

## **Student concert goes virtual**

*Assisted by audio engineers, Wantagh H.S. singers perform virtually*

Derek Futterman | January 21, 2021 | Long Island Herald

As the coronavirus pandemic raged on, many people — and especially senior citizens — were unable to celebrate the holiday season with family and friends.

At Wantagh High School, meanwhile, the concert choir and choral ensemble have been among the countless performers who have been frustrated by the pandemic, unable to perform for a live audience since it began. Yet the students have managed to spread their voices in spite of this seemingly insurmountable obstacle.

With the assistance of the high school's audio engineering class, choir students arranged and recorded a virtual concert, to be shared with the community, and with nursing-home and assisted-living facility residents in mind as well. The students made the program even more festive by interspersing photos of themselves and artwork they created.

"We really decided to do [the project] because we wanted to make our music for as many people as possible," said Sameerah Cassidy, a music teacher at the high school. "We wanted to make sure that our nursing home and assisted-living residents could hear music and have a little bit of joy during the holiday season."

Cassidy added, "Our students really do care about the community they live in. It's heartbreaking to know that many of these residents can't see their loved ones during the holiday season."

Cristian Barberio, a student at the high school, added that he and his peers tried to make the virtual concert "as special as possible" to both entertain those residents and to "relieve some of their stress."

Using audio engineering technology, most notably Musical Instrument Digital Interface files, students were able to sing along to choral arrangements and send their tracks to student audiovisual editors, who fused them together into a cohesive, assemblage of voices.

"People don't realize how important audio really is," said student TJ Cerasi.

Audiovisual production and music have become increasingly enmeshed during the pandemic, when performers must think of innovative ways to produce and record content separately.

"Now, [since] we can't [hold live performances] as much, we've gotten more tech-savvy," said student Dominick Rossi. "It's completely changed the way we hear music."

Cassidy, who described her role in the project as a facilitator for the students, complimented the capabilities of modern audio engineering technology, saying that it "allows [students] to create their own music" rather than having them sing along to pre-recorded arrangements. Moreover, exploring a niche of the music industry that conflates

music's sonic and visual qualities has allowed students to explore their creativity in front of and behind the camera.

"There's never been more of a need for audio engineering in general during this pandemic," Cassidy. "We're here, we're still making music [and we] will do our best to keep any sort of context with the arts that we can right now."

While Wantagh High students and faculty hope they can one day return to live performances, they say they believe the fusion between musical performance and audiovisual technology is here to stay.

"Although we are socially distanced, we can still find ways to be all together," said Rossi. "[Audiovisual production] will completely change the way we move forward."

"The students miss [our standard performances] so much," Cassidy added. "This has been the start of a great partnership through these crazy times."