

August
2020

Choir News



Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

Choirs remain out in the cold

I hope you are all beginning to enjoy some elements of the relaxation of lockdown which has started to take place over recent weeks. Whilst some of this may be welcome we all know that we need to remain cautious about exposure to others and this seems to be one of the reasons the government is citing with regard to preventing amateur choirs from recommencing their activities.

Some of you may be aware that a lot of articles have been written about the perceived dangers of playing instruments and singing; but to date little of this discussion is founded on scientific evidence. A few weeks ago a piece of research was undertaken under the leadership of Declan Costello. Costello, an ear, nose and throat surgeon with an interest in voice disorders and a side career as a tenor, has conducted a series of experiments as to the effects of singing or playing instruments and his findings are currently being presented to government. It is hoped that the findings of Costello's research may form the basis upon which the ban on choirs may be relaxed - so watch this space.



During the month I have been in contact with a couple of local choirs to share ideas and benchmark what activities are being undertaken to maintain contact with choir members and keep some form of rehearsals going. Ian Webster of Eastwood Collieries MVC has clearly been very busy and spearheaded a number of initiatives to help keep in contact with their members. They are holding weekly zoom rehearsals lead by their MD Liz Moulder and she is even setting weekly homework tasks for choristers to complete. Not sure what the sanction is for failing to complete your homework

but I don't think retired teacher Liz would look too kindly on feeble excuses such as "the dog ate my homework" In addition to Ian Webster, Susan Hope, Vice chair of Rolls Royce Ladies also shared her ideas and concerns about the future and how best to keep members engaged. There are further articles from both Eastwood and RR Ladies later in the newsletter

During the lockdown the committee have held a meeting using zoom but on Wednesday 29th July we actually held a physical committee meeting outdoors, maintaining safe social distancing protocols. Our discussions centred around how and when we might be able to develop rehearsals where initially small groups of choristers gather in a safe and secure manner (and within government guidelines) We also discussed what future events might look like and considered opportunities to perform outside more than we have in the past. We will also be planning to hold an AGM in September either by zoom or in a safe and socially distanced manner somewhere.



#BRINGBACKMYCHOIR

Landmark Birthdays

During the lockdown period a couple of our colleagues have celebrated landmark birthdays. Sean Powell has celebrated his 50th birthday although the circumstances did not really allow much of a celebration. "I have found the last few months quite difficult" said Sean, "My daughter was put into shielding due to her heart condition which meant my 50th was a little bit muted. I have also had difficulties at work and also moved house during the period so it's been quite an upheaval for me"

So that his birthday did not go unnoticed, Tom Fleming and Louise Buxton arranged a rehearsal at Tom's house at which a birthday cake with candles was produced and a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday" was sung to mark the occasion.

Now that we are coming out of lockdown I can now see my



75

daughter so I have a full schedule planned, breakfast at our favourite cafe, watching dvd's and days

out. The one thing that has been my constant has been my video calls with Beth and the chat between Tom and Lou.

What better way to celebrate your birthday than a short break in "God's own" country and then to return home to the bosom of your family to enjoy a home baked birthday cake.

Not only was John celebrating his 75th birthday but his dear lady wife celebrated her own birthday a few days later.

Whilst it would be unbecoming to enquire as to the age of a lady it is clear to us all from the photo (left) that

Pat must have been a child bride and many years younger than her Husband John.

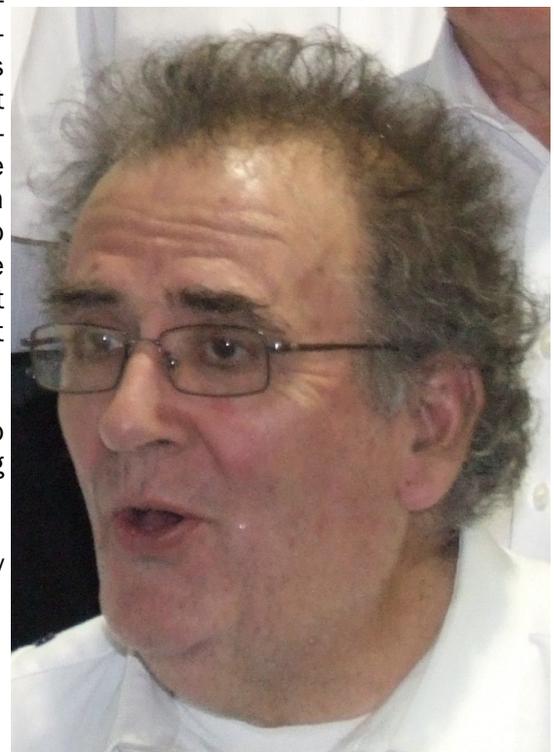


Baritone Peter Bradley is also celebrating his 72nd birthday during the month of July

We wish all of you many happy returns of the day.



50



Breaker one-nine, this here's Cab-over-Ken we've got ourselves a convoy !!!



Is there no end to the talents of our second tenor, Ken Levasseur. Here he recalls the story of when he was asked to create a rather unique wedding cake

Having developed something of a tradition for making birthday cakes for his god daughter Jenny. He could hardly refuse the invitation to make her wedding cake although he was somewhat taken aback when she requested it to be in the shape of a Scania lorry. Jenny and her future Husband are class 1/HGV Drivers and desired a cake which reflected their chosen profession. "The task became somewhat easier when I realised that the model of the lorry itself did not have to be edible" continues Ken.

"To begin the process I bought a model Scania lorry to determine the shape and proportions, draw up a full size plan and then model it in polystyrene including 10 sets of double wheels and 2 front wheels, base board and MDF trailer. A couple of weeks before the wedding I covered all the parts in fondant icing, not an easy task in a summer heat wave with temperatures in the high 20's, drying the icing quickly, but we managed it.

Next were the cakes. 1 fruit and 2 sponge that was the easy bit. Again a further complication. Jenny wanted the top and bottom as sponges and the middle tier a heavy fruit cake, not a good idea as a heavy cake would squash the lower sponge tier. Thinking cap on again. The solution, use plastic pillars through the bottom tier, great but a heavy cake may move the rods in the soft cake below,





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the answer was to support the top of the rods with a think cake board on which the fruit cake would rest hoping it would work, luckily it did. Covering the cake was again made more difficult with the extremely high temperatures but eventually we finished it. I had made the decision that because of the intricacy of making the lorry I had decided to have the flower decorations made professionally by a lady we had used before in Newark and even she said the heat had not made it easy for her, so it gave me some comfort over my problems. After the main icing was completed we only had the finishing touches. These were painted on with a paint brush – new of course – and edible inks but what were we going to call the haulage company and the number plate. I decided to use the couple's initials and married surname and the number plate was the date of the wedding JM 21 JLY. So all was completed and test assembled at home. We then had to dismantle the tiers and put them in boxes, load everything into the car, jamming the lorry between the back seat the tail gate. We prayed it would not be damaged on the trip to Coventry. All went well and we assembled it in the Reception room on the Friday night before the wedding. Hen Jenny saw it she was over the moon even commenting that we had fitted Susie's between the cab and the trailer, these carry air and electrics from the cab to the trailer for brakes etc. This was another story when sorting the cake out. Christine spent several days as we drew alongside Lorries, counting cables so we would have some accuracy. The pipes were made from electrical wires wound round a dowel rod. All that was left was to have a great day and demolish the cake. The lorry is still in one piece at Jenny's home with a pseudo cake on the back. Those were the days when we partied all evening at weddings until well after midnight. Let us hope it will not be too long in the future until some semblance of normal will return."



SCANIA

JM 21 JLY

J & M LEMM



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Choral Couples - Janet Ireland

A number of our members have partners who share their passion and enjoyment for singing. Two of these are Janet Ireland and Christine Levasseur. Below the ladies share their experience of singing with choirs in the Derbyshire area.

Janet Ireland has sung with several choirs in Derby and currently sings with Kaleidoscope Community Choir. The choir began in 1997 and Kaleidoscope Community Music was formed in 2002, an organisation promoting music to the people of Derbyshire. Our groups are open access, with no auditions.

Janet joined Kaleidoscope in 2004 and sings in the Alto section. The choir is mixed voices and sings a cappella in four-part harmony. They specialise in World Music and this year have learnt songs in the native language of South Africa, Georgia, Latvia, Cornwall and Israel along with traditional and contemporary songs.

Kaleidoscope rehearse on a Thursday evening at an excellent venue - the Multi Faith Centre at Derby University. For many years they were at the Voice Box on Foreman Street in Derby before it closed. The membership is 50+ and boasts a regular attendance of 35 voices. Unlike many other community choirs, they do have a good number of men, so their sound is nicely balanced.

"We learn by ear although occasionally we do have the dots" commented Janet, "At rehearsal we sit and stand in a circle and Frances, our MD is in the middle of that circle."

"We do not 'perform' regularly but do respond to requests to support community events. We have continued to support Macmillan Cancer at their Wellbeing Events for cancer patients at Pride Park and Burton Pirelli Stadium. These have been incredibly positive and life-affirming spots. We have warmed up as people arrived for registration, and then done a short 20-minute slot on the benefits of singing including getting people warming up and joining in with a song."



In 2017 and 2018 the choir took part in the Community Choirs Festival at Stratford with our precious MD Willow Songsmith.

Kaleidoscope host international singing groups once a year for a workshop and concert. In 2019 they hosted Northern Harmony from New England and Kongero from Sweden

Like all other choirs they have not sung for a while but Frances their MD has worked hard to arrange successful Zoom sessions twice a week since April. Frances has also set up her own website and recorded and videoed each part for 28 songs so they have a resource to use whilst we cannot meet.

"Kaleidoscope Community Choir is relaxed and fun" said Janet "and I love it".

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Choral Couples - Christine Levasseur

Christine Levasseur's interest in singing started at school, when she joined the school choir and it has continued throughout her life. Meeting Ken ensured that this would carry on as he also liked music and fortunately the same kind as herself, but due to work commitments she did not take part, only being an enthusiastic audience member.

Christine takes up the story "Little did I know that when we moved to Derbyshire 13 years ago, Ken would be invited by a neighbour to join the Dalesmen MVC and I would not only be a senior citizen groupie but would become their official photographer and write their quarterly Newsletter that was sent out to members of the choir and Friends of the Dalesmen".

My first encounter with the SherWIn Singers was in fact when Cromford WI which I am President of, organised a joint concert with the DCMVC (then the Constabulary Choir), an idea put forward by Judy Noble, to be held in Cromford Church. It was a couple of years later when Janet Chambers and I summoned up the courage to attend our first rehearsal with the SherWIn Singers.

The SherWIn Singers are a Choir of ladies from different WIs within the Derbyshire Federation who started singing together in April 2012 when the WI launched a large scale competition to celebrate communal singing as part of their centenary celebrations. Choirs of all ages and abilities were encouraged to get involved and join the three year Singing for Joy competition.



Unusually the choir rehearses on a Saturday afternoon at the WI HQ in Derby. We have a very enjoyable and relaxed two hours of singing all sorts of songs with like-minded people. The choir is made up of three sections, Altos, 1st Sopranos and 2nd Sopranos which is the one I belong to. We have not taken the big step forward of singing without folders, but occasionally Diane asks us

to try and sing a familiar piece at rehearsals without them as I know she would love to see us ditching them altogether. Some members who read music and some who do not. We start rehearsals with a quarter of an hour warm up of exercises including several rounds which Diane our MD likes to do to make us listen to each other. I have been a member for the last three years and have thoroughly enjoyed singing a variety of music and some of my favourites are a medley from Phantom of the Opera, Look at the World, The Prayer and Leonard Cohen's, Hallelujah, although our words are slightly different as we do not sing about being tied to a kitchen chair.

We do not perform as many concerts as the DCMVC but one of my highlights was when we sang at Derby Cathedral to a packed audience to celebrate the Derbyshire Federation centenary. We were joined by some of our husbands who sing in other choirs including the DCMVC, as we needed basses and baritone voices for some parts in Look at the World and The Prayer.



In the presence of nobility

For a number of years bass singer, John Cumpstone, has been researching his family tree. In recent weeks he has discovered that one of his ancestors, Isabel Gamage was the daughter of the owner of Coity Castle, near Bridgend. The castle dates back to the time of the Norman conquests and John believes there may well be an even earlier link to the de Cumperville family.

John takes up the story: "After the Norman Conquest of 1066, several Marcher lordships were quickly established throughout Wales. Rewarded by William I for their loyal service, the Marcher lords became powerful men and erected fine stone fortifications to control their portion of the kingdom.

In South Wales, one Marcher lord, Robert FitzHamon, had William's blessing to distribute the lands of Glamorgan among a dozen of his own men. While FitzHamon (who built Cardiff Castle) doled out his best lands to his favourites, he forced at least one member of his retinue, Sir Jon de Cumperville, (pictured right) to acquire land on his own.



Shrewdly venturing into the Lordship of Coity, Jon de Cumperville discussed the acquisition of Coity Castle with the Welsh leader, Morgan Gam. Evidently, Morgan agreed to turn over his castle to Sir Jon on one condition: either the Norman had to fight Morgan for the lordship or he had to marry Sybil, Morgan's daughter. Symbolically (and wisely), Jon took the proffered sword in his left hand and clutched Sybil with his right. They married and Sir Jon de Cumperville became Lord of Coity.



Regardless of the authenticity of the above tale, Jon ("the Demon") de Cumperville gained control of the Lordship of Coity no later than the beginning of the 12th century. While it is possible that the earliest stronghold at Coity was erected by Morgan Gam, Jon de Cumperville replaced the Welsh stronghold with one of his own.

The male line of de Cumpervilles died out in the 14th century. However, in 1384, Sir Lawrence Berkerolles inherited the Lordship of Coity, its castle and its estates, through marriage to one of the de Cumperville daughters, Lady Louise (pictured left). Sir Lawrence probably ordered the extensive renovations mentioned above. He also added the east gate, which opens toward Coity Church and was defended with a portcullis and a drawbridge; a new stone curtain wall around the Outer Bailey; and a four-storied round latrine tower on the south side of the curtain. Draining into a cesspit which directed the waste into the moat, the round tower served the personal needs of the garrison and also functioned as a observation post from which the guards could fire down on attackers."



Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir

“I need to do a little more research” said John, “but I’m fairly certain that we are descendants of the Cumperville family and therefore rightful owners of Coity Castle.”



“Although it could have all been lost because the Welsh have been a constant thorn in the side of our family. The Welsh proved a difficult race to conquer and that is why there are so many castles in Wales. In the early 15th century, Owain Glyndwr, the Welsh freedom fighter and folk hero, assaulted Coity Castle. Despite his successes elsewhere, the owners of Coity Castle managed to withstand Glyndwr's siege. Since Glyndwr's failure to gain the castle we've had little further problems with the Welsh despite them thinking they can sing better than the rest of us” added John.

“If we are able to confirm the link with Sir Jon de Cumperville, I will press my claim to be referred to as Lord Cumpstone and obviously my daughter will expect to be addressed as Lady Louise,” commented John

Louise was unavailable for comment on the breaking news but it is understood that she is already requiring neighbours at her Belper home to refer to her as M'lady



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My favourite concert

Over the past couple of months we have been encouraging choir members to write a profile which we have been using on social media to maintain some sort of presence and interest in the choir during this period of inactivity. Many of you have commented on your favourite songs and perhaps your favourite concerts; Derby Cathedral and Cornwall Music Festival being cited regularly.

Mulling over my experiences with the choir there have been many really enjoyable evenings and I would struggle to pick out a single favourite, but our annual concert at St Werburgh's church in Spondon on the 28th April 2018 has to be a front runner.



We had received very wide publicity over the previous few weeks courtesy of the Chief Constable, Peter Goodman which resulted in the church being full to capacity on the evening of the concert. There was an electric atmosphere and it was obvious that all choir members were determined to put on a good show. At the beginning of the concert I remember choking up as I introduced the choir as they all processed down the central aisle, lead by Chris Hare, to rapturous applause.

The evening had everything and epitomised what we do well; some great singing set in a relaxed atmosphere accompanied by some gentle humour; much of it on this occasion at the expense of the Chief Constable. The audience contained a sprinkling of retired choir members and we were delighted to invite one of our previous Musical Directors Christine Bell to conduct the choir for a couple of pieces during the evening.

Our local radio station, BBC Radio Derby, were in attendance and had interviewed a number of choir members and members of the audience prior to the concert starting. Our good friends, Rolls Royce Ladies Choir had been invited to share the concert programme with us and they sang a delightful series of songs which were well received by the audience. The Ladies Choir were tremendously supportive of us that evening and presented us with a framed copy of a poem written by one of their members and a new mascot which was hastily named Peter.

The evening concluded with another feature which makes me feel so proud to be part of this choir. We were able to present two cheques to charity. Ian Lilley presented a cheque for £500 to Hazel Clarke, the daughter of our long term supporter Alma, in aid of the "Children of Honduras". Anne Allen also presented a cheque for £3250 to Mark Vallis who was representing Derbyshire Bloodbikes.



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Derbyshire Community Male Voice Choir



**Quelle surprise !
it's a woman !!!**



Following the nationwide criticism received by the Derbyshire Constabulary in 2018; was it ever in doubt that the next Chief Constable of the force would be a woman. The Derbyshire Constabulary were found to have the largest gender pay gap in the whole of the UK and it is thought that the disbanding of the all male police choir was a foolhardy attempt by the Chief, Peter Goodman, to show that the force embraced gender equality.

The appointment of Rachel Swann, who is currently the Deputy Chief Constable, will now be subject to a confirmation hearing by Derbyshire's Police and Crime Panel. We wish Rachel every success in her new role and trust she makes a longer and more positive contribution than the current incumbent who has been in place for just over three years. I wonder what Rachel's radio call sign might be?

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Eastwood Collieries MVC Centenary celebrations in lockdown



My heart goes out to all of those choirs who like ourselves have been forced to cancel many concerts during 2020. I feel particular sympathy for our near neighbours, Eastwood Collieries MVC, who have been forced to cancel a number of events as part of their centenary year celebrations. Although the choir was formed in the autumn of 1919, the bulk of their celebratory events had been planned for 2020 so it has been particularly difficult for them during the lockdown period. Earlier in the month I spoke to the their enthusiastic and energetic secretary Ian Webster.

“When the news broke in March that many ‘normal’ activities would have to be curtailed in order to contain the Coronavirus, ECMVC, like all choirs, acted swiftly to suspend all physical meetings of members” said Ian, “ and over the coming weeks, it emerged that we would need to postpone the events which had been organised to celebrate our centenary through to the end of 2020. This really was a bitter blow for us but we were determined to try and maintain the momentum created by the launch of these celebrations just a few months before”.

Ian (pictured far right above) went on to describe all the hard work that he and the music team had undertaken to try and maintain good contact with all choir members and keep the discipline of rehearsal in place -albeit in a virtual form.

“We’re all nervous about the future but, as someone said, “We’re not going to let a global pandemic stop a century-old choir from singing!” commented Ian “ECMVC send our very best wishes to all our friends in the Derbyshire Community MVC. Let’s sing together sometime.”

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Coping with Covid in Rolls Royce Ladies Choir



A couple of members of Rolls Royce Ladies choir share their thoughts with us on how they are coping with the challenges of the current pandemic.

Belinda Basson

Learning inspiring songs, baking for Britain, and sharing floral splendour to keep spirits high during lockdown.

What does a close-knit choir do when they are unable to share the joy of singing together in person? They set up a WhatsApp group to keep talking to each other, to raise much-needed smiles and to provide friendly support for anyone who needs it, in the spirit of choral camaraderie.

As a multi-talented and creative group of ladies with a diverse range of skills and interests, the lockdown has provided an opportunity for our choir members to both share activities and events and to learn more about their fellow choristers. Our ladies have been showing funny videos, using their wide-ranging experience to provide useful information, showcasing wonderful baking, proudly displaying flowers and gardens at their very best, providing country walks to bring the joy of the outside inside at this time of lockdown and celebrating Birthdays together.

Our valiant Musical Director Christine has been doing a sterling job, uniting our choir in learning new choral pieces, fastidiously recording the separate Sops, Middle and Alto parts for three new songs to date, and continuing to develop our repertoire while also providing a positive result from our time apart.

For us, the pinnacle of 2019 was the celebration of 60 years of the Rolls-Royce Ladies Choir and we were collectively excited about the concerts scheduled for this year including the VE Day anniversary celebrations in Derby. The same disappointment is being felt by choirs nationwide and Christine highlighted this during an interview with Radio Derby, skilfully arranged by our Secretary Catherine, with our choir also featuring briefly singing 'We'll Gather Lilacs', from our CD completed last year. The lockdown has provided a period of contemplation for us all. Thankfully, our bond as a choir has enabled us to comfort those who have lost family members and other loved ones, and to celebrate and salute those who have selflessly protected our health and provided other support.

We certainly miss singing together in these challenging times, but we are so much more than just a choir and we will be even closer and stronger when we regroup to share the joy of practicing and performing again.

Our heartfelt best wishes go out to you all.

Claire Toplis

When I first joined the Rolls-Royce ladies choir I was made very welcome but it took me some time to slot in and that, in part, was down to me being autistic. When a disability is invisible it can be very hard for you to be seen as anything other than normal, but you are normal and being accepted is part of that. Being autistic I don't always light up a room socially and sometimes people misunderstand me. Expressing myself takes a shed load of work and leaves me exhausted. Even writing these words now I wonder and worry how my words will be perceived!

Being in a choir is not always sunshine and roses. For me, the real turning point was a rainy Sunday in May last year - my first performance with the choir. It was outdoors, raining hard and few people stopped to listen to our singing - I felt ill-prepared. Things have been much easier since, although sometimes I still struggle when trying to be heard. But that is the rhythm of life, just like the song!

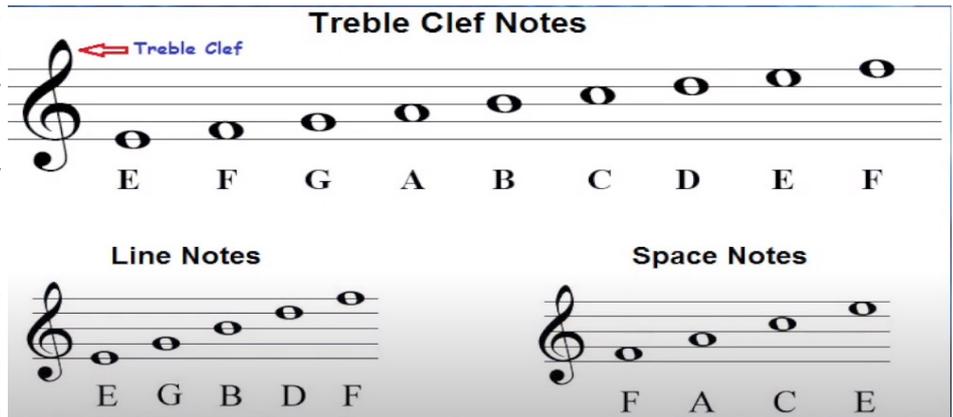
So like a phoenix emerging from the fire I have grown in confidence and faith of heart. Throughout last year and especially these last few months, the choir has been there for one another and I am very honoured to be part of it. And that is the point of belonging to a choir. It is a social anchor point and is more important than I ever realised, especially during the current stresses of the pandemic.



Your opportunity to improve !!

Although we are unable to assemble as a group currently that doesn't mean that we can't all make a personal contribution to improving the overall performance and efficiency of the choir. Being a non-auditioning choir means that we have a wide range of musical knowledge within our group. Having a couple of hours free on a Monday evening is a perfect opportunity for some of us to improve our understanding of music notation. None of us are expected to have a thorough knowledge but the more we know can only improve the effectiveness of rehearsals and provide a greater sense of self satisfaction.

No expert myself, here's my understanding of some of the basics which would benefit us all: First and second tenors usually read music from the treble clef which includes both line and space notes. Useful acronyms to remember these notes are



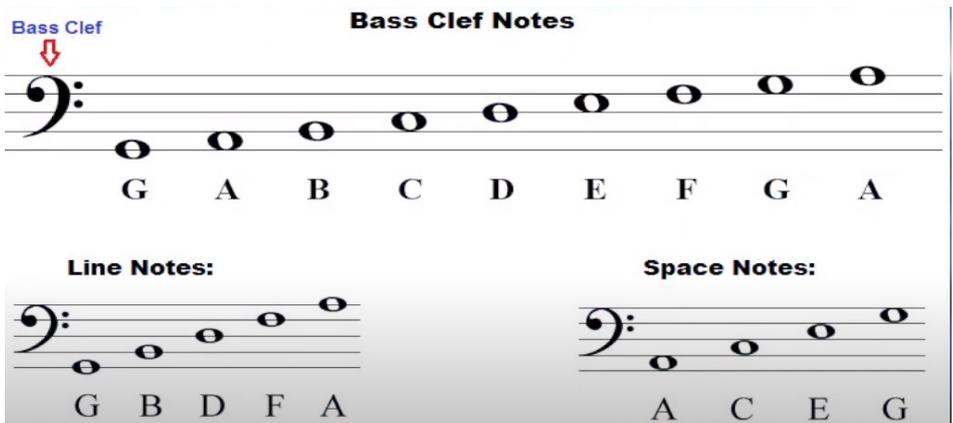
Treble Clef Notes

Line Notes: E G B D F

Space Notes: F A C E

Line notes **E G B D F** Every Good Boy Deserve Favour
 Space Notes **F A C E** Face

Baritone and Bass singers for most pieces of music read notes from the Bass Clef and again there are a couple of simple acronyms to help you remember the notes



Bass Clef Notes

Line Notes: G B D F A

Space Notes: A C E G

Line notes **G B D F A** Good Boy Deserve Favour Always
 Space Notes **A C E G** All Cows Eat Grass

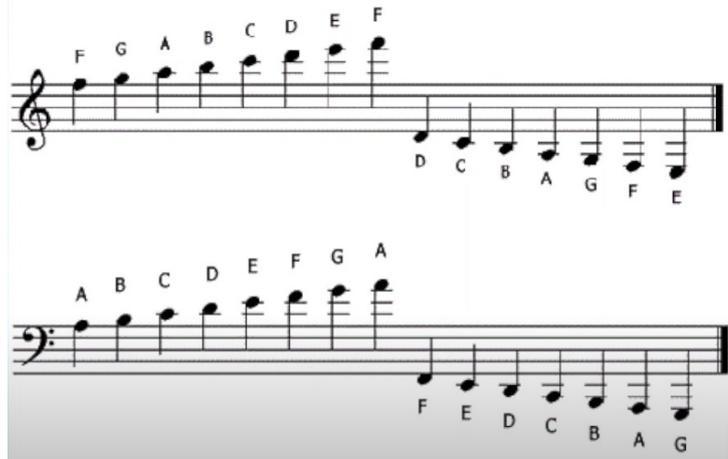
In addition to these notes on lines and in the spaces we often encounter notes that are above and below the staff. These notes are placed on or between ledger lines. Ledger lines are short lines used to accommodate notes above or below the staff. A little bit more difficult to remember but if you take a note on the staff line as a reference then you can work out the note by continuing the sequence of staff notes



For treble clef **E F G A B C D E F**

And for bass clef **G A B C D E F G A**

Ledger Lines



Sharps # and Flats b

The white notes on the piano diagram shown below are labelled C through to C and represent an octave. If the note needs to be sharpened or flattened then the black notes are used. You can see that all black notes have two possible names - a sharp and a flat name.

The choice as to whether a black note takes the sharp or flat name depends on the scale or chord being constructed that uses that note.

C#	D#	F#	G#	A#
Db	Eb	Gb	Ab	Bb





Note lengths

The number of beats that a note should be sung for is shown in the table below. Again it would be useful if we all knew the names of the various notes and their beat value.

Notes	Name		Value
	Semibreve	Whole note	4 beats
	Minim	Half note	2 beats
	Crotchet	Quarter note	1 beat
	Quaver	Eighth note	½ beat
	Semi-quaver	Sixteenth note	¼ beat
	2 Quavers	2 Eighth notes	1 beat
	4 Semi-quavers	4 Sixteenth notes	1 beat

Rest Length

Of equal importance is our understanding of how long a rest should be and these are shown in the table below. You will note that all the all the symbols used in both tables are very familiar to you as they appear on most of the music that we use

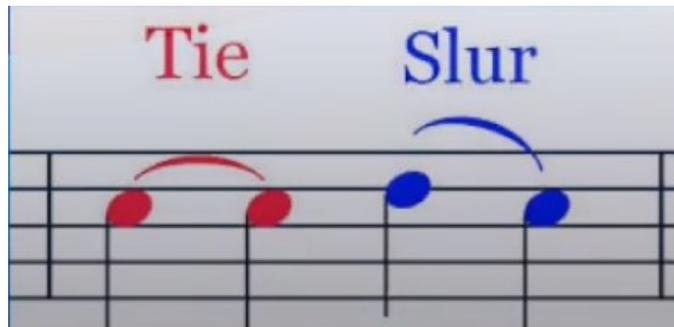
Notes	Name	Rest	Name
	Semibreve/whole note		Semibreve/whole note rest
	Minim/half note		Minim/half note rest
	Crotchet/quarter note		Crotchet/quarter note rest
	Quaver/eighth note		Quaver/eighth note rest
	Semiquaver/sixteenth note		Semiquaver/sixteenth note rest

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Ties and slurs in music notation

Again the curved lines above and below notes should be very familiar to all of us. You will observe that when the curved line is used to attach two notes of the same pitch it is called a Tie whereas when two or more notes of different pitch are attached it is called a slur.



Below there are two examples of tied notes:

On the left there are two crotchets of 1 beat value which are both Cs - the C should be sung for two beats

On the right there is a crotchet and a semi breve of value 1 beat and 4 beats. Both are F notes. The F should be sung for a value of 5 beats



Below is a group of 3 notes - E, F and G which are connected by a curved line. This is a slur with 3 crotchets so a total value of 3 beats. Although the pitch of the notes are changing from E through to F and G, the whole slur should be sung in one breath.

