

FINAL

In-Person Singing Plan during COVID-19 Pandemic



October 17, 2020

PURPOSE

This document will establish a plan to return to in-person singing for members of the ScotianAires, in a safe manner, that follows all Nova Scotia Public Health requirements and guidance from relevant organizations such as Harmony Inc. and the NS Choral Federation.

The chorus will continue to host virtual rehearsals for members for as long as required, until such time as members can return to in-person singing as a full chorus. Participation in any in-person singing rehearsals/events will be completely voluntary for members.

The health and safety of members is a priority and all decisions related to managing in-person singing during the COVID-19 pandemic, will be made with this in mind.

BACKGROUND

Since March 2020, when the Province of Nova Scotia declared a state of emergency to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of Nova Scotians during the pandemic, the ScotianAires have been hosting their rehearsals on Zoom. All in-person singing was suspended, and contests and other events cancelled or held virtually.

In July 2020, a survey was completed by members to provide feedback on virtual rehearsals in order to inform planning for future virtual rehearsals. The overall results were very positive, recognizing the significant effort and energy being expended to create a positive experience for members. One consistent theme shared by members, however, was the inability to hear others, create harmony, and socialize with their fellow sisters in Harmony.

After 6 months of following all NS public health direction, the state of the pandemic in Nova Scotia is very favorable, with few to no new cases and no community transmission. Public health restrictions have slowly been easing to allow for small to medium in-person gatherings and larger outdoor gatherings. Depending on the type of activity, the gathering may require wearing masks or observing physical distancing and other protective measures. Science continues to show that singing is an activity which potentially has increased risks for COVID-19 transmission, therefore, any in-person singing should be done with full awareness of the risks and full compliance with the NS public health guidelines.

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

In September 2020, a ScotianAires COVID-19 Task Force (CTF) was established to develop and implement a plan to support a gradual return to in-person singing in a variety of situations, that would protect the health and safety of members.

The CTF includes members from the Directing team, executive and membership:

- Sue Kember, Director
- Adele Merritt, Assistant Director
- Tanya Reid, President
- Elizabeth Houghton, Chair Strategic Planning
- Kelly Cawthra, Member
- Debra Gilbert, Member

The CTF will meet as frequently as necessary to ensure a well-developed plan is established and implemented, and to adjust the plan as we continue to manage in the pandemic, until such time as the state of emergency is over and public health measures are no longer required during in-person singing. At which time, this plan will continue to be available as a reference document should another break from in-person rehearsals be required. Membership may change over time but will continue to include representation from the directing team, leadership, and membership.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

A phased return to in-person singing, in line with evolving public health guidance, will support the continued learning, nourishment, and sisterhood of the chorus. It will supplement the virtual rehearsals that will continue to be the primary method of chorus rehearsal for the foreseeable future. The in-person singing, in limited numbers, will also address the mental well-being and social needs of the chorus members, for those who wish to, and are able to participate.

The outcome of the work of the CTF will be a plan:

- to support the safety of members during in-person singing, through various stages of the pandemic;
- to identify measures needed to address safety in the physical rehearsal space;
- to outline the behaviour expectations of members when they gather to sing in-person, in various situations.

COVID AND SINGING

There is significant information available to members on the Coronavirus: how it is spread, the symptoms and risks of transmission as well as information on transmission through singing.

Information on COVID-19 can be found on many sites, only some of which are included below for reference. Information from these sites and documents have been reviewed and considered in the development of this plan:

[NS Response to Coronavirus](#)

[NS Protect Yourself and Others from Coronavirus](#)

[BHS: Interim Guidance for BHS Ensembles and Singing Communities](#) (June 2020)

[Harmony Inc and COVID-19](#)

[NS COVID 19 Guidance for vocalists and Instrumentalists](#)

[NSCF: Guidelines for Choral Singing in Nova Scotia \(dated August 14, 2020\)](#)

MEMBER PARTICIPATION

August 20, 2020 HI Letter: "According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada, everyone, regardless of age, is at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19. Older adults and people with underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness if they contract the virus. Some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus."

Member participation at in-person rehearsals will be on a voluntary basis. Information will be communicated to members on the health and safety measures and protocols in place to provide as safe an environment as possible, while recognizing that during the pandemic, risk of transmission of COVID-19 can exist even when all protocols are followed.

The CTF will ask for members to identify themselves, at various points, in order to proceed with planning for in-person rehearsals. Members will be scheduled on a bi-weekly rotation so that there is a 14 day gap in their attendance as an additional measure to reduce risk. The Directing team will develop a rehearsal plan that will ensure members who have volunteered, have an opportunity to participate. When possible, recordings of Zoom and in-person rehearsals will be made available to members. The rehearsal schedule will cover the same songs for both the in-person and Zoom rehearsals. Notes will be taken from each rehearsal and shared with the President for a merged About Last Night to be shared with all members.

Members should not feel pressured to participate at in-person singing activities and there will be no negative impact, or penalty for members who choose not to participate at in-person singing due personal reasons.

Members should educate themselves on the status of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia as well as the symptoms and behaviours that can lead to transmission. NS Health also has information on health issues that may put themselves and others at greater risk (i.e. older adults, and other health conditions) when attending any in-person chorus related activities. Please note that Public Health currently does not recommend that people who are more likely to experience complications of COVID-19 – including older adults – sing with others in person. Each member must assess their own personal circumstances and determine whether participating at in-person rehearsals is the best decision for themselves, family members, and other members of the chorus.

For information on people who may be at higher risk of complications from COVID-19, please see the following Government of Canada website: [Canada: People at Higher Risk](#)

PHASES FOR IN-PERSON SINGING

COVID-19 Guidance for BHS Ensembles and Singing Communities | Rev. 08-21-2020 cab: "On August 10, 2020, choral leaders presented a joint webinar to discuss the ongoing research about aerosols and singing. This session focused on the preliminary release of results from scientific studies showing that singing and theatrical speaking can widely spread droplets which may contain viruses - and that masking, limited contact time, good ventilation, and air filtration are essential elements in reducing risk."

The phases below are identified based on current coronavirus information and NS public health guidance and may be adjusted as the public health situation changes in Nova Scotia. The following phases are identified to allow for a gradual and cautious return to in-person singing for members. The phases support informed decisions at each stage, as public health guidance changes and will inform the decisions by the CTF in moving from one stage to the next. At any point in time, a decision can be made to revert to an earlier phase based

on current and local pandemic conditions. The CTF will continue to monitor and assess conditions that may affect the current measures needed to protect members.

Baseline – all chorus activities are delivered in a virtual model with no chorus activities taking place in-person; virtual rehearsals will continue to be a critical component of chorus development, until such time as the chorus can return to full in-person rehearsals. Each phase of the return to in-person singing plan is based on this starting point (as of September 2020).

Phase 1 – Return to In-Person Singing Outside

This phase outlines guidance for informal, small gatherings of members who may wish to sing together, while following the required public health measures. Gathering is informal and not a planned ScotianAires event. Guidelines were shared with members to encourage safe in-person singing outside. Guidelines shared in ALN September 16, 2020.

Phase 2 – Hybrid Model with Concurrent Virtual and In-Person Rehearsals

This phase outlines guidance for scheduled gatherings of a small number of members who voluntarily participate at in-person rehearsals or other in-person singing activities, while following the required public health measures.

Participation is limited to the number of members that are safely allowed in the rehearsal hall at any one time, based on the current NS public health guidance. Rehearsal time will be based on the current NSCF guidance where in-person singing time may be limited based on air exchange factors for the space.

In-person rehearsals may include other non-singing activities that will be conducted following the appropriate NS public health guidance. One member of the Directing team will be present on a rotating basis as well as one member of the CTF.

Other small in-person singing activities may be considered based on NS Public Health guidance.

Phase 3 – Other in-Person Singing Activities/Events

This phase outlines guidance for large gatherings or events (e.g. performances) where members participate at in-person singing, while following the required public health measures. The criteria for this phase will be developed as public health restrictions ease.

Final Phase – Return to Full Chorus In-Person Singing

This phase represents guidance for return to full chorus in-person rehearsals. Virtual rehearsals would no longer take place. Live rehearsal streaming would again be offered for those unable to participate in-person due to various reasons. This phase will be implemented as NS public health guidance permits and where required health and safety measures will be followed.

PROTOCOLS FOR IN-PERSON SINGING – PHASE 1

For protocols associated with in-person singing at outdoor gatherings (Phase 1), please refer to the [Guidelines for In-Person Singing Outdoors](#) dated September 15, 2020 as shared by the CTF in About Last Night and available in dropbox.

PROTOCOLS FOR IN-PERSON SINGING – PHASE 2

NS Guidance for Musicians: “Using a layered approach with multiple measures including environmental cleaning, conducting frequent hand hygiene and maintaining respiratory etiquette decreases the number of interactions and increases the safety of interactions that occur.”

The following protocols address the minimum requirements for in-person singing. The measures outlined below are based on the NS public health requirements and guidance of Harmony Inc., BHS, and the NSCF. They are intended to reduce the interactions among members, increase the safety of members, and reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. Measures will address both the physical space and member actions.

Following the first in-person rehearsal, the Task Force will meet to review and make any adjustments to the protocols to improve safety. On-going review and feedback from members will be routinely considered as part of the safety protocols for successful and safe in-person singing activities.

Members’ Responsibilities

The following outlines the responsibilities of any member voluntarily participating at an in-person singing activity in phase 2:

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE:

- Each member should [self-screen](#) prior to attending an in-person rehearsal; should a member feel unwell or be experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, they should **not** attend the rehearsal in order to keep themselves and other members safe; the member should contact 811 and follow the direction of NS Health;
- If a member has traveled outside the Atlantic bubble within the 14 days preceding the planned in-person singing activity, the member should **not** attend;
- If a member is referred for testing, they need to self-isolate right away and **cannot** attend rehearsal.
- If a member lives with someone who has been referred for testing and /or is awaiting test results, the member should **not** attend rehearsal;
- If a member is unable to attend the rehearsal for which they’ve been scheduled, please contact the “away” email for your section, as soon as possible, to let the planning team know.

WHILE YOU’RE THERE:

- Answer all screening questions upon arrival; if you answer “yes” to any of the screening questions, you will **not** be able to attend practice that evening;
- Wear a well-fitted CLEAN [mask](#) meeting health guidelines ; the mask should be worn before you enter the building, and at all times while at practice unless the Director has indicated it is acceptable to remove your mask; this includes wearing a mask while moving around the space, where physical distancing cannot be maintained, and while singing; 2 masks are recommended for the evening;
*** note that the “mingle mask” does not meet NS Public Health requirements and therefore is not an acceptable mask for in-person rehearsal;*
- If you must remove your mask during rehearsal, please exit from the hall first. This is for both your safety, and the safety of everyone else;

- Ensure you have all items you need for the rehearsal (mask, water bottle with capped lid, pencil and music (if needed)) to limit exit and re-entry into the hall. Items cannot be shared among members during rehearsal;
- Choose a chair in the rehearsal hall for the evening, hang your jacket upon it, and store your items underneath such as coat, purse, music, water bottle; coat racks will NOT be available for use; only bring the items you require for the evening to reduce clutter around your chair;
- No food or beverages should be shared, nor will they be available at rehearsal;
- Ensure you follow all signage and pay attention to approaching people – step to the side and wait to avoid crossing paths, where possible; refer to Appendix A – Floor Plan for additional information on layout and directional flow;
- Wash your hands frequently, following proper hand hygiene or use hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol; hand sanitizer will be provided in various places throughout the rehearsal space for easy access; members are also encouraged to bring personal hand sanitizer which should be kept on their person or with their personal belongings at their chair;
- Maintain physical distancing (2 meters/6 feet) at all times; members must refrain from interactions that break the physical distancing bubble such as hugs, etc.;
- Comply with any health and safety direction provided while you're at the rehearsal, to ensure you keep yourself and other members safe;
- The washroom will be limited to one person at a time; prior to entering the washroom, verbally confirm it isn't occupied;
- Members should not access areas of the church that are not being used for the rehearsal such as the kitchen, other small meeting rooms, etc; Understand that any room entered is a room that the clean-up crew will have to sanitize after;
- If at any time, a member does not feel well, they should remove themselves from the group, and arrange to go home as soon as possible; a member of the Task Force can assist as needed; the member should contact 811 and follow NS Health direction.

AFTER YOU LEAVE:

- If, within 14 days after the in-person rehearsal, you are advised to be tested for COVID-19, or are confirmed as having COVID-19, please follow all NS public health direction and contact the President so that contact tracing can be supported;
- Refer to the section on Reporting a Case of COVID-19 for additional information.

The Physical Space

The following preparations have been taken and measures put in place for in-person rehearsals taking place at Anglican Trinity Church.

Rehearsal planning will take in to account the air ventilation system and air exchange rates in order to determine the amount of time that members can remain in a room for in-person singing. The current guidance from NSCF indicates 30 minutes prior to vacating the room. This time can be increased depending

on the air ventilation, ability to circulate fresh air from fans or windows. It is not suggested that AC be used as this could circulate existing air.

BEFORE REHEARSAL

- The space has been assessed to determine the number of members that can attend safely and maintain 2m/6ft of distance when singing in the hall; members will be staggered and all face in the same direction; the Director will be positioned approximately 12 ft from the nearest singers;
- Signage will be placed to remind members of health and safety measures and areas that are not to be accessed;
- Grey chairs will be set-up prior to each rehearsal for member use (blue chairs are not for use);
- Doors will be propped open and lights turned on to reduce the number of high touch points;
- Washroom use will be limited to one person at a time with signage for proper hand hygiene; Disinfectant wipes will be made available in the washroom.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided and located at various points to allow for safe hand hygiene;
- Set-up: one member of the CTF and 2 member volunteers will be identified for each in-person rehearsal; the team members should not be the same from one week to the next to keep the 14 day gap; a checklist for set-up will be available; for duties associated with set-up and clean-up, see Appendix B and C.

DURING REHEARSAL

- Upon arrival, a member of the CTF will check the member's name against the attendance list to confirm that the member is due to attend that night and to support contact tracing.
- The CTF member will ask each member the screening questions as identified on the NS COVID-19 website;
 - o Are you unwell?
 - o Do you have any of the following symptoms?
 - Fever or cough (new or worsening)
 - Or two or more of the following symptoms (new or worsening)?
 - Sore throat
 - Runny nose
 - Headache
 - Shortness of breath
 - o In the last 14 days, have you travelled outside of the Atlantic Provinces?
 - o In the last 14 days, have you had close contact (within two metres/six feet) with someone confirmed to have COVID-19?
 - o Are you, or anyone in your household, awaiting the result from a COVID-19 test?

IF A MEMBER ANSWERS 'YES' TO ANY OF THE ABOVE QUESTIONS, THE MEMBER WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND REHEARSAL THAT EVENING.

- A CTF member or chorus member will be asked to monitor the time to remind the Director when the 30 minutes of singing is approaching, to ensure everyone has time to safely exit the room.
- Members will be asked to use the washroom as needed so that it decreases the number of people accessing and waiting for the washroom at the same time.

AFTER REHEARSAL

- Attendance information (member name and seating location) will be saved in a centralized location to facilitate contact tracing should it be needed;
- The clean-up team will have a checklist to complete in order to ensure church and NS Health requirements have been met for cleaning; for duties associated with set-up and clean-up, see Appendix B and C.

REPORTING A CASE OF COVID-19

If a member contacts 811 and is advised to be tested, is waiting on test results, or has tested positive and attended a ScotianAires in-person activity within the preceding 14 days, they should contact the President to let them know. The member's name will be kept confidential. Public health authorities will lead the process which may include isolation, testing and contact tracing. Any advice or direction by NS Health will be followed and the chorus response will be dependent on the direction of NS Health. Attendance of members at in-person rehearsals will be kept to support contact tracing.

Members should be aware that the NS Government requires anyone who has travelled outside Atlantic Canada, to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they return to the province, even if they don't have symptoms. Additionally, after testing, you are legally required to self-isolate if you are waiting for your COVID-19 test results, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, even if you have tested negative for COVID-19.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING

The health and safety measures outlined in this document for in-person singing are based on the guidance from NS Health and the NS Choral Federation and are intended to reduce the risk to members, as much as possible. We continue to live in a pandemic and need to consider our own and each other's safety by following the measures that have been identified.

A CTF member will be present at each rehearsal to answer questions and to assist with the set-up and clean-up team activities. Members will be asked to self-monitor while they're at the rehearsal and comply with the measures put in place.

It will be important to show patience and compassion as we all adapt to another change in our new reality.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Communications to members will be important to ensure there is transparency in the planning and that members feel they have opportunities to provide input and voice any concerns they may have. Brief updates will be provided to members during regular Tuesday night rehearsals identifying key messages around health

and safety of members and a gradual and cautious return to in-person singing in compliance with NS public health guidance. Members may speak to any member of the CTF to share their concerns or ask questions.

The COVID In-Person Singing Plan will be shared with members in draft form for their feedback and information for members attending the in-person rehearsal will be shared in advance, that will provide each member with information on member responsibilities and expected health and safety behaviours.

The physical rehearsal space will have signage based on the NS Health Authority COVID-19 signage that outlines the health and safety measures (e.g. mask required, proper hand hygiene, etc). Information will also be shared with members on the screening questions that will be asked when they arrive as well as information on people who may be at higher risk of complications from COVID-19. A document with questions that may be asked by members will be shared and added to as needed and posted on the member portion of the ScotianAires website.

Key Messages:

- Health and safety of members is number one priority and all protocols will follow NS Health directives and NS Choral Federation guidance and will reflect thoughtful and informed decision-making
- A phased return to in-person singing, in line with evolving public health guidance, will support the continued learning, nourishment, and sisterhood of the chorus.
- We are one chorus and in-person singing will supplement the virtual rehearsals that will continue to be the primary method of chorus rehearsal for the foreseeable future.
- The in-person singing, in limited numbers, will also address the mental well-being and social needs of the chorus members, for those who wish to, and are able to participate
- Patience, compassion, kindness, and respect, continue to be vital to a healthy sisterhood in the chorus.

Activity	Date	Complete
Step 1: Rehearsal - Task Force Team established and shared with members	Sept 10	√
Step 2: Rehearsal - Share Info on Planning to Date with members	Sept 29	√
Step 3: Rehearsal - Share Info on Survey and In-Person Rehearsal	Oct 6	√
Step 4: Share COVID Draft Plan with members (comments due Oct 14)	Oct 6	√
Step 5: Zoom Session: Info Session and Q&A for members	Oct 7 and 8	√
Step 6: Survey: member participation at in-person rehearsals	Oct 8-13	√
Step 7: Rehearsal: Reminder about survey	Oct 13	√
Step 8: Share FINAL COVID Plan	Oct 17	√
Step 9: First In-Person Rehearsal – reminders at beginning of session	Oct 20	

Step 1: September 15 – Task Force Team established and shared with members: COMPLETE

- Intro of Task Force for return to members; information shared that a team has been created to plan for a safe return to in-person rehearsals based on NS Public Health Guidance and NS Choral Federation guidelines; Zoom rehearsals will continue; more info to come

Step 2: September 29 – Rehearsal – Share Info on Planning to Date with Members: COMPLETE

- Intro members of Task Force
- Messaging: why we’re considering this given COVID situation and risk of singing (Spain reference; NS COVID situation favorable)
- No pressure/guilt for members to participate; will have Zoom and in-person (limited number in the hall)
- Protecting health and safety of members – need to make decision based on personal circumstances
- Will respect all NS Public Health directives and NS Choral Federation guidelines
- Directors will rotate; members won’t attend back-to-back in-person rehearsals; will share info to all members
- Rehearsals will not look and feel the same – 2m/6ft distancing, no hugs or handshakes, shorter time period, etc.
- Will be required to wear masks – practice singing with them on
- More info to come next week and a separate Zoom session for those interested in returning who want more detail..

Step 3: October 6 - Rehearsal - Share Info on Survey and In-Person Rehearsal: COMPLETE

- Sue to share that first in-person rehearsal will be October 20th;
- Tanya will share that a survey will be sent out October 8 and open until October 13 and will ask three questions of members:
 - o whether they will be participating at in-person rehearsals between October 20 and last rehearsal in December; a new survey will be completed for sign-up for rehearsals starting in January;
 - o if they are able to assist with the recording of the in-person rehearsal,
 - o if they are able to be a member of the set-up/clean-up team;
- Tanya will promote Information sessions for members who would like to know more about the return to in-person singing plan – October 7 and 8, 7:00 pm; come to info session with questions
- (cover at info session)Elizabeth to indicate Draft Plan will be shared and comments, questions, concerns can be shared with any CTF member;; request feedback by October 14

Step 4: October 6 - Share COVID Draft Plan with members (comments due Oct 14): COMPLETE

- Send Draft plan by email to members requesting feedback by October 14

Step 5: October 7 and 8 - Zoom Session: Info Session and Q&A for members: COMPLETE

- Information session for members who wish to receive additional information on the plan, ask questions, etc.
- Q&A will be scheduled as part of the session to ensure members have time to ask questions; any questions not answered during the session will be included in the FAQs to be shared with members
- Member of the CTF to take down notes on questions and answers for potential FAQ document content.
- Information session to be recorded and available on Dropbox for all members.

Step 6: Survey: member participation at in-person rehearsals: COMPLETE

- Survey Monkey to be sent to members on October 8th and open until October 13th as indicated above.

Step 7: October 13 - Rehearsal: Reminder about survey COMPLETE

- Reminder to members to complete the survey if they haven't already as important to have your name on the list for the fall rehearsals. Directors will work on the grouping and rotation based on the information received in the survey.
- Reminder about feedback for Draft Plan – due October 14

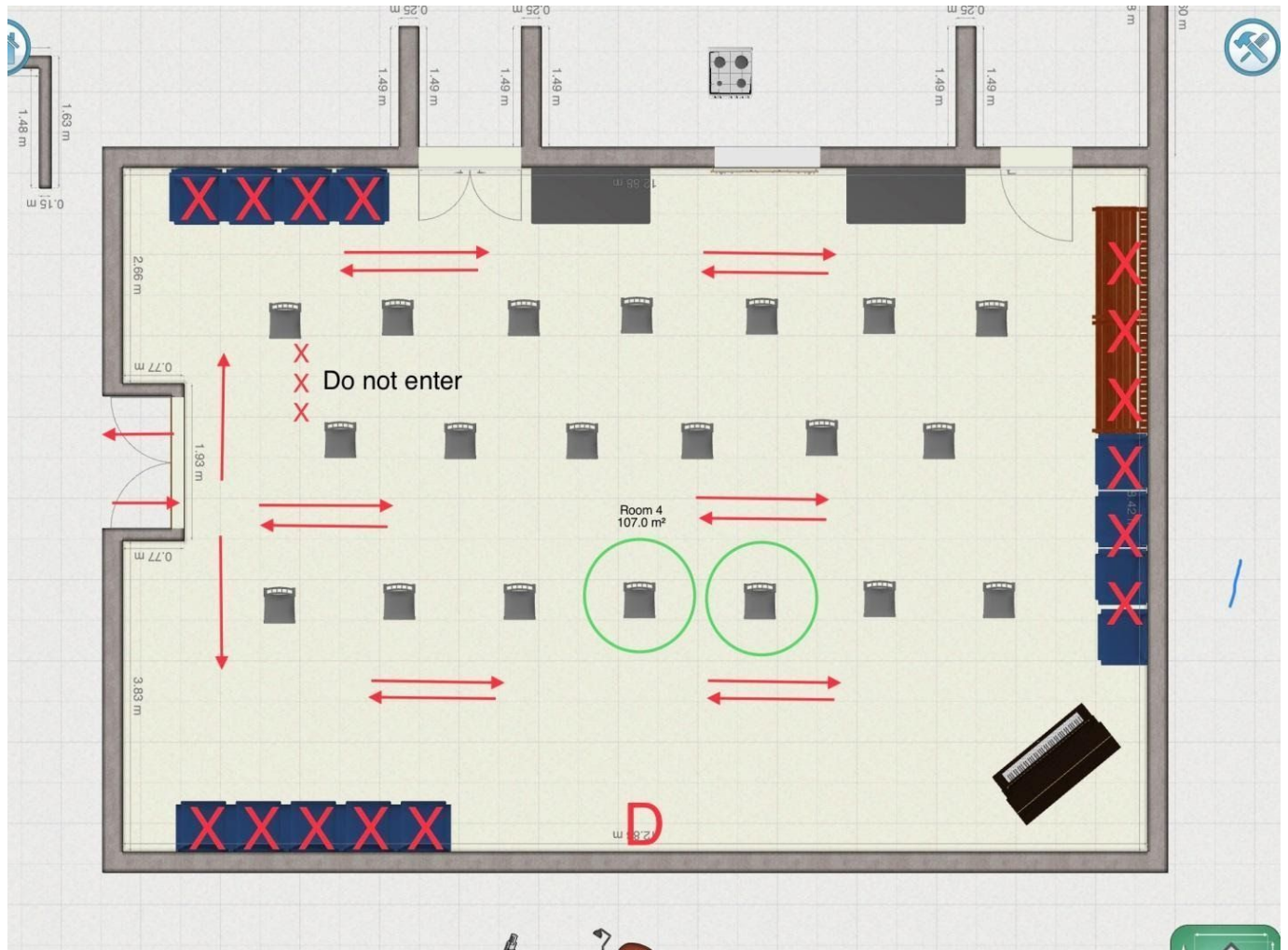
Step 8: October 17 - Share FINAL COVID Plan COMPLETE

- Share final plan - post on website

Step 9: October 20 - First In-Person Rehearsal

- Reminder email to members prior to attending about expectations
- Reminders at beginning of session re expectations – compliance with direction and measures put in place
- Identify CTF member in attendance if there are questions or if someone is feeling ill
- Identify member to take notes for ALN and share with Tanya after rehearsal

APPENDIX A – FLOOR PLAN



APPENDIX B – SET-UP CHECKLISTS

Set-up Procedures for In-Person Rehearsals

- ❑ Ensure signage is present at entrance points (stop sign, self-check and mask required).
- ❑ Place table and chair, sanitizer and box of masks, at hallway juncture.
- ❑ Place signage at table (self-check and hand-sanitize) and list of screening questions for COVID Task Force member.
- ❑ Ensure all doors that are authorized for use are propped open.
- ❑ Place signage in hall (social distancing, masks required, how to stay safe).
- ❑ Set up chairs at appropriate social distance markings, all facing forward, ensuring right front leg is on red dot. Crew should visually verify no dots have left the space due to sweeping.
- ❑ Set up music stand for Director/Assistant Director at front marker with a copy of seating plan and clipboard.
- ❑ Ensure signage specifying 'one person at a time' is in place at bathroom entrance and in bathroom area.

** Reminder: no items such as MORK or 50/50 are being used at this time

APPENDIX C – CLEAN-UP CHECKLISTS

Clean-up Procedures ScotianAires Rehearsals

Follow instructions on product for “wait” times once items are sprayed/wiped.

Members volunteering to carry out tasks will follow personal protection protocols/measures.

- Sanitize all chairs and return to storage.
- Sanitize table surfaces and music stand and return to storage.
- Collect any items left behind and store in storage room until that group is together again. Urgent items will be brought home by a COVID Task Force member.
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces (light switches, doorknobs, taps, paper towel dispenser, stall door locks).
- Store hand sanitizers/cleaning products/cloths in the hall closet for use at the next rehearsal.
- Remind Director/Assistant Director to send completed seating plan to Kelly.
- Sanitize, with Lysol wipe, as exiting building, and dispose appropriately.