

COMMUNITY VOICES: BC'S choral connections in the time of COVID-19

- By Thea Tanicala
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All that we know has been greatly affected by recent events. Across the country, students, teachers, choirs, athletes, families and communities are dealing with many changes, and at Bakersfield College, we're learning to adapt while ensuring we keep the essence of our community and purpose.

As president of the BC Chamber Singers, I am proud of our program which strives to create an environment and an experience that revolves around inclusivity and family. Our program is one that relies on deep human connection and interaction, and as we begin the upcoming school year, I can't help but think that nothing will change.

Usually, BC's Chamber Singers would have just finished a two to three day retreat in the woods where we learn to support one another, sing together and establish a strong family connection that we can rely on for years. Aug. 18 would have been our first performance at the New Student Convocation, which is our annual introduction to the new incoming students.

These are things we can no longer do and it's extremely challenging to be physically distanced from my choir family, but it's even more difficult to accept the fact that we're not able to make beautiful music together. I said earlier that nothing may change, but it's important to realize that change is necessary. Things may not be how we want them to be, but we can do everything in our power to make sure that we rise to the occasion, adapt to the circumstances and maintain the essence and value of what it means to be part of something greater than ourselves. I believe this is exactly what we are trying to do.

Earlier this month, BC's Chamber Singers conducted our first virtual retreat where members received goody bags filled with familiar treats like mini s'mores to represent sitting by the campfires, BC choir wristbands and a Chamber Singers yard sign to remind us we are still in this together and connected.

This fall, we look forward to hosting a virtual concert on Nov. 6 titled "Becoming Us," where we will collaborate with BC's photography and videography students. We will also hold the first virtual Chamber Choir Festival with local high schools where composer Eric Whitacre will be the guest speaker. We also acknowledge the different hardships our society is facing and will be studying some African American composers this semester and feature four female composers in the repertoire of our virtual concert.

Music is what drives me and it's been the source of comfort and motivation during quarantine. Together, it has to be our mission to keep moving forward and to work as hard as we can until one day we can meet with each other and sing side by side.

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