

Virtual music festival in tune with the times

By Lindy McNamara, Southern Cross

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Coordinating about 1600 students from 80 different schools to sing together in tune is no easy task at the best of times – but even more so during a pandemic.

Organisers of the Catholic Schools Music Festival have faced many challenges in trying to stage their event in 2020, but for music director Denise Rothall none has been greater than the inability for large numbers of students to rehearse together.

“It has definitely been a different year in so many ways,” Ms Rothall said.

“I have been so proud of the students in the way they have coped with the constant changes during the pandemic.

“All festival choir schools have now resumed rehearsals however, even though the majority were able to keep rehearsing, some schools stopped altogether. Teachers needed to alter the configuration of their classrooms or move to larger spaces such as their school halls to ensure they adhered to the appropriate social distancing guidelines. We’ve been so grateful that despite these challenges, students have been able to continue their learning journey by accessing pre-recorded audio tracks of the repertoire and by watching in-house videos of the choreography.

Previously scheduled to be held in September and run over four nights at the Adelaide Festival Centre, this year’s event will now be presented as a virtual festival.

Production manager Samantha Taylor said at this stage the 67 Festival choir schools will be allocated to sing at one of four recording sessions to be filmed in Sacred Heart College’s Debourg Performing Arts Centre in the last week of Term 3.

“Our big challenge is bringing the students together as a massed choir for their combined rehearsal, which we normally hold a month before the festival. This year they will sing together for the first time on the day of the filming.”

Auditions for support acts are currently in progress and they will be recorded and filmed at a different time, with all performances collated into four distinct concerts scheduled to be available in November.

“It is very important that we maintain this very special event for this year’s student cohort - it will be a very different festival event - but one that will continue to showcase the immense talent of Catholic school students.”