

Introduction

- There's growing interest in the positive impact of choral singing on health and wellness of older adults (Cohen 2006; Johnson et al., 2015, 2018). Singing in a choir is the most popular adult hobby (Grunwald & Chorus America, 2019).
- Radiologic evidence supports widespread, bilateral, cortical and subcortical overlapping neurocorrelates of language and music (Monroe et al. 2020; Tomaino, 2010; Patel, 2010).
- Sociobiological theory supports group singing as a way to increase social connectedness, social bonding, and group resiliency and decrease loneliness (Good et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020).
- LPAA values support participation in meaningful activities for living well with aphasia, yet IWA often have limited access to participating in the creative arts (Pound et al., 2000).
- Sustained choir participation may "induce transformative changes in regards to the stigma of disability" (Good et al., 2020).

Aphasia Tones Choir was established in 2009 as a Life Participation activity group (LPAA Project Group, 2000)

- Ability-focused model--participation at every level
- Performances--Annual concerts and special events
- Emphasis on musicianship, growth through challenge, aphasia advocacy, and social community

Virtual Transition

In March, 2020, COVID-19 disrupted our once weekly choir rehearsals. The Aphasia Treatment Program quickly transitioned to online communication groups. Audio lag on Zoom was a barrier to choral singing. After observing a Virtual Connections (www.aphasia.com/virtual-connections-info/) singing session, we adapted our choral model to providing access to highly familiar songs to promote upbeat, positive engagement for our members to sing along to while muted. Through a **continuous process of problem solving** addressing technical challenges, our 90 minute, once a week rehearsals focused on **maximizing participation and interaction**.

Greetings

Physical & Vocal Warm ups

Songs 1-2

Conversation Break

Songs 3-5

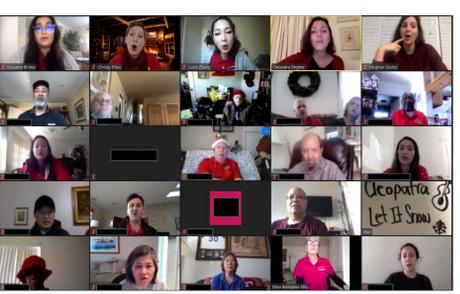
Wrap Up

Tips for Navigating Zoom

- Host controls Mute and Unmute for members
- No headphones while leading songs with karaoke track; Do NOT check "share computer sound"
- Troubleshoot audio prior to rehearsal
- Provide Zoom supports for member training
- Speaker vs. Gallery view
- Review Zoom features at beginning of session

The Show Must Go On!

Synchronous Singing



- Call and Response: selecting specific melodic lines/stanzas
- Pacing: follow along with tapping
- Give alternatives to lyrics (oo, ah, ma)
- Select verbal warm-ups that allow for unmuted group vocalizations
- Use of live singer with instrumental track or live guitar
- Conducting strategies (i.e., hand gestures to show pitch, rate, dynamics)
- Mouth shape cues to support members with apraxia

Visual Supports

- Keyword writing on separate Zoom tile/whiteboard
- Lyric powerpoint with pictures that support content
- Printed visuals to support comprehension
- Increase multimodal communication (e.g. gestures)

Music Selection Examples

I'm Here (Aphasia is a Challenge)
 By: The Aphasia Tones, Madison Cano Fox and Marion Alonso

I Won't Back Down- Tom Petty

Ring of Fire- Johnny Cash

Stand by Me- Ben E. King

Don't Stop Believin- Journey

Dancing Queen- ABBA

Fight Song- Rachel Platten

Top of the World- Carpenters

One Voice- The Wailin' Jennys

Choir Engagement

- Provide agenda of rehearsal
- Use of novel stimuli (e.g. hats, choreography, holidays decor)
- Use of lyric powerpoints filled with past performance photos of members to share prior successes
- Supported conversation breaks with music-related topics
- Personal Goal Examples:
 - Perform a solo
 - Develop deep breathing
 - Memorize lyrics
- Value of a challenge: learn new songs
- Multi-modal member "shout-outs" acknowledging participation
- Members call on peers to encourage solos/duets/trios during a song
- Elicit member feedback to check in and improve future rehearsals.
- Post-session emails with choir links
- Weekly Summertime Themes:
 - Summer; Courage; Blast From the Past; Community
- Signature events: Semester Showcase, Holiday Sing-a-Long

Program Evaluation: Member Feedback (n=15)

Logistical Questions	Psychosocial Questions
Whiteboard: 73% rated helpful	Improve mood ? Average 9.9/10
Chat messages: 33% rated helpful	Improve communication ? 80% Yes
Lyric PowerPoint: 93% rated helpful	Improve confidence ? 100% Yes
Post-session Emails: Average 7/10	Feel connected ? Average 8.5/10
Satisfaction with music selection: Average 8.6/10	Preferred format : In-person (53%), Virtual (20%), Both (27%)

Final Notes

- Aphasia Tones members successfully participated in virtual choir to **interact, enjoy music making, and build community**. Rehearsals continue to grow and evolve.
- A few members prefer virtual format. Many others express looking forward to the return of on-campus choir. We can agree with Talmage (2020): **"It is not choir as we know it, but for now it offers a good enough musical asylum."**



Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Aphasia Tones Choir Team Members Christy Thies, Cleopatra Degher; Aphasia Access; Laura Cook (<https://voicesofaphasia.com/blog/>); the SLHS faculty and staff at CSUEB, and the Aphasia Tones Community. Thanks to Aphasia Choirs Go Global for camaraderie and support.

References:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HC2-dAVa6PbtjPWkY8DWpanOP1bc49kcnzgdUv0yJA/edit?usp=sharing>