only the Peach Hall but the Hibbert Room, the Lounge, Garden Room and even the little TV room, all throb with the activity of our members.

In conclusion I want to say a big Thank You to our Secretary for beavering on our behalf and taking on the additional task of providing CDs and downloads of our hymn recordings, to Lyanne for editing this first issue of *Cantemus News*, to Elizabeth and her organising group, to many others around the country using music to bring hope in these difficult times and the committee for helping me keep UMS alive.

Please feel free to respond with your comments and feelings, but we hope you will appreciate that we are acting with care and consideration for our members.

With love

Valerie

Valerie Walker, UMS Chair

NB - As an affiliated member for the GA we are entitled a voting delegate at the Annual Meetings. Does anyone wish to attend the Virtual GA as our delegate?

The meeting is on Sat 24 April. There is no charge but the registration deadline is 3rd April so our Secretary would need to know by 31 March.

There is a free to attend service the evening before.



The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow, Derbyshire



A 180 degree turn

Remember a time before Zoom? No, honestly, me neither. That little blue and white camera was completely unknown to me and my life was arguably happier for it. But oh well, here we are and Zoom is the newest member of our families and, it seems, our music society.

Although plans were being made to hold this year's summer conference at the Nightingale Centre, the likelihood of us meeting in person in August has grown slimmer and slimmer. But the organising sub-group is a resourceful and stubborn lot, we've parked the Partnership Prom for 2022, and instead have gone down a new avenue for this year's conference. Using, none other, than our best friend: Zoom.

Yes, you've guessed it! For one day and one day only, we're hopping on the bandwagon and hosting a virtual conference. We are still very much in the planning stages (so much so that we haven't decided on a name) but one thing we're certain of is that this is a huge opportunity to introduce new people to our society. This one day conference will be free for all, with the option for anyone to pop in and out of whatever takes their fancy. They don't have to commit straight away and we can give them a true flavour of UMS, whilst the rest of us do what we have always done best - make music!

Although this year will be different from most, you can still expect the things that we love and cherish at UMS. Spiritual worship, captivating talks and the time to chat with friends you haven't seen in a long time. We'd also like to make this mini conference into a bit of tribute to David Dawson, so we hope to sing introits and hymns that he created for the society and wider movement. We also have the opportunity to showcase UMS at the Zoom Societies Day in June where we've been given an hour slot alongside other Unitarian Societies over the course of a weekend to discover everything our movement has to offer. Basically, 2021 might continue to be a difficult year but we're taking it as a chance for growth and reaching as many new people as possible.

Members of the organising sub-group are of course knocking our brain cells together, but we love it when someone gives us an idea that we can then run with. If you'd like to get involved with the Virtual Conference in the form of worship, workshops or activities, or if you think you have an idea that will make us go "YES! *And then we could also do this ...*" then we'd honestly love for you to give us a bell. Feel free to call me on 07968756055 or email us at unitarianmusicsociety@hotmail.co.uk

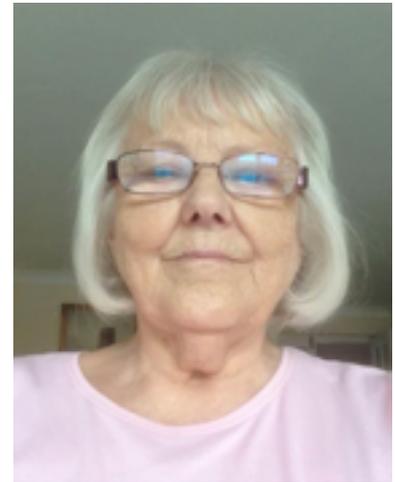
I am, as I'm sure many of you are, very sad that we won't be joining together at the Nightingale Centre in August. The sub-group spent a long time debating the options of hosting a reduced conference but a decision needed to be made and this seemed like the best, and safest option for us all. We do feel daunted holding a conference via Zoom, but we're up for the challenge and hope that you join us in August!

More dates and details will be given in future correspondence but until then, keep on keeping on,

Elizabeth (Organising sub-group - Elizabeth, Jo, Isabelle, Elly, Esther and Lyanne)

UMS Secretary musings

After taking over the role of Secretary of UMS, following the stepping down of Adrienne, I was not sure of what I would have to do to fulfil the role. I was brought files, a memory stick, clip boards (with attached pens), UMS badges, information going back many years and a large box of UMS hymn CDs, which David had recorded (from Christine) by Adrienne .



The files have made interesting reading and supplied me with lots of information regarding many of the Conferences held in Oxford and Great Hucklow, before I joined UMS.

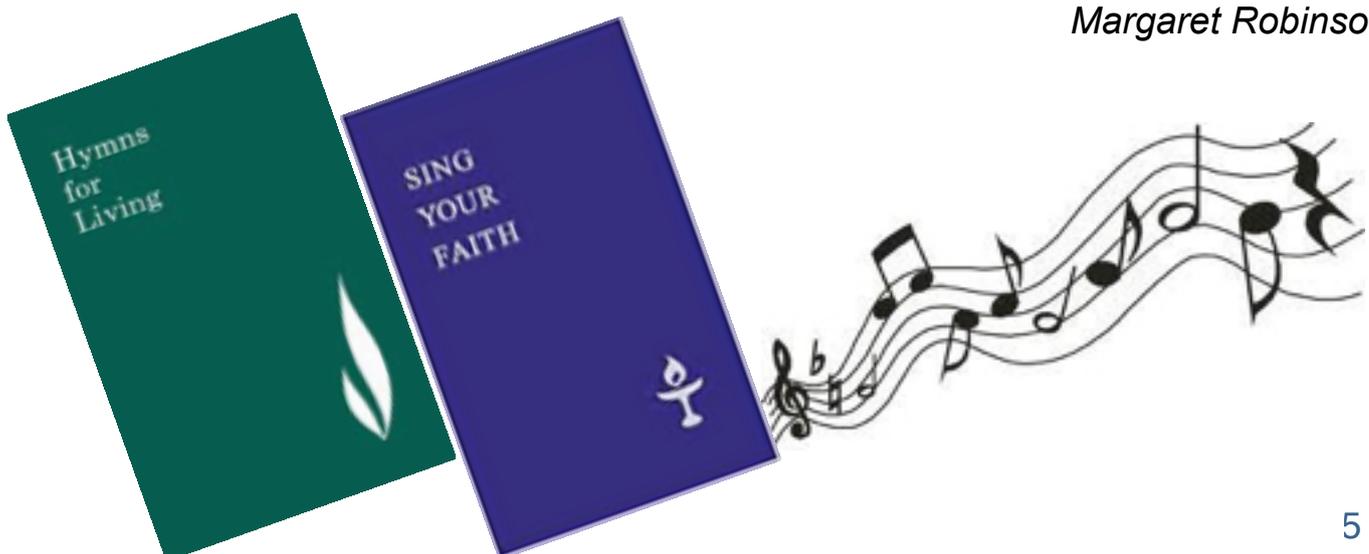
The word finally got out that I was able to supply hymn CDs and requests came in, I have sold four Christmas CDs, sixteen SYF (Sing Your Faith) CDs, fourteen HFL (Hymns for Living) CDs and one Contemporary British Unitarians CD. I have sent twenty-eight hymns electronically for services.

Despite the Covi-19 pandemic and not being able to meet in person, I have managed to keep in touch with some UMS members by email and Zoom. I have been kept busy with replying to emails, sending out the Newsletter, posting CDs and sending hymns electronically and even sending a hymn for a funeral to a Funeral Director.

I sent a card to Christine Best on the occasion of her 90th birthday. Please let me know of any special occasions on which I can send cards on behalf of UMS.

I regularly sing with Uni-sing! on a Saturday afternoon and also with a Self-Isolating choir on-line. I also host our Sunday services at Stockton church where we regularly use the hymns from the UMS CDs.

Margaret Robinson



UK Unitarian TV

I have today received something from Margaret Robinson to brighten my day. It certainly did that.

You have probably seen and heard it, the result of a delightful liaison between David Kent and Lyanne Mitchell (musician and artist).

I cannot imagine that it hasn't been sent to you but, if not, let me know and I will send you the link. I received it at a time when we are crying out for such creative audio-visual ideas.



Constructed online meditation and worship is crying out for this kind of thing and I would love to get the UMS helping us to turn out more of this kind of material. So often, our congregations are struggling to make services online and are subverted by trying to make effective services of worship online and the problems of getting effective worship or meditation by expecting that, often badly reproduced, "Hymns for Worship" will do the trick.

Before I received the youtube link today, I had intended to write to you along these lines, asking if the UMS could help us (and I'm talking with my UK Unitarian TV hat on) to collaborate in producing a library of short musical pieces (sometimes with words - spoken or sung) in contemplation of spiritual elements in our lives. Lyanne and David have started the ball rolling. It has been enhanced by their ability to execute it so well at this time of social distancing. I hope to see more similar collaborations. They have so much to offer, not just in the days of covid but in our chapels, churches, temple and mosques, in the days that will follow.

On behalf of UK Unitarian TV, we will be happy to work with members of UMS. We have seen how effective such ideas can be through such events as the beautifully produced Christmas services, of recent years. and meditational pieces in collaboration with the National Unitarian Fellowship. Just now, the idea of a Hucklow weekend where different musical groups are simultaneously working away in different spaces, including the Chapel, to make music which we can incorporate in our worship, wherever we are. It would be great way to honour the work of people like David Dawson whose dream was to progress from the extremely useful (and very well-used) collection of hymns on CD, to the now achievable results of employing new technology which is rapidly allowing us even richer possibilities to find spirituality through words and music.

At the moment we are held back in this process, but let's plan for an even more fruitful Unitarian future...

John Hewardine.

A New Resource on our Website Menu?

I would like to endorse 100% what John is saying in his article on the previous page.

He is offering us all an opportunity to work with UKTV to produce a 'musical resource' which can be widely used in Unitarian worship.

We are a talented bunch! Our formal and informal concerts at Huckow have proved this on a regular basis. We have excellent singers, instrumentalists and composers in our membership.

Surely this would be an excellent use of our time and energy - post Lockdown? UMS is at a cross-roads..... I believe this could be a possible new direction for us.

We are already beginning to move towards this. As you will know, Myrna and Louise are leading classes called 'Voices in the Air' for learning songs and exploring harmony and composition. David Kent and I are compiling our own resource of new inspirational songs set to original and traditional melodies. We hope to go on to produce much more.

Thanks mainly to David Dawson, our extensive selection of choral hymn recordings have come into their own and become invaluable over this time of 'zoom' worship up and down the land. We can add to this and offer recordings of solo and group instrumental pieces which could be used as preludes, postludes, and quiet music for reflection or meditation in Unitarian services and meetings. I believe we can go much further now and offer so much more variety.

Of course this would take time - it would be an on-going project. When we are able to travel and meet again, I would love to think that some of us could arrange recording sessions with John and his team, on a fairly regular basis....and also as part of our annual conferences. I believe this could become a new and much valued role for UMS. It would also be an opportunity to reach out to younger singers and musicians, to invite them to take part. Not only could it be accessed through our own UMS website - it could also be offered as a Worship Resource on the UK website and to smaller groups like the Worship Leaders' Network.

I think it would inspire us and refresh usand wouldn't it do justice to the memory of our much missed Maestro, David Dawson?

Lyanne

Solos and Duets?

Inspirational songs?

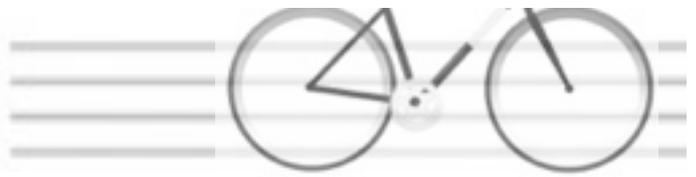
Instrumentals?

Music for Meditation



Oliver's Journey Home

An Up-date from Nick Morrice



This is a letter from a music society in Bridlington which I approached about **OJH**. I replied on 30 November, answering all his questions, since when I have heard nothing. I should have more information for the next issue of *Cantemus News*. At least he ended his letter on a positive note!

Hello Nick.

Many thanks for sending me the Vocal score of Oliver's journey home and your covering letter, which in part was so sad to read. The loss of your dear friend David, to corona virus, must have been heart breaking for you all. I cannot imagine how a family cope losing a loved one to this awful disease and of course the loss of a good, dear friend. As you say it would be fitting to perform this Musical as a tribute to David and to see your musical performed on a stage.

Let's hope it happens and let's wish for normality to return in 2021.

The Musical.

Firstly I take my hat off to you for writing a musical.

It's not easy. Finding a story line, dialogue and songs to suit, takes some doing. But you have, well done. The connection with Bridlington and Huddersfield, makes it a Yorkshire Musical too, so you are in good company with Calendar Girls and Spend Spend Spend. Of course putting a musical on stage is a different matter.

We at Spotlight are capable of producing any play, musical. But for me to get the bigger picture of your musical and to assist me in saying, "yes" we can do it. I need more information.

(There follows a list of specific questions about libretto, timing, wardrobe, and staging. All information has been supplied by Nick.)

Re Orchestra. Well, Spotlight hasn't the capacity to hold 10 orchestral players. Our Musical Director would play it, with added synthetic sounds. E.g. Strings, Brass etc. Even if we had the capacity to hold 10 players. Their combined professional fees would be more than box office takings. Our theatre holds an audience of 83.

So, if you can provide the info Nick, it will help me to consider the potential of us performing it. I hope we can.

Thank you and Kind Regards.
Mike.

Mike Sheldon.Chairman.
Spotlight Theatre. Bridlington.
Reg charity 231760.
A-Not- For-Profit-Organisation.

Great title – what is it?

VOICES IN THE AIR

We are still meeting on zoom, and now something new is *in the wind!* This has arisen as a project separate from Uni-sing! but organised and led by us, Louise Rogers and Myrna Michell. Assuming that uncertain times remain with us, and aware that not everyone can join us on the weekly Saturday afternoon, we devised two strands of monthly workshops for Monday evenings: the first is to introduce a variety of new songs and to invite our friends beyond Unitarian borders! The second strand comprises discrete sessions covering practical music making and reading.

As so much keeps changing, we have advertised sessions only until April. Of the six sessions, one of each has now passed, so details for the remaining sessions are below.

The next session is on 1st March - songs workshop number 2, introducing a new batch of five songs: accompanied and unaccompanied, some poignant, some challenging, but always learnable and fun. As with Uni-sing, friendly and keen faces and voices greet each other, and a spirit of collaboration is firing people to write, talk, sing and listen to each other!

SONG SESSION DETAILS

Monday: March 29th @ 7.00pm-8.15pm

- Accompanied songs, quick to learn – in verses
- Unaccompanied in two or three parts – you choose your line
- Contemporary rounds and chants – you will hear the lines develop
- We sing muted but with an occasional experiment!
- For some songs, printed music and/or recordings will be available in advance



MUSIC SESSION DETAILS

Monday 15th March – Adding a simple harmony

A collaborative session for singers, guitarists and keyboard players.

Sometimes we want to add a harmony to a melody, or work out which chord comes next. Some of it sounds fine, but other bits sound weird. Why?

Monday 19th April – Writing our own hymns and songs

(change from original programme)

We would like to encourage people to write their own hymns. Whether you want to write the words, the music or both, this session will explore hymn writing and identify what help people might want to support their own creativity. We'll give you some pointers to start you off.

ALL SESSIONS ARE ON MONDAY EVENINGS AT 7 – 8.15PM. Zoom room opens at 6.45pm. Fancy joining in? To receive the weekly newsletter and zoom link, please email: louise.rogers256@gmail.com

All our activities are being added to the website: www.ring-of-voices.net

What's in a name?



I have greatly enjoyed being part of the UMS sub planning group. Elizabeth, Isabell, Jo, Elly, Esther and I have been 'zooming ' together for some time now, exchanging and discussing new ideas and directions which might be possible for UMS.

The tragic combination of David's death and the pandemic has brought UMS to a shuddering halt and I know I am not the only one who fears it may never recover.

I believe we can use this break to plan and discuss changes and new directions. This will not only encourage and refresh us, but hopefully lead to younger people being attracted to join us.

We could start with our name. The word '**Society**' is a wee bit formal....and dare I say it? a tad stuffy. Is it attractive to younger folk?

Here are two suggestions ;--

Unitarian Music Makers

Unitarian Music Network

These options are in *no way* meant to be any kind of final solution
- I'm just having a bit of fun!

But hopefully, they show how a younger image might be projected using not only an alternative word for '**Society**' but also by different choices for colour and typeface.

Do you think the new Unitarian UK website projects a younger image?
(I think this is what was intended.)

Of course a change of name for UMS is a big step and would need agreement from members, committee and constitution.

Looking forward to your feedback.....

Lyanne

... And Finally ...

The last issue of *Cantemus* was really a tribute to the late David Dawson.

I hope you will all like this new A4 on-line format.

(It somehow felt wrong to lose the word '*Cantemus*' altogether!)

Please share with us your feedback on any of the articles in this issue
and your vision for the future of UMS.

Tell us how your congregation has weathered the storm
of the Pandemic; have there been musical innovations
in your church or chapel?; how have you coped with zooming?
and do you think it is here to stay?

**Thank you to everyone who has contributed
to this issue.**

Please send contributions to issue 2 of *Cantemus News* to -
lyanne.mitchell@mac.com

(or post to 49 Mount Stuart Road, Rothesay, Isle of Bute, PA20 9EB)

No later than Friday April 30th

Wishing you all good health and hoping
it won't be too long until we can gather again to make music.

Best wishes, Lyanne Mitchell
Cantemus News Editor



SAVE THESE DATES!

Friday 18 June
2.45 - 3.45
Zoom Societies Day
This is our UMS
slot (details later)

Saturday 14 August
UMS Virtual Day,
which will include a
mini-tribute to David Dawson
(details later.)