

## CSP Supports Local Businesses by Purchasing “Singer’s Masks”

BY REBECCA BEASLEY



Photo Credit: Rebecca Beasley

**S**MALL BUSINESSES HAVE A hard enough time growing and succeeding in our economy, and the pandemic has made owning and running a small business even more difficult. Concordia St. Paul’s music department has been able to support a small business in the community by commissioning over 90 specialized masks for the choirs.

Professor Shari Speer, voice instructor and director of Concordia’s Jubilate choir, worked alongside Dr. Mennicke and Dr. Murray to find alternative masks for the choirs this fall. Speer’s research led her to a pattern for a mask created by Joan Fearnley, called the DIY Mask for Singers. She then went to a local shop, Thanh’s Tailor, to commission the masks. Thanh opened her business on Grand Avenue in 2008, although her tailoring hobby began when she was a child in Vietnam. She works with her husband, providing a variety of services, from custom suit alterations to making classic face masks. Speer made a prototype singers mask, then collaborated with seamstress Thanh to create the perfect singer’s mask for Concordia’s choirs.

The masks are made with 100% cotton fabric with interfacing for structure. Two strips of zipties are used to pull the fabric away from the wearer’s mouth, allowing for better diction and jaw movement. Nose wire and adjustable elastic ear loops allow for a comfortable fit. The masks are designed to be washable and long-lasting.

Speer explains that although having fabric in front, the singer can trim the sound made

by upper voices, having these specialized masks allows the wearer to project their voice and dictate words more effectively than in a typical face mask. Additionally, having face masks that have reliable coverage reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other germs. According to the CDC, singing increases the chances of the airborne spread of COVID-19, due to the “concentration of suspended respiratory droplets in the air space” and “Inadequate ventilation [...] that allowed a build-up of suspended small respiratory droplets and particles.” Concordia choirs have taken extra measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes having specialized masks, singing outside, and not staying in one room for too long.

Students in the choirs compare the singers masks to traditional masks, finding much to love. Erika Langemo, an alto, says, “I really like how much space is available in the masks, so you can open your mouth to sing without the mask shifting, or even going into your mouth.” Rachel Tourville, a soprano, says “I like the masks because they actually give me some space to breathe and sing.” Sarah Jeppesen, an alto, says she feels like she can sing better in a singers mask than a traditional mask.

This pandemic has brought a new market for masks, and a way for people to support businesses in their community. Next time you need something, try to find a small business that can help before going to another big box store.

## Hauntitorium 2020

BY ERIKA SOUKUP

**H**AUNTITORIUM IS A YEARLY event set up by the theater club on campus, STAGE, and CAB. This year, because of Covid, Hauntitorium is not able to happen in a typical way. Instead of having a normal walk-through haunted house, they are actually filming it instead. The film takes place in the theater as we follow a group of college students in a haunted theatre where things are all as they seem. Or are they?

In most cases, Hauntitorium is set up in a span of a couple of days with a lot of beforehand preparation. So how long has STAGE been planning this new Hauntitorium, and how much work does it take? According to Secretary Anna Haselmann, “We’ve been doing the planning since May/June-ish. At the beginning we had a lot of ideas for what it was going to look like (in person, virtual, walk-through, any people at all) and we’re happy we get to do it with at least some people. Then it moved on to what’s our story, how do we audition

this, how do we get actors who know what to do? We did our audition process with videos, cast everybody, had a few brainstorming sessions and off we went.” Normally, it’s a relatively straightforward process with the story, but for the new Hauntitorium, they wanted to ensure it was an extremely collaborative event. Everything you see on screen was a collaboration between the actors and designers to make sure they felt comfortable.



Photo Credit: Erika Soukup

Since so much has changed for Hauntitorium, you might wonder if the end product will actually be scary (or creepy at best if you’re a sceptic). Through the use of film there is

a lot that can be done that would be considered cheesy or stupid in a live event. Ruth Elkerton, Vice President of STAGE, said, “We plan on jump scares mixed with the story. Since we’re filming we can do a lot of special effects, like makeup for our actors, editing, and camera angles that we couldn’t do if it was live.” So after the entire thing is filmed, then it’s on to the editing corner where the scare will be ramped up.

While it’s difficult having so many things change around us, the STAGE Board is actually enjoying the process of working with film. Elkerton said, “I think it’s just a different experience and I’m glad I’m experiencing it this way because I have interest in the film industry. I’m glad I have the opportunity to learn more.”

In the end, while Hauntitorium is going to be a completely different experience, it is still going strong and ready to spook.