



**"There really is joy in being part of the choir!"**

## The Sing For Joy Choir

By Debbie Ensor

**Debbie Ensor was diagnosed with MS 35 years ago. She lives in north London and teaches yoga. She was an active member of the Yoga for Health Foundation at Ickwell Bury, helping with the MS intensive courses.**

**I** I have never had a loud voice, but after so many years with MS it is not as loud or clear as it once was. This had become a problem for me when teaching yoga and was also difficult on the phone. So how wonderful it would be if I could improve my voice through singing.

I first heard about the Sing for Joy Choir about four years ago from a member of my yoga class. It had been started by Nina Temple after she was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease as a way of managing the condition and many of the choir members are affected by Parkinson's.

But fortunately for me, it soon became possible for people with other neurological conditions to join too. There are now 24 of us in the choir, two with MS, with a waiting list of people who want to join.

I'd seen the choir when I went to a couple of their annual cabaret nights in central London. After some thought, I decided to give it a go and joined the Sing For Joy Choir last September, with no idea what to expect.

Everyone who joins says they can't sing. I just make very strange sounds. But they say that as long as you can open your mouth, you can sing with the Sing For Joy Choir – you won't have to sing alone.

We are led by jazz singer and

teacher Carol Grimes, with Dorian Ford at the piano. They really make the Choir. Carol has been working with Elina Tripoliti, a speech therapist from the National Hospital who I and other choir members had been to see. We start our sessions with Carol working on breathing and clever warm-up exercises for our voices.

The songs we sing are pretty varied and open to the choir members to put forward, with Carol's great ideas on how we can get the most out of them, both musically and therapeutically. Our song list includes: 'I Can See Clearly Now', 'Dirty Old Town' and 'I Walk The Line'.

We meet at a hall in north London on Tuesday evenings at 6pm, starting with a warm-up and simple songs before Dorian joins us at 7.00. We have to be out of the hall at 8.00 – such a short time for singing! So before concerts we have extra time fitted in and also practise with CDs at home.



*Caption*

### So Much Fun

Amazingly, soon after I joined them I took part in the Xmas Concert at Westminster Cathedral. And it was SO good to be part of this year's

Cabaret night in July, with 250-300 people attending.

My friends commented on how happy I looked, like I was having so much fun. Everyone who came agreed it was a lovely evening!

We've had a couple of workshops at the National Hospital – I went to the last one and it was well attended and fun. We want to get charitable status to promote singing as part of the treatment of long term chronic conditions and to support the setting up of other groups. Possibly one will be at the National.

These days, I also find myself singing at home, something I haven't done since I was a teenager.

Since joining the choir, SO many people have commented on the strength and quality of my voice when talking.

There really is joy in being part of the choir!

### Info Box

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