

NANAIMO SINGS!: OUR STORY

September, 2009: Nanaimo Sings! collaborated with the BC Choral Federation to present a choir management workshop which was attended by people from all parts of the Island from Victoria to Campbell River and Port Alberni.

February, 2010: Bruce Pullen, renowned choral clinician presented a spring *Choral Tune-Up* workshop which was attended by singers from Nanaimo Sings! member choirs.

February, 2012: Nanaimo Sings! was pleased to present *A Vocal Winterlude* with workshops for both women and men. Morna Edmundson and Elektra presented the women's workshop and Jim Sparks facilitated the men's workshop. This was our chance to "Elektra-fy" and add "Spark-le" to our voices! Nanaimo Sings! extends its appreciation to SMBC (Spectacular Music BC) and Windsor Plywood for their support for this event.

February, 2014: *A Spring Tune-Up!* - Vocal workshops for men and women - was held with clinicians, Frances and Geordie Roberts. The women's workshop was held in the Shaw Auditorium of the VI Conference Centre. The men's workshop was held at St. Paul's Anglican Church.

April, 2014: We welcomed Swedish musician Sanna Valvanna as we collaborated again with the BCCF to present two days of workshops called *Sing and Shine with Body and Soul*. 270 children and youth aged 8-17 from six elementary schools and one secondary school worked with Sanna. Workshops were held at Park Avenue, Pauline Haarer and Woodlands Secondary schools.

October, 2014: *AnySing Goes!* was held at St. Andrew's United Church. This was a choral party during which Nanaimo Sings! member choirs sang for and with each other. It was an opportunity to celebrate the richly diverse choral community we all enjoy being part of.

March, 2016: A workshop for children entitled *South African Choral Music*, was presented by Sarona Mynhardt in collaboration with the BCCF. 63 children attended and 9 adults audited the workshop to observe/learn from Sarona.

November, 2016: Nanaimo Sings! hosted its first *Choral Coaching Clinic*. Fiona Blackburn, Brian Wismath and Willi Zwozdesky, three highly qualified choral clinicians, shared their knowledge and expertise with eight Nanaimo Sings! choirs. Each participating choir had the opportunity to work with two different clinicians on pieces that were works in progress. It was a great day of learning and song.

June – August, 2017: *A Summer Sing!* was facilitated by Patricia Plumley. Sixteen men and women sang, danced and learned more about the human voice and vocal production than they ever had before. Feedback was excellent with requests to do a Summer Sing! with Trish again next year.

February 10, 2018: *UP YOUR GAME: Strategies for Tenor/Bass Voices* was a skill-building demonstration workshop for experienced tenor/bass choral singers committed to refining their craft. Led by Willi Zwozdesky, participants sang together and individually, exploring the unique attributes of tenor and bass voices including voice type, register, timbre and falsetto.

June/July, 2018: *Ready, Set, Sing!* facilitated by Patricia Plumley in collaboration with James Duthie, this was our second mid-summer choral boost for those who just love to sing! Four two-hour sessions held allowed participants to explore new levels of vocal efficiency and artistic enjoyment in a supportive summer environment.

September, 2018: *Sight Singing from the Ground Up*. This was a three hour workshop offered by James Duthie to explore the fundamentals of sight singing.

October, 2018: *AnySing Goes! Take Two ...* After many requests to repeat this event and the time was finally right! Eleven Nanaimo Sings! choirs came together at St. Andrew's United Church to celebrate the Nanaimo choral community by singing for (and with) each other.

March 2, 2019: *Sing 'Hello' to Spring with a Vocal Tune-up*, was a full day workshop dedicated to working with Soprano/Alto and Tenor/Bass voices, both separately and together. We were pleased to welcome Morna Edmundson and David Stratkauskas as our facilitators. Morna is one of Canada's best-known choral conductors, with a strong reputation for excellence. Based in Vancouver, she is Artistic Director of Elektra Women's Choir and EnChor, an auditioned SATB choir. David, a native of Victoria, is the organist at the Church of Saint John the Divine.

He has directed the St. John's Chamber Singers, the Victoria Baroque Players, the Victoria Children's Choir and the Recital Choir, an ensemble for 10-12 year old singers. Over 90 singers from all parts of Central VI and the Gulf Island attended this successful workshop.

COVID Pandemic – 2020-21

This was a sad time for Nanaimo Sings! The Festival scheduled for 2021 was cancelled as were some workshops that had been planned. Singers lost their choir communities and the joy of singing that brought so much to their lives. Several of our choirs went completely dark. Others carried on albeit in very new ways that meant singers were meeting on zoom, outdoors, in small gatherings and distanced wearing masks. Sanitizing became part of our routine.

In a determined effort to maintain connection with our singers, the Nanaimo Sings! planners did a number of things.

Fall, 2020: With expert assistance from James Chappell, a member of our Planning Team, a video was created to chronicle our work over the years. To develop this video, we delved into our archives to find pictures and audio clips of our work through the years. It was a wonderful walk down memory lane... a true celebration of Nanaimo Sings! and all that it stands for.

Click this link to watch a video of [Celebrate Nanaimo Sings!](#)

Fall, 2020 – Spring, 2021: In the absence of being able to gather to sing in person, a virtual choir project called *Keeping Calm and Singing On* was launched. 66 singers represented 14 Nanaimo Sings! choirs in this project to perform *Hearth and Fire*, written by Gordon Bok, and *Island Oohlahey*, written by Nanaimo singer/songwriter Rick Scott with Valerie Hennell. Willi Zwozdesky, arranger of *Hearth and Fire*, was the Artistic Director for the project. Nico Rhodes, arranger of *Island Oohlahey*, was the pianist. We were fortunate to have James Chappell do the video editing for this project.

To watch the video of the Virtual Choir performances from the Nanaimo Sings! pandemic project, click this link: [Keeping Calm and Singing On](#).

June – August, 2021: *Back in the Swing: Getting Ready to Sing ...* a series of virtual sessions designed to recover the vocal fitness that may have been lost during the pandemic. **Patricia Plumley**, experienced voice teacher, offered these sessions on zoom. Singers from twelve Nanaimo Sings! choirs attended as well as singers from Duncan, Salt Spring Island, Oceanside, Craig Bay, Qualicum Beach, Courtenay/Comox and Campbell River.

February, 2024: *Singing with Your Ears* was an innovative full day workshop designed to introduce choral singers to advanced ensemble techniques. With a focus on the ear, rather than the voice, as the key to great choral singing, this workshop took singers on a technical, physical and intellectual journey into intuitive singing based on hearing and listening. It was facilitated by Kathryn Whitney, artistic director, choral conductor, singer, musicologist and voice teacher who works in Canada, the UK and globally through her virtual choirs. Approximately 80 singers from Nanaimo Sings! choirs attended.

October, 2024 *Singing With Your Eyes: know the score.* A beginner's guide to reading music, this workshop is focused on understanding a music score ... making sense of what you see when you look at a piece of choral music. Registration for this workshop was limited to 40 participants and was facilitated by Patricia Plumley, choral conductor and music teacher.

Patricia divides her time between Vancouver Island and the mainland. She has been on faculty at Vancouver Community College since 1988 where she has taught piano, voice, class piano, piano pedagogy, and keyboard literature. As well, she conducts the Willan Community Choir, co-conducts the VCC Concert Choir and coaches chamber collaborations. On Vancouver Island, Patricia conducts A Cappella Plus, the Village Voices of Qualicum Beach, the Vancouver Island Symphony's Children's Choir and the Vancouver Island Choir. She enjoys teaching voice and piano at her studio in Nanoose Bay.

March, 2026 *Pitch Blend Balance.* This was a wonderful day of learning and singing together with two exceptionally talented and widely respected clinicians: Morna Edmundson and Willi Zwozdesky. Nanaimo Sings! was delighted to welcome 121 singers representing 37 choirs from all over Vancouver Island as well as the Lower Mainland.

The day was structured so that singers worked on two selections in upper and lower voice sectionals as well as together on three pieces for mixed voices. The focus was on pitch, blend and balance: three of the most critical factors in choral performance. It was exhilarating to hear the musical growth as the singers worked with Morna and Willi to prepare for a performance at the end of the day. The final result after just 5 hours of rehearsal was remarkable.