



Research Report

The Digital Turn: Exploring the Social Value of Liverpool Cathedral's
Online Music Outreach Programme during the Covid-19 Pandemic

UPDATED EDITION

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Simone Krüger Bridge is a senior academic working in Higher Education for over twenty years with a passion for academic excellence in teaching and learning, research and writing. Qualified in business and banking operations in the early 1990s, Simone moved to Liverpool in her 20s and has since gained academic qualifications of the highest levels from prominent UK universities. Since 2007, she embarked on a successful academic career at Liverpool John Moores University, UK, where she has worked as a Senior Lecturer, Programme Leader, Reader and Committee Chair, building a wide-ranging track record as an academic, writer, editor, educational leader, guest speaker and in executive service roles for learned societies and organizations. Her current research explores the social value of musical participation in two comparative settings: the social value of online music participation during Paraguayan classical guitarist Berta Rojas' Jeporeka projects, and the social value of Liverpool Cathedral's music outreach programme during the Covid-19 pandemic and in post-pandemic society. With a strong belief in civic citizenship and passion to enable young people to achieve their very best potential in life, Simone is also active as a trustee at The Blue Coat School Liverpool.

Front cover image depicting the interior of Liverpool Cathedral on the second anniversary of the first lockdown with candles lit in support of the millions of people who've been bereaved during the pandemic. Photograph by author taken on 23 March 2022.

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Introduction

Liverpool Cathedral is the most important British church building of the twentieth century (Brooke 2017: 7). It stands on the brow above Liverpool as a symbol of the Christian faith, which people have taken to their hearts because of the sheer architectural power that it exerts—it is the biggest Cathedral in the UK and the biggest Anglican Cathedral in the world—and the memories which it embodies. It is a central part of the city’s identity, indelibly linked to the experiences Liverpool has lived through of war, economic change, regeneration and the recent Covid-19 pandemic. It also holds a special place in the story of English Cathedral music, in part because of its world-famous church organ—one of the largest in the world—but equally because of its choral traditions and the way in which music has been used in the Cathedral’s distinctive liturgy and, in more recent times, for outreach engagement and community participation.

The latter focus is important, since music participation evidently shapes people’s lives. It enhances wellbeing, and triggers physical, psychological and social benefits for those actively involved (Carlson et al. 2021). Music participation is thus highly valued, even if music participants may be unable to concretely say what it is that matters to them about music—but they know that it does. Considering questions of musical value is thus useful to reveal how music participants find meaning in what they do, how they make and relate to music, and how this meaning or value is understood by a society or culture more generally. To focus on value helps us to understand what matters to people, and why music matters.

This report presents the findings of The Digital Turn research project, an empirical research project (2020-2021) that sought to understand the social value of online music participation during the Covid-19 pandemic, with specific focus on Liverpool Cathedral’s (LC) School of Music’s outreach programme. LC annually engages more than 1500 children, young people and adults from the Northwest of the UK via a significant range of activities that continued online and/or in blended form since the beginning of the pandemic. Entailing online participant-observations, questionnaire and zoom interviews, the research sought to understand whether, why and how music participation helped participants cope with the pandemic, and what their online music participation meant to them. It sought to understand the motivations, values and experiences of music participants, and the meanings that they ascribe to their active music participation in LC’s online and offline music activities. It sought to understand whether, why and how music participation can make a difference to individuals and to society, and how barriers to music participation can be identified and possibly removed.

Value is understood here to encompass educational, social, cultural and wellbeing dimensions, studied from the perspective of participants, including staff at LC’s School of Music and children, adolescents and adults who participated in LC’s music outreach programme. The research thus engages with a music-cultural theoretical framework to explore social questions of value: what music participants think about what they value, and what is meaningful to them during music making. It sheds light on online music participation as social connection and in relation to agency, education, identity and wellbeing, and makes an important academic contribution to the field of digital humanities. Importantly, too, it provides the first detailed academic study of the value and impact of Liverpool Cathedral’s music outreach programme more generally.

Research Context

There are three reasons why this research is important, timely and necessary.

The Social Value of Everyday Music Making

Firstly, research on the social value of music participation has surfaced only recently in the arts and humanities, considering, more broadly, the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society (e.g., Carnwath and Brown 2014; Crossick and Kaszynska 2016). There exists a body of evaluative scholarship that attempts to quantify the extent and evaluate the impact of musical activity amongst the population, including the National Music Council and Arts in England Annual Reports, and evaluations of and critical scholarship on the infamous El Sistema-inspired programmes (Creech et al. 2016; Baker 2021), and more specific evaluations of the In Harmony programmes in the UK (Nordicity 2020) and Liverpool (Burns 2019). Much of this evaluative work has shown that music education and participation evidently enhance self-confidence, self-esteem, relationship building, a sense of belonging and general wellbeing, among other impacts (Department for Education 2022).

Meanwhile, sociological and musicological questions of musical value tended historically to go hand in hand with questions of musical aesthetics, taste and class in Western art music (see also Levinson 2015). Since the 1960s, academic research has turned towards critical analyses of value, genius, status, taste and class (e.g., DiMaggio 1982; Weber 1975; Bourdieu 2010), alongside shifting interests towards the social value of all kinds of musics and identities (e.g., Frith 1996 [1978]; McClary 1991). More recent research has begun to explore the value of music for ordinary people in their everyday lives, although the value and impact of music participation has yet to be systematically researched via accounts of the experiences of those involved (Pitts 2005: 3). For example, Ruth Finnegan (1989) explores the meaning and value of local grassroots music to ordinary musicians in a contemporary English town, while Tia DeNora's work (2000) focuses on music's mediating role in relation to social action and experience and shows how links between music and social life/social experience are forged. On similar sociological territory, Stephanie Pitts (2005) explores and reflects on participants' musical identities and experiences of their own patterns of musical engagement in four UK-based settings, with specific focus on highly specialized classical music settings.

By comparison, Timothy D. Taylor seeks to conceptualize and theorize the value of cultural goods, such as music, from an anthropological perspective and within the context of globalization or global capitalism (Taylor 2018, 2020). Meanwhile, David Hesmondhalgh (2013) makes an important interdisciplinary contribution to exploring the roles of music in modern societies, and provides a complex, multi-layered presentation of music's transformative capacities in everyday experiences, while drawing from the affective turn in anthropology, musicology and aesthetics. The book makes a vital contribution to contemporary studies of the value of music, seeking answers to such important questions as: What is the value of music to our lives at the individual level, in particular through its capacity to engender feelings and emotions? What is the role of music in people's intimate relations, in enhancing human experiences of love and sex? What is the role of co-present musical participation as a form of space-based publicness? What is music's potential of transcending or containing social difference across different communities and places?

This project contributes concrete evidence and theorization to the emerging literatures on the social value of everyday music making. It also responds to ethnomusicologist Jonathan Stock's ethical imperative for applied research in situations of social inequity and call for collaborative

work of the kind evident in this project (2021). Importantly, too, the research provides the first detailed academic study of Liverpool Cathedral School of Music’s outreach programme to understand whether, why and how music matters to its more than 1500 children, young people and adult participants.¹

Online Music Participation during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Secondly, people’s education, cultural engagement, and social and mental wellbeing has been adversely affected in countries internationally by the current Covid-19 pandemic. Freshly emerging research focuses predominantly on the devastating impact of the pandemic on the creative industries in the UK (Impact of Covid-19 project 2021), Wales (Carr 2020), Liverpool (Anderson and Flynn 2020) and elsewhere, including its impact on cultural participation (The Audience Agency 2020), employment (O’Brien, Taylor and Owen 2020) and cultural workers’ experiences (Gray, Wright, and Centre for Cultural Value 2021) in order to highlight the challenges faced by cultural practitioners, organizations and audiences. Many cultural organizations and practitioners, including LC, have responded rapidly to these challenges by creating opportunities for online cultural engagement (e.g., Rendell 2020).

Yet little research exists to show whether, how and why online music participation in social isolation helped alleviate people’s sense of purpose, learning, belonging and wellbeing (e.g., Williams et al. 2021). For example, recently emerging research has shown that the use of online music sessions in lockdown was important for giving people meaning and creating important opportunities for social interaction, and that it was important for these sessions to be live streamed so that participants knew everyone is involved in the same activity at the same time, which created a feeling of being part of something bigger than themselves (Vandenberg, Berghman and Schaap 2021). Meanwhile, people’s mental health was negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which improved by listening to and playing music, while balancing mood and promoting a positive outlook (Hennessey et al 2021). Thus, although the social group of a choir is not the same as the “real thing”, online music sessions provided an important sense of security, belonging and identity.

Generally, however, research on the social value of online music participation during the Covid-19 pandemic is still in its infancy, while most existing research on music outreach and participation takes place in the offline world. It is also of significant concern that the recent return to offline music participation may enhance people’s abilities to cope with and recover from this pandemic, and be conducive for long-term consequences for education, belonging and wellbeing due to disruptions to usual patterns of cultural and social behaviour. While LC has returned to “real” and blended delivery of its music outreach programme since summer 2021, the project thus also sheds light on how music participation can provide efficient strategies in the aftermath of the still ongoing pandemic and the transition to post-Covid-19 society.

Music Participation for Children and Young People

Thirdly, Liverpool Cathedral’s music outreach programme engages three groups of participants, with its main emphasis clearly placed on the music participation of children and young people, including babies. This focus is important, since most interdisciplinary arts and humanities research on the value of cultural participation is focused mainly on adults (MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, eds. 2012), while the impact of cultural engagement for children and young people has been neglected. Those studies that do exist, notably in educational research, have highlighted that

¹ For examples of research on music in Liverpool Cathedral, see Francis and Jones (2020); Francis, Jones and McKenna (2020); Francis, Jones and McKenna (2021); Leslie et al. (2020, 2021) and Pike (2022).

participating in culture, including music, can support self-confidence, self-esteem, relationship building and a sense of belonging (Hallam 2015). Indeed, music impacts many aspects of young people's lives by creating educational positives, such as enhanced creativity, better memory and greater development of literacy and language skills. It has positive impacts emotionally, including the development of emotional intelligence and forming positive mental health, while participating in music groups, such as choirs, at a young age creates social inclusion and group identity through their shared sense of unity and togetherness (Rimmer 2013), all of which create meaning in young people's lives. Indeed, participating in choirs enhances self-esteem, motivation, communication skills and social skills, which are essential for young people's social and mental wellbeing (Ros-Morente et al. 2019). Importantly, these studies have suggested that special talent in cultural activities is not important; the act of doing them is what matters.

It is also a particularly pressing research gap to fill at present, given that learning, education, socializing and wellbeing amongst children and young people has been adversely affected by the recent and still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and opportunities for cultural engagement amongst children and young people have been dramatically altered by disruption of education and closures of cultural organizations. It is therefore of concern that a lack of musical opportunities for children and young people could not only hinder their abilities to cope with and recover from this pandemic, but also could cause long-term consequences for education, social and cultural opportunities, and mental wellbeing. Therefore, this project asked whether, why and how music participation can have value not only for adults, but especially for children and young people.

Methodology

The methods informing this research project involved a quantitative and qualitative examination of the value of online music participation for children, adolescents and adults. The research questions explored whether, how and why music participation could benefit those who participate, and what participants perceive to be the social, cultural, educational and wellbeing value of online music participation:

1. What do children and adolescents and their families and adults perceive to be the social, cultural, educational and wellbeing value of LC's music participation programme?
 - 1.1. Which activities are you/your child participating in?
 - 1.2. How long have you participated in this activity?
 - 1.3. Why you/your child joined the activity?
2. How has music participation been affected during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what do participants perceive to be the social, cultural, educational and wellbeing value of their online music participation?
 - 2.1. Which online activities did you/your child participate in?
 - 2.2. Describe your/your child's online experience.
 - 2.3. What is the social value of your online music participation?
 - 2.4. What do you think of the educational value?
 - 2.5. Do you think that your/your child's participation in the Cathedral's music programme has cultural value?
 - 2.6. Does your/your child's online music participation have any values during the pandemic related to wellbeing and/or (mental) health?

To answer the above research questions, a combination of research methods was used that included online participant observations, virtual questionnaire and individual zoom interviews as follows:

- a. Observations of a selected range of online rehearsals/classes to gain first-hand insights into participants' experiences.
- b. An online questionnaire (57 responses) that included both closed and open-ended questions about the social, cultural, educational and wellbeing value of people's participation in LC's music outreach activities.²
- c. Qualitative interviews with 10 adults and parents of participating children to capture and analyze a range of perspectives and meanings, exploring the research questions in as much depth and nuance as possible. Random sampling was used to recruit interviewees with diverse socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds.

Stephen Mannings, Director of Music (previously Director of Outreach), organized and directed all Cathedral Outreach activities, who enabled my access to and hosted my observations, questionnaire distribution and interviewing. Stephen oversees all of LC's music outreach activities and led many of them himself (e.g., outreach choirs, music theory classes, etc.), which he delivered online via Zoom during the pandemic 2020-21, and which became the focus of this research when I observed a whole range of online rehearsals/classes, collected online questionnaire responses about the social, cultural, educational and wellbeing value of people's participation in these activities, and conducted interviews with volunteering adults.

² The online questionnaire is available at <https://trackimpact.org/project/eu-west-1/9745/evidence>, accessed 11 July 2022.

Tara Delve (Music in Unison) delivered the early years music programme aimed at babies, including newborns, infants and toddlers and their parents called 'Teeny Maestros, with whom I liaised regards the online questionnaire and interview questions, and who enabled my access to and host observations, questionnaire distribution and interviewing. Working with Tara has been important during the Covid-19 pandemic, given that most of her baby participants were all born into this bizarre, socially distanced, face-masked, computer screen version of the world, which was all they had ever known. The research continues to be important, since the pandemic is still ongoing, while the experiences of babies are often excluded in academic research due to methodological issues surrounding language and babies' inability to communicate with researchers through interviews. Babies' voices must therefore be heard via adult interpretations, which was a successful method for data collection, and made possible through Tara's continued support of this research.

Thematic Analysis supported the data analysis stage, while developing a coding framework using concepts from the questionnaire and interview topic guides, and then organizing these into themes that derive from the content. In a second step, the Documentary Method helped to answer the question of how the peoples' everyday practices are realized by focusing on the incorporated, tacit knowledge (Bohnsack, Pfaff and Weller 2010), which allowed to take a deeper look into the underlying mechanisms between music activities, impact and value.

Overall, the proposed research generated an in-depth understanding of how participation in LC's music outreach and participation programme contributed to the lives of those, who are participating, with specific focus on individual experience within a group context, as participants (adults, parents) reflected on their own and/or their children's perceptions of musical learning, their interactions with other participants, and their own sense of musical engagement.

Widening Access and Inclusivity: Liverpool Cathedral's School of Music Outreach Programme

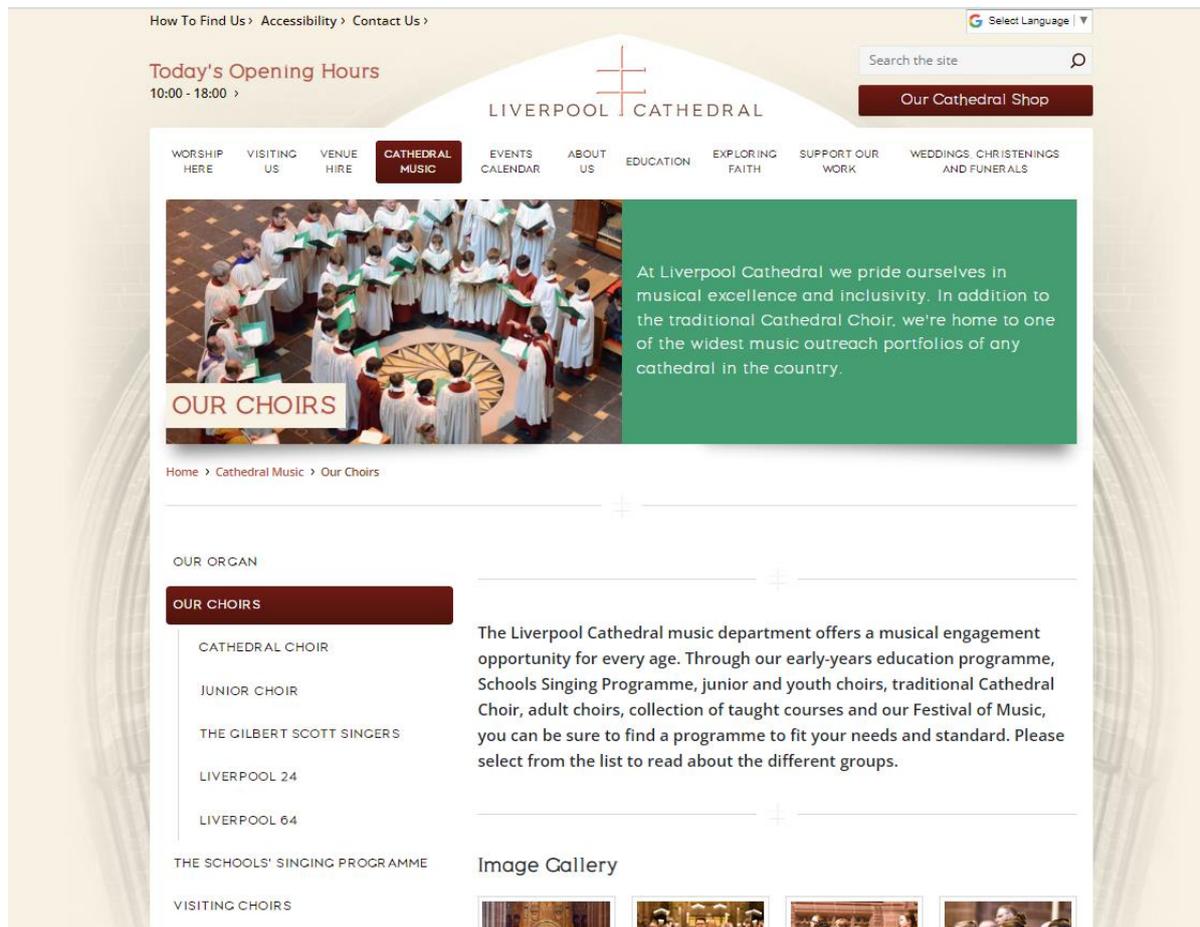


Figure 1: Liverpool Cathedral website stating, “At Liverpool Cathedral we pride ourselves in musical excellence and inclusivity. In addition to the traditional Cathedral Choir, we’re home to one of the widest music outreach portfolios of any cathedral in the country.” Available at <https://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk/cathedral-music/our-choirs/>, accessed 28 June 2022.

Liverpool Cathedral proudly exclaims its commitment to musical excellence and inclusivity, which, in addition to its traditional Cathedral Choir, is achieved through one of the widest music outreach portfolios of any cathedral in the UK (Figure 1). LC’s music outreach programme began in 2012 when Stephen Mannings was appointed as Director of Outreach, until which Liverpool Cathedral maintained the Chorister Choir only:

Yeah, they created as a new post in 2012, I started in April 2012, and part of the idea was to create just a school singing programme that would help the Cathedral to increase awareness and presence in school, but also to recruit for the Cathedral Choir. And everything else we’ve done has sort of spun off from that... Children who became engaged with us then became older, we had to sort of think of new ways of keeping them with us, and then through them, parents and grandparents got involved and then younger siblings and even babies... That’s when we started thinking about creating a unique selling point for the Cathedral with outreach being the catalyst... it engages every age... The post, when it was created, was off the back of the National Singing Project [which] was a government funded project for cathedrals to go into schools and assist teachers in bringing choral singing in the classrooms.... And since then, a lot of cathedrals have done similar. I think Liverpool

Cathedral in most ways is the catalyst or the leader of change because it is so well-known. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)



Figure 2: Liverpool Cathedral's Values. Source: Strategic Plan 2014-2024. Available at https://issuu.com/liverpoolcathedral/docs/strategic_plan_nov_2013_spreads_web, accessed 23 June 2022.

LC's commitment to widening access and inclusivity is anchored in its 2014-2024 Strategic Plan (Figure 2), "and part of the strategy is sort of increasing the size of the cathedral congregation, and that... is part of my role to help with that" (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021). Dr Chris Newton, Administrator of Music and Liturgy, agreed that

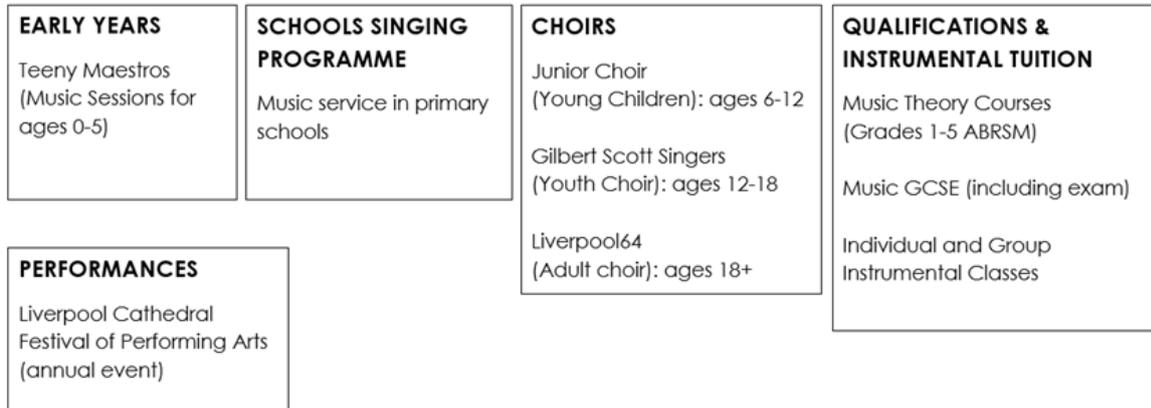
We have tried to reach a huge range of ages and people [while] everybody loves music. They are here with propose, they have not been forced to come here. It is an education for them but at the same time is a passion that it's being developed.... It is all about, you know, getting people to believe in what we do, because you know, religion is not the same as it was 500 years ago.... I think people come here for different proposes; we give exhibitions, music.... Not everybody is religious, but they still feel something about the place; it gives just a bit of magic, I suppose, just because it is beautiful; hopefully the music is beautiful. (Interview, Chris Newton, 31 July 2021).

Since 2012, LC's music outreach programme has thus evolved into a comprehensive music offering, encompassing five different types of musical engagement that range from interactive music sessions for babies and children, choral participation, to music theory and instrumental tuition, school music programme, and music performance opportunities (Figure 3).



Liverpool Cathedral School of Music

An encounter for every age



Revised January 2021

Figure 3: Liverpool Cathedral's School of Music Outreach Programme Structure, provided by Stephen Mannings, Director of Music, Liverpool Cathedral, 25 Jan 2021.

Within this current structure, LC's School of Music outreach programme engages three groups of participants, as outlined below.

Children, including Infants, Babies and Toddlers aged 0 - 10

LC's Early Years programme (called Teeny Maestros) provides young children (aged 0 - 5) with a comprehensive musical foundation designed to promote a life-long love of music and equips parents with knowledge and skills necessary to support their child's musical development.

LC's School Singing Programme engages Liverpool-based primary school children (aged 5 - 10) in fun and first-rate singing workshops, with a specific focus on a music project which culminates with a concert performance at the Cathedral featuring all schools.

LC's Junior Choir offers young children a gentle and fun introduction to choral singing during weekly rehearsals at the Cathedral, culminating in several public performances and choral evensong performances.

LC's music theory courses guide children of any age through the various elements of music theory, following the ABRSM grades 1 - 5 syllabuses, while individual piano tuition and group ukulele instrumental tuition for children aged 5-8 combine games with practical learning, while allowing the children to explore their musical foundations in an exciting and informative way.

LC's Festival of Music provides an opportunity for children and adolescents to gain real music performance experience in front of a real audience in the stunning setting of the Cathedral's Lady Chapel.

Interestingly, the Junior Choir was the first choir set up within the outreach programme,

and the rationale behind that was to offer choir for children with one day-a-week commitment where there was no audition, because the process of auditioning is quite a scary process, so I take that away and give children a more gentle and more well-rounded approach to music at that age and allow them to sing in a famous building, but also to get to know different schools and essentially, recruit for the chorister choir. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

The school singing programme, which involves twelve primary schools in the Liverpool region, has similarly resulted from LC's strategic commitment to widening engagement and inclusivity:

It is basically about bringing choir singing into the classroom, allowing children to sing in the Cathedral, in a fantastic space, but across a variety of genres... and the full span... classical music to rock and roll, to pop, to soul.... We tend to work with about twelve schools per term on a project. Now, when we first started the project, the aim was for schools, sort of, that could afford it to work with us on a regular basis and... we've changed that.... Also, we changed the way that schools could [participate] on a termly basis, and we run a different project each term, which was the Christmas Performance and, in the spring/summer term project there are performances again, and then at the end of the summer term we had two local workshops where schools come, I mean, they rotate around with different styles of singing. We have Brazilian samba singing and traditional choir singing, gospel singing and pop singing, and that's what... the model of the school programme has become. Normally... we have about six [schools] who are regular with us, and then there are schools who are new to us as well. And those are two reasons for increasing the Cathedral's engagement in the community.... One of the things we tried to do is to branch out to Knowsley [where] there is a very wealthy part and then a very impoverish part [which] I think is the second most poor area in the country, and schools there couldn't really afford to be involved with us. And so we were able to give a chance to schools to be involved free of charge. And that's... how we've operated since 2012. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Adolescents aged 10 – 18

LC's Gilbert Scott Singers is an auditioned choir for boys and girls aged 11-18, which is suited for those studying music at GCSE, BTEC or A-Level. The choir learns and performs a variety of music from different genres and gives several concerts each year in the Cathedral. The choir provides an important social function too: two older members of the choir are appointed as Gilbert Scott Reps, who play a big part in the planning and delivery of games and social activities, and act as role models and mentors for newer and younger members of the choir.

LC's Music GCSE tuition and instrumental tuition provides young people with theoretical and practical training in music. Adolescents may also perform during the *LC's Festival of Music*.

Stephen Mannings explained the rationale for developing the Gilbert Scott Youth Choir as follows:

The youth choir essentially came about as the older members of the Junior Choir became too old... and initially that was a choir for 14 to 25 five-year-olds... and we thought that would be a great chance for young singers to sing with... adults, to give them that unique experience. As some of the older adults became 25, we increased it to 30. But that choir never really took off... and I think it was perceived as this one group that never changed and they got older and older. It didn't really appeal to people at a young age, so that September we relaunched it as a youth choir as a direct follow on from the junior choir, but up to 18, so it is between 11 to 18. That made it easier for safeguarding... but also we've recruited a lot easier since September because everybody is in that secondary school bracket. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Adults aged 18 and Over

LC's *Liverpool64* choir was formed in 2018 and now has over 100 members registered to sing across the soprano, alto, tenor and bass sections. The choir learns and performs a wide range of music from across multiple genres, including one full work each year (e.g., Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* in 2019; Faure's *Requiem* in 2021).

In creating the L64 adult choir, Stephen Mannings explained:

That the one thing we didn't have was an adult choir.... Obviously, we had the adults in the Cathedral Choir, but we wanted a choir with more of a community feel to it. But there was no audition at first; we scrapped that because it put people off. The choir's well-rounded with a nice balance and ages, so literally the L64 has got people who are 18 up to the 90s, so really a great span in ages [means] people in their 20s are friends with people in their 90s on Facebook. And especially during the pandemic, it has been amazing how even the oldest people have got to create social media.... And they've been doing their own recordings as well, and yes, a sense of age boundaries is taken down. That's what has been really good. Adults too have the chance to sing in a traditional way a wide range of music. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

In terms of widening access and inclusivity, the creation of the L64 adult choir also meant that adults from all musical backgrounds could come together in their shared enjoyment of singing. Brenda, a L64 choir member, explained that "basically I can see if the notes are going up or down, but if that's a C or whatever I wouldn't really know.... We've got people with music degrees, and people with nothing" (Interview, 30 July 2021). As a result of its music outreach programme, Liverpool Cathedral has since 2012 opened up to engage a far wider range of people of all ages and from all musical abilities, who may not normally participate in the church's services, choirs and music activities. This goes further to the acceptance and appreciation of different religions and ethnic identities (see also Bradley 2006):

We don't stop it, in fact... we do have a boy Muslim who is part of the choir. I think that's great; I think is good to keep that open... Also, in the cathedral, we have a Muslim group; they worship here every Sunday at 1 o'clock in the Lady Chapel. So, we are, you know, showing an appreciation for all the cultures and religions. I think musically speaking, we do our best to not just make it one thing. (Interview, Chris Newton, 31 July 2021).

Stephen Mannings proudly emphasized the inclusive ethos of LC's music outreach programme, evident in LC's religious inclusivity and the breaking down of socioeconomic barriers, while making classical music accessible to people who may traditionally not engage with it:

In this cathedral, we accept everyone, including non-Christian, so when we go out into schools, we do so with a sort of a Christian ethos, but we are going to all sort of schools, you know, religious schools, both Catholic and Anglican, and non-religious schools as well.... One of my jobs is to bring classical music to children who would normally not have access to it.... Classical music is very elitist and if you go back hundreds of years, it was owned by the church, you know? Cathedral choirs as such are very elitist, and traditionally they are born out of... highbrow cathedrals with private schools of music. So, ours is one of the few cathedral choirs where the children all come from different schools.... All have come from a variety, and actually one of the things that we are proud of ourselves of doing especially is that, during one decade [since 2012], is the expanding of demographics, so you know, a different sort of family, different set ups, and different socioeconomical backgrounds, different cultures as well, different religions.... Yeah, we have tried to take down the wall, this sort of elitist barrier to the Cathedral Choir.... But it is still a challenge, because you know, if you go into a school now and... say "okay, now we are going to learn about Henry Purcell", and then they are lost straight away. And then, especially, the Cathedral Choir itself rehearsing six days a week at the Cathedral, and actually trying to make the parents see why that's a

commitment worth having, it is a real barrier in itself. So, and traditionally it has been sort of wealthier parents and children in private school, but, as I said, in the last decade, we sort of broke it down a little bit. There is still a long way to go, and, you know, there is still a great amount we can do [to] sort of increase the awareness of what it is, what the cathedral is, you know, and how to get involved with us. I think for the junior choir, we have a way of doing that as well, reaching out, bringing schools from all over there together. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Liverpool Cathedral's strategic commitment to widening access and inclusivity also concerns gendered norms and traditions. In 1910, LC saw its first chorister choir consisting of boys and men only, reflecting the historical dominance in ideology and norm to only include men and boys, especially in the church (Wright and Finney 2010: 241). In September 2003, to mark the centenary of Scott's Cathedral in 2004, the girls' chorister choir was founded, one of the first to emerge in the UK, while breaking with age-old gendered traditions.

Online Music Participation during the Covid-19 Pandemic

We are just so grateful to Stephen and everyone for keeping it going. They are truly lockdown heroes for all these reasons mentioned already. (Questionnaire response, 8 May 2021)

The Cathedral Music staff have been absolutely amazing during the pandemic especially the School of Music. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

The choir leaders have done an excellent job keeping us singing in difficult circumstances through the lockdown - thank you all! (Questionnaire response, 7 June 2021)

Stephen's energy was amazing and he delivered strength for so many through the rehearsals, messages and online videos. (Questionnaire response, 7 July 2021)

I would wish to take this opportunity to thank the “formidable four”, Stephen, Chris, Dylan and Dan for the diligent and professional handling of full and sectional rehearsals during these difficult times. Also appreciated was the good humour displayed. (Questionnaire response, 8 March 2022)

In March 2020, the UK government announced a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and on 16 March 2020, LC's School of Music announced that a number of LC's initiatives cease with immediate effect following government's advice to reduce social interaction. Shortly afterwards, beginning from 25 March and lasting for approximately one year, LC's music outreach activities, notably the choirs, music theory, instrumental tuition and Teeny Maestros, moved to online delivery. In a virtual announcement, Stephen Mannings announced the changes to online delivery,³ with the key motive for switching music sessions online being

just to give hope... It was more [about] the social thing rather than a musical thing.... and to keep the spirit of what we do alive.... It was awful, I mean... the first time I remember a Zoom with a whole group of people, it was such an emotion because we were in this frightening period when we didn't know what was going to happen next, but then we were able to communicate.... I think it gives hope and it gives people meaning. (Interview, Chris Newton, 31 July 2021)

Outreach Choirs

LC's Junior Choir was henceforth delivered via weekly pre-recorded podcasts (Figure 5), which were circulated as a link via email on a weekly basis to parents for download and their children to sing along to. Each podcast rehearsal followed a similar format to “normal” rehearsals, with warm-ups and vocal exercises followed by learning music of different styles, including sacred and popular music (Figure 4). An email to Junior Choir parents explained, “We hope that this rehearsal aid will be a fun educational resource for your child to look forward to and use each week. We will send a digital lyrics pack to you by email. The podcast will be designed so that, if you wish, the parent (or indeed whole household) can sing along with your child.” (Stephen Mannings, email announcement, 22 March 2020).

³ see <https://www.facebook.com/513215530/videos/pcb.2446575005443682/10163474059390531> and <https://www.facebook.com/513215530/videos/pcb.2446575005443682/10163474061025531>, accessed 15 March 2022.

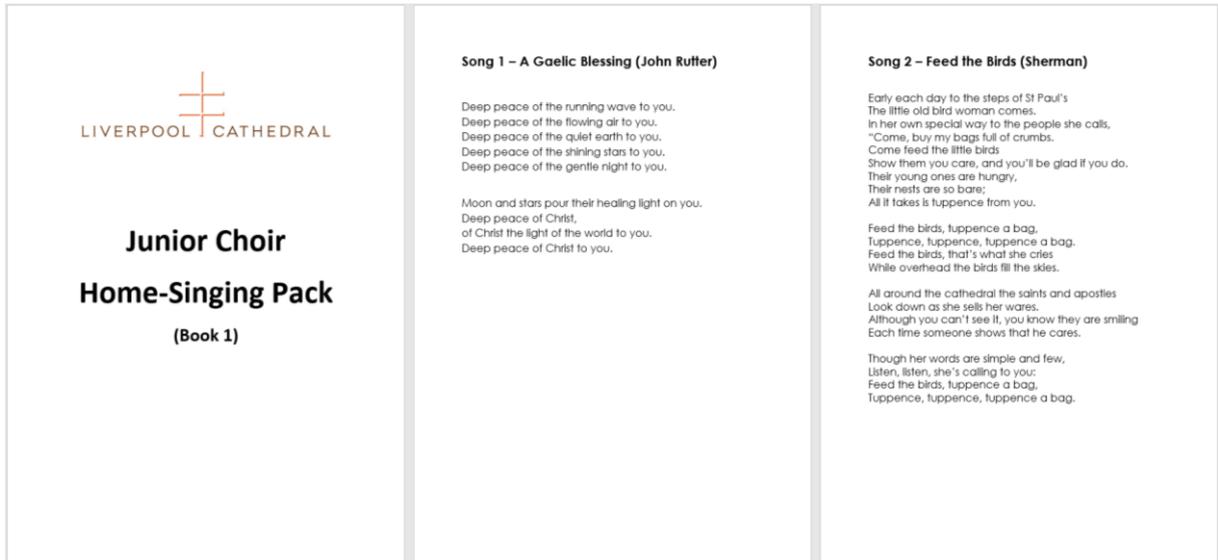


Figure 4: Junior Choir Home-Singing Pack to accompany the weekly podcast rehearsals, which was emailed to parents of LC's Junior Choir, and contained 11 songs as follows: 'A Gaelic Blessing', 'Feed the Birds', 'Magnificat', 'Nunc Dimittis', 'Food, Glorious Food', 'I'd Do Anything', 'Where is Love', 'He is the Lord, God', 'Believe', 'OK' and 'The Inch Worm'. Distributed to Junior Choir parents on 25 March 2020.

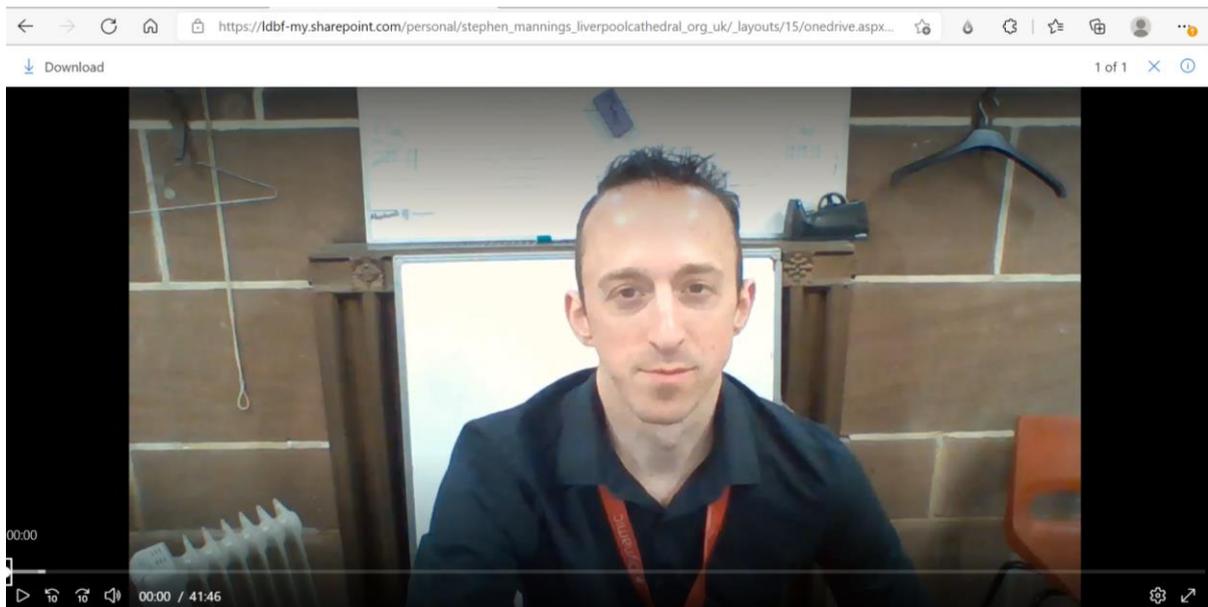


Figure 5: Stephen Mannings leading the first of weekly pre-recorded podcast choir rehearsals available as follows: Podcast 25th March (Part 1) https://ldb-my.sharepoint.com/:v/g/personal/stephen_mannings_liverpoolcathedral_org_uk/EZx1ue0KVMFBowEG1RviYMcBjumOIycC5bHGSOBv1pnNjA?e=zYuaZy. Podcast 25th March (Part 2) https://ldb-my.sharepoint.com/:v/g/personal/stephen_mannings_liverpoolcathedral_org_uk/ET2eT-pj_w5Attanh7oyIVABxy2A-UVkAIIYLt4GILWllg?e=IRjOMn.

By June 2020, the weekly Junior and L64 Choir rehearsals were delivered live on Zoom, which meant that each choir member had to be muted during the rehearsal and sing solo in their home environment and along to the choral leader's voice and accompaniment:

So L64, the other choir, that was sort of, we hit the ground with rehearsals straight away from the first weekend of lockdown, and when we first did it, we sort of assumed that everyone would.... So they had rehearsal since day one and the junior choir, I think, started at end of April, I think. Yeah, so it has been great, and with the 64, because there are four voice parts, from soprano to bass, we did breakout rooms, and so Chris takes one and I take one, and we rotated each week so everyone is learning their voice parts. And we had social things, like, you know, quizzes and stuff

like that. We've done virtual recordings. I think the first virtual recording was the junior choir and the L64 together for 'Look at the World' back in May time. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Yet, perhaps not surprisingly, some music participants were less enthusiastic about the online choral practices, which was particularly the case for the young people in the Gilbert Scott Junior Choir:

We quickly found that that group or that age group weren't really keen on regular Zoom as the junior choir are. This lasted to the Christmas term after we relaunched the choir just with twelve or thirteen-year-olds. We run a full term of weekly Zoom and it just didn't work, I mean, we had a fun time, we did some virtual recordings... but when the lockdown started, we decided, you know, what the people want. We don't really think they were that enthusiastic about the Zooms, so we've agreed we will stop the Zooms then until at least the February half term. But in the meantime, we have engaged all the children giving them roles... so they are going to help with recruitments, so they are going to be doing instrumental videos to promote the choir, doing testimonials... It is their choir, and they have a responsibility how it grows. It is sort of giving them more responsibility as they get older.... It has been amazing seeing how giving them a role of responsibility rubs off on the younger children and they are actually closer together as a unit and stronger with it. As I said, I think with the teenagers, I think... after 8 hours of [online] school a day, I think they want to finish and chill out and not to do a rehearsal. That being said, if schools don't return after the February half term, we are thinking about doing something then, to keep them engaged. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Beyond weekly online rehearsals for the Junior and L64 choirs, which would also make special mentions of participants' birthdays, LC's School of Music also organized various online participatory activities, including age-appropriate quizzes for participants of the choirs. For example, the Junior Choir children and their parents were invited to send short videos of their home pets, which were then assembled into four JC Pet Videos and a link distributed via email to parents, showcasing the pets of the Junior Choir children, including a selection of rabbits, dogs, cats, chickens and even Canon Neal's "grumpy gorilla" (Figure 6). LC's School of Music also created a Liverpool Cathedral Music Outreach group on Facebook to share news, information and "how to" videos.

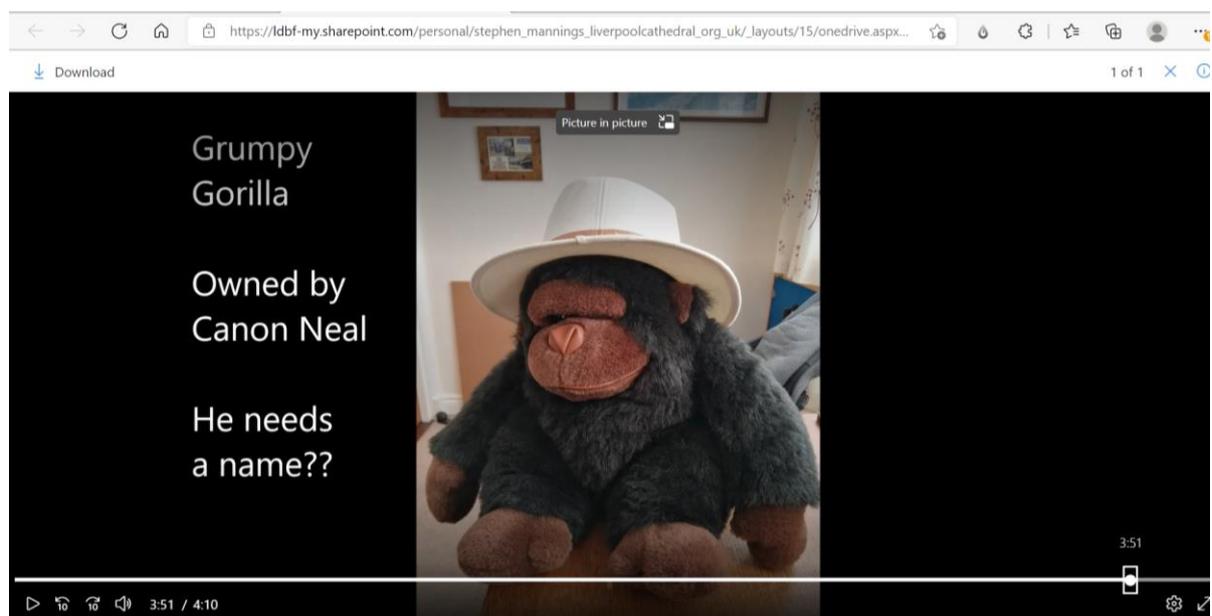


Figure 6: "Grumpy Gorilla" owned by Canon Neal is featured alongside LC's Junior Choir children's pets, asking children to give him a name. JC Pet Video distributed by Stephen Mannings on 28 April 2020.

With the partial easing of the lockdown in summer 2020, the choral autumn term was delivered in hybrid format, while combining small-group in-person and online audiences via an accompanying live stream, while the repertoire included evensong music, contemporary pieces, Christmas pieces and Christmas carols provided in a music pack. Yet since the live streaming of live choral rehearsals proved to be little engaging for those watching at home, remote rehearsals changed in October 2020 to a separate online-only rehearsal on a different weekday alongside small-group in-person rehearsals. However, restrictions were tightened again during December, which meant that all rehearsals switched back to online zoom delivery, which continued well into the spring term 2021. Stephen Mannings reflected on the fluctuating attendance during this unsettling time:

What we found across both junior and L64 is that the enthusiasm for Zoom was right at the start, but it sort of dropped a little bit by the summer and in autumn term [2020]. But we found now, I think, maybe because there has been a bit of a [lockdown] break, or because there is a vaccine, enthusiasm increased again. Okay, everything is going to be different, this is the final big hurdle, and we can make it through it. That is a feeling... this month, even though we only had one or two rehearsals, it is sort of the feedback I am getting. I mean, for instance, at the end of the Christmas term, the average attendance of the L64 Zooms is up to 30, and then on Monday was 68... and the same with the Junior Choir... by Christmas you get about 20, and there was about 35 or something in last session. So, it increased as well. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Virtual Choral Performances

While the choirs would normally practise for selected Evensong services and other performances, which were cancelled during the pandemic, the School of Music replaced, for instance, the April and June 2020 performances with an online recording of 'Look At The World' by John Rutter (Figure 7), which the JC and adult choir Liverpool64 rehearsed to perform together. To do so, participants from the Junior and L64 choirs were asked in April 2020 to make an audio recording on their phones singing along to the song lyrics and/or score, following either the orchestral backing track or the conducting video (both were provided pre-recorded), while wearing headphones to hear the track and record only their voices.



Figure 7: Screenshot from the virtual performance of 'Look at the World' sung by LC's Junior and L64 choirs directed by Stephen Mannings. Video by Chris J Newton. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/stephen.mannings/videos/10163667016855531/>, accessed 15 March 2022.

Similarly, LC's L64 choir audio-recorded a virtual performance of Rob Howard's 'Alleluia' for Holy Week in April 2020 (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Virtual performance of 'Alleluia' sung by LC's Liverpool64 Choir for Easter 2020 and directed by Stephen Mannings. Video by Chris J Newton. Available at <https://youtu.be/EyoIPiKDeww>, accessed 15 March 2022.

Subsequent virtual choral performances featured individual video recording of the singers in their home environments, for example for the virtual performance of 'Sing', which was recorded instead

of the annual joint concert by the Junior Choirs of both cathedrals that has been held for eight years (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Virtual Performance of 'Sing' by children of the Junior Choirs at Liverpool Cathedral and Metropolitan Cathedral. Available at <https://youtu.be/2UcqEJwgGA>, accessed 15 March 2022.

For the Christmas season 2020, LC's Junior Choir performed a festive virtual recording of 'Do You Hear what I See' (Figure 10) jointly with the Junior Choir from the Metropolitan Cathedral for, what would have been, Liverpool Cathedral's infamous annual Action for Children Christmas concert, with the support of Annamarie Newton (Metropolitan Cathedral), and Gabriel Thomas Newton and Chris J Newton (Liverpool Cathedral; videography). Usually featuring over ten choirs, a concert band and Santa himself, the Action for Children concert, which was presented by Channel 4's Jon Snow, also included a virtual performance from LC's Schools Singing Programme schools and its regular AFC school choirs (see below).



Figure 10: Screenshot of both Cathedrals' Junior Choirs performing a virtual recording of 'Do You See What I See'. Available at <https://youtu.be/BjLjqmdG5Dg>, accessed 15 March 2022.

To celebrate Christmas “at home”, the Gilbert Scott Youth Choir performed a virtual recording of ‘Calypso Lullaby’ (Figure 11), and Liverpool64 premiered a virtual recording of ‘Walking in the Air’ (Figure 12), all featuring the singers in their home environments.



Figure 11: Screenshot of Gilbert Scott Junior Choir's virtual performance of 'Calypso Lullaby'. Available at <https://youtu.be/8YpacBZd3-E>, accessed 15 March 2022.



Figure 12: Screenshot of Liverpool Cathedral's L64 adult choir during their pre-recorded online performance of 'Walking in the Air'. Available at <https://youtu.be/1YpuFr1BbY4>, accessed 15 March 2022.

Teeny Maestros

The Teeny Maestro sessions aimed at infants, babies and toddlers were adopted via a two-step approach: Firstly, for already enrolled participants, sessions were transferred online and delivered by Tara Delve live via Zoom (Figure 13), while instrumentation was adapted to accommodate home music marking with the content remaining the same. A recording of the session was also made available for the participants. Secondly, for the wider audience, Tara Delve also produced content in the form of pre-recorded online tutorials of five minutes length and hosted on YouTube, which can be accessed any time and are suitable for music making with children up to the age of 7.



Figure 13: Tara Delve (Music in Unison) delivering LC's Teeny Maestro sessions via pre-recorded tutorials on YouTube during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. This material is free to access and available on the Music in Unison channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJ4Hpm-nVZFFS9gWI4RtxwA>. Photograph provided by Tara Delve and reproduced with permission.

Not surprisingly, the switch to online music making for babies and toddlers proved challenging, although, as the report shows later on, the online music sessions proved immensely valuable for some parents of babies and toddlers. Without the research results, Tara felt that home-based online music participation may have less value for children of such a young age. Stephen Mannings agreed:

The way that Teeny Maestros works, actually, it is a pay-for service, so essentially parents paid to be on it, as we would do in the early years. I think six times, six week courses each year. Now, Tara who runs that basically ran that from her kitchen during the first lockdown, but she felt with that age group, it wasn't really working, because obviously, you know... with babies and toddlers you've got to be with them, and their focus is like 10 seconds, right, then "I am doing something else", so that we didn't think it [worked]. In September [2020] we came back to the Cathedral, and we were worried that no one would come... but actually, especially new parents being isolated so much, you know, six months... in babies' lives... to get back out. So, between September and the Christmas lockdown... we had three classes for new-born, older babies and toddlers... under new COVID rules with space for 15, as in one parent and one child in each class. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

During the Christmas season in 2020, and to everyone's delight, the babies and toddlers were even visited by Father Christmas (!) during one of their in-person music sessions (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Father Christmas, played by Dr Chris Newton, visits the babies and toddlers on the Teeny Maestro courses for Christmas 2020. Liverpool Cathedral, 18 December 2020. Available at <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1876292752471913/>, accessed 24 June 2022.

School Music Programme

At the beginning of the pandemic, all schools across the UK were closed with education switching to remote and online delivery for most children, which in turn also impacted negatively on LC's school music programme as it had to be ceased for approximately twelve months. For the first time since 2012, LC's School of Music was unable to hold its Christmas "Big Sing" for schools. LC's School of Music instead worked with small numbers of pupils from twelve schools in the Northwest to create a virtual recording (Figure 15), which was featured during the Action for Children virtual concert on 8 December 2020 hosted by Channel 4's Jonathan Snow. Stephen Mannings explained the experience as follows:

That's one of the biggest concerts we did for charity. We had virtual online weekly lessons and we wanted things simple to start with [working with] three children, who were in the same bubble in each school. There were twelve schools, and I went in three times at each school, in the beginning

in the middle and the very end... The three children from each school log into Zoom and went over the music, and then we recorded them, an actual recording. And that was the School Christmas project and that was great because that was included in the virtual concert. Jon Snow from Channel 4 presented it and then, because he sort of put on the video the school up and gave them a mention, other cities have used it. I think it is in the diocese of Gloucester or something [and] they used the same video for the Christmas campaign... so that was a great, sort of, innovative thing from our perspective to bring schools into the mix. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)



Figure 15: Liverpool Cathedral Schools Christmas Song 2020. Available at <https://youtu.be/FAYJ4fQg524>, accessed 15 March 2022.

Instrumental Tuition & Festival of Music

Besides its choral programme, LC's School of Music also delivered individual instrumental tuition on piano, voice and other instruments, and held its annual Liverpool Cathedral Festival of Music, which had evolved in 2019 with the following aims:

For the first year we had an instrumental performance category, we had a piano category, and there was a primary school category and secondary school category. I think string was one, I think two choir events, because we didn't have any open choir categories. So, we had a primary school choir competition and a secondary school choir competition. It was great, there were... six choirs in each taking part. Before they all performed, we did a singing [session] together.... We did have fun, we had piano and string competitions, again with primary and secondary categories, and we had the choir competitions... I am hoping to do that... in the spring term, and really sort of think of the fact that... some pretty much haven't played them [instruments] ever outside of home, and it is just a non-informal way, a non-competitive way of playing to an audience with similar interests... and on a bigger scale.... There was a plan last year to have a brass band as a category as well and to open the choir, the adult choirs as well as school choirs, and because we have got the space to do that, it seems an opportunity to miss, because it had so much success the first year. It was quite sad that we couldn't capitalize on that in the second year and that's why we are hoping to have a virtual format this year, so we can, you know, grow it next year.... In fact, it is in the

diaries on Monday when we produce an online competition, or not even a competition, but a festival performance, but online, starting with instrumentalists. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Thus, during the pandemic, the Festival of Music similarly moved online as a live stream on YouTube and was hosted by Stephen Mannings (Figure 16). The Festival of Music 2021 was divided into two parts, with the FoM Grades 1-4 Category premiered on 18 March 2021, and the Grades 5-8 Category premiered online on 25 March 2021. The 2021 rendition was a pre-recorded, non-competitive music performance festival for ages 6-18, with any instrument, including voice, permitted. Feedback was provided by industry experts: Lee Ward (former Director of Music at Liverpool Cathedral), Tara Delve (Founder of early years music education company, Music in Unison), Dr Rob Howard (Assistant Head of Music Faculty at St Edward's College) and James Luxton (Assistant Director of Music at the Metropolitan Cathedral).


LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL
Festival of Music

A virtual, non-competitive performance opportunity for
young musicians aged 6-18

Ideal for children who have been learning an instrument remotely.
Performances recorded at home prior to the festival dates.
Each musician will receive professional feedback.



2 Categories:

Grades 1-4 Standard
(18th March, 6pm)

Grades 5-8 Standard
(25th March, 6pm)

Any instrument (including voice) and
any age between 6-18
Both events pre-recorded and streamed
on these dates

Places are limited and booking is essential.

The deadline for applications is Monday 1st March.

To enter please contact

christopher.newton@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk

Figure 16: Announcement of Liverpool Cathedral's first ever Virtual Festival of Music 2021. FoM Grades 1-4 Category was premiered via social media on 18 March 2021 (see <https://youtu.be/v0KUTqPSKOs>), and the Grades 5-8 Category premiered online on 25 March 2021 (see <https://youtu.be/F1E2DF6puxo>), accessed 25 March 2022

Music Theory

The Music Theory programme, while following the ABRSM graded syllabus, similarly moved to online delivery via live stream on Zoom, facilitating tutor-led teaching and participatory learning via screen share, workbook writing, question and answer, and instrument demonstrations by invited musicians to explain how sound is produced on, for example, the bassoon and piano. For example, beginning on 22 July 2020, LC's School of Music delivered the "Music: Learn the Basics" course for children aged 6-12, providing a basic level introduction to musicianship and music theory, taught in a fun and interactive way via Zoom, and aimed at children who have either never had instrumental lessons or who are at the early stages of learning. More generally, expert tutors, including Stephen Mannings and Dr Chris Newton, taught music theory to children aged 6-18, working from the basic foundations and up to Grade 5, while helping students to eventually sit and pass the Grade 5 ABRSM Theory of Music Exam.

Outreach Music and Prayer

During the height of the pandemic in late April/early May 2020, LC's Dean Sue asked the Music Department to record an online video "You'll Never Walk Alone" with music and prayers on the themes of "Consolation, Healing and Restoration" to be spoken by three Junior Choir children and video recorded at home on a mobile phone (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Prayer spoken by a child from LC's Junior Choir in a recorded service "You'll Never Walk Alone" in a message by Dean Sue to Liverpool Football Club. Available at <https://youtu.be/OpgzEfKtqgU>, accessed 15 March 2022.

Research Results and Discussion⁴

The insights gained during this project provide a strong ethical and moral imperative for this research, showing in profound ways how music played a vital role across all sorts of social, cultural, educational and wellbeing dimensions during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, through observations and talking to babies' parents, the research showed that online music participation in Teeny Maestro sessions played a vital role for the babies' socialization and relationship building, and their social, emotional and cognitive development. And while a zoom choir experience will never match the experience of collective singing inside the marvelous interior of Liverpool Cathedral, the weekly online rehearsals provided routine, belonging, friendship, enjoyment and, above all, real hope, particularly to those choir participants classified as "shielding". One L64 participant summed it up as follows:

It has been great that we have been able to continue rehearsals online during such a strange time. I feel grateful for this and believe it has helped in some ways. For example we have had more time to go through challenging pieces (Stanford) and get them tight in terms of notation. Having said this, nothing compares to real in person rehearsals. (Questionnaire response, 7 July 2021)

Participation in Liverpool Cathedral's Music Outreach Activities

The online questionnaire link was distributed through Stephen Mannings to adults and parents of children participating in LC's music outreach activities, with 57 responses received in total, of whom the majority attended the three outreach choirs: L64 (64%), Junior Choir (14%) and Gilbert Scott Youth Choir (13%). Some respondents also attended the online music theory classes (13%), Teeny Maestro baby sessions (7%), and other music activities (13%), including online ukulele lessons, as probationers and choristers in the main Liverpool Cathedral Choir, and Music in Unison, which is another title for the Teeny Maestro baby sessions (Figure 18).

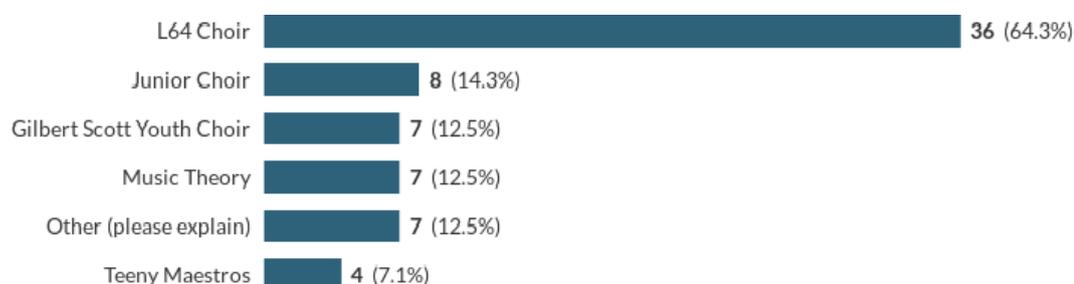


Figure 18: Questionnaire responses to "Which activities are you/your child participating in? Your may select more than one."

The majority of questionnaire respondents (81%) joined LC's music activity over 12 months ago, among them predominantly L64, Junior and Youth Choir members, who joined well before the beginning of the pandemic and had thus experienced rehearsals and performances within the impressive interior of Liverpool Cathedral prior to switching to online and/or blended practice. Meanwhile, only 11 participants joined less than 12 months ago during the Covid-19 pandemic, who were predominantly child and adolescent participants in music theory courses, and baby

⁴ The results and discussions make frequent reference to the voices of participants, which are quoted throughout the text, including quotations from questionnaire responses, email comments and interview responses. The questionnaire responses, which are anonymous, were collected between April – July 2021 and are not explicitly referenced in the report. For longer quotes from questionnaire, interviews and email comments, references are provided in detail, with the consenting participants named.

participants in Teeny Maestro/Music in Unison sessions, and thus had solely online music experiences (Figure 19).

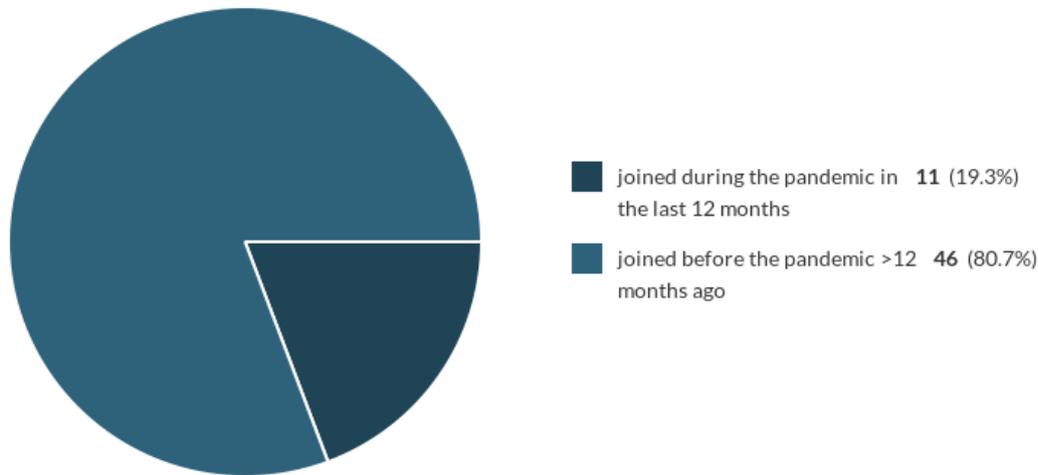


Figure 19: Online questionnaire responses to “How long have you participated in this activity?”

The Meaning and Value of Music Participation

I think it is... very unusual for a Cathedral to be open to anybody, whether they are a fantastic singer or whether they just enjoy singing, and everybody is welcome; everybody can join in; everybody feels very welcomed. I think they [LC's music staff] make a very valuable social piece of work as well; I mean we opened it to the community, we are doing stuff for the community, and it is great. I mean we have some fantastic highlights, the Alder Hey's children concert just before Christmas and Ken Dodd's wife comes... and money raised goes to the Alder Hey hospital, it was packed... And another highlight was *The Armed Man* by Karl Jenkins, a mass about the futility of war. It was brilliant, and it was such a privilege to be part of something like that and making music with such fantastic people... and it is pretty graphic in places when the fighting was actually going on; it was a fantastic thing to be involved and some beautiful music. And it was non-denominational... There was some Japanese *haiku* in it; there was some Muslim call to prayer in it, and it finished with one of the songs at the end, and it was great. That was one of the highlights. I mean I've never even heard of Karl Jenkins and I loved that. I think he [Stephen] is doing a very valuable job. I do. (Interview, Anna, 30 July 2021)

I think the Anglican church and the L64 and Stephen and Chris and the others they are kind of... it is almost like that Liverpool feeling that we were talking about, how people are really supportive and want to have that sense of community and want to help each other out and want to create something. And L64 kind of represents that feeling for me... Even though it is not a one-to-one training as such, but you kind of maintain your skills by singing, rehearsing and practising, so it has that educational value for me. Also, I think one side of it is the routine. It is a brilliant thing to have choir on a Monday because... it computes as a balance for work life. And it has that community side, because you kind of leave your barriers behind, and you just focus on what is at hand and with that choir they've always been really lovely. There is a good pool of friends in that choir as well. I just love to be doing music every Monday. (Interview, Milja, 30 July 2021)

Clearly, there are numerous reasons why children, adolescents and adults wish to participate in LC's music outreach activities. For example, the motivations for outreach choir participation are rooted in the simple fact that singing itself is a vastly enjoyable activity, which people “love”, “really

enjoy” and may feel they have an aptitude for, and which may trigger positive memories from previous experiences: “I have participated in church choirs previously and love music, especially singing”, including positive childhood memories: “I enjoyed singing as a child and wish to re-engage with this activity.” Indeed, many adult participants especially had “sang in choirs all my life” and “enjoyed singing for 50+ years” and regarded their participation in LC’s choir as an extremely valuable and positive opportunity. One participant summarized the value of choral participation simply as: “singing + social”.

The Social Benefits of Shared Music Making and Learning

To most people choral participation is of social value, since a choir or music session provides a temporary “non-threatening setting” and social context in which to see, talk, laugh, feel emotions etc. with like-minded people. Indeed, “nothing is as emotionally engaging as the expressivity of fellow humans [and] groups can draw us into emotional experiences that we would not be able to experience on our own” (Scheve and Salmela 2014: 41). For instance, “to be part of a choir” enhances interactions and friendships and has been recognized to have both immediate and long-term positive effects on social and emotional aspects of people’s lives (Diwase 2018). Meanwhile, “her friend also attends” was a key reason for a young person to join the junior choir, while “to sing in a group [helps] to build daughter’s confidence”. Social choral interaction makes people feel good and enhances general wellbeing, which is also especially important for the elderly who may have experiences of loss and loneliness: “I had sung with my husband in an amateur opera group. Then he died suddenly, and my daughter saw L64 was starting and encouraged me to have a go. SO glad I joined”. Anna, a member of the L64 choir, explained:

I have had made some very close friends, which has been a bonus because I lived where nobody else was living. I didn’t really expect to make such good friends.... I felt I turned a corner, losing, I mean, he was my soulmate; I missed him terribly, and I felt I turned a corner when I joined the L64; I started coming back to life a bit, getting on with life so... I sure it does a lot for a lot of people in different ways. Whatever their age. I really feel it is a good glue that keeps people together and keeps people focused, happy, very positive, it is lovely.... I think it helps on so many levels. I love the singing; I love the songs; I love the social style; I love being in the Cathedral; I love the music. It is just, it is very fulfilling in all areas, it has been brilliant, I love it. (Interview, Anna, 30 July 2021).

Others faced significant health conditions that hindered their usual activities when choral participation provided a new opportunity and hobby: “Since I developed ME/CFS most of my previous hobbies became impossible. Fortunately, I discovered singing in a choir.”

Social interaction and “to mix with other children” is equally important for babies’ socialization, which builds babies’ social and cognitive skills and abilities, and provided the key reason for parents’ of babies and toddlers to participate in LC’s Teeny Maestro programme. Indeed, socialization allows babies to develop in not only most basic ways but is also conducive for more extensive early development while learning the expected cultural norms and values in a particular society, which in turn leads to successful lives educationally, professionally and socially. Children’s socialization beyond the family home, including social education in early care settings, in addition to parental socialization is critical for children’s development, both behaviorally and academically, with the potential to increase IQ levels, employment chances and socioeconomic status (Zoritch et al. 2000). Indeed, preschool children exposed to music making are able to release energy,

develop motor skills and socialize more sufficiently with other babies, while more sustained challenging musical learning, such as singing and learning to play the piano also provides key skills due to the long periods of concentration and determination (DeVries 2004; Williamson 2014). Memory, too, is greatly stimulated, for example by encouraging babies to find the “right” musical instrument or toy for a particular song, while also learning to name it, in a little box of sensory items provided to them. Music can trigger humans’ empathy and trust for one another, heighten oxytocin levels and improve cultural cohesion (Suttie 2015). It is no surprise, then, that parents valued their babies’ musical development in “a proper music class”, while they “enjoy singing and playing instruments” and the “musical interaction with musical instruments”, alongside the social benefits “to connect with other mothers”, offering opportunities to young mothers or fathers to meet like-minded parents and carers over a cup of tea or coffee, talking about the children, how they love their classes and favourite songs, and sharing caregiving experiences. Many research participants experienced pregnancy during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, which prevented them from attending antenatal classes to learn from and interact with other pregnant women. Thus, meeting other young parents who have shared experiences created an immense sense of comfort and reassurance.



Figure 20: Cover image on Teeny Maestro Facebook page announcing “Teeny Maestros Older Babies 2021” at Liverpool Cathedral, available at <https://www.facebook.com/events/liverpool-cathedral/teeny-maestros-older-babies/543672046943065/>, accessed 22 March 2022.

Outreach music participation is educationally meaningful, allowing participants to develop their theoretical and musical knowledge, and performance abilities, such as “learn[ing] more both practically and through theory” or “learning ukulele”. To some adult participants, it was the performance of more challenging choral music that triggered a certain sense of achievement and excitement, such as when “L64 was about to learn to perform *The Armed Man* and always wanted to perform this.” Janet agreed,

I think it was spring, there was a performance of... *The Armed Man*. So yes, I’ve participated enough to participate in the big events in the Cathedral as well.... It was... wonderful, absolutely wonderful. It is brilliant music and there were so many people involved.... It is a composition for peace, isn’t it? And the text that we used was also beautiful; just everything about it, so a brilliant

piece of work, with a brilliant spirit and a... it is just a wonderful piece of music to be involved in. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

Meanwhile, the online music theory courses, preparing participations for the various Grade examinations of the ABRSM, “were essential for him [son] to be able to continue his progression with his piano grades”, and helped “to strengthen the music theory she was learning as a Cathedral Choir probationer”. One participant put it loud and clear: “I strongly believe in the importance of music in education.” Besides learning and education and social aspects, Janet, a L64 choir member, further highlighted the cognitive benefits of musical engagement for memory and concentration at an older age:

First of all, it broadens up musical horizons because we are introduced to new pieces regularly. Well, not always new, there are some that we know, but to get to know the pieces from the inside, to sing, to do the parts singing within pieces that we might have heard, not knowing what the parts are. I enjoyed that breakdown of the music and putting it back together in a new way, so the music is very much part of it.... And then, just the fellowship of singing with other people. And then the enjoyment of practising a scale. I feel more challenged in singing at my age now than singing in the 60s; my voice isn't what it was, and I am anxious to still sing while I can before my voice goes beyond repair, so it is important to keep those vocal chords moving.... There is a joy in the harmony that we create, and I mean it is good for your mind.... I can feel it's using parts of the brain that, you know, have been dormant for a while, and that is good, especially at my age, you need to keep the brain active. And then, of course, the directorship of the choir with Stephen; he is effective, he is efficient and organized, and at the same time he is relaxed and humorous and just delightful to be with, and it just combines all the things you want in a musical director. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

Belonging and Identity

Belonging to Liverpool Cathedral and what it stands for also resonates with, reinforces and constructs a sense of shared identity. Some participants have built a strong connection to LC, which provides a “family” to those more intensively involved in its religious music offerings. One L64 choir member explained that her/his “Father [was] previous Director of Music”, while another said, “I have connections with the cathedral as my husband has been a lay clerk and my boys were both choristers.” Children, too, evinced highly positive experiences of the friendly “family” atmosphere, some of whom began in the Junior Choir and progressed to chorister, with parents praising the “excellent continuous pastoral care for all choristers at Liverpool Cathedral”. In this context, the religious context of more immersive music participation often plays a significant role, particularly for adult choir participants, who “really enjoy singing choral music”. This importance of singing choral music was also shared by Janet, a L64 choir member, yet for different reasons, given that English choral music evoked important notions of English identity:

Having lived in other countries, I find that the English sacred music tradition is one worth preserving, and I am glad to be able to be preserving that because it's a massive part of our heritage... I've lived in France and there is choral tradition there, of course, and I've lived in Germany, and I've lived in the States and was fortunate to be part of a Cathedral choir in Indianapolis, and I found that a lot was English choral music. And it was a wonderful link with home, and it helped to be able to continue singing those pieces there. And so, I feel privileged to be able to be part of that. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

A related and hugely significant reason for singing in LC's outreach choirs has to do with cultural value, given that participants commented that “it seemed prestigious and special to sing in the

Cathedral choir” and “Love to be in the Cathedral!”. Another participant similarly compared singing in LC to a “special” opportunity: “I was already in a choir but the opportunity of being part of the Cathedral Music Department was too good to miss.” Indeed, being and becoming a part of Liverpool Cathedral through its music outreach activities is held in special regard by many. Anna, a member of L64 choir, agreed that “it is a beautiful setting to sing in. It is a privilege to sing there, it is quite lovely.” (Interview, Anna, 30 July 2021). Janet, who also sings in the L64 choir, agrees that

I love the church choir, it is something that we do on Sundays, well not always, but since my 20’s I’ve sang there. And the cathedral is on a different level, is on a different dimension to singing together, is on a different scale, and it offers the opportunity and the privilege of singing in such an amazing space.... It’s been a privilege... then to take it to another step and to sing with 64 people. It is really exciting, yeah, under the directorship of Stephen; he makes it wonderful and enjoyable at the same time. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

Liverpool Cathedral itself holds a special place in the hearts many people, evoking sensory experiences and emotions through a sense of “awe” and “wonder”, terms that capture people’s appreciation for beauty in the church’s social contexts. Janet and Milja elaborated on their experiences inside the Cathedral:

Well, it is a... goodness, as I said, it is a privilege to be enriched within such a place, just to be able to go there. But then being able to participate in events that take place there and exploit the vastness of the space and the beauty of the building and the sacred nature of what it represents. All those things combined make it a very, very special experience.... Yeah, so the transcendental aspect of it and being together with others in that space and to make something... beautiful, to create something in that space that aims at being beautiful, and also sacred music. It is all those things. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

When you walk into the Cathedral, it means something, because it is such an absolutely amazing building. You kind of feel a certain level of calm every time you walk in. I think it is during pandemic times... and to walk in inside, it is kind of that time to reflect what is going on elsewhere, more of being safe haven from everything else that is happening. It is such a beautiful building. I find something new every time I walk in there that I have not paid attention since before.... I think for me, I really love nature [but] you don’t often have space in England, indoors, you don’t get that, and the Cathedral does exactly that for you.... You can always have your own space and your own moment, which is really hard to find in a city as in Liverpool. (Interview, Milja, 30 July 2021)

Liverpool Cathedral combines certain physical elements to create a particularly emotional atmosphere: the lighting as a whole is dim, with candles and yellow ambience lights dotted throughout, the magnificent stained-glass windows with colours and light pouring through the glass contributing to the mood; the architecture itself is intricate and detailed, influencing not only the way that people hear the music, but the way they experience it, with music and voices being complementary to the architectonic design (Bagenal 1930). The primary material of churches, such as the natural materials, marble floors, wooden furniture and stone walls, create unique and distinct acoustics for musical performances to evoke emotional experience, thus playing an important part in carrying the sound around the space, while the walls allow for long reverberation and reflection, giving a specific echo and rich depth to the acoustics (Álvarez-Morales et al. 2020). Indeed, LC incorporates music into the very fabric of the building, incorporating ambience, timbre, fibers and materials to set the scene for emotion, mood and feelings to be experienced within the realm of the church. The notion that people come into the Cathedral to be in touch with their emotions

and move away from the stresses and strains of everyday life to a state of harmony is almost palpable. Brenda, a L64 choir member, remembered that

I've always loved the building. I'd always go for services on Christmas, if I'm not in my own church, you know. When I was little, we always used to go the Saturday before Christmas when they do the whole repertoire of Christmas music. And that was... when Christmas really started.... Oh, yes, yes. Friends from years ago said, you are a different person when you are in the Cathedral. It is like "she changes, she comes alive." She said, "you look like a different person when I got there". I wonder what it was. The building was having an effect on me.... Yeah, you think back of all those situations that you have lived when you were back there... A group of us would go to an event we were in, and you keep thinking, "oh yes, and we were sat over there". It does bring back memories. (Interview, Brenda, 30 July 2021)

Memory is evoked through the shared experiences inside the Cathedral and informed by the values and practices of a community, which is reinforced by music's power to evoke the past, of how people remember history, framing their understanding of it, and the social groups associated with it. Indeed, music is a way to tap into memories, such as the loss of a loved one, a past event or a distant homeland (e.g., Marsh 2012), given that "musical structures may provide a grid or grammar for the temporal structures of emotional and embodied patterns as they were originally experienced" (DeNora 2000: 68). Music can engender sociability in a way that "embraces the feeling of belonging to a group, a family, a community or a nation [and] the feeling of togetherness through the performance of music" (Riedel 1965: 149). These lived experiences inside Liverpool Cathedral were of course disrupted due to the global spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Online Music Participation during the Covid-19 Pandemic

We were very impressed and happy that the choir continued without any breaks most of their other activities just stopped. We were very grateful that the choir stayed "on" all the time! (Questionnaire response, 17 May 2021)

Really enjoyed online lessons in lockdown it was a good distraction, enhanced mood, positive activity. Much appreciated. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

I really appreciated that Stephen and Chris, in particular, put so much effort in the Zoom rehearsals. So, they thought in advance that people were gonna have a lot of Zoom screen time rehearsals, so it can't just be people singing along. So, initially, we had some kind of quizzes and some random games. I always got into it because it was funny to try to get the answers, but I think it was really important... that Stephen and Chris maintained that routine, as every other hobby and opportunity got cancelled. Everything else stopped, and it was really good that L64 continued.... I think it quite relied quite heavily on Stephen, like, he is absolutely exceptional how he is managing to keep it going. (Interview, Milja, 30 July 2021)

The pandemic has impacted significantly on the prohibition of "music(k)ing" (Elliott 1995; Small 1998), especially group singing, while undergoing a "digital turn" toward online experiences in order to continue. The digital turn toward online experiences in music education and engagement is not a new phenomenon; digital technology and online learning have formed an important part of music education for some decades. Yet what is new during the global pandemic crisis has been the need for music education, learning and engagement to operate principally within a digital and online domain, and this necessary turn has caused considerable disruptions to practice for music education and music engagement more widely (Camlin and Lisboa eds. 2021).

Most questionnaire participants continued to attend almost all (44%) and all (42%) online meetings of rehearsals, lessons and performance sessions. Janet, a L64 choir member, found that participation in the online rehearsals at home was convenient and fitted well around her busy work schedule, even though screen fatigue meant she missed the earlier online rehearsals:

Singing on Zoom obviously is not ideal, but what made it good is... for me accessibility, so I don't have to travel, which after school on Monday night, when you've got the rest of the week to plan and all the marking, you know, and an extra hour to go there and back... makes for a late evening.... No need to travel and being able to join from home, having the music at home.... [You attended some of the online rehearsals?] The latter ones, not the early ones, not the first year. Partly, I found myself like you, spending hours and hours of time on the screen everyday with teaching. Some days, the last thing I wanted was more screen time in the evening, so I wasn't there the whole time.... And once people were actually back to school, and I wasn't at the screen, then I really got more into it, yeah. (Interview, Janet 30 July 2021)

Meanwhile, only five respondents (9%) attended hardly or no online sessions due to technical issues, including "internet problems", "connection problems", "poor internet access" and "lost connection". Others were prevented from attending due to "clashes", "other meetings on Mondays", "hard to sing in my flat with company at home" and "also homeschooling our older child and working from home" (Figure 21).

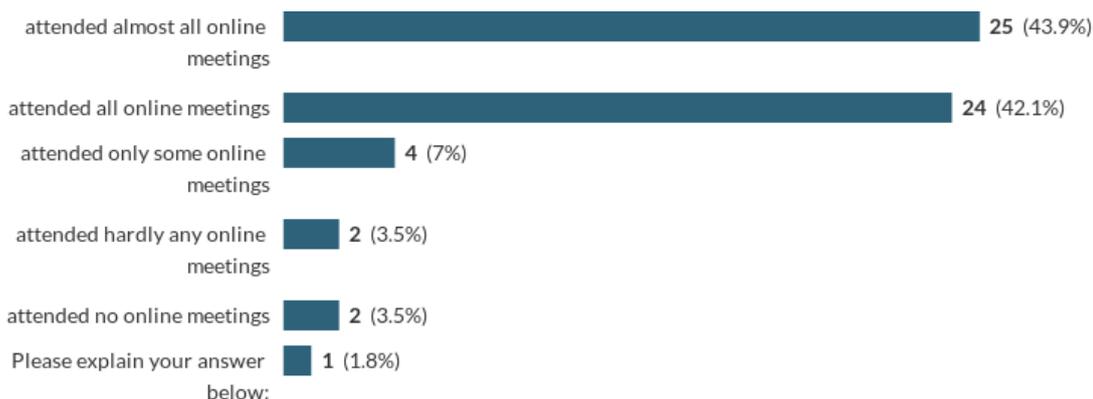


Figure 21: Questionnaire responses to "Please indicate your/your child's online participation."

In some instances, participants simply found it hard and challenging to engage online, given that a computer screen was a "new" environment for many participants, and that technical issues like slowdowns and speed loss, server outages and crashes may seriously hamper motivation. Moreover, the experience of mediated interaction may feel too abstract and unrelated to "real" life, so it is easy to lose interest in the online music activity, especially for children. Some parents explained that their "child wasn't interested in online sessions", that it was "difficult to see [sic] them engaged at home, too distracted" and it "wasn't the same as being there in person, I found my child didn't engage with it in the same way and lost interest".

Thus, live online engagement alone was clearly challenging to some people, including babies and their parents: "It was hard to keep my baby focused and the lack of connections with other mothers." By contrast, one parent of a toddler participant in online Teeny Maestro sessions particularly valued their shared *blended* learning experiences of both "real" and pre-recorded online music sessions:

We loved the prerecorded activities as we could participate whenever we wanted and watched them all more than once (much more). We were familiar with lots of the songs through in person classes and the familiarity to pre covid life was great for my toddler. (Questionnaire response, 12 Jul 2021)

While other participants “took a while to get comfortable being on screen and talking/singing online”, they eventually “enjoyed the online content. It kept my child engaged for half an hour and gave us ideas of things to do at home. This meant that we were able to entertain ourselves whilst in lockdown!” Thus, to many participants who successfully adapted to the unfamiliar online environment that became the “new normal” during the pandemic, online participation was experienced as mostly enjoyable (42%) and enjoyable (39%) by the majority of questionnaire participants, while 9 participants struggled with and 1 didn’t enjoy their online music participation due to the above-mentioned reasons (Figure 22).

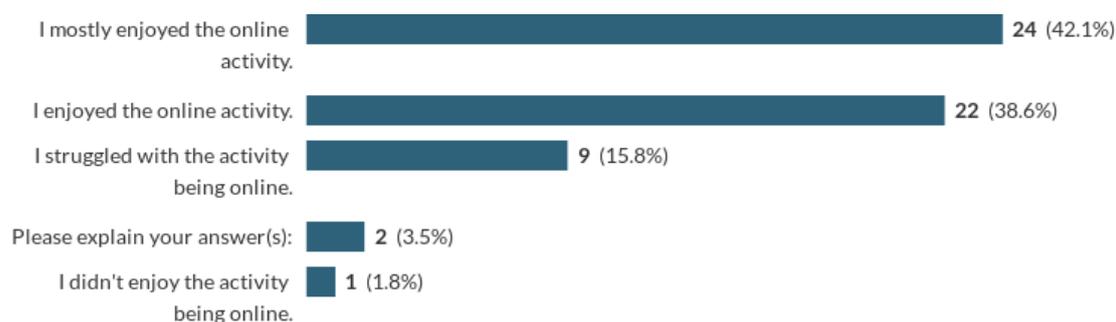


Figure 22: Questionnaire responses to “Please indicate your/your child's online experience”.

Clearly, then, most questionnaire participants continued their own and/or their child’s online music making and learning, while appreciating the fact that LC’s music programme switched online almost immediately after lockdown announcement. By contrast, many arts organizations and institutions discontinued their cultural activities altogether, which heightened many participants’ appreciation of LC’s efforts: “The choir I already sing with didn't really set much up during the pandemic”. One participant summed up their appreciation of LC’s online music programme as follows:

We have been extremely grateful that the junior choir continued online when the first lockdown started. Our son has attended all online rehearsals, which at first were pre-recorded and sent via link to a shared One Drive folder. We still kept [sic] to the regular rehearsal times and streamed the recording via our telly. Later on they became live via zoom, which was even better and allowed our son to feel connected to the Cathedral and the teachers. It wasn't perfect as he had to be muted and so we couldn't hear the other children but only his own voice. So it didn't give a proper choir feel. But the fact that the [sic] children sang and saw each other and saw Mr Mannings and kept it going was fantastic. (Questionnaire response, 8 May 2021)

While most participants evinced highly appreciative experiences of LC’s music programme, and “enjoyed the [online] activity immensely” and agreed that it “provided valuable activity during lockdown” in the particular context of pandemic-related social restrictions, it is also important to acknowledge that many were stressing to “prefer the real choir” and enjoying the activity “obviously not as much as live rehearsals”, thus being “glad that we are able to meet and practice in person again”. An L64 participant agreed that “it’s a shame to sing ‘solo’ when we enjoy singing together”, while another agreed that it was not as enjoyable as a real-life rehearsal” and “missed not singing as a group and hearing everyone else” and “this is an interactive class that is much better delivered in person”, which clearly highlights the limitations of online choir rehearsals either in pre-recorded format or live on zoom.

The Social Value of Online Music Participation

It was wonderful during the time of lockdown to have at least that connection with others. If not [being] able to see them in person, I felt it was a good way to keep it going, yeah, keep the connection going and to learn the music, definitely. (Interview, Janet, 30 July 2021)

As well as providing focus and learning the new music pieces participating in the choir practice gave a sense of normality and feeling of continuity that we were all hoping to get back together again soon. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

Under conditions of social restrictions during the height of the pandemic, many people felt a lack of control, anxiety and loneliness because of the government's imposed social isolation. Consequently, one hugely important reason for online music participation during the Covid-19 pandemic was "keeping in touch", "social contact" and to "keep on touch with other choir members during the lockdowns", which to many participants also meant that "they were fun", "a highlight of the week" and "a highlight to see people, talk & sing - a bit of normality". To children, too, "the weekly Junior Choir was the highlight of our week during lockdown". One participant simply said that "you will not hear other voices, but you can see them and see and hear the MD". Brenda, a L64 choir member, agreed that

You might have trouble getting on to there but once you are used to getting on to Zoom it was fine. It is nice to see people and it was nice to know what their names were because they appeared on the screen.... I was shielding. I was one of these clinically extra vulnerable people. So, the only person that I saw was the girl who did my shopping for me, and she used to bring my shopping every week, and that was the only person I saw. So, well, it is good to see other people because we have time to have a little chat beforehand and afterwards, so... it is nice.... It gave you structure of the week; it is Monday when we rehearsed, well, and we had other days sometimes as well; we had Wednesday or Thursdays, it did move around a bit, so... it was something to look forward to.... I've never Zoomed until Stephen taught me how to do this. We had a chat on Zoom as well, and then we had a go in network session every Friday, which was just a chat and a quiz and things like that. (Interview, Brenda, 30 July 2021)

As highlighted earlier by Stephen Mannings and Chris Newton, the main motive for the switch to online music activities was social, and thus provided relevant opportunities, so that participants also "attended online quiz evenings", which of course enabled further social contact during the social isolation experienced by most people during the lockdowns. Anna, a widowed L64 choir member, who joined the choir prior to the pandemic, explained:

We had choir practices... sometimes split with different people for the parts, and at the end every week we had a quiz, so it turned to be a really nice social event, It was great, I enjoyed it. Every week. He asked for a volunteer, so we had all sorts of this, and you got to know the choir members a bit more, you got to know their interest. It was good.... Some people volunteered more than others; me and my daughter had a go one weekend; it was cool. We did two very opposites: we did a history quiz and the Disney quiz.... I mean and it was a social event too, it was something to look forward to. It was just nice. It was really, really helpful.... Definitely, it was something to look forward to; it was a focus; it was something to give your mind to; it was social interaction. It filled a big need. (Interview, Anna, 30 July 2021)

The regular online activities provided much needed structure, distraction and enjoyment during very challenging times for both adults and children, along with a sense of normality and routine: "During the first lockdown the course was a way to keep focused and something else to do, and also a way of keeping in contact with others." This meant that many participants "enjoyed the

activities and social aspect”, including parents of child participants, who valued the continued routine, social contact and socialization, and educational value of the choir rehearsals:

It was better than having no rehearsals at all. Being stuck at home all the time during the various lockdowns meant that the online activities kept him/us connected to the outside world. We were literally house-bound for many months, and this broke up the week, gave something to look forward to, and the music was very enjoyable. Mr Mannings always ensured to have chat time too with news by the children. He was just super lovely with the kids and we really valued this continuation of normality. (Questionnaire response, 8 May 2021)

Most participants also appreciated the choral leader and/or teacher, commenting that “Stephen & team are so good at delivering zoom rehearsals” and “Stephen was brilliant at keeping spirits high”. Babies and toddlers, too, seemingly benefited from regular contact with their Teeny Maestro sessions leader, with one parent explaining that “my toddler especially enjoyed the connection to a familiar face through the course leader”. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of questionnaire participants enjoyed the activity (77%) and appreciated the choral leader and/or teacher (77%), while it maintained some normality (71%), they felt connected to other people (64%), it felt good (69%), they had fun (52%) and appreciated seeing their friends (41%) as a result of their online music participation (Figure 23).

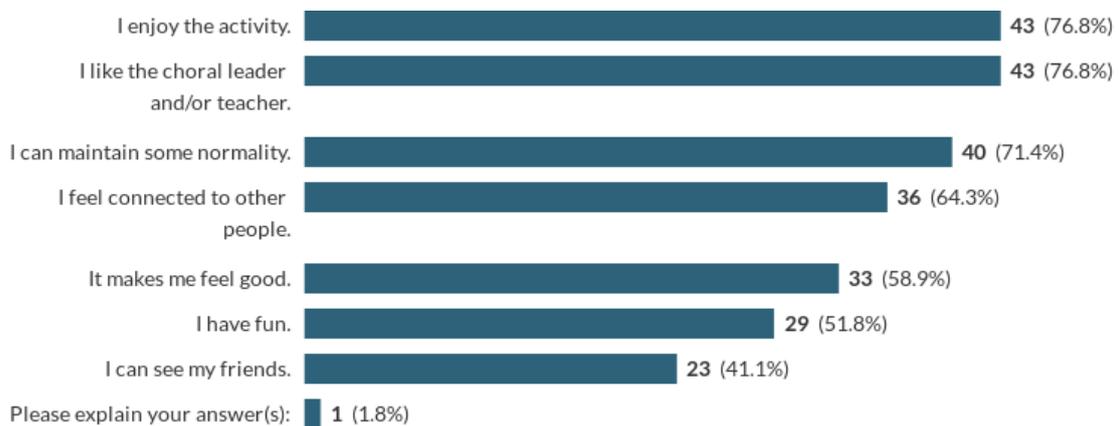


Figure 23: Questionnaire response to “In your opinion, what is the social value of your online music participation? Please select as many answers as you wish.”

To parents of newborn babies, the Teeny Maestro sessions provided a hugely important relief from the challenges of the pandemic and first-time parenting:

As a new mum, it was really difficult being stuck at home with nobody else to compare baby related things with! These classes meant we saw somebody, and had some fun, and were able to chat to other mums of similar aged babies. (Questionnaire response, 12 Jul 2021)

During an interview with a mom of a young baby girl, who attended the online Teeny Maestros sessions with Tara Delve, she recalled how the online sessions provided important social impetus to the mom:

Did it [online sessions] help you as well through the pandemic?

M: It did, yeah. I, particularly with having her, felt almost like we were a little bit abandoned at that point because we couldn't have visitors, couldn't come out to see anyone or you couldn't go to any of the classes... It was all gone, and even something such as going to the doctors, which was on the phone, you weren't actually seeing any people and meeting people. And at least having the

classes once or twice a week, it did make a huge difference. Even if you didn't talk to anyone, you were seeing other faces, and and even just from the perspective of other people saying, "we are up to this stage, or they are doing this"... even kind of seeing what the babies were up to developmentally, when there wasn't anyone to ask if it was, you know, normal... so it did help. I think having a couple of days where you had a bit of routine... you know, it made a difference. (Interview, Teeny Maestros mom, 30 July 2021)

The online Teeny Maestros sessions were also deemed of significant importance to this mom's baby. During the interview, she recalled the ways in which her young baby daughter interacted with the teacher Tara Delve during live streamed sessions on television screen at home:

It was interesting to see because... in the beginning of the lockdown, we ended doing all of them [the courses] online. So, she was eleven weeks when the first one started.... As she got bigger she responds; well, we put it on the TV screen and... she responded as if they were in the room, and she responded to the teacher when she was talking to her and things like that and saying her name; and what the teachers were doing and copying them.... She [baby] was interacting with her [Tara], so when it was just a programme she wasn't, she wasn't bothered.... When they [live sessions] started, she could tell the difference, which I didn't realize at that age. She would be able to tell the difference and that's because most of her life, she has been on screen so far.... In September the first time she met Tara... in person [and] I was interested to see, I suppose for all of them, how they would respond to actually being with other children or other people because they haven't been. And then from September to October, she [baby] was quite reserved. She would stay close by not doing much, and I mean granted she only started to crawl about at that point, but by Christmas she was going around everywhere, and then from January when we went back properly... she was just everywhere, she would just happily go. She was the one with the tea cup when you were in the session.... I was quite surprised at how quickly she did... At the time, lots of people were saying, "oh you know, this little one is not going to have ability to interact or anything", so I was a little worried. And then, she [baby] went "fine, I will go hang out with the other people, I will leave you on your own". [Did she react to the other children? Online?] They couldn't really speak to each other... and she didn't really. She obviously liked being with the babies... but it was more responding to the teacher. (Interview, Teeny Maestro mom, 30 July 2021)

It is of significant insight that some of the rich social, cognitive, developmental and emotional benefits of baby music classes also extended to online music participation for some families. The mother's reflections clearly provide important insights into the social value of online music participation in terms of socialization and communicative skills development in very young children. Indeed, conveying emotions through song, such as happiness or sadness, and combining it with parent interaction can provide a solid foundation for social and language skills development. By using substitute musical instruments at home, such as spoons and pans, babies can figure out how to use them and how to make the sounds they want, which, combined with stimulating physical movement can help develop important motor skills. Learning about loud and quiet sounds can also enhance babies' sensory awareness, while the use of lyrics in songs, including lullabies, is hugely beneficial for language development. Musical interaction between babies and adults clearly correlates with verbal articulation in babies by the age of twelve months, while also passing on important knowledge and cultural heritage (Bennett 2019; Berthomier and October 2018). If a baby is exposed to this kind of musical interaction while learning nursery rhymes and children's songs, they are usually amongst the best readers and spellers by year three of primary school (Bennett 2019). Teeny Maestro classes also helped some parents to soothe their babies through music, creating healthy associations and stimulating emotional regulation. And, importantly, spending musical interactive time with one's baby has huge benefits for strengthening parent-child emotional connections.

Clearly, then, many people suffered greatly during these unprecedented times due to the enforced social isolation, and thus experienced relief, joy and hope through their participation in the online music activity, along with important social benefits. One participant explained that “being at home was not a good experience. To have a social contact and a very good learning together session helped enormously”. Another participant agreed that “it feels as though our group is still together despite the separation”. There was a clear consensus regards the value to have “some normality”, “some form or routine” and “stay in touch”. Those participants who were shielding emphasized even more the critical importance of maintaining social contact: “Having to isolate through health reasons; it really helped maintain some normality socially and was fun.” The social value of participants’ experiences thus clearly outweighs the many positive impacts of LC’s online music programme, particularly those forced into complete social isolation: “It was good to ‘meet up’ with people while I was shielding.”

The Educational Value of Online Music Participation

Music participation and engagement has significant educational value to participants under normal pre-pandemic conditions. Considering the disruption to music learning and education due to the pandemic, it is imperative to ask questions around the perceived educational value of LC’s online music outreach programme during the Covid-19 pandemic. Interestingly, the research revealed that the continuation of music education online was indeed an important reason for participants, appreciating the widely shared perception that “Stephen et al. have kept us focused on learning new music”. Some participants explicitly commented that “I wanted to keep up learning the music”, while the rehearsals provided “a focus on making music still” and “I was pleased to be able to learn the music”. The adult choir, in particular, “enjoyed that we could note bash” and shared an appreciation that “‘note bashing’ enabled the voices to learn their parts with accuracy”. Many L64 members agreed that the online rehearsals were “nowhere near as effective as the real thing, but it was good for note bashing”. What “note-bashing” means is explained by another L64 participant as follows:

I really enjoy learning new pieces of music especially when Stephen and colleagues are taking the practice as we can learn the finer details of the piece and really appreciate the learning experience when we come together as a choir. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

Rehearsing in four vocal parts (SATB) meant that “it sometimes allowed for more time to go through music theory - why sections are sang in certain ways”. Another participant agreed that it was “good for practising the parts and learn it in isolation from the other voices”. Even those participants who were “unable to attend all online meetings” still “appreciate[d] being able to practise the music at home during lockdown months” and that “it helps that I can make mistakes no-one else can hear”.

However, online choir rehearsals also posed educational challenges to some participants, who would “lose continuity of parts” and thus found the “harmony difficult when one does not sight-read music”. Other participants similarly “missed singing as part of a group & hearing others at the same time. Hearing all 4 parts helps you with timing and tuning when singing your own part”, and it was “more difficult to learn pieces without support of other members singing around me; also didn't get the effects of pieces sung with all parts”. Even another adult found it “hard to learn difficult songs (if in another language)”. One participant even found that it was “rather boring only being able to hear your own voice!”

Reflecting on the educational value of their online music participation, many questionnaire participants agreed that they wished to improve their singing voice (71%), learn new things about

music (48%), which they deemed important (40%), learn to read musical notation (29%), improve their music theory (27%) and work towards music exams (12%) (Figure 24). One participant felt that “online zoom didn’t really help in musical knowledge”. However, there are clearly differences in the educational value of different kinds of music activities, varying across choral participation, music making, and music theory courses. As mentioned above, L64 participants often explained that “I also want to improve my sight reading/ singing” and “enjoy improving sight reading”. Another participant explained that “I like to understand what I’m singing whether it’s notation/language our leaders would explain”.

This emphasis wasn’t as much a priority for children in the Junior Choir. For instance, one parent regarded the educational development of her Junior Choir child as more “indirect”, while there is a greater emphasis on the development of the singing voice and more general, transferable skills, alongside acquaintance with a wider and fun musical repertoire, while some even progress to become a chorister:

Our son’s voice has developed beautifully since singing in the choir. He has basically a beautiful head voice. The pieces are good fun too, especially when the children sang the Christmas carols and songs. There are always some popular fun pieces too, like the one about the laughing hyenas and other animals. Mr Mannings is very energetic and lively, and zoom meant our son can see him close up rather than at a distance. The educational development is probably more indirect when singing in a choir. Our son didn’t learn that much about the music itself or music theory or so. Singing in a choir is more about coordination, listening, following the conductor, reading the words, and those sorts of skills, which can be very important for children’s general development. (Questionnaire response, 8 May 2021)

By contrast, participating in online music theory courses seemingly had more direct educational value, likely since the instructor-led zoom sessions resembled more closely what participants regard to be formal school education. Here, one parent reflected that “my daughter is doing her grade 4/5 theory and wanted to learn more so took up this course during lockdown; it also helped with the sight-reading side of music.” Moreover, music education and learning was also experienced as a shared social activity, given that sessions were attended on screen in children’s home environments, which in turn provided an opportunity for children and their parents to learn together:

Me and my child learnt together. I have no musical education and love the fact that I learn new things along with him. (Questionnaire response, 12 Jul 2021)

Shared musical education was also particularly valuable for parents of young babies during Teeny Maestro sessions, who could themselves learn important skills for interaction and communication with their babies through developing new musical skills and knowledge, which in turn helped with babies’ socialization and social and cognitive skills development:

For me it was really helpful learning how to introduce musical ideas to my little one in a way that would be engaging and would keep her interested. I learnt so much and was able to gain confidence in helping my little one to learn as well. My little one loves Tara and was mesmerized by her teaching on the screen! (Questionnaire response, 12 Jul 2021)

It [online music classes] also gave us ideas to use on non-class days. We used the pre-recorded online content provided almost every day that we didn’t have the live class. (Questionnaire response, 12 Jul 2021)

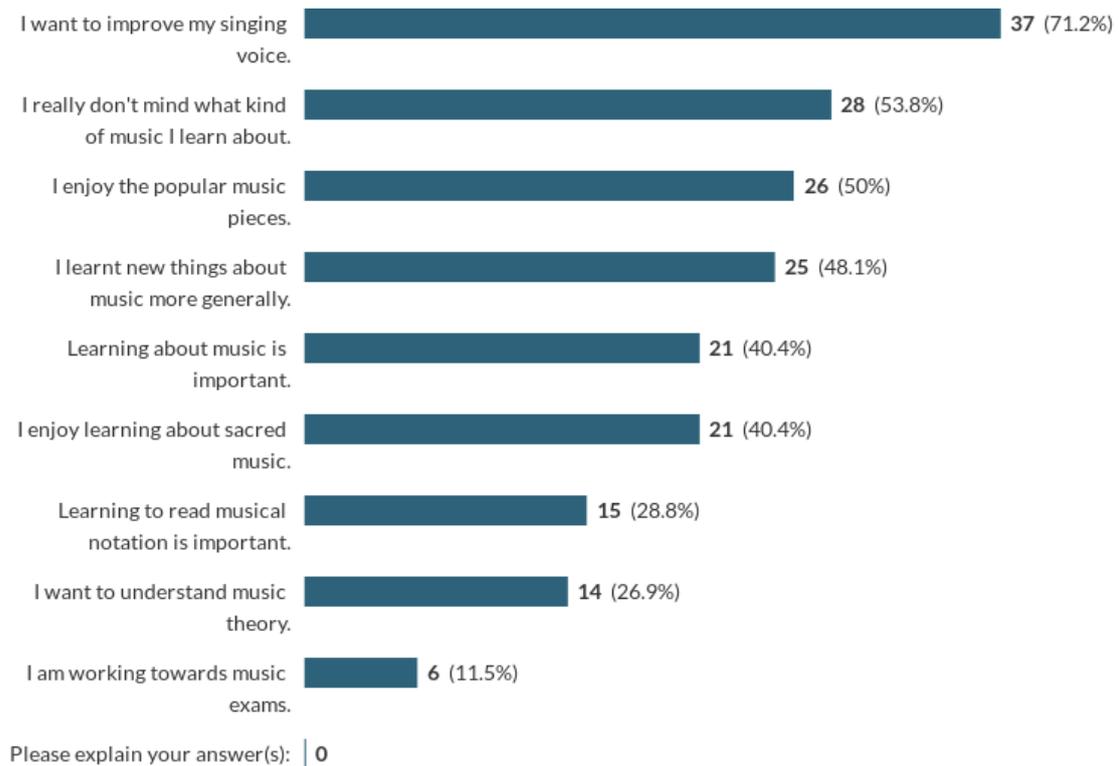


Figure 24: Questionnaire response to “And what do you think of the educational value? Please select as many answers as you wish.”

Meanwhile, while online music education and learning is highly valuable, many participants evinced highly omnivorous musical tastes (54%), including preferences for popular music (50%) and sacred music (40%) alike (Figure 24). One questionnaire participant explained that “we have a broad repertoire and that's part of the fun and part of the challenge. Enjoy learning new pieces in different styles. Each piece is unique and we have a great variety.” Another said they “like a mixture of modern + religious”. Yet another adult participant accredited their religious identity for having omnivorous musical tastes, saying that “I'm Catholic in my musical tastes, i.e. I'm happy singing most styles”. Children, too, enjoyed the eclectic music repertoire encountered in the choir: “My daughter loves singing different genres of music.” and “2 kids mainly love sacred music, 1 kid loves pop music more; they all love singing and learning about music.” The musical variety was thus regarded as something positive that can open people’s minds, since “all music teaches something new”.

The Cultural Value of Online Music Participation

I think the real value here is the place, the meaning of the place... greatness to the feeling of being here, of being part of a place like this. (Interview, Chris Newton, 31 July 2021)

Despite the promotion of collective identity, class is historically engrained in churches, representing wealth and power in society, even if nowadays presenting a far more eclectic and inclusive feel. This is not different for Liverpool Cathedral: its scale is large, noted as the fifth largest Cathedral in Europe, with grandeur, tall ceilings, big windows, statues and art exhibits alluding to affluence and wealth. The clothing of the clergy is typically smart and professional, which bestows a sense of importance, while the gold accents on furnishings connote internalized traditional ideas of class. Situated in the Georgian quarter in Liverpool, which was previously home to the upper-class Liverpool merchants and is still today representative of a prestigious

neighbourhood, LC is representative of Britain's class-based history (Earle 2015). It was thus of interest to explore participants' perceptions of the cultural value of their participation in LC's music outreach activities, and whether connotations of class, prestige and wealth still play a role in modern churches.

It was clear that most participants expressed pride, affinity and prestige about their connection to Liverpool Cathedral (Figure 25). Almost all questionnaire respondents expressed their respect for their choral leaders (87%) and agreed that "Our leaders have excellent musical skills and are encouraging!". Brenda agreed that "I mean it is amazing how Stephen can sing all the different parts, and then he plays while he is looking around and you are thinking, 'I can't play anything here'. And I am sure his musical knowledge is fantastic as well, apart from his theoretical knowledge, apart from actually playing" (Interview, 30 July 2021). The majority also felt proud (80%) about their LC participation: "very proud when we have the opportunity to sing in the Cathedral especially with the great choir" and "proud to join in the Cathedral events". The majority of respondents also agreed on the excellent musical quality (78%) and a feeling of connectedness to LC. For example, one L64 adult participant commented, "It is great to be involved in such a prominent community with our city", while another stated that they "feel part of the Cathedral community now". In this context, nearly half the respondents agreed on the notion of prestige (44%), commenting that LC is "a superb place to rehearse and perform" and that [they] "feel privileged to be able to be part of the choir at the Cathedral". Anne, who is a L64 choir member, explained her feelings of affiliation to Liverpool Cathedral as follows:

I didn't realize it was attached to the Cathedral at first.... I've always loved the Cathedral. I love the architecture there. I love the feeling in the choir in the Cathedral. And one of the first times, it was the first Christmas, and we did the Bell Carol, and we did it under the bridge and we did it unaccompanied... and it sounded gorgeous. I was so pleased with it.... But yeah, I do feel very proud of being in the Cathedral Choir now. (Interview, Anna, 30 July 2021)

Meanwhile, participating in LC's musical activities impacted on some people's participation in other activities (40%) and/or support of the Cathedral more widely, for example through donations (27%). One L64 participant commented that, "before would visit occasionally and now visit more regularly (before lockdown that is!) and will do again". Another participant of the L64 choir, whose child is a chorister, said that they "support cathedral in all aspects the cathedral choir has become a big part our families' life and they feel like a second family". Less significant to the respondents was the comparative perspective, as only a minority of respondents selected a preference towards LC's choirs as compared to other choirs (29%).

One parent of the Junior Choir summed up their perceptions as follows:

Singing in a Cathedral choir is definitely prestigious and different to say an amateur community choir. The cathedral is in a way out of reach for many people, but with our son singing in the choir we have definitely developed a strong connection with and love for the Cathedral. We are proud to tell others that our son sings in the choir here. We think the quality could be better, but then it is an outreach choir that is not auditioned. I think this may be different for the youth choir that will be auditioned and we definitely want our son to sing in it. (Questionnaire response, 8 May 2021)

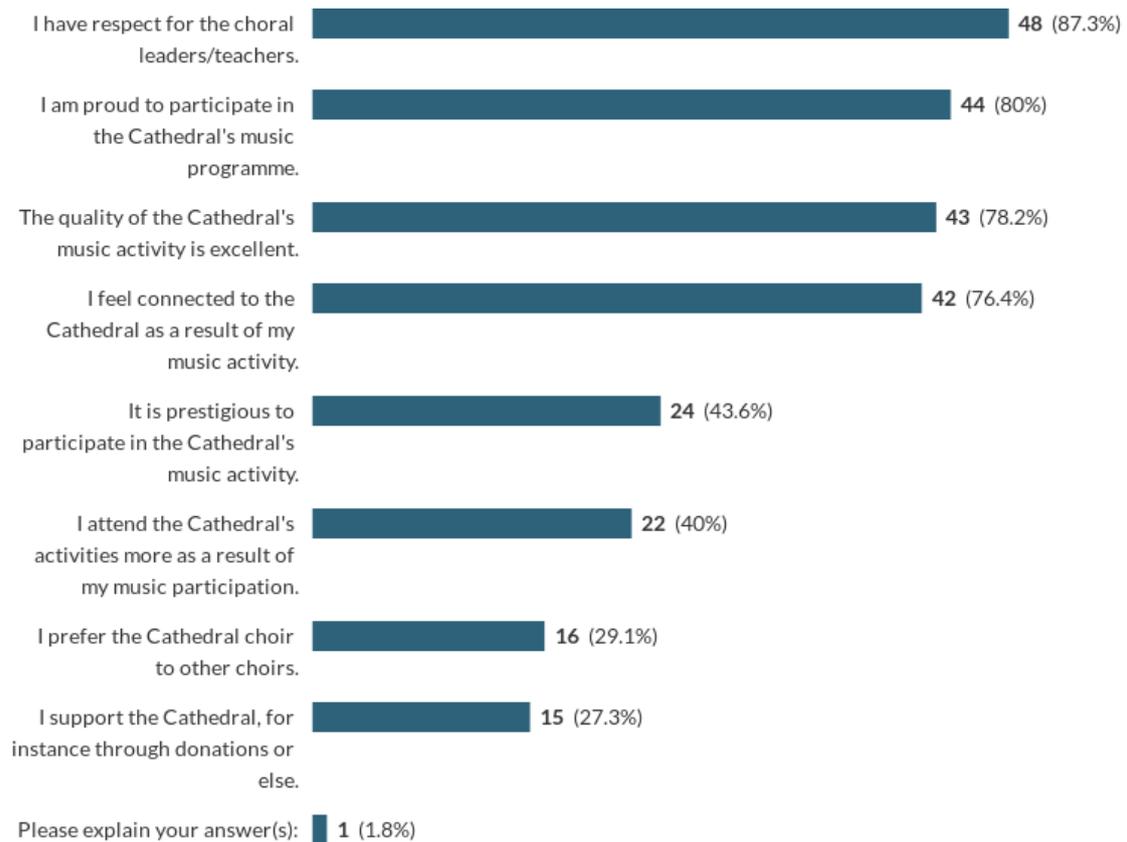


Figure 25: Questionnaire responses to “And do you think that your/your child's participation in the Cathedral's music programme has cultural value? Again, please select as many answers as possible.”

The Wellbeing Value of Online Music Participation

A lot of events that have been happening have a major impact in people's lives like the pandemic [and] everything else that is happening, global warming as well. I think people seek more options [that] bring them comfort and security.... People are more open to talk about their mental wellbeing and mental health, and that's probably where I see the most importance that any religion or religious establishments is to provide that kind of security and stability. (Interview, Milja, 30 July 2021)

It is widely accepted that musical engagement can enhance general wellbeing in the population, a much-needed necessity throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, singing in LC's outreach choirs is often experienced as “a positive, enjoyable thing to do”, as is “being a part of something”, which in turn impacts positively on participants' general sense of wellbeing. Many of the functions of music are social—music is fundamentally social, communicative and embodied—which were almost certainly altered for many by the pandemic situation. Moreover, social isolation has come at high cost to social and emotional wellbeing and mental health due to heightened rates of anxiety and depression (Carlson et al. 2021). It is therefore imperative to understand the ways in which participants found LC's online musical activities meaningful and useful for coping with the negative psychological consequences of the pandemic, and how LC's offerings supported resilience on individual and community levels. The research sought to understand how music helped participants for affect regulation during the pandemic, and whether and how music helped to mitigate negative effects of lockdown and prolonged stress and uncertainty.

While some participants “didn’t value online” and “felt less connected to people than when physically attending choir”, the positive impacts of in-person musical engagement extended to most participants during the global pandemic (Figure 26), whereby some participants suggested that they “felt happy after zooms” and “feeling part of something that was still going on whilst everything else was on pause helped wellbeing”. To many participants, the online music activity “gave me something to look forward to, to have a few hours of singing and to briefly catch up with friends”. Most significant to questionnaire respondents experiencing social isolation during the pandemic was that participating in LC’s online music activities made them feel good (87%), particularly “singing [which] is always a good vent for anxiety”, since “singing has a positive impact - makes you feel good” and “singing is good for my mental health and I always feel good after”. One L64 participant explained the importance of singing as follows:

Even the simulation of singing together brings some of the considerable benefits associated with choir membership. My knowledge of the music improved & my confidence, which would have been hard to maintain without any online practice. There is still a boost to motivation & mood & it was often easier to attend online so my participation was greater than it otherwise could have been. (Questionnaire response, 7 June 2021)

This positive perception could also be explained by the fact that the regular online music sessions gave some structure to the week (83%), saying that “having the class to look forward to gave some much needed structure to our weeks”, and also enhanced many participants’ perceptions of social connectedness (70%), notably for those participants who were shielding during the lockdowns. Several L64 choir members reflected on their shielding experiences as follows:

Due to having to shield for health reasons it helped with all the above, as it was a release from being indoors. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

Felt like life was being lived in a cage [and] the lockdown... made it worse. [The online activity] helped with the frustration, boredom and loneliness. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

L64 played major part in staying sensible and in good spirits through 1st & 2nd lockdowns specifically. (Questionnaire response, 7 July 2021)

As I live alone and was also sheltering during the pandemic the choir zoom on Monday night's gave focus to my week and also enabled me to keep in touch with my friends and choir members. It also gave the opportunity to get to know more members of the choir especially when we had a chat before practice started. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

To most children, the social benefits of continued music participation were similarly important, with parents commenting that “It was particularly good for my child to have contact with other children during lockdown” and “This activity is positive for my daughter”. Many of the questionnaire respondents were thus looking forward to the online musical activity (70%) and regarded it as the “highlight of the week”. For instance, one parent explained that “she [daughter] enjoyed the lessons [which] gave her routine and she was happier after the lessons.” Another parent agreed that:

The sessions with the choir and also the theory courses definitely helped my son, it gave some structure to the week rather than the days blending into one, they gave him ways to interact with others and all the while, getting the buzz from learning something new. (Questionnaire response, 11 May 2021)

More than half of the questionnaire respondents felt that their online music participation helped them to get through the lockdown (54%), reflecting that “Again, I take the view that the above

[questionnaire] statements are self-explanatory. I DID feel good. I did feel connected etc”. Many also agreed that LC’s activities provided important distraction from the pandemic (44%), saying that “It definitely gave me a chance to forget about other worries of the week”. And, as indicated throughout, to many respondents, their online music participation helped to relieve stress and anxiety (35%), which meant that “I always feel on a high after rehearsing and performing” and that the online music activities were “something positive to relieve the isolation & boredom”. One participant even exclaimed, “I thrived in lockdown!”

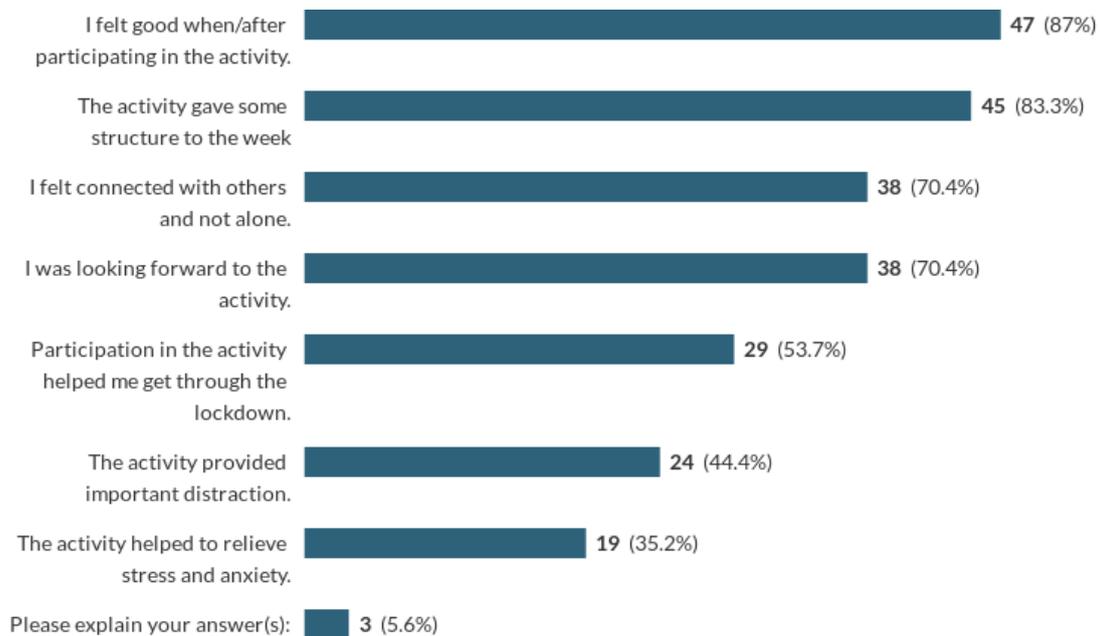


Figure 26: Questionnaire responses to “Please indicate whether your/your child's online music participation had any values during the pandemic related to wellbeing and/or (mental) health. Some brief answers are provided, but please also use the space to explain this sensitive area of the research.”

Generally, people's education, cultural engagement, and social and mental wellbeing has been adversely affected in countries internationally by the current Covid-19 pandemic due to disruptions to usual patterns of cultural and social behaviour. This research has shown that LC’s online music participation in social isolation helped alleviate many participants’ sense of purpose, learning, belonging and wellbeing. It is therefore of significant concern that the recent return to in-person music participation may enhance people’s abilities to cope with and recover from this pandemic, and be conducive to long-term consequences for education, belonging and wellbeing. Indeed, many participants of LC’s online music activities who “kept going” during the pandemic “came back to our first rehearsal to the cathedral because of what Zoom had done.... They came back with full energy and confident. There was nobody lacking confidence. And I think that is because what we did with Zoom.” (Interview, Chris Newton, 31 July 2021). This sense of positivity and confidence among many of LC’s music participants shows in powerful ways the social value of online music participation in the transition to post-Covid-19 society. What is needed now is continued research that sheds light on how in-person music participation can provide efficient strategies in the aftermath of the still ongoing pandemic and the transition to post-Covid-19 society.

Conclusions

One of the things we have noticed is the amount of people who are in their sort of 30s and 40s and who were born in Liverpool and have never been in the Cathedral. And for them, just to come to the Cathedral! It is a massive famous building that they've never been to... So, that was one of the great things about [music outreach] with people who developed the link with the Cathedral through that. And also with schools... that are further away, especially, and unfortunately poorer schools... Whereas now... all the parents come in and the parents enjoy it... especially the Christmas concert, it is a big thing... and a highlight, Easter for instance... [and] the spring term Big Sing at the Cathedral... It is good to see people's attachments... That's one of the things with parents being involved with the Cathedral, you know, religion is like politics, and there is quite a fine line [because] lots of people have quite a negative view of the church... So, I think our Cathedral is quite blessed with engaging people in a non-invasive basis, comfortably and, you know, we are not here to talk about "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" and actually sort of have meaningful conversations about real life. Obviously, they will pull it back into a Christian viewpoint, but it is all in a holistic way. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Music and religion are multiversally linked. Music was developed and cultivated through the church, creating a social hub for agents to come together to participate in the act of music and song (Vaughan 2015). Historically, music that is "good, serious and dignified" (Little 1925) was orchestrated, along with instrumentation like the organ, to represent the place, environment, people and God—the type of church and the values it promotes (Saint-Saëns and Baker 1991). Music serves the collective, embodied participation of groups of people, such as acts of collective worship, prayer and song, creating joint bonding experiences. Bringing people together through music, sharing ideas and meanings, connects one another and strengthens social bonds of those taking part in these practices (Suttie 2015). Music thereby helps the church to communicate and connect with its audience by means of sharing emotions, meanings and intentions (MacDonald and Glennie 2005), and invoking physical and/or psychosocial meanings and reactions. Music is thus harnessed by the church to form social relations and implement the ideas and constructions of religion into the consciousness of the people. It is heavily ingrained in the traditions and practices of religious institutions and used as a tool to connect with the masses united in one single church community (Lukes 1975). Music is a medium through which spiritual awareness can be enhanced and modelled in order to feel a connection to God, evident in hymns and worship, and services such as weddings, funerals and choirs, that combine ideas of religion and collective engagement and participation.

Even so, there is no denying that over the past century, religion has declined rapidly throughout the western world due to the profound impact of secularization, modernization and capitalism globally (Evans 2006; Franck and Iannaccone 2014). In the face of global secularization, especially with young people turning away from religion, it is clear that many churches adapt its services and come up with new and innovative ways to attract wider audiences (Arnold 2016). Churches have sought to overcome this dilemma by creating a brand identity and opening their cultural offering to create and maintain the value and attractiveness of the church. This postmodern reconstruction of the church is more inclusive, while still being influenced by ideology. Music has increasingly been used in churches to create a sense of corporate identity that reinforces social bonds within the community and attracts newcomers (Tepera 2017). The use of contemporary music and language in church breaks down the traditions (Evans 2006) and reinforces the new brand, with heightened focuses on physical and emotional experiences (Wagner 2019).

Indeed, Liverpool Cathedral's brand is reinforced by the symbol of the double-cross that is representative of its double-cross floor layout, while its website informs of the many and diverse range of events and happenings hosted by the Cathedral, ranging from yoga and interactive art exhibitions to concerts and performances (Figure 27), from men's groups to various charity events and fundraising concerts for local organizations, encouraging and welcoming visitors and members back to the church in future (see also Liverpool Cathedral Annual Review 2019). Collective participation in these events and happenings is seen as purposeful, with importance being placed on "inclusivity of all" in these activities. Indeed, and as observed by Milja, a L64 choir member, "some people associate cathedrals with classical music, which I didn't realize until I arrived in the UK, but classical music was considered as a middle upper-class thing". Liverpool Cathedral's music outreach programme clearly embodies this shift toward religious inclusivity, musical omnivorousness and the breaking down of socioeconomic barriers to classical music participation:

My focus and my interest are two-fold, one is involving every age group and bring them together and the second is, as I said, breaking down the snobbery of classical music. So, as you say, there is a huge stigma, upper class stigma attached to it in many ways, and it is [about] breaking it down and bringing people from different, who prefer different [music] genres, together and learn what classical music has to offer, and doing it through a lot of different ways. (Interview, Stephen Mannings, 22 January 2021)

Cultural and music participation thereby acts as a medium through which identity and meaning making are formed, such as taking part in raising money for a wider cause or listening to music to connect with the cause, ultimately connecting the inside of the church to outside society. It enhances a sense of "belonging without believing" (Davie 1990, 1993), as the modern churchgoers can participate without religiosity (Bullock 2017). This emphasis on the collective and active role of the community in LC's musical and other cultural activities shows how the church bonds with people through culture and music for wider societal meaning.

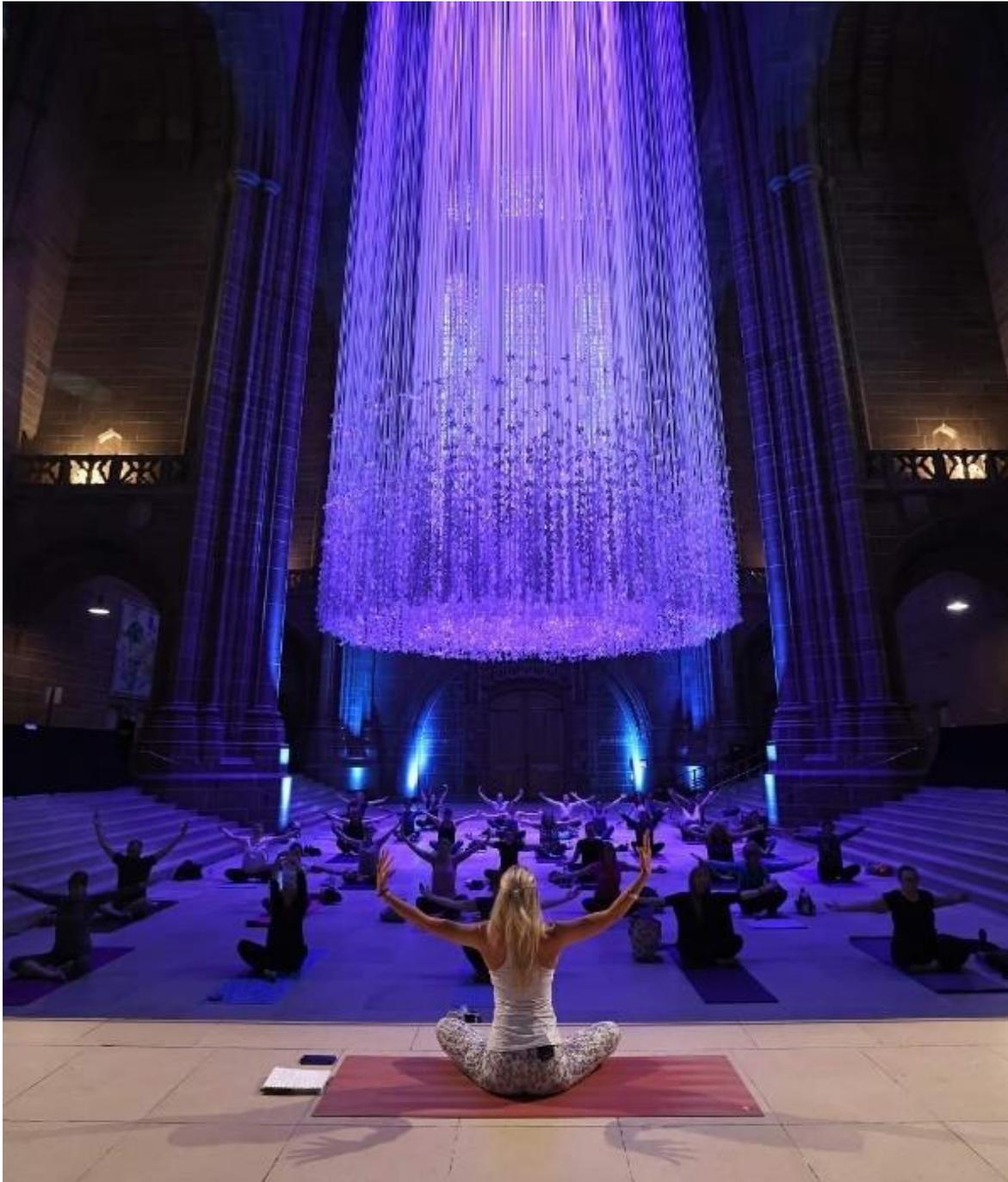


Figure 27: Image depicting “Yoga under the Peace Dove Art Installation” held at Liverpool Cathedral in June 2021. Photograph available at <https://m.facebook.com/LiverpoolCathedral/photos/a.142191061668/10157843086071669/?type=3>, accessed 15 June 2022.

With the start of the global pandemic, due to the spread of COVID-19, which was first declared on 11 March 2020 by the World Health Organization, social isolation in conjunction with widespread access to the internet and other technology has created an unprecedented situation in many spheres of public and private life. Liverpool Cathedral reacted via the online adaption of services and cultural and musical offerings that were henceforth delivered via digital and online technologies in LC’s continuing attempt to reach out to wider audiences. For instance, the virtual message “from one Cathedral to the Other” addressed to Liverpool Football Club by LC’s Dean Sue Jones on the musical theme of “You’ll Never Walk Alone” (Figure 17) was significant as it represented how the church is opening in acceptance, encapsulating football and church culture,

two important identities in Liverpool (see also Coles 1975). Clearly, then, LC represents a vision of overcoming classism and acceptance of new concepts, ideas and meanings, thereby bringing in younger audiences through new, innovative communication and technologies.

While engagement with the creative arts can have a positive impact on people's wellbeing (Levstek et al. 2021), the value—social, cultural, educational and wellbeing—of LC's switch to online music participation cannot be overstated. Indeed, arts engagement was an effective means for collective coping with uncertainty and psychological distress during the pandemic worldwide, ranging from neighbors singing on balconies,⁵ outdoor ballet performances,⁶ outdoor photography projections,⁷ the BBC's virtual choir performance with over 15000 people,⁸ and many more. The research presented in this report has similarly shown the importance of online music engagement in times of spatial distancing. It sheds light on the value of online musical participation for social connectedness and belonging, the reduction of negative emotions, music education and learning, and as a social determinant of health and wellbeing. Thus, even if virtual choirs do not offer the same social benefits as in-person choirs as they lack peer musical support and feedback due to being muted during rehearsals, virtual music choirs still had significant value in fostering a sense of social belonging and wellbeing during singing. Online music participation thus helped in affect management, mood enhancement, experiences of pleasure, a sense of purpose, and stress and anxiety reduction.

Overall, the research presented here explored participants' lived experiences of online music participation at Liverpool Cathedral's School of Music during the national lockdowns in the UK when in-person group music making was not possible. While there are obvious methodological limitations to this study, given the relatively small number of adult respondents and interviewees, the research provides some concrete evidence—through quantitative and qualitative empirical data—of the positive impact that online engagement with music had on participants' experiences and coping strategies in times of spatial distancing. Liverpool Cathedral provided a social, aesthetic and spiritual experience of musical participation as a means for connecting with the self, as well as with others. Importantly, too, Liverpool Cathedral's School of Music provided critical social support and contact for like-minded people of all ages, enhancing their sense of belonging to something bigger, and helping them to cope with the uncertainties and anxieties of the Covid-19 pandemic.

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/14/solidarity-balcony-singing-spreads-across-italy-during-lockdown>

⁶ <https://dancetabs.com/2020/09/outdoors-ballet-some-different-responses-to-lockdown-from-around-the-world/>

⁷ <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/people-look-at-a-photograph-by-slovenian-photographer-news-photo/1210189141>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-52860785>

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