

Main Instructions

**The singing and audio
recording**

for

**Voices Around The
World 2014-15**

Listen To Us

Write your VATW username and password here

Username:

Password:



Voices Around The World

<http://www.voicesaround>

Introduction

This short booklet gives you all the information needed on the 'how to' type of details for helping you record your choir and submit the recordings to us. We hope it helps make things straightforward. We recommend that you print out these instructions and keep them for future reference.

VATW site membership - don't forget your username and password

It is quite annoying for you if you forget these details and cannot easily access the resources on the website. The reason that we ask for these details is basically only because we want to have your email information that enables us to send you the important news and information about the project. It also gives us an approximate guide as to how many schools/youth groups are participating in the project. We promise never to pass your details on and also we will only send you emails that relate specifically to the project. There is a space on the front of this booklet for you to enter your username/password details – so you always know them!

How to 'get ourselves in sync'

The key to the success of this project is the synchronisation of the choir vocals from all of the participating choirs. We cannot stress enough how important this is. You need to therefore ensure that you **follow the instructions below very, very carefully.**

How to rehearse – important points

It is very important that you stick to the choir MP3 versions. Make sure that your students have plenty of opportunity to sing along with these parts so that they are as closely in sync as possible with the voices on the demo tracks.

While it will of course be the voices of all the choirs involved that will feature on the final recording, getting the voices in sync with the demo track voices is the template for ensuring that all choir recordings we eventually receive will be in sync with one another.

One very useful training strategy, is to provide your choir with individual electronic copies of their choir parts so that the students can practice at home etc. We have found this method very successful in the past for helping students quickly learn different choir parts – it will really speed up your rehearsals!

How to make the recording(s)

We hope you have got/and will get much pleasure out of rehearsing and performing the song. However, the recording sessions call for a different approach and one that needs a good deal of forethought and planning in order to get the best results. The work will require much rigour – calling upon the greatest amount of precision possible from your singers. While it will be lots of hard work, generally we find students enjoy the recording part – as they feel a bit like 'pop stars' and a bit like they are appearing on the X Factor! You will also thank us afterwards because the resulting quality of your choir's singing will be awesome as a result of the rigour to which they have

been subjected!

We will only be able to include choir recordings on the final master recording that have reached a reasonable standard and, as stated before, recordings being in sync with the supplied choir MP3s is the most crucial factor. We are sure that all of you will manage this!

Getting used to singing while wearing earphones

This requires practice. Many people/students find this hard at first especially as they cannot hear their own voice in the same way as usual and this can raise vocal tuning issues. This improves with practice. It may be useful for some students to experiment with pulling one earphone off on one side so that they can hear their own voice and the voice of others while they sing. If you look at the VATW site photos page you will notice some students doing just this!

Fool proof recording

This feels a little like stating the obvious, but it is worth reminding that when recording choir parts, make sure your students are listening to the demo track as a guide. To inspire yourselves before you record you could enjoy watching the YouTube video of the studio session for recording 'We Are The World'. This is a great resource and makes a superb music quiz for older students ...can they recognise these icons of the music industryyou are helped by the credits rolling at the end of the clip! <http://youtu.be/M9BNoNFKCBI>

How to get as close to a 'pure voice' sound as possible

We need the voices of your choir to put on the final master recording. This means that your recording(s) should only be voices! In other words, we do not want a recording of your choir that includes the backing track in the background. This would lead to quite an unpleasant sound when we come to put all the recordings together – making the final mix. We want you to set up your recording so that the students listen to the backing track on earphones while singing. This of course pretty much mirrors the way it is done in professional recording studios. 'WOW that sounds difficult' we hear you say! NO not at all....here is what you do:

1. Ensure you have reasonable quality recording equipment. A basic microphone and recorder should do the job. Nowadays, these pieces of equipment are easily available at reasonable prices if you do not already have them. You may find somebody in your school parent community who can help out.
2. You need to have sets of earphones and a junction box/junction boxes....the more the merrier! See the picture of a typical junction box below ... this feeds from the sound source where you are playing the choir part MP3s while the students sing.



This approach means that you can record groups of your choir singing ...the number of groups you record will depend upon the number of earphones you have available ... the more earphones you havethe fewer the groups. Working in this way means that when you record, your singers can hear the music backing, but the recording only captures their voices. Within reason we are happy to accept any number of recorded groups from you. All of your recording submissions should be in wav file or MP3 format.

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Recording groups.

The groups that you record will require some forethought. The obvious format is to require different sections of your choir. However, you will inevitably have some variations in the quality of your singers. We have sometimes found ourselves breaking sections down i.e. a stronger section of the best singers recorded, ten other groups where some of the best singers support the singer of weaker individuals.

Soloists

Yes please - **We are happy to receive recordings of soloists** if you have some especially high quality individuals - this gives us the scope in the mixing process to bring a few individual voices to the foreground of the mix if appropriate.

Here is an imaginary example of a recording plan of a choir. The music teacher has sorted out soloists, strong groups and groups that need support

The altos are the first section to record, and they listen to and sing along with their relevant choir MP3 part, aligning their voices with Howard's as closely as possible. The other choir sections follow on in the same way.

Choir sections	Recording Track
Part 1 – group a	1 wav audio recording
Part 1 – group b	1 wav audio recording
Part 1 - 2 individual solo recordings	2 wav audio recordings
Part 2 group a	1 wav audio recording
Part 2 group b	1 wav audio recording
Part 2 group c	1 wav audio recording
Part 2 - 3 individual solo recordings	3 wav audio recordings
Part 3 group a	1 wav audio recording
Part 3 group b	1 wav audio recording
Part 4 group a	1 wav audio recording
Part 4 group b	1 wav audio recording
Part 5 group	1 wav audio recording
Part 6 group	1 wav audio recording
Part 6 – 1 individual so recording	1 wav audi recording

How to get the best sound - the recording environment

It is well worth choosing the room in which you record very carefully. Smaller rooms with soft furnishings will often give the best results.

Microphone placement - The distance of your singers from the microphone is important and it is worth experimenting with this a little. It varies a bit from microphone to microphone. Successful recordings we have done in the past have been with students arranged in a semicircle around the microphone so that they are all a similar distance away. About a metre from the microphone is often about right for choir work. It will be good if you are able to monitor the sound levels and quality using earphones yourself, and adjust choir positions/proximity to the microphone accordingly. In particular watch out for any singer with a much louder voice than others and adjust their standing position if necessary. You may find this problem is exacerbated because students may sing differently with earphones on (known as the iPod syndrome!). Be careful that you do not

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'over record' i.e. have a recording level that causes distortion of any sort – this would make the recording unusable for us.

Your singers do not have to sing loudly

The joy of audio recordings with microphones is that you do not need to sing loudly – pitch and tone are far more important. The volume of your singers can of course be boosted by the recording equipment as necessary. As mentioned above 'over recording' and distortion are the main enemies. In the process of finally mixing vocal submissions we can usually work with recordings that were rather low volume – boosting the volume with the studio equipment. Sadly there is very little that can be done with distorted/over recorded submissions.

Extraneous noise.

You will need to take care that there are no extra sounds on the recording. There are many hazards in any school environment for someone trying to make a recording! Typical problems can be school bells, kitchen or air conditioning equipment andof course ...PEOPLE!

How to submit your recording(s) - Uploading your choir recording(s) to Dropbox

Success! You have managed the recording and are all feeling pretty pleased with yourselves ...and rightly so! Now the puzzle of how to submit these valuable recordings to us!

Firstly to say - please, please, please do not send the recordings by email. This method could lead to a serious 'logjam' on our server.

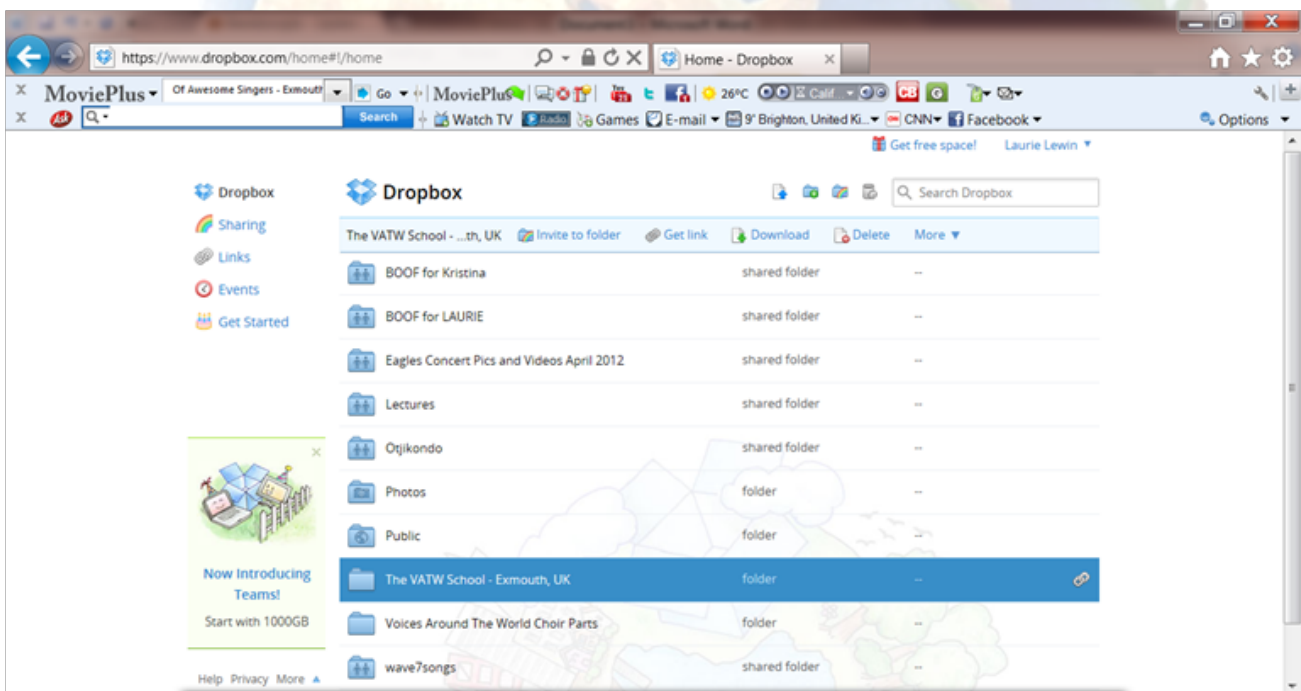
One of the best systems we have come across for sharing recordings/files is the Dropbox system. This is a free internet programme. If you are not already a member of Dropbox, simply go to their website <https://www.dropbox.com/> and download their software and you will be ready for action.

Downloading the Dropbox software

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Setting up your folders

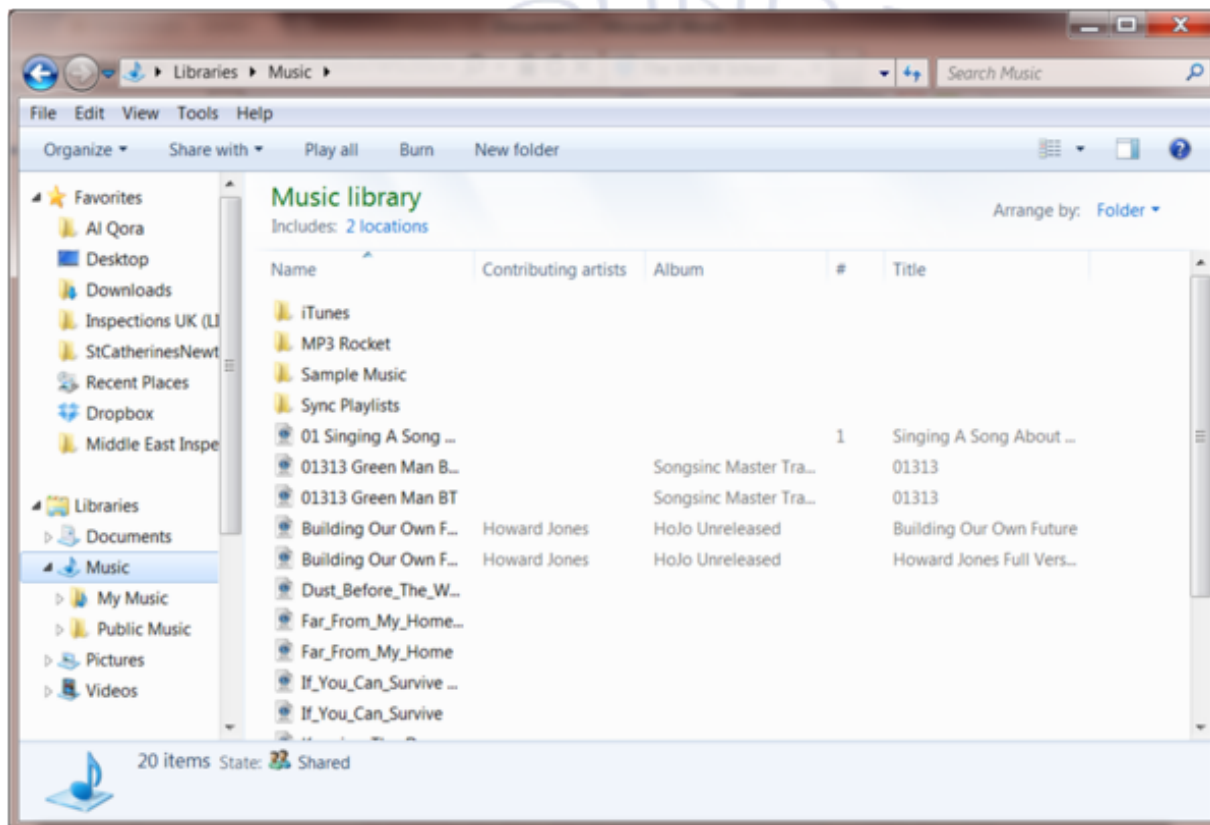


This is a snap of our current Dropbox. We have lots of folders, but you only need one for this project. Simply click on the add folder option in the menu at the top of the screen. It is very important that you clearly label your folder. This is how we will identify your school choir. You will see on the screen snapshot above, we have created an example folder called 'The VATW School – Exmouth, UK.'

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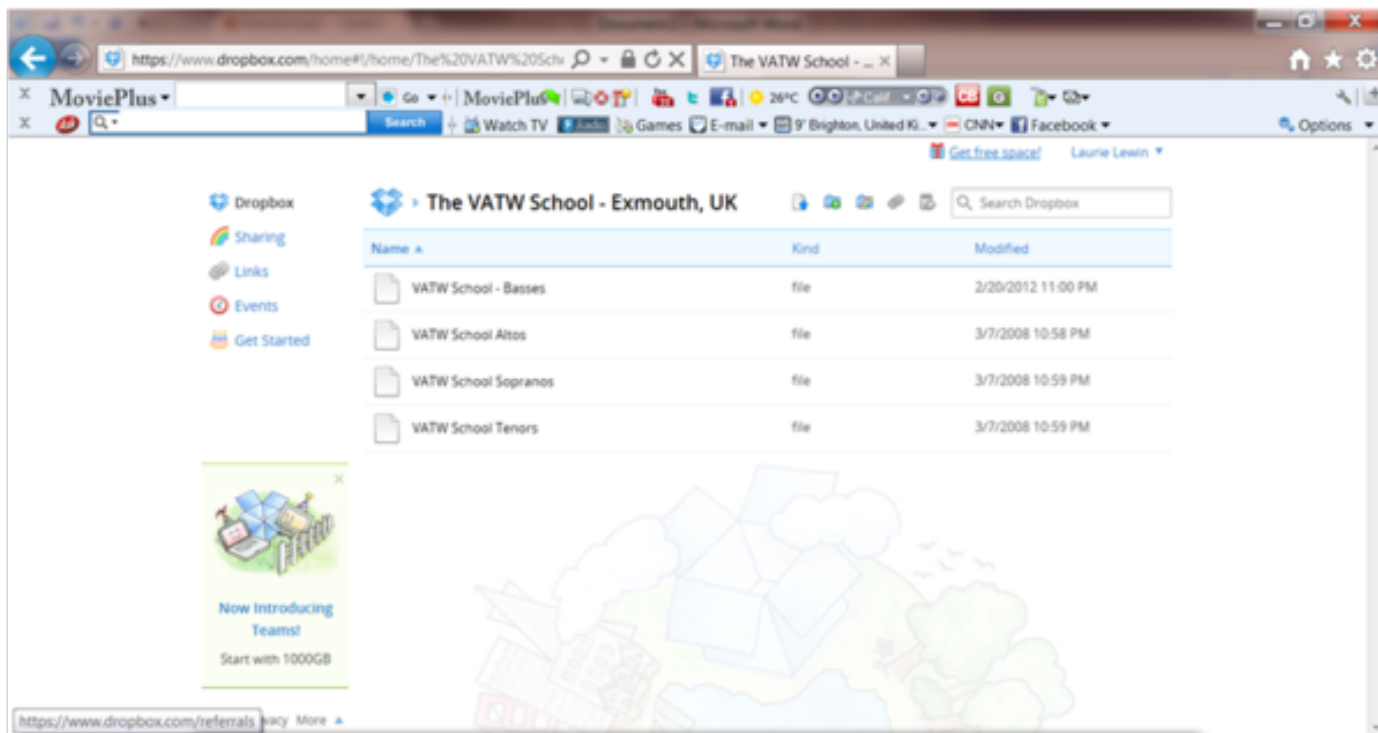
Uploading your files

Whatever device you have used to record your choir parts, you will need to save the audio files onto the computer on which you have installed Dropbox. You can then save your audio files easily to Dropbox. Those of you who are pretty 'wizzy' with things ICT will have realised that Dropbox cleverly creates a folder space on your computer as well as on the web. Whatever you copy to the Dropbox folder on your computer, provided you are connected to the internet, automatically gets copied onto your web Dropbox Folder and vice versa. Warning: remember the same applies to deleting folders!!!



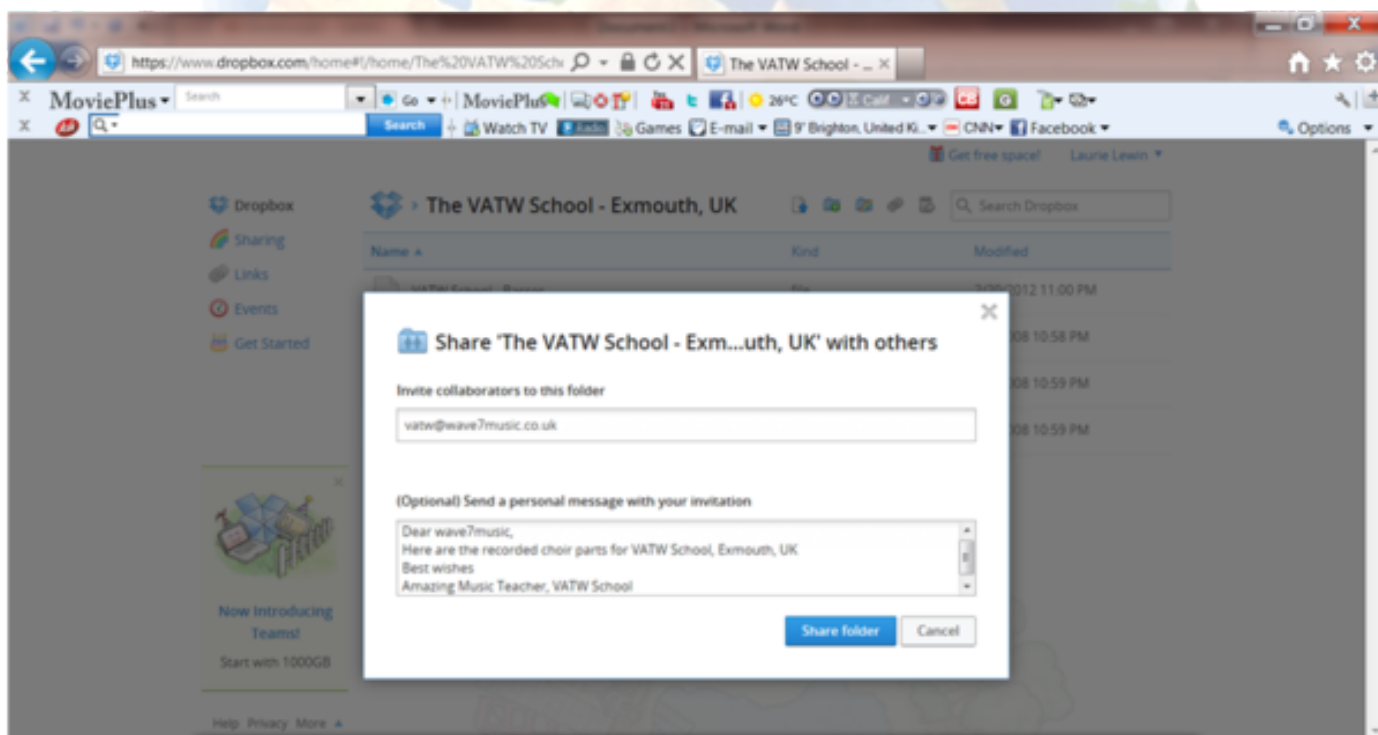
So just go ahead now and save your choir recordings to Dropbox on your computer. (Make sure you are connected to the internet.) We recommend keeping a backup somewhere safe of your choir recordings in case of computer crashes etc.

By now you should have something like the screenshot below shows. The final step is to share your files with us so that we can download them.



Sharing your folders with us

As indicated, click on the rainbow coloured icon. And you will get the screen below opening:



You need to put the email address voices@voicesaround.com in the first box and any relevant message in the box below – to show which school you are. Well done you are there! If you have reached this point YOU AND YOUR STUDENTS ARE A TRULY AMAZING GROUP OF PEOPLE and you are doing something that will make a real difference: **‘As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.’**

(Quote from Nelson Mandela’s inaugural speech – [click here](#) to read the full quote)

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