

## **BULLETIN #25 2020**

### This Week

Dear friends,

I hope you're all well?

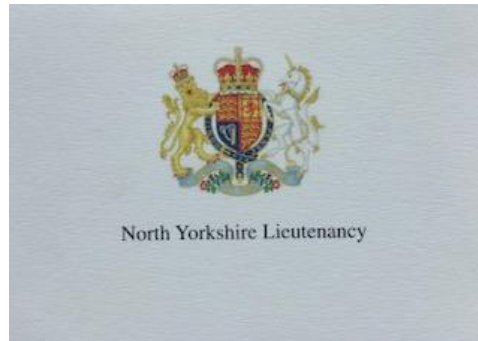
When we had to stop meeting for practices in March it felt so incredibly sad that we wouldn't be able to meet and sing together for possibly a long time. Also we were going to miss the lovely events that we'd planned and worked hard for too.

After lockdown, the virtual choring phenomenon quickly became very apparent on Social media. Many choirs and big names from the world of choral singing were sending out invitations to join their Zoom time. However, because we wanted to keep our own lovely choir running and together, we thought about the possibilities of having our own weekly Zoom time. Our wonderful Craig and Declan kindly agreed to do us a weekly Zoom session of our own, initially it felt strange but you all quickly relaxed, many of you have given your wholehearted support, which we have really appreciated. Along with joining us weekly some of you have even volunteered to do little performances at the end of the session to entertain your fellow members. Craig gave this the title of Quarantunes, well done to those of you who have volunteered so far. Please don't be shy as after next weeks practice we have some free weeks

We've managed to keep the bulletin going even though sometimes there's not a lot to put in it, but very kindly many of you have said that in receiving it you've kept a feeling of connection to our Knot Another Choir community. Thanks to those of you who've done profiles and poems, they've been fantastic and I'm sure they've helped us all get to know each other a little better.

## Acknowledgement from the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire

Today I was absolutely delighted to receive a card of acknowledgement from the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire for the work we've been doing as a choir since lockdown, how amazing is that? So well done everybody and thanks for your enthusiasm, energy and commitment.



The Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire is Her Majesty's representative in the County, charged with upholding the dignity of the Crown. North Yorkshire is the largest geographic Lieutenancy in England and has a population of 1,135,800.

The Lieutenancy promotes North Yorkshire, York and Teesside, its people, culture, diversity, heritage and history. It serves its communities and encourages engagement with voluntary services across all groups and sectors; in business, industrial and social lives.

Julie, John and all the members of your Choir,  
Wonderful work keeping everyone's spirits up!

A heart-felt note of gratitude for the extraordinary support and service shown by you and your colleagues during this COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you for all you have contributed in ensuring that everyone is kept as safe and well as possible.

With very best wishes, Jo Ropner.

Mrs Jo Ropner  
Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire

## **Zoom Practice**

We had a great Zoom last night, I love seeing your smiling faces. We sang “si si si la dolla da” for our warm up. This was followed by our Cover 19 song, this week we sang “Let It Be” to commemorate the birthday of Paul McCartney, what beautiful words and as Craig said they seem very appropriate at the moment. Craig said he’s seeing his parents for the first time tomorrow since January, I’m sure we all hope they have a great reunion. We sang Brave as our main song. it was very enjoyable. Craig thrilled us all last night by showing us a video of a performance he had done at the Royal Albert Hall with three friends singing in harmony when he was just 14. Our Quarantune song this week was a beautiful ABBA song “Slipping Through My Fingers” sung by Liz Connell. Liz sang beautifully with great feeling. You’ll find the recording of her song on the website very soon.

## **Important Announcement**

Craig made an exciting announcement during practice; he and Declan are going to produce a video of us singing “Get by with a little help from my friends”. This will involve us, as individuals, doing a recording of ourselves singing along to the soundtrack of our parts. Craig will send more information on exactly how to do this, we will send this to you in an email as soon as we receive it.

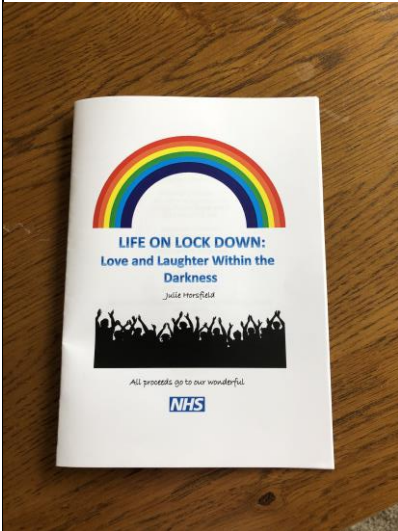
Look after yourselves. Julie.

## **1:1 Tuition Available**

Craig is offering his 1:1 lessons , they will be available at the cost of just £35 per hour. Craig is conducting his lessons on Zoom and payments can be made via Paypal and BACS. Make your bookings by emailing [craig@livingvocally.com](mailto:craig@livingvocally.com)

Declan is offering 1:1 lessons too in piano/composition. I’ve had a lesson and I can wholeheartedly recommend. They can be taken Monday-Sunday 9-00 am-8-00pm. Declan’s lessons are just £30 . To book please email [Declandaviesmusic@gmail.com](mailto:Declandaviesmusic@gmail.com)

## **NHS Fundraiser**



Choir member Julie Horsefield has written a set of poems. Julie is selling her book for the NHS charity for just £5.

I do hope you will support this great cause.

Here's another of Julies poems.

### **Social Distancing.**

It doesn't seem right,  
It's not in the plan,  
When you don't get to visit  
And cuddle your nan.

I'm in one place, they're in another,  
We have to fight the fight.  
But without my little treasures.  
My world is a little less bright.

But at least we get to see them  
If only on a screen.  
We'll keep in touch daily,  
That's OK for the time being.

But once that glorious day comes,  
And it's safe to do so,  
I'm going to hug my lovelies  
And never let them go.

## **Profiles**



### **Milena Vjestica**

I'm a proud Leeds lass with an interesting background (which I invite you to read about if you dare)...

After graduating from Warwick University, I became a Trainee Personnel Manager for Asda Pudsey Leeds, before retraining as a teacher. I worked in schools across North Yorkshire for decades, making my way up to the position of Head Teacher at Fountains Earth Primary in beautiful Nidderdale, which was my last job

before I retired.

When I handed over my school keys, I took some time to reflect on my childhood passions and discovered that a lot of them still interested me - particularly ballet. I decided to throw myself into learning it, and since tying my ballet ribbons for the first time, have achieved five qualifications - including three IDTA exams, and two professional Royal Academy of Dance ones too! For the latter, I've taken two exams in 'The Discovering Repertoire' syllabus, one of which I achieved a high merit. I was very proud, and it's safe to say my obsession is back in full force. Now I own a wardrobe full of leotards, dance skirts, tutus and pointe shoes... and my collection's always growing!

Ballet isn't the only hobby I pirouetted back into, however. After leaving school, I found that I missed singing in assemblies and productions, so joined the Harrogate choir Rock Up And Sing. I was an active soprano for three years until they disbanded.

Since leaving the working world, I've taken as many opportunities as I can to experience what life has to offer with my husband, Nik. We're big tennis fans, and have frequently been to Wimbledon as well as the Australian Open, Indian Wells and Monte Carlo. We've also travelled to Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, the West Indies and America along with many other spectacular destinations like Mauritius and the Maldives.

I suppose I can trace my love of exploring back to my childhood, too, as I was always visiting family based around Europe in Serbia, Croatia, Germany and Austria. But despite all the travelling, my childhood - like everyone's in the sixties - was very different from today. I was the child of foreign immigrants who spoke poor English (but good Yorkshire!). My mother Waltraud was born in Sudetenland Bohemia (the former Czechoslovakia) and my father, Simo, came from a village near Zagreb, Croatia. As a result, I grew up in a household that celebrated many cultures and languages, and thanks to that I speak both Serbian and German fluently.

My upbringing was a religious one, as well, and having been raised as Christian Serbian Orthodox, I've been involved in church life since my christening day. I even follow the Julian calendar! In my household, we celebrate Christmas on January 7, along with a range of other fabulous traditions throughout the year like a feast day - which we call 'Slava' - in honour of our family saint, St. George. Nik and I host this event, serving seven courses over an afternoon and inviting at least twenty hungry guests to celebrate! My 'gibanica' is the stuff of legend among my friends and family.

On that note - out of everything I've achieved in life, my family means the most. I have two of the most handsome and smart lads called Illiya and Aleksander, as well as a clever (and incessantly greedy!) black lab, Milly. And then of course there's Nik - my husband. Funnily enough, though we consider ourselves quite religious, his full name - Nikola - is the old biblical name for the devil... on top of which, our family surname means 'witch'. Milena means 'sunshine': so when you put all of that together, I'm a sunshine witch married to a devil witch!

Joking aside, we do no witchery in our household, I assure you... and when I met Nik at just seven years old, I had no magical instincts that suggested he'd become my future husband. My father had pressed my sister and I to join a local Serbian folklore dance group called Oplenac. It was here that I first met Nik. I didn't fancy him then, as when he danced next to me I was too fascinated by his big, pointy ears to even talk to him properly (think Spock from *Star Trek*). But it must have been written in the stars, because many years later, a new club was opened by the Serbian community in Leeds. It was here that I clapped eyes on him again, and the rest is history! We have a love for the ages.

## This or that?:

*Andy Murray or Novak Djokovic?:* Novak, of course - I've even met him twice!

*Curry or fish 'n' chips?:* Fish 'n' chips... delicious.

*Walking or driving?:* Walking. You see so much more.

*Beer or spirit?:* Spirit - specifically, a Serbian plum brandy called 'slivovica'.

*Dogs or cats?:* DOGS!

*Man United or Leeds Utd?:* Leeds Utd.

*Jeans or dresses?:* Dresses.

Since joining this choir just before Christmas, I've fallen in love with it. The first person I saw was Julie - she reminded me we had worked together at my little school when she was my pupil-parent support teacher, and was as lovely then as she is now!

I can't wait to make memories with you all once this pandemic is over, and hope you've enjoyed getting to know me via this newsletter.

Until later! Ciao, Milena



## **Natasha Hawkes**

When Julie phoned me the other day and asked if I could write a bit about myself, it was only then that I realised that I've had a similar life to my parents in that I lived in different countries and travelled around. My parents met in Paris at the American hospital. My father is a New Zealander and my mother is of Russian descent.

He proposed to her on their first date. They got married in Paris, 58 years on they are still in love and together. They moved for work to the UK and years later my brother and I were born. I was 18 months old when we moved to Auckland, New Zealand. We lived for the next 7 years near the beach in St Heliers, where I fondly remember swimming in the sea with my brother most days. After my sister was born we returned to the UK to live in Bedford for my father's job. After my O'levels I headed to London. I worked for several years at Harrods in various departments, and then moved into

Human Resources. I lived in North London in a number of flat shares in Primrose Hill, Chalk Farm and Belsize Park. Most weekends were spent in Camden town, in and around the various watering holes and the antique markets, as I have a passion for collecting bric-a-brac.

In 1997 my brother died. I was devastated. I decided to make use of my New Zealand passport and head for a new life in Sydney, Australia. I found a job and rented a flat in Pyrmont. It was fabulous to have my own space after endless years of flat sharing in London. I joined some meet-up groups and got to know a circle of friends, mostly ex-pats. In 2000 I met Stephen on Anzac day in Balmain in a pub called The London. He had been in Sydney for 2 days and was over from Dublin travelling through Australia. We dated for a couple of months before his visa ran out and he had to return to Dublin. Our relationship continued long distance for the next 18 months with weekly calls and daily emails. In 2002 I followed my heart, packed up my life and went to live with him in Guildford. Our first home together was in a house in Wherwell Road in central Guildford. It was very close to the station, which was very handy for me as I commuted to London for my job. In 2003 Stephen proposed to me whilst we were on a weekend break in Madrid. In April 2004 we got married in Richmond at the Bingham Hotel. It was a glorious day, wall to wall sunshine not a cloud in the sky.

Our plan was always to return Australia, so we left the UK in December 2005, spent Christmas with my parents who had recently retired in New Zealand, before we migrated to Australia. We spent the next 9.5 years living in Melbourne and Sydney. We successfully got onto the property ladder and carved out a life. I obtained a Diploma in Human Resources and made a sideways move into world of recruitment specializing in Human Resources. Over the years we explored different parts of Australia and took up Latin and ballroom dancing. We enjoyed eating a range of different cuisines such as Vietnamese Malaysian and Cambodian, to name a few. I have a couple of dishes I now make. The last five years of living there, we were fortunate, on the back of a holiday in the UK to go travelling in South East Asia. We slowly began to realise how much we missed living in the northern hemisphere, so we made plans to move back.

Five years on we've lived in Dublin, Southsea and since October 2018, in Harrogate. We moved here due to my husband's job. We are enjoying our lives in Harrogate. It's such a lovely town surrounded by stunning countryside. York and Leeds are just down the road if one wants to get that city vibe. I'm very much into health and fitness. I meditate daily and over the

years have attended a number of weekend and daily retreats. I'm a keen member of the gym and I enjoy my power walks around the stray as well, weather permitting of course. We are at final stages of buying a house in Harrogate, which will be exciting to have a place of our own again. I've changed careers too. I've followed my passion of food. I work for Rafi's Spicebox and it's at work, whilst making a curry pack for Julie, that I learnt about KAC. I remember saying to her that I would really love to join a choir, but I can't sing. Julie said it was not a problem and kindly invited me to come along to one of the practice sessions. I came along at the end of November and have been a member ever since.

I've thoroughly enjoyed every session. Thank you all for making me feel included from day one, you are a lovely friendly and helpful group. Craig and Declan, you are just great, so encouraging, patient and uplifting especially during these strange and difficult times we've all been experiencing. It really is a great choir to belong to, if you're having an ordinary day and you come along to choir, it just lifts you, you can't help getting swept along with all the good stuff that is going on around you. Seeing all your faces on Zoom during lock down has brightened my week. I'm really looking forward to seeing you all again in person very soon.

The above photo is of my recent trip (Feb/ March 2020) out to see my parents and Aunt in New Zealand. My sister happened to be over from LA. It was at Villa Maria, vineyard, just outside of Auckland. It was a wonderful holiday and reunion.

### **Make Contact**

Please feel free to contact me, my email is [jbradburyssharp@gmail.com](mailto:jbradburyssharp@gmail.com) or ring me on 07926027676.