



Guide to Remote Choir Video Recording

(based on material we have used previously)

- Shawn stresses that recording is NOT mandatory and all singers are welcome to continue joining us for rehearsals. We are working on other materials as well. On the other hand, practising this video-making process now means that we can do it more efficiently in the future. We encourage all singers to try making a recording!
- Furthermore, our audience wants to see us and hear us singing. We are using mostly concert videos, and they are excellent. Giving our friends and supporters the opportunity to watch us as we sing 'more live' is a wonderful addition to our seasonal virtual concerts!
- The sound and video editors make us sound and look good – and we should be proud of showing ourselves in this positive manner!

Step 1:

Cue up the *guide track* you've downloaded from the bottom of the Achill Practice page: "<https://achill.ca/practice>". Use a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or a desktop computer. Plug in your headphones, and position yourself so you have a good view of Shawn on that video-playing device's screen.

Step 2:

Place your video-recording device (smartphone or tablet, etc.) at eye-level so that your face is well-framed. **Please use landscape-mode** (like your TV). Frame yourself so that you show your shoulders and head, and up to just above your head. Give our editors some space around your head so that he can make everyone's head about the same size!

Step 3:

Press 'Record' on your phone or other video recording device. Get into position (stand/sit straight, shoulders back, music up), start the guide track on your video-playing device, and sing your part along with your lead(s). At the beginning of the guide track there is a three-count, and then you are to clap to help the editors synchronize all the tracks. **Please include that clap in your video!** Having a helper, if one is available, will make this a tad easier. Please stay still, attentively watching the camera lens, until the accompaniment on the guide-track finishes – just the same as you would during a concert!

Step 4:

Do as many 'takes' as you like. But upload only one – the one you like best – to the Dropbox at this address: (You do not need a Dropbox account to do this!)
<https://www.dropbox.com/request/JoV4ZlmhdsqkEYsuOwVeg>
There will be a blue box that says **UPLOAD**. Click on that and choose "FILE", find the desired file on your computer/table/phone, select it, and upload it to the Dropbox folder. **You might instead find your video in your Photos.** (You do not need a Dropbox account to do this!)

We wish these files to be submitted by Friday, October 29th.

John Lemke president@achill.ca / 519-216-2830
and Mark Whitcombe support@achill.ca / 519-939-0020
are available for help at (almost) any time.

ACS video recording notes

Some Tips:

- Filename syntax will be critically important: An organized and clear filename syntax can easily save 3-5 hours over the course of the project and reduce the chances of someone getting missed. Your recording software will automatically choose the type of file that's appropriate, and will add the file type extension automatically to the end of the file name (if that even shows).

*If you have issues correctly naming files,
please contact Mark Whitcombe at support@achill.ca,
or by phone at 519-939-0020 for help!*

[SECTION LETTER]_[FULL NAME]_[OLOVE]

First letter of the filename is S/A/T/B depending on section
so a quick file sort will auto-group by section.

Filename examples:

B_ACHILL_JOHN_LEMKE_OLOVE.mp4 (or .mov, etc.)

- The guide track recordings are on the bottom of the achill.ca/practice page of the website. Some of us prefer using the guide track for our particular section, and others prefer using the full SATB guide track so as to be able to hear the full music. Your choice!
- Keep in mind that you're going to be dealing here with two (2) videos:
 - first, a 'guide track', which is the video of Shawn conducting combined with the sounds of your section,
 - and second, the video you'll be making of yourself.
- You'll also be using two (2) devices:
 - a video-playing device for the guide track,
 - and a video-recording device for the video you make.
 - You'll also need headphones/earbuds.
- You can position your video-recording device right above or below the video-playing device. If you're playing the 'guide track' on a laptop, you can just lean your smartphone against your laptop screen to record yourself, using the screen's angle to adjust the smartphone so that you get a good image of your face. Try lifting both devices up onto a higher surface, like a breakfast bar. Tape the music to something just off to the side (or have a helper hold it) rather than having to look up and down.
- Filming in soft, even daylight works best, so preferably not direct sun. Be aware that whatever shows in the background is public for all to see, i.e., full liquor cabinets ... Plain but not bright backgrounds generally work best. No windows behind you!
- Set your camera to record at 1080p or 720p. That video quality is sufficient. Please do NOT send HDR video. Some very new (read:\$\$\$) smartphones can record HDR (high dynamic range video) and this adds an unnecessary amount of additional video tone-mapping and transcoding work. Other than that, any video format can be accepted. Our editors ca don't need or want 4k video with a 700MB file size ...
- It is preferable to use the rear camera of a smartphone for its superior quality. Selfie mode is OK if you don't have someone to check the framing for you but the rear-camera of a smartphone is better.

Frequently Asked Questions ... and Answers!

Q: "What's the best device to record on?"

A: Whichever one you feel most comfortable using. Seriously.

If you're used to using your laptop or desktop to Zoom, then go ahead and record on it.

For a WINDOWS device, click START (the little window-looking icon at bottom left), then start typing 'camera'. The WINDOWS Camera app will come up. It'll let you take a selfie, or record a video with sound. Choose the latter by clicking on the video icon on the right side of the app's window.

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For Mac, etc, you can use Photo Booth.

You'll then use your smartphone (preferably with earphones) to play the video of Shawn and your section lead(s) as you sing along. Try to stay with Shawn's tempo! This will allow you to be a bit farther away from the camera. It might be best if you could prop your camera with something. Your music folder might help that work.

But you can use any combination of smartphone, tablet, laptop, desktop computer, etc., to do either of the two jobs: playing the accompaniment video while recording your own contribution.

Q: "What microphone should I use?"

A: The integrated mic in your device will do just fine. Just shoot the video of yourself and it'll sound great.

Interestingly, the headset mic you got for Zoom conferencing might not do such a good job.

Most are inferior in quality compared to your recording device's built-in mic. If you have a fancy-schmancy mic that plugs into your device, go for it, just make sure your levels aren't too loud so that you "clip" or distort the sound. To catch any "distortion" from too-loud volume, have a good listen to your track before you send it in.

The earbud with a microphone bump on it that came with your smartphone is also a good microphone to use. Make sure you plug it in. ☺

Q: "Why are there so many wires?"

A: If you listen with a headphone, and also record with a headphone-with-mic, you will definitely be wired up. This is why I recommend just using the mic that's built into your phone/tablet/laptop.

Q: "I made a boo-boo."

A: That's ok! A teeny boo-boo here or there? *Fuhgeddaboutit*. Sang the lyrics to verse 3 in verse 2? Re-record please. There isn't time available for me to splice multiple takes for 40-55 recordings, so just pick your best and send it in. Little things like cut-offs and downbeats are notoriously hard to line up when recording this way so you'll all have some 'digital help'. Shhhh, don't tell anybody.

Q: "How 'big' a voice should I sing with?"

A: Well, conventional wisdom for recording dictates 'under-singing', but don't under-sing for this. Get a good breath and sing your phrases just as you would in choir. Forte is forte. Piano is piano. May God have mercy on your neighbours – and the people you live with!

Q: "How should I stagger-breathe?"

A: Well, for example in Rutter there's often a pretty long phrase that ends each time with "every blessing". Don't breathe where your guide/lead breathes. Instead, practise with the track and choose somewhere else for your sneak-breath (unless you're a superhero). Some sections pre-negotiate their catch-breaths a bit at a rehearsal, but anywhere that isn't your guide/lead's spot will probably be fine.

Q: "I feel like the recording I made sounds like an angry raccoon berating a double-locked garbage can"

A: As the leads can attest: we've all been there. Don't worry, it won't sound bad when we put you into the choir. It will sound unfamiliar and strange (like hearing yourself on an answering machine circa 1989). The finished recording will sound wonderful with all the voices blended.

Q: I'm bamboozled by the prospect of getting my singing PLUS my videoing working together ... too many balls in the air at one time ... What can I do?

Talk to Mark Whitcombe: support@achill.ca / 519-939-0020...