



Britain's Christmas Singalong *It's a new Christmas tradition!*

- Doorstep Carols returns this year to unite the nation in song on Wednesday, December 15th at 6pm, supported by local BBC radio and BBC Sounds. It has been adopted as the Local BBC Radio 'Make a Difference' campaign, following BBC Children in Need.
- The free, inclusive, charitable event aims to promote the social and psychological benefits of singing together again after the pandemic
- It is supported by: Sir Tim Rice, British Conductor Suzi Dibgy OBE, Military Wives Choirs, Popchoir, Voices Foundation and Project Get Singing, among others
- This year is a combination of 'hub' events nationwide and singing in the streets – tune in to local radio, download the words at doorstepcarols.co.uk and SING!
- We can provide a list of media contacts/interview opportunities on request

Community engagement is central to this event, to encourage people to rally their streets and join together in song. This a free, wholly inclusive, mass participatory, charitable event with no commercial intent, designed to promote togetherness and strengthen communities. We ask the media to please help us achieve our vision to create a new Christmas tradition.

- **Nationwide uptake includes:**

LONDON

- **Trafalgar Square** - Popchoir is leading a massed choir, engaging a nationwide network of choirs and music directors.
- **Great Ormond Street Hospital** - The Spread a Smile Choir will lead the families of children joining in from the ward. One of the children singing is due to have treatment at GOSH later the same evening. The Sing out London choir will sing outside **The Royal Marsden** (this choir has been part of a research project investigating the wellbeing benefits of singing for people affected with cancer)
- **The Rhythm Studio**, Shepherd's Bush, engaging their communities and putting a Rock and Pop spin on their Doorstep Carols.
- **The Voices Foundation** and **Tri-borough Music Hub** are also supporting us.

BIRMINGHAM

- Ex Cathedra's Academy of Vocal Music will be leading singing from St Paul's Square in the **Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham**. The Singing Medicine team will lead the singing with staff and families at **Birmingham Children's Hospital**. Ex Cathedra is encouraging engagement across its **Singing Playgrounds** schools and all of its outreach projects.
- CIVIC Square (Ladywood) are holding a community singalong, organised by The Department of Dreams
- **BROMLEY** - The Glades Shopping Centre will play the carols for shoppers.

CAMBRIDGE

- Cambridge Gospel Choir will be singing Doorstep Carols outside King's College Cambridge.

CANTERBURY

- A Cathedral choir will lead the singing in the Buttermarket

WINCHESTER

- Cathedral choirs are working with the Winchester Christmas market to lead the public in song and Military Wives Choirs will be joining in.

SHREWSBURY

- **Shrewsbury** ('the epicentre') town square event, hosted by BBC Radio Shropshire and organised by Shrewsbury Town Council, linking with The Market Hall and Shopping Centres hub events and in the streets across Shropshire

- **SWANSEA** The Quadrant Shopping Centre will play carols for shoppers to sing to

OVERSEAS: The **Military Wives Choirs** are linking with the **military engagement branch** to enable **overseas** soldiers to sing with their loved ones at home for the first time in history.

125 CareUK care homes are taking part with residents knitting hats and scarves to wear as they sing with the nation.

New **easy sheet music resources** have been created for children to use in school music lessons across the UK to learn enough notes in time to play along, to promote instrument learning after the pandemic.

The list of engagement continues to grow.....

PRESS RELEASE STARTS:

Doorstep Carols is back this year – and with an ever growing list of mega organisations jumping on board, it looks set to be Britain's biggest ever carols singalong.

Carols on the doorstep brought people together in the midst of the pandemic last year. Broadcast on over 30 local radio stations, it led to wonderful scenes of families singing on doorsteps, sharing mulled wine over the fence with neighbours and children playing instruments in front gardens. An estimated 125,000 people took part, raising over £10,000 for MIND UK and local charities, with collections at street level.

This year, Doorstep Carols 2021 is a supercharged nationwide event, taking all of the street magic of last year across the country whilst also reaching out to those who are

isolated. More than 30 local BBC radio stations (and BBC Sounds) will again broadcast the pre-recorded backing tracks to well-known carols and Christmas songs so that the nation can sing in unison. Streets taking part are encouraged to use the opportunity to raise money for a charity of their choice.

A host of national organisations and celebrities are jumping on board as this event grows, supporting the British public in what is expected to become a record breaking singalong. Internationally renowned British conductor Suzi Digby and Sir Tim Rice are also backing the event.

The 'epicentre' event will be in Shrewsbury, where Doorstep Carols originated, with Carols in the Square hosted by BBC Radio Shropshire, linking with doorsteps and other hub events across the country. Even the reindeers are joining in at Hoo Farm in Telford!

In Birmingham, Ex Cathedra's Academy of Vocal Music will be singing in St Paul's Square in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham. The Singing Medicine team will lead the carol singing with staff and families at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Trafalgar Square is booked for a massed Doorstep Carols singalong with Popchoir, and The Spread a Smile Choir, made up of patients, their siblings and friends, is set to sing outside Great Ormond Street Hospital. The Rhythm Studio and Project Get Singing are also engaging communities and choirs across London and beyond.

Canterbury and Winchester Cathedrals are also involved as well as churches, choirs, hospices, schools and care homes across the UK, and the Military Wives Choirs are linking with the military engagement branch to enable overseas soldiers to sing with their loved ones at home for the first time in history.

Doorstep Carols organiser Katy Rink, who came up with the idea, said: "Last year we saw wonderful scenes up and down the country, with people having a good time with their neighbours. We're delighted that Local BBC Radio is on board again this year so that people can join in wherever they are. It's about celebrating the joy of singing together – sharing the experience and strengthening communities. It's so simple and absolutely free."

"We hope this year will be more of a street party festival atmosphere, with neighbours able to celebrate and sing together," says **co-organiser Beth Heath**, of Shropshire Festivals.

Following the restrictions on collective music and performance during the pandemic, Doorstep Carols 2021 aims to underline the social and psychological benefits of singing together.

Adding his support **Sir Tim Rice** said: "*I hope that singing en masse will remind us that music, especially vocals, can bring everyone together whether in unison or harmony. We must not let recent troubles make us fearful of using our voices.*"

Chris Burns, Head of Audio & Digital, BBC England said, "Local BBC radio stations have always been at the heart of Christmas celebrations where we live, and as thousands of people come together for the first time in two years, I am delighted that we will be linking communities together through Doorstep Carols."

Choral conductor **Suzi Digby OBE**, founder of The Voices Foundation, adds: "I am delighted to help champion this opportunity to sing together as one nation. Music, particularly singing together, has the power to unite people and communities and create bridges between peoples. We saw last year the joy that Doorstep Carols brought to those streets which took part and it's thrilling that this will become a new Christmas tradition. We are helping to shape our culture for future generations."

Doorstep Carols music arranger Jeremy Lund, former Head of Music at Prestfelde School in Shrewsbury, who has created easy parts for instruments for all the carols and is offering them free to the nation, said: "The newly arranged carols open up the possibility of ordinary people, cathedral choirs, children who play instruments, local brass bands and orchestras as well as other community groups all joining in together. There are backing tracks with piano or brass band and singers – use the worksheets to create your own carol concert, or join in with BBC local radio stations around the country on December 15th at 6pm for our big doorstep carols sing.

"This was my lockdown project – now it's over to schools, hospitals, care homes, churches, community groups and everyone else to join in sharing the Christmas cheer!"

Rebecca Smith at Link for Good, supporting Doorstep Carols, says: "This event will bring people together to sing in their communities but it will also provide a musical connection for people who are isolated.

"Collective singing plays a significant role in positive group identity, it creates a sense of social inclusion in a world fractured by the pandemic. By encouraging people, particularly children, to sing together again we are providing a reminder of the social and psychological power of collective song."

Doorstep Carols is partnering with multiple charities that recognise the value of music in the work that they do. These include Youth Music, Dementia UK, Demelza Children's Hospice, MindUK, Spread a Smile, Ex Cathedra and others.

Rev Tom Atfield of Shrewsbury Abbey said: "The community feedback last year was amazing. Singing brings people together in a really special way and gives people a point of connection. Through Covid, people have found new and creative ways to revitalise community traditions. The tradition of wassailing through the dark days of winter is as old as time. We've now found a new way of doing that through technology and good organisation."

Helen Hampton, Director of Popchoir, one of the largest community based choirs based in London, said: "Popchoir will be leading a massed choir under the tree at Trafalgar Square as part of the Doorstep Carols nationwide event. We invite everyone, whether choirs, individual singers, families or colleagues, to come and join us for this hour of festive music and the opportunity to sing some favourite carols together in this iconic setting under the Christmas Tree.

"We know the enormous value of singing together with others - the health benefits are enormous and well reported - from improvement in respiration (especially important during this pandemic) to all the mental health and well-being benefits that come from singing and making music with other people. We are therefore delighted to be advocates and leaders for this wonderful nationwide initiative to get the whole country singing together at this lovely time of year when being together means so much to us all. We want everyone to be part of this event and we encourage everyone to join in and sing wherever they are. So if you're in London, why not come on down, to sing with us. It will be an amazing night and you'll be part of something very special."

Victoria Hodges of Sing out London, who will be singing outside The Royal Marsden Hospital, said: "Singing has been scientifically proven to lower cortisol levels (your fight or flight) and reduce feelings of loneliness, and with thanks to the support of Royal Marsden and Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Sing out London choir is putting that science into practise! Made up of cancer patients and their loved ones, Sing out London is thrilled to team up with Doorstep Carols to bring the wellbeing power of singing to Chelsea this Christmas."

Collette Spinner of Spread a Smile Choir, which will be singing outside Great Ormond Street Hospital, said: "We are very excited to be involved in such a wonderful event and I know from my choir's point of view, especially for those who will be unable to join us perform live due to being in hospital, to be able to join in still via zoom or other platforms is just so wonderful."

Laura Booth, Artistic Planning & Engagement Manager for Military Wives Choirs, said: "The Military Wives Choirs are hugely proud to be taking part in Doorstep Carols 2021. With a network of nearly 2000 women in 72 choirs across the UK and internationally, we celebrate a love of singing and the power of shared experiences. Our network welcomes all women whose lives are currently impacted by their military connection, and many will spend Christmas away from their loved ones; Doorstep Carols will give the opportunity to not only share in a hugely uplifting musical experience, but also to feel that little bit closer to the loved ones they will be missing at this special time of year."

Gemma King, Education and Participation Manager for Ex Cathedra, said: "Ex Cathedra Singing Medicine team are proud and excited to support Doorstep Carols in 2021.

"We hope that Doorstep Carols will help to bring families together, as they join in from home or online with their children, at a time when hospital visiting is limited and families cannot be together in the traditional sense. Through Doorstep Carols, we hope to bring Singing Medicine to all who join us. Ex Cathedra invites people across Birmingham to take part in their own communities and enjoy singing together."

Diahann Brown, of The Rhythm Studio Foundation, which will be working with young people to produce their own versions of Doorstep Carols, said: "We are so excited to be part of the Doorstep Carols event on December 15th. After the year we've all had, it's such a brilliant idea to use festive songs to bring everyone together in the local community and make connections with friends and family further afield. And of course, we'll be adding our own RSF groove to the evening!"

Collette Spinner of Spread a Smile Choir, said: "We are very excited to be involved in such a wonderful event and be able to perform together. Even those children who are in hospital and therefore unable to join in person, can join in via video conference. We are so excited to be back together again and to give our Spread a Smile choir a reminder of the power of music and how much we enjoy singing as one."

Andy Kendall, Alzheimer's Society Community Fundraiser said: "Doorstep Carols is a wonderful concept and we're delighted to be taking part. While Christmas can be magical for so many of us, it can also be a very isolating and lonely time too, particularly for people affected by dementia. By helping to spread word of the Doorstep Carols, we hope lots of communities will get involved and share in the festive spirit music can create. There's also the opportunity to continue the festivities from the warmth of your own home by joining us later the same evening for Alzheimer's Society's Carols at Christmas.

“We know through our own Singing for the Brain activity how it can help people, even in advanced stages of dementia, to tap into long-term memories linked to music and song – for some, this can mean they can communicate through singing when no longer able to do so through speech. Singing together can help encourage positive feelings for people affected by dementia, creating powerful connections. That’s why we’re happy to be involved in this initiative. For information and advice call Alzheimer’s Society’s Dementia Connect support line on 0333 150 3456 or visit alzheimers.org.uk.”

CIVIC SQUARE will be hosting a massed singalong in Ladywood, Birmingham, organised by Rach Bromfield of The Department of Dreams, who said: “Knowing this came about during the pandemic to bring hope and connection to anyone needing comfort ties in perfectly with Floating Front Room and CIVIC SQUARE's first phase of community work. Doorstep Carols really speaks to the neighbourhood work we're doing in Ladywood. This is a beautiful way to make further connections in the area and connect through the joy of song over mince pies, mulled wine and hot chocolates.”

Visit www.doorstepcarols.co.uk for more information and to find out how to tune in, download the words and music and sing along on Wednesday, December 15th at 6pm!

For more details contact Katy Rink on 07701 048360. A selection of images from last year’s event are available via the picture gallery at <https://www.doorstepcarols.co.uk/press-and-media>