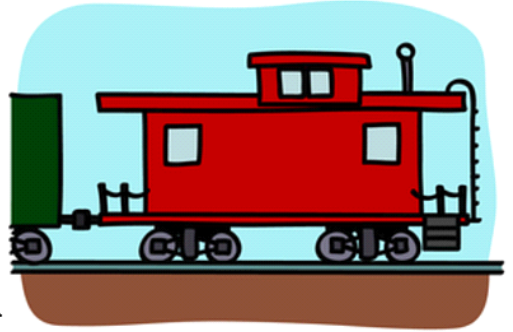




THE CABOOSE



AMBLER STATION SINGERS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE #5 DECEMBER 2020

What Happened ?? By John Dziel

Who would have thought that suddenly in March of 2020 the entire live entertainment industry would stop dead in it's tracks? That theaters, churches, and sports stadiums would be closed and sit empty? Yet this is exactly what happened. Ambler Station Singers was formed to bring joy to the public through singing but singing itself was deemed unsafe. We were well underway with rehearsals for our upcoming spring season when this hit. To say we were shocked and depressed was an understatement! Yet the threat was real. We were in a world where a pandemic was setting the rules. At first, it was to be a two week shutdown. Maybe we could continue after that... Sandi and I had just helped Lisa move into her new home and had spend the last two weeks working closely together. The decision was made to form a "nucleus." Our two families would function as one unit, sending one member out per week to do the shopping for all of us. Chris was working in Harrisburg, but Harrisburg decided that since he had visited Montgomery County, he was not allowed to come into work, so he moved in to Lisa's new home. Both now worked from there, telecommuting each day.



But what about the choirs? There were three choirs they were involved in. Both were involved in Ambler Station Singers, Lisa was the director for MPC Sanctuary Choir, and Chris was the director and organist for FPC in Lancaster. The churches switched to online services, and somehow the music programs needed to continue. Lisa's new house was quickly turned into a TV studio! On Wednesdays, we would do a Zoom get-together with Ambler Station Singers, Thursdays we would do the same for MPC. On Fridays and Saturdays we would record music and solos for MPC's Sunday service, and on Sunday mornings we would broadcast a music "live stream" for Chris's church! Wow..

There were a few weeks of despair and depression. After all, these choirs were not just a job, they were family! If one could telecommute for business, was there some way to telecommute a choir? We soon learned that due to the lag on the internet, not much could be accomplished in real-time. Some choirs had turned to doing virtual songs online... This might work. Everyone would sing their parts in the safety of their home and they would all be edited into a finished piece. Getting the hardware to do this turned out to be tricky since many other people had decided to try this too! By May, we had the editing equipment and software and tried our first song, "Thankful." We had just performed it and it was fresh in everyone's minds. It took about a month and a half to pull it together but it worked! This was followed by a multi-choir piece ("For the Beauty of the Earth"), followed by our most ambitious piece, "How Can I Keep From Singing."

Continued...





Still, something was lacking... By now we had recorded about 70 songs for MPC, and done about 80 combined broadcasts for FPC, MPC, and Ambler Stations. What was lacking was personal interaction. Regulations were starting to be relaxed. What if we all met in an open parking lot and sang with masks on? That is exactly what we tried! It was great to see everyone even from our 10 foot distances! Still, many were concerned that even this exposure might be too much. About that time, Lisa came to me with an article about "Drive-in" choirs! "Could we do this?" The answer was yes. We bought enough equipment to handle 16 people and scheduled four rehearsals. Each car would get a microphone and Lisa would direct from the back of the truck, with Chris or Jackie playing keyboards. Members would listen to each other by tuning in their FM radio. It worked! However, we knew the cold weather was coming and booking rehearsals past mid October would be impractical. So, what were we rehearsing? Well, we couldn't do a concert, but we could do a TV special!



The Ambler Station Singers' Holiday Special was born! We would go live on Sunday December 20th at 7:00 PM and Lisa would host the show. We recorded and edited three new virtual choir pieces, "Wells Fargo Wagon", "Marshmallow World", and "Light the Candles." In addition, we broke into teams to record several solo and duet pieces by members, as well as dramatic and comical items. We are now in the process of collecting "Holiday Tradition" videos from members that will be sprinkled throughout the show!

As of this writing, we have about 50% of the show in the can. We are going to promote this show the same way we would promote a concert. This will be an adventure as none of us has ever done a live broadcast of this magnitude! "Stay Tuned", as they would say, the best is yet to come! We may not know what the future will bring, but Ambler Station Singers is alive and well and waiting for the day when we can all return to singing together in public!



Above The growing collection of Virtual Choir videos we have done. The bottom three will be featured in our Holiday Special premiering Dec 20th

The Wedding of Lisa VanHeldorf and Christopher Henkel

Honestly, who didn't see this coming? What no one saw was (to quote Jerry Garcia) "what a long strange trip it's been!" Lisa and Chris had dreamed of a big wedding at which all of her choirs would sing. Well... That didn't happen! At least for now. Things began to change when Chris, who was working in Harrisburg, was banned from returning to work as he had visited Montgomery County. Lisa had just moved to a bigger house so it made sense for Chris to move in as well. It wasn't long before the proposal took place!

The thought was that when things calmed down there could be a wedding. As we all know, that didn't happen. As the fall approached, a plan "B" was formed. They would get married with a small group at Lisa's house and the wedding would be streamed online so all could attend, at least virtually. A date was set and all the preparations were made for a wedding with a reception afterwards. Turns out that a plan "C" and plan "D" were needed as well!



As the date approached the infection rate was on the rise and even a small party of 25 would be way too much. The wedding would now be a small affair held in the yard of a minister couple they knew. Six people would attend and there would be no live stream. The thought of a religious service without family able to attend (PA banned out of state visitors) weighed heavy on them... On to plan "E" !!

The wedding would now take place in two phases. The first would be a legal service and the second would take place at some point in the future when the original dreams of a big religious wedding with choirs could take place! With that in mind, Lisa and Chris went looking for a judge to marry them.

One was found and the marriage took place in Lisa's living room on November 21st at 5:00 PM

Since this was our usual studio recording location, the wedding was recorded, edited, and put online that night so that all of our family and friends could view it! Amazingly, all went off without a hitch! Lisa is retaining her last name due to professional concerns, but is very happy to now be called "Mrs Chris"!!

As for a big formal wedding, well, stay tuned! If you would like to view the wedding it is available on our Youtube channel!

[Youtube.com/AmblerStationSingers](https://www.youtube.com/AmblerStationSingers)



The Gift!

Maria took up a collection for a wedding gift for Lisa and Chris. The support was fantastic! A painting was commissioned for a picture of Walkers Underpass in Wissahickon Valley Park. This is the location of one of their first dates as well as the location that Chris proposed to Lisa. The artwork was done by Nancy Brockmon who was also responsible for the cover artwork on our Holiday 2019 programs. Enough was collected to pay for the painting as well as purchase many gift cards, all of which were presented to them on our weekly Zoom meeting by Maria who stopped by in person!



Our corporate address:
Ambler Station Singers
P.O. Box 476
Fort Washington, PA 19034



Don't Forget, we are on Facebook and Instagram as well!

All these feeds can be found on our main website. Here are the direct links:

facebook.com/AmblerStationSingers/
instagram.com/amblerstationsingers/



Donations to Our Group

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we are always looking for sponsorship and donations. One way your friends can help us is by making a small donation via PayPal. This link, like the others, can be found on our main website.

The Candy Story

One other issue with the shutdown was that it came right in the middle of the Spring Candy sales! A huge order arrived and we had no good way to deliver the orders.

The answer was that we loaded all the orders in the equipment truck at John's and let everyone know that they should go to his place and get their orders from the back of the truck! It worked out well with only two orders not getting picked up.



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STAFF

- Director:** Lisa VanHeldorf, Chris Henkel
- Accompanists:** Jackie Cohen
- Video Crew:** John Dziel, Lisa VanHeldorf
- Website Design:** John Dziel
- Soundman:** TJ Wilson
- Crew:** Jake VanHeldorf, Sandi & John Dziel

REHEARSALS (WHEN THEY RETURN)

WE REHEARSE WEEKLY AT SAINT MARIAM'S CHURCH
654 BETHLEHEM PIKE, FORT WASHINGTON 19034
7:30 PM WEDNESDAYS

The Caboose! Issue 5 December 2020 To submit ideas or articles, Email: Caboose@AmblerStationSingers.com
 The Caboose is published each season or as may be needed! For all other matters, Email: Office@AmblerStationSingers.com