



**Sing Out Brussels! asbl**  
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## Sing Out Brussels! Activity Report 2020-2021

### 1) Sing over and over again

After a second season largely cut off by the health crisis, our association hoped to be able to resume more usual activities during its 3rd season. We never imagined that nothing was going to go as planned.

The season started off in a very classic way, with auditions organized during the summer. Given the very large number of people on our waiting list, we opted for a new two-part method: an audio recording to allow our choirmaster to assess each other's voice, and then an audition in person during which each person was heard individually, then in groups for a song learned beforehand, with the help of some members of Sing Out. This method allowed us to recruit 9 singers who joined the choir in September.

These auditions had already made it possible to test the health protocols prepared by the public authorities, with a view to resuming our rehearsals.

In September and October, the rehearsals resumed in accordance with the health protocols in force at the time. At the request of several singers, we set up a hybrid formula: the physical rehearsals were broadcasted live on Facebook to allow people who could not attend, to participate remotely.

At the end of October, unfortunately, the outbreak of contaminations heralding the second wave in Belgium resulted in the cancellation of our first weekend of work, as well as the suspension of physical rehearsals. This suspension will have lasted 7 months. It wasn't until the end of May that we were able to resume outdoor rehearsals, as our season was already coming to an end.

### 2) Dreaming of the future

Initially, we rather organised activities in the form of virtual workshops, in order to prepare for the future.

First, we organized a brainstorming session as part of our bid to host the LGBTQI+ Various Voices International Choir Festival in Brussels in 2026. Barcelona is the other candidate city. The 25-page dossier and the accompanying video were prepared by Marina Belotti, treasurer of the association, and Christophe Cordier, member. They surrounded themselves with a team of around ten singers to finalize the drafting of the dossier, in collaboration with visit.brussels and a PCO (Professional Congress Organiser). The virtual brainstorming session organized in November generated many ideas that fueled the bid, the final version of which was submitted

at the end of June to Legato, the European federation of LGBTQI+ choirs. The host city will be announced in December.

Then, our Creative Joy Team mobilized the choir to begin preparations for our "Back to School" show (initially scheduled for 2022, postponed to 2023). This subject of "back to school" being sensitive for many of our members, the Joy Team, headed by Robbie Blake, ensured the animation of three virtual thematic workshops in small groups, which allowed us to discuss our experiences of school life and adolescence, while getting to know each other better. The testimonies collected will feed into the writing of the show, which will have an educational ambition.

Finally, as part of the "Listen, care and share" project, for which we obtained a grant from Equal.brussels, the Board conducted a survey of all members and former members of the ASBL in order to assess the well-being within the choir and to detect problematic behaviors (racism, lesbophobia, fatphobia, misogyny...). The results of this investigation are confidential. A summary was provided to the choristers. "Listen, care and share" pursues the objective of promoting inclusive behavior within the group and implementing non-violent communication. As this project can hardly be implemented virtually, it has been postponed to season 4, with the agreement of Equal.brussels. This season has been mainly devoted to finding professional partners who can train our members.

Very quickly, it became difficult to pursue rehearsals virtually. On the one hand, videoconferencing tools are not suitable for the practice of choral singing. On the other hand, we have observed in many of our members, already permanently connected for professional reasons, a deep fatigue towards virtual meetings.

### **3) #KeepOnDancing**

Faced with the extension of the lockdown, the Board realized that it was not possible to limit the group's activities to virtual discussion sessions. Sing Out Brussels! is above all a choir. Singing is at the heart of its mission.

In November, contacts were made with the Pink Singers of London, hosted in Brussels the previous season, in order to benefit from their expertise in the production of videos. We had indeed the objective of animating the choir through this kind of production, but completely ignoring how to do it, both for the recording of the voices and for the filming of the choristers. The Pink Singers were a huge help in sharing their methodology with us.

A survey was carried out among the choristers to determine the song to be recorded. Robyn's "Dancing on my own" gathered the most votes.

The Board then created a Video Team around Marina Belotti, treasurer, Robbie Blake, coordinator of the Creative Joy Team, and Julie Janssens, film director and production manager. Several choristers enthusiastically joined this team.

The "Dancing on my own" project started in December and spanned two months: recording of the piano base by our arranger Philippe Maniez, individual recordings of a few choristers at

our choirmaster, brainstorming on the video pitch, writing a script, writing instructions for members, audio recordings of members at home with their smartphones, editing of voices by a professional sound engineer, writing video instructions for members to film themselves at home, accompaniment during filming, additional shooting at Braine L'Alleud with a few volunteer choristers and a professional team (in compliance with health rules), video editing and finally broadcast and promotion in February.

Given the great success of this first video and the new extension of the confinement, we then made two decisions: record a second video (Can't stop the feeling, by Justin Timberlake) and ask for the reorientation of the subsidies granted by Equal.brussels and the VGC for our show "Dance with Pride" (initially scheduled for June 2020, postponed to June 2021, and finally canceled) to this new project called #KeepOnDancing.

After obtaining the agreement of Equal.brussels and the VGC, we launched the new video project in early March. Thanks to these grants, we were able to be more ambitious, inviting more artists and professional technicians, themselves hard hit by the pandemic: with Philippe Maniez this time on drums, Noé Berne on bass, Auxane Cartigny on keyboard, and Thomas Mayade on brass. A new Video Team worked on this project which took place in a more or less equivalent way, except that the shootings were this time carried out outdoors and in small groups, thus taking into account the evolution of the health situation. The video was released at the time of Belgian Pride, with the slogan #FeelThePride.

It should also be noted that the song "Dancing on my own" was played during the tribute paid at the Bourse on 12 March 2021 to David, the victim of a homophobic murder in Beveren. A delegation from Sing Out Brussels! attended this tribute.

#### **4) Keep our community alive**

All of the activities carried out during the 3rd season pursued the goal of keeping our community alive. We worked with a concern for inclusiveness, allowing each and everyone to get involved in their own way and according to their wishes, without pressure. We made sure to maintain the link with as many members as possible and respected the choice of those who preferred to stay away from the group during this troubled time.

The attachment of our members to the association can be demonstrated by the very high number of contributions paid despite the suspension of rehearsals for almost the entire season. This is obviously essential for our non-profit organization, since the contributions were our only sure source of income during this season, since we were not able to organize any concerts. In return, the association offered a mug with the choir's logo on the occasion of the holiday season. In addition, public subsidies have enabled us to make our projects a reality and we must also underline the invaluable help of Cocof, which granted us two extraordinary subsidies intended to help us with the health crisis.

Throughout the season, we have thus taken care to consolidate our partnerships: with the public authorities, with the municipality and the cultural center of Uccle for our next shows, with the RainbowHouse in Brussels, with Legato, with the Pink Singers, with the artists and technicians who have surrounded us this season. We have learned a lot and the experience

gained will be invaluable in continuing our activities and bringing to fruition a Season 4 which we hope will mark our return to the stage.