

CHORAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent government restrictions, which included a ban on singing in public places and companies, proved to be challenging for choirs in the Czech Republic. When group singing was listed as a high-risk activity that could spread the virus, many choirs had to transfer their choral practices into the virtual space and perform their activities in a novel way. The following survey was initiated by Elvira Gadžijeva from the Department of Music Education at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice to investigate how the pandemic affected Czech choirs. The authors of this paper contribute to an important research topic related to the disruption of choral activities in the Czech Republic during the global pandemic. It presents the results of a questionnaire survey which was completed by choirs of various types from all over the country.

Keywords

COVID-19 – choirs – singing – choral singing – distance choral rehearsals – online survey

Introduction

In 2020–2022, the COVID-19 pandemic strongly affected choral activities across the Czech Republic, an EU country with a population of about 10 million and 495 choirs of all types officially registered in the national choral database (according to the Czech Choirs Association, the number of active choirs is actually over 1000). The pandemic was so serious that it provoked a nationwide debate among choirmasters and singers, music teachers and organizations supporting choral activities in the Czech Republic. The declaration of a state of emergency by the government of the Czech Republic was issued on March 12, 2020, following the law of crisis management regarding the practical operations of choral education and singing activities in general.¹ During the state of emergency, government measures and extraordinary measures by individual ministries restricted certain singing activities. The state of emergency was declared repeatedly from March 12 to May 17, 2020, from October 5, 2020, to April 11, 2021, and from November 25 to December 25, 2021. During these periods, choral activities were transferred to the virtual space and distance form of practice. According to the Czech Choirs Association, about 30 % of choirs canceled their activities during the time of restrictions (Michálek, 2021). During the state of emergency, home education instituted by schools was also mandatory. Initially, there was no specific requirement by the Ministry of Education for a particular distance teaching method, and therefore teachers

¹ Detailed statement available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2000-240>.

and schools adopted the method they considered most appropriate. According to the Czech School Inspectorate report based on almost a thousand schools, one-third of the students did not communicate regularly with their teachers during this period. In almost one hundred schools, about 20 % of the students did not participate in distance education at all, with some schools reporting that over 50 % of the pupils did not participate. It also was challenging for parents, who had to assist their younger children with distance education and at the same time manage their duties as they worked from home (CSI, 2020). The main cause of this slow beginning in distance education was the lack of experience with online teaching methods (Brom et. al., 2020). The Czech school inspectorate suggested that schools focus on the profile subjects (CSI, 2020) and music lessons and choir activities in schools' curricula were of low priority. Further, teachers in the Czech Republic often lacked expertise in technology as well as access to technical equipment itself or a reliable internet connection (CSI, 2020; Ružičková, 2021). Towards the end of September 2020, singing activities became even more difficult when, at a press conference after an extraordinary meeting of the Government of the Czech Republic, the Minister of Health of the Czech Republic declared that singing was a high-risk activity for the spread of COVID-19.² Stricter measures then prohibited singing of all kinds, especially choral activities and singing during church services. The Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Public Health referred to a technical report and guidance document about ventilation in indoor spaces from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC, 2020). The ECDC referred to the case study of the church choral practice at the Skagit Valley Chorale from Washington, USA, where after a 2,5 hour-long rehearsal with 61 attendant choristers, 3 developed COVID-19 symptoms and 2 died (Hamner et. al., 2020). This was the only document in Czech containing information from official institutions that indoor choir singing could be the cause of SARS-CoV-2 virus transmission. Czech official institutions failed to refer to international research that focused on virus transmission in the performing arts, such as the investigation at Bristol University (Gregson, Watson, Orton et. al. 2020), or about aerosol transmissions during the human speech, cough, sneezing, singing (Asadi, Wexler, Cappa et. al. 2019; Bazant, Bush, 2021).

The documented cases of virus transmission during choral activities led to the banning of singing in the Czech Republic for almost a year. The work of amateur choirs during this period depended on whether the choirs had free access to their practice rooms, the age of the choristers, and their health condition (senior choirs were more vulnerable). Government measures during the pandemic were often unclear, sometimes accompanied by discrepancies, and choral singing would be subjected to different rules depending on the groups. For example, when the restrictions were loosened in spring 2021, choirs in music schools could operate from the end of May 2021 and choirs in hobby centers or amateur choirs could also operate from the same period with a maximum of 30 persons at rehearsals, whereas choirs in elementary and high schools were not allowed to rehearse until September 2021.

² Detailed statement available at: <https://www.vlada.cz/cz/media-centrum/tiskove-konference/tiskova-konference-po-mimoradnem-jednani-vlady--30--zari-2020-183869/>

A brief overview of the possibilities of choir operation during the different stages of the COVID-19 restrictions in the Czech Republic

March 2020–May 2020	distance education, no possibility of the presence of choral practice, canceled concerts, choral festivals, etc.;
End of May 2020–October 2020	with the following anti-epidemic measures (hygiene, masks, distance) singing allowed with max. 15 persons;
October 2020–October 6	group gatherings allowed without singing activity;
October 9	individual singing allowed (one teacher – one singer);
October 16	distance education, no group singing in presence allowed;
End of November 2020	singing in the presence allowed with 3 persons;
December 2020	singing in presence allowed with 10 persons;
January–April 2021	distance education and choral practices.

The return to the presence form of choral activities took place gradually. Professional choral ensembles, which negotiated special conditions with state-authorized institutions, were the first to be able to rehearse live.

May 2021	May 10 – singing allowed without specific conditions with a group of max. 3 persons May 24 – singing allowed without specific conditions with max. 10 persons. With 11 singers and more, a negative COVID-19 test is required, or a medical certificate proving COVID-19 recovery is needed
June–August 2021	following hygienic rules, max. 30 singers allowed during practice
September 2021	following hygienic rules, max. 50 singers allowed during practice

The pandemic situation worsened during the autumn months of 2021. A state of emergency was declared from November 25 to December 25, 2021. Christmas markets were cancelled and many choral concerts and Advent singing activities were stopped again.

Survey Questions

Since choirs were not able to meet in person for almost a year and singing activities were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, choir conductors have questioned how the situation was dealt with and what impact distance rehearsals had on choirs' operations. The unusual situation presented choirs with the unique opportunity to explore the virtual space and to hold virtual choir practices. This paper presents the results of an online survey among Czech choir conductors and aims to understand how the choirs operated during the period of restrictions in the Czech Republic.

The questions of the survey were as follows:

1. In which region does your choir operate?
2. What type of organization sponsors your choir?
3. Number of choir members?
4. Age range of choir members?
5. Type of choir?
6. How does your choir work online during the government's Anti-COVID measures?
7. How do you get feedback from the choir members?
8. What percentage (%) of the choir members participate in online rehearsal?
9. What does the rehearsal consist of?
10. Have you noticed whether the singing ability of your choir members has worsened? (intonation, breathing technique, vocal range, etc.)
11. Are you worried about how your choir will continue to work in the future?
12. How many scheduled performances did you have to cancel due to the pandemic?
13. How high were the choir's financial losses during the pandemic?
14. Personal experience.

The original questionnaire is available in the Appendix A.

Method

This survey was approved by the Faculty of Education of the University of South Bohemia. The 13-question online survey was created using Google Forms and it took only about 5 minutes to complete. The goal was to have as many respondents as possible. Except for the last question, which was open-ended, all other questions provided multiple-choice answers (Appendix A). The participants were contacted primarily by email. The link to the survey was sent to the 495 addresses included in the list of choirs registered in the national choral database. The Music Department of the Faculty of Education of the University of South Bohemia, the Czech Choral Association, and the social networks of teachers, musicians, and conductors on Facebook also helped with the dissemination of the questionnaire. The advantage was that the online form was a fast way to reach many respondents, with the disadvantage being that online forms limited the number of respondents (conductors) who do not actively use the internet, generally a problem for seniors. The lockdown in the Czech Republic began on March 12, 2020, and the survey was activated after over a year of distance choral experience from May 20 to October 20, 2021. Since we noticed a significant decrease in respondents during the July–August 2020 summer holiday season, we resent the survey link to choral organizations at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year.

Survey sample

The survey, which was 97 % anonymous except for 8 senior choirs, was based on voluntary participation. There were 238 responses to the survey from different types of choirs from 12 regions of the Czech Republic, including the capital city of Prague as a 13th independent

region (according to Act no. 129/2000 Coll. (“Law on Regions”). Most responses came from the South Bohemian region (25 %) and Prague (21 %), while the other regions were represented almost evenly (between 5–7 %). The respondent choirs were founded and sponsored by different facilities and organizations. Out of 238 respondent choirs, 46 % were functioning as choral associations or clubs, 49 % were from school facilities and 5 % belonged to the ‘others’ group, such as church choirs and citizens’ initiatives. In terms of size, most of the respondent choirs were medium-sized. Only 17 % of the answers were from choirs with over 50 participants. Chamber choirs with up to 21 singers and choirs with a maximum of 30 choristers represented 44 % of the respondents; 39 % of the answers were from choirs with 30–45 participants. The age range of the choristers varied between 4 and 80 years old.

Concerning the type of the choir, the answers were divided into the following groups: children’s choirs (age up to 15 y. o.) – 36 %, mixed choirs – 30 %, female choirs – 13 %, youth choirs (age between 15–26 y. o.) – 14 % (including university choirs), boys’ choirs – 2 %, senior choirs – 5 %. No adult male choirs participated in the survey.

It is necessary to note that only a few senior choirs participated in the online survey. As predicted, some senior members of the choirs did not communicate via mail, so our survey had no chance of reaching them. Therefore, we decided to contact eight senior choirs by phone and interview them orally. We contacted the conductors of choirs from South Bohemia and church senior choirs with senior conductors.

Results

The results and data of the survey question responses are presented below.

Out of 238 respondents, 67 (28 %) reported that they had paused their choral activity. The conductors/ facilitators of the senior choirs (5 %), mixed or female choirs (18 %), and only children or youth choirs (8 %) stated that they did not organize any virtual forms of cooperation or any other form of distance choral practices.

How did your choir function online during the government’s anti–COVID measures? What does the rehearsal consist of?

28 % of respondents did not operate at all during the restriction measures. The most common reasons for this were insufficient technical know-how or equipment, the poor health condition of the singers or conductor, personal hardships caused by the pandemic, lack of rehearsal space, and choral singing considered a low-priority subject, particularly in school choirs in after-school classes. Over 56 % of the respondents used online platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype (here listed in order of frequency of use). Virtual meetings mostly followed the timetable of the usual choral practices, but they were shorter than live meetings. Choirmasters actively made use of video recordings of the meetings, so that singers could repeatedly watch choral practices. The structure of the lessons was different for each choir. For regular warmups and song practice, different activities were included to develop musical skills, such as musical memory, rhythmic exercise, and musical hearing. Children’s choirs reported that the children

often needed the assistance of the parents to join the virtual practice or send video/audio recordings to the conductor for revision.

Almost 5 % of the respondents ran a YouTube channel for their choir freely accessible to the public. To simplify the process of home singing practice, 57 of the respondents (23 %) created audio recordings of the choral parts. Interestingly, the conductors who were used to public performances stated that they were initially quite shy to broadcast and needed to muster the courage to overcome their fear. Another form of distance work involved creating worksheets and materials which were uploaded onto the choir’s web page. 14 % of the respondents organized their distance choral work on the web page, where they shared documents and video and audio recordings of the songs for rehearsals. Less than 2 % of the choirs stated that they tried the online format of rehearsals but soon abandoned them (Figure 1). The respondents could choose multiple answers.

DISTANCE REHEARSALS

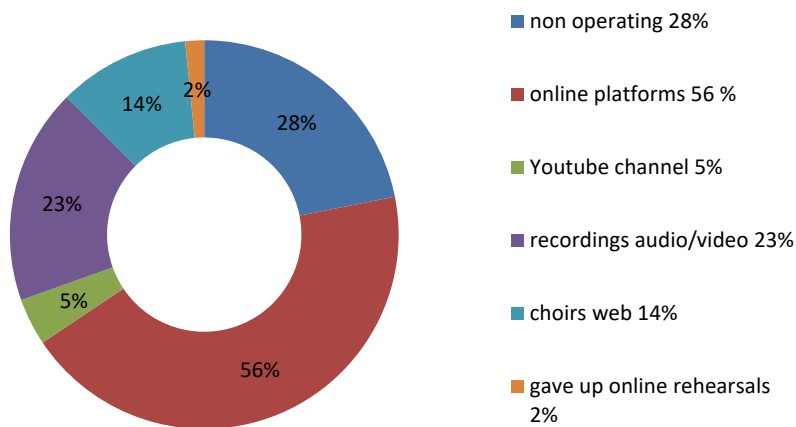


Figure 1: Showing the percentage of choice of the online platforms used for distance rehearsal

Did you teach new songs during distance rehearsals?

64 % of the conductors stated that they only used the existing repertoire with songs the choir already knew. Many choirmasters focused on individual choral parts and rehearsed them with each choral part at a time. One-third of the respondents (31 %) taught new songs. The choral parts also worked separately on the existing repertoire. Conductors had a chance to hear the new pieces with the full live sound of the choir a few months later. Surprisingly, 17 % reported that instead of singing, they preferred to perform other tasks during distance teaching, such as recordings of the choral parts, accompaniments for individual singing, and worksheets for smaller children with games and quizzes.

What percentage of the choir members participated in online choral rehearsals?

The number of participants during the virtual rehearsals varied according to the type of choir (Figure 2).

DISTANCE REHEARSAL PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

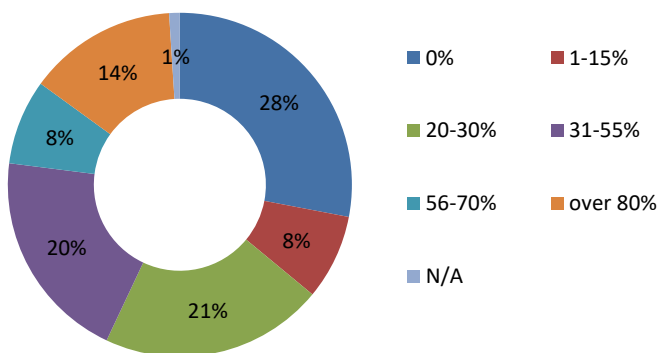


Figure 2: Showing the number of participants in percentage during the online rehearsals

The different percentage of participants was divided almost evenly. 28 % of the respondents answered there was about half of the choristers (56–70 %) participated in the organized online rehearsals. Between 31–55 % of singers during the online practices were reporting 20 % of the respondents. Between 20–30 % of singers reported 21 % and 14 % reported they had a very high participating rate, which is over 80 %. The choirs who did not hold online rehearsals were 8 % of the respondents and 8 % were also the amount of choirs with low participation (1–15 %).

How did you obtain feedback from the choir members, and did you notice a decrease in the singing ability or quality of your choir members?

Conductors received feedback from their singers in different ways. The easiest and fastest way was during the online rehearsals when a chorister would individually turn on their microphone/video. For some singers, who were not used to singing on camera, it was a challenging experience to overcome their shyness. Conductors reported that their online lessons had the same structure as face-to-face rehearsals, with the conductor singing/playing, an individual singing while the others had microphones muted. Overall, the online sessions lacked the possibility for the conductor to hear their choir (Figure 3).

CHORISTER'S FEEDBACK

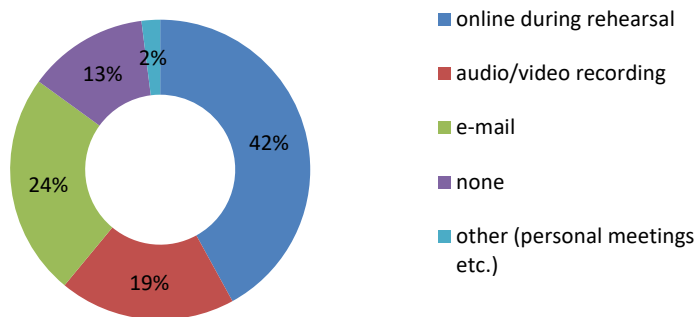


Figure 3: Showing the ways the singers were getting feedback from the conductors on their singing

Another form of feedback from the singers was recordings sent for consultation. This method was popular among choristers as it was easily accessible thanks to recording applications on smartphones. Although it was time-consuming for the conductor, it was generally perceived as positive since singers received personalized recommendations.

With the absence of live rehearsals, conductors seemed to be concerned about the quality of their members' singing ability. Even though the actual situation would be revealed once live rehearsals would take place more regularly, 51 % of the facilitators expressed their concern over the lack of improvement in the singing ability of their choir members. Almost 22 % of the conductors responded they had not noticed any vocal deterioration. Some conductors were not able to evaluate the vocal skills of their choristers (18 %), and 7 % of the respondents, despite being able to hear choristers singing, did not know if their singing ability had worsened. Children's choirs were the most vulnerable and showed deteriorating vocal skills.

All the senior choirs who participated in the survey stated that they did not practice during the emergency measures and that most of the members had health problems, such as a long convalescence after COVID-19, breathing problems, and fatigue. They stated that either the choristers or the conductors were not able to use technology to perform distance rehearsals. For the majority, singing in a choir had a social significance, the joy of physically being in company with others and experiencing choral singing.

How many performances did you cancel due to the pandemic, and do you have any concerns about how your choir will continue to work in the future?

For two years, cultural life in the Czech Republic was strongly affected by restriction measures. Many choral concerts were canceled causing significant financial instability for many choirs since such concerts were the only source of income to run the choir and cover all

basic expenses (rent, fees, sheet music, etc.). Almost 44 % of respondents had to cancel between 6 to 9 performances, and on average they held about 4 concerts a year during the restrictions period. Between 1 to 5 concerts were canceled for 32 % of respondents while 22 % of respondents had to cancel 10 to 20 performances. 2 % stated that they had canceled over 30 concerts (we assume these answers related to the extended choirs including the preparatory sections of younger singers). The absence of public performances was incredibly demotivating for choristers, and the facilitators also noticed a decrease in the number of choristers in their choirs, especially from September 2021 at the beginning of the school year. During the time of restrictions, some members left the choir due to their health conditions or personal hardships caused by the pandemic. Children's choirs were left with a generational crisis when two years of graduates had left the choirs and younger children did not enroll in the same number as they had in the previous non-pandemic years. All these complications led to concerns about the feasibility of operating the choirs in the future. Over 62 % of respondents were concerned about how their choir would continue to work, while 37 % were sure the choir would survive and be able to continue its activity.

Optional open response

Facilitators were able to share their personal thoughts in the last open question. Gaining insight into the conductors' individual experiences was the focus of the analysis here. Our evaluation is based on 68 voluntarily provided answers. Content analysis revealed a spectrum of topics considered important by the respondents. In general, they could be divided into four themes: social interaction, studio recordings, preparation for rehearsals (including technological preparation), vocal skills, and feedback.

Most respondents were concerned about the lack of face-to-face social interaction with their singers and most importantly, among choristers.

“Nothing can replace live singing.” [Conductor; response 13, Q. 13].

Some conductors had to adapt their instruction and its content, even cancel temporary vocal activities, to focus on maintaining social ties among the singers. They also created programs to develop musical skills other than singing (metro rhythmic exercises, activities focused on music hearing development, improving articulation, and memory training).

“I noticed a decreasing interest in connecting to the virtual choral rehearsals. Many of my choristers told me that they missed their friends. Instead of singing rehearsals, we prepared outdoor games for the choristers with quizzes and games every week, including some educational, theoretical music questions, guessing listening tasks, etc.” [Conductor; response 27, Q. 13].

“Our senior choir is not currently rehearsing, but we are trying to keep in touch regularly and maintain our friendship by going for walks into the countryside with small groups. We also set up a social network to help choristers who are lonely or sick with grocery shopping or with other tasks in general.” [Conductor; response 41, Q. 13].

The authentic experience of live singing, while performing the music piece was missing. Choirs looked for alternative creative ways to make music. They recorded CDs together in small groups at local studios and had positive results and memories from these events.

“Although COVID-19 took our regular group rehearsals and concerts away, we discovered new opportunities and focused our activities on recording studios. Because the children did not go to school and their after-school activities were limited, they were able to devote their time fully to the recording project and were very motivated.” [Conductor, response 53, Q. 13].

Conductors spent significantly more time on preparation for online rehearsals compared to their regular live meetings. A certain amount of extra time had to be set aside for technical preparation, internet connection, and camera and microphone settings.

“Unreliable internet connection slows down the broadcast, the ‘mute microphone’ button is a regular thing now, and sometimes we even have to turn the video off as well.” [Conductor, response 9, Q. 13].

“We had to shorten our online rehearsals. The regular 90-minute sessions of live practice lasted only 60 minutes in the online version. Sometimes online meetings were organized for a certain choral part (soprano, alto). We also actively sent groups into virtual rooms during online rehearsals, although this required a leader for each group. Our pianist was able to lead one group, while I was occupied with the other.” [Conductor, response 62, Q. 13].

Conductors commented on the development of vocal skills and feedback they received during the time of restrictions.

“Some of those who have had COVID-19 had problems with their voice (and with breathing as well). They got tired sooner. We noticed that those who regularly joined the rehearsals improved their vocal skills. They are more confident and not afraid of singing alone during the broadcast. For those who, for various reasons, could not join the regular practices, it was quite noticeable that they did not spend their time working on their voice, so we had to start all over again with an easier repertoire... maybe in a few years we will return to where we left off.” [Conductor, response 47, Q. 13].

“My singers were quite shy to sing on camera in front of the others. We used a voice recording format which they sent them via email for individual consultations. This way was effective for their vocal growth, even though it was a time-consuming process for both sides.” [Conductor, response 62, Q. 13].

While not being able to meet in person, many conductors were able to find new ways of maintaining the continuity of the choir. Since none of the platforms mentioned by the responders were able to allow synchronous virtual singing, conductors had to radically change the method and content of choral practices. They were unable to obtain immediate feedback from the choral sound and could not control the quality of the intonation

or common phrasing. It was often necessary for singers to have their microphones, and sometimes cameras, turned off most of the time for quality transmission, and they often experienced a high sound latency.

Discussion

We have presented the results of the online survey examining how Czech choirs have coped with distance rehearsal formats during the COVID-19 restriction measures. The results show that choirs adapted to the new situation and continued their choral activities. Despite the initial technological difficulties, conductors learned to operate in the virtual space, which allowed them to create digital libraries of the scores and design learning material for individual study with audio/video recordings of the choral part. Some choirs engaged in studio choral recordings issuing new CDs or video clips for the choir. Music teachers had to be flexible and adapt quickly to the constantly changing government rules. Teachers tried to reorganize their sessions more interactively. Since online platforms proved unsuitable for multiple voice harmonies, the repertoire chosen was mostly simple: unison or two-part singing, and songs known by the choir. Many teachers conducted shorter online rehearsals than the live ones, and virtual breakout rooms were often used during the rehearsals to work separately on certain choral parts. Most of the time, singers had their microphones muted, and the lack of immediate feedback was frustrating. A similar situation occurred with singers and musicians in other countries (Daubney, Fautley, 2021; Octaviani, 2021, Price et al., 2021).

Despite all the effort and enthusiasm the conductors and singers placed into the distance rehearsals, the lack of social interaction, which is very important in group singing, was adequately compensated for. Other countries reported the same issue concluding that this aspect is indispensable in group singing (Theorell et al., 2020; Daffern et al., 2021). A recent study by WHO (2020) also highlighted the significant value of group singing among all ages, particularly in older adults. Choral singing provides psychological and social benefits for singers. (Livesey et al., 2012; Lonsdale, Day, 2021; Dingle et al., 2013) Virtual choirs and projects became very popular during the pandemic (Galván, Clauhs, 2020) and recent research by Grebosz-Haring (2022) investigated the popularity of group singing among children and adolescents. The research, performed in the Salzburg area (Austria), showed that, although children enjoyed singing in both the present and virtual settings, they preferred the virtual setting with familiar songs (Grebosz-Haring, 2022).

Distance rehearsals among young children needed more support and participation from their parents. Assisting their children with obligatory distance school education and with after-school online activities was very challenging for the parents who also worked from home (Brom et al., 2020). Children sent many drawings which later were organised into exhibitions.

Online rehearsals required more thorough preparation from the conductors, who created videos and audio recordings of choral parts or accompaniments. Some conductors created YouTube channels or pre-recorded online lessons on the web pages of their facilities. Conductors who faced the challenges of distance rehearsals reported personal professional growth, development of technical skills, better ability to time management and multitasking skills, especially when performing hybrid rehearsals from September 2021. Conductors also

chose to continue with online rehearsals for singers who were isolated in quarantine but remained healthy.

Internet connection quality, the availability of technical equipment, and the know-how of the singers and conductors played an important role in the number of virtual participants. The adult choirs, mixed and female, that operated virtually were able to continue with regular rehearsals. Attendance of children's and youth choirs went through several phases. At the beginning of the restrictions, effort was made to meet in the virtual space. After some time, the interest in meeting virtually decreased especially among older children due to the absence of performances, canceled concerts, festivals, and competitions, increasing frustration from not being able to meet in person, and lack of social contact with choral friends. Smaller children needed assistance from their parents during virtual rehearsals. While working from home, it was extremely challenging for parents to combine their work with their children's education and activities (Brom, Lukavský, Greger et. al. 2020). Facilitators reported decreased support from parents starting in January 2021. In many cases, parents unregistered their children from the second semester of the 2020/2021 school year. This tendency was caused by financial uncertainty, frustration with long-term online teaching, and preference for physical activities since the children used to spend several hours a day in virtual online classes in front of the computer. Some conductors responded promptly to this tendency and began limiting their online rehearsals, which they replaced with MP3 voice recordings that children could listen to during their walks.

Despite the many challenges faced during the pandemic, such as lack of social interaction, lack of immediate feedback, and unstable internet connections, choral rehearsals would also see several benefits. Conductors experimented with new ways of teaching, they were introduced to the online platforms suitable for group lessons and were able to use virtual rooms for working with smaller groups. All this helped develop their technical skills and digitalize choral libraries. They created learning videos for the choristers which were available for repeated playback.

Conclusion

The period of the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging for choir singers and conductors. Strict restriction measures led to repeated lockdowns and interfered with the operation of the choirs. The unique situation of the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic was frustrating for choirs but also created several new opportunities to explore the virtual world and its possibilities, with the potential of combining future live rehearsals with more active use of digital technology. The survey reflected the choral activities and the ability of the choirs to continue their work during the restriction measures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It pointed to some positive and negative sides of the distance rehearsals. It also opened new topics for future research on how the choirs are recovering from the pandemic break. What innovations and patterns from virtual rehearsal do they still use, if they do so? How fast did the choristers improve their singing abilities and restore the choir's repertoire? Those are new relevant questions after the pandemic.

Data Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the author on request. The request should be made to Elvira Gadžijeva, t.elvira@seznam.cz.

Ethics Statement

An ethical review and approval were not required for the study on human participants under the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study following the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire for choirs

1. In which region does your choir operate?
2. What type of organization sponsors your choir?
 - School facility
 - Association/Club
 - Other
3. Number of choir members?
4. Age range of choir members?
5. Type of choir:
 - Children's
 - Youth
 - Female
 - Male
 - Mixed
 - Seniors
6. How does your choir work online during the government's Anti-COVID measures?
 - We do not practice at all
 - Through an online platform (e.g. Google Meet, Zoom, MS Teams, Facebook, etc.)
 - Through a created YouTube channel
 - Through recordings
 - Study materials on the choir's website
 - Other
7. How do you get feedback from the choir members?
 - Online during lessons/video call
 - Recordings
 - E-mail
 - Other
8. What percentage (%) of the choir members participate in online rehearsal?
9. What does the rehearsal consist of?
 - We learn new pieces
 - We only maintain the existing repertoire
 - Both
10. Have you noticed whether the singing ability of your choir members has worsened? (intonation, breathing technique, vocal range, etc.)
11. Are you worried about how your choir will continue to work in the future?
12. How many scheduled performances did you have to cancel due to the pandemic?

13. How high were the choir's financial losses during the pandemic?

14. Personal experience – notes

Thank you for your answers.

About the author

Elvira Gadžijeva, choirmaster and pedagogue, a graduate of the Conservatory and State Academy of Culture in Choral Conducting in Kharkiv, Ukraine. She is the head of the Music Department of Children and Youth Activity Center in České Budějovice, Czech Republic, where she also has been a choirmaster of the children and youth choir Jitřenka since 2006. She is currently the artistic director of the Cantate Budweis International Choral Festival. Since 2015, she has taught at the Department of Music Education at the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice. She is a doctoral student at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen.

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