

ARTS

Treasures



‘That was beautiful, I felt lifted up.’
‘Do you rehearse regularly?’
‘Do you have the music, the chords, maybe a recording?’

These are some of the comments and questions made over the years, as the songs echoed in halls, churches and other venues where people of the Focolare had gathered together. However, the sheet music was unavailable and we hadn’t

Lorraine Reade reports on the making of a new CD of Focolare songs in March this year.

recorded any Focolare songs since the album ‘Bridges’ was recorded in 1970!

Fifteen songs in one weekend

Following a desire to ensure that our culture, expressed in music, was not lost, and a generous offer to underwrite the costs of making a CD, we embarked on what would seem the impossible task of recording an album over three days. It was a chance for many to be involved, whether by cooking, providing hospitality and support, to those who would sing and play the target ‘Fifteen songs in a weekend’. Many, who over the years had sung with the groups, committed themselves to listening to the rough recording sent to them before the weekend so that they could arrive prepared. With the cables laid out, the mics on stands, the instruments tuned, the glasses of water, the headphones and so much more, the room began to fill with – not just the equipment, but people, who were there to give their all. The atmosphere grew as each one greeted the other and agreed we wanted to give ‘the life behind the songs’. One of the singers said: ‘... this music is our culture, our culture of unity and as such, it’s invaluable to record it, remembering that we hold on to the unity that is built every time we sing together. But more importantly, it forms a part of our common heritage and as such is one of the elements that binds us together.’



Photo: Eliana di Dominics

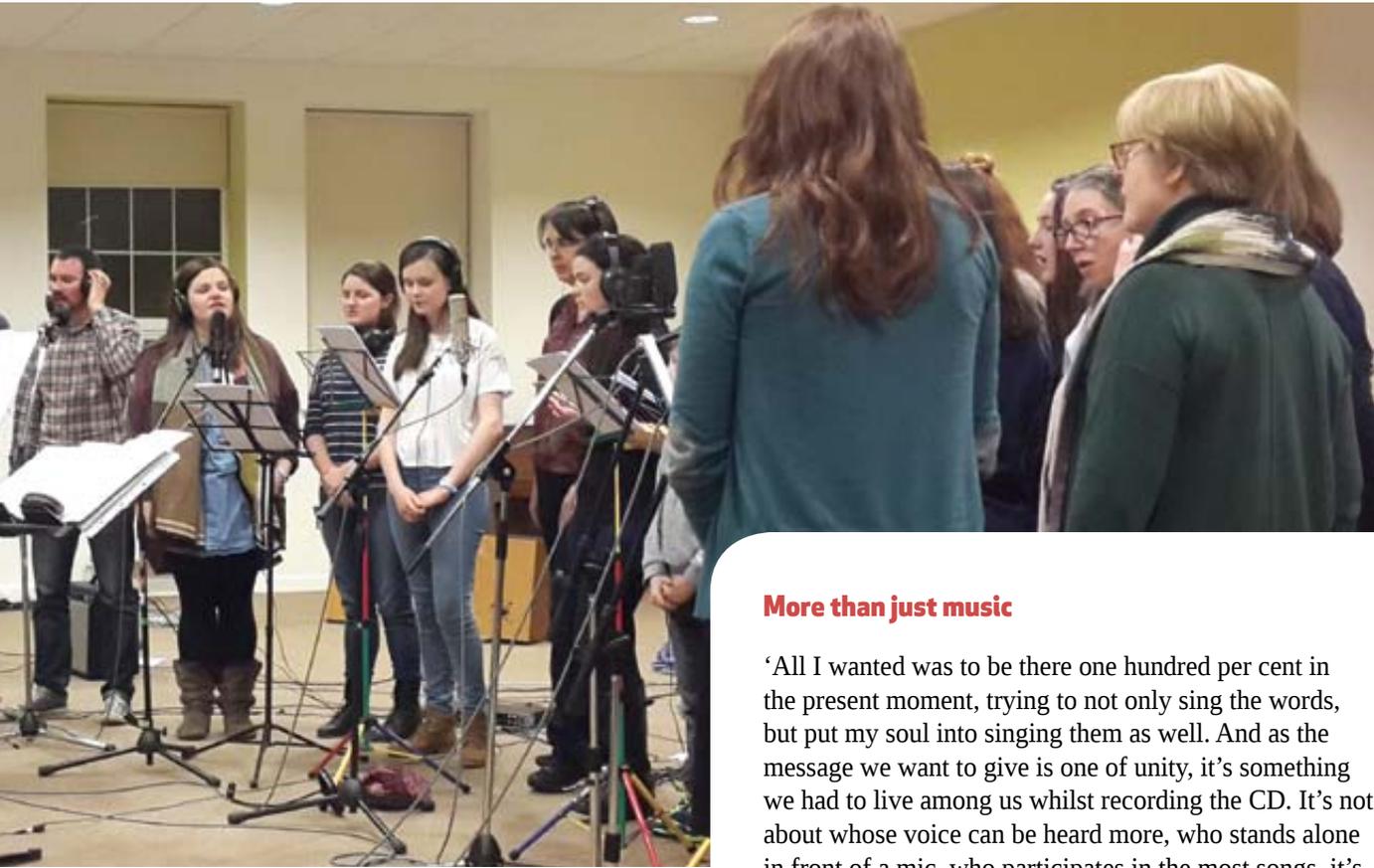
A little miracle

Three days of non-stop recording backing tracks and vocals, with people offering suggestions, listening, sharing great talents, who went beyond their tiredness and gave everything. Often we would re-record when we thought that we could do better and ensure that the end product reflected life and not just ‘professionalism’. Bethany wrote ‘The actual recording process is always more boring than glamorous, but I felt that each one of us was there out of love, and each moment of waiting for things to be ready or for me to play the right chords(!), was a chance to love.’

Clare our percussionist wrote ‘Sometimes as a drummer recording can be a very lonely process... maybe a click track or a distant guitar in your headphones and your own breathing in the background. In the making of “Treasures” things were very different.

Although I still had the headphones on and was sometimes in the room on my own I felt I had everyone else with me. There were about thirty of us altogether and each one was ready to live for the other. What has been produced is a little miracle.’





More than just music

‘All I wanted was to be there one hundred per cent in the present moment, trying to not only sing the words, but put my soul into singing them as well. And as the message we want to give is one of unity, it’s something we had to live among us whilst recording the CD. It’s not about whose voice can be heard more, who stands alone in front of a mic, who participates in the most songs, it’s about the presence of Jesus amongst us, who allows us to share so much more with our songs than just music.’

And that is what the outcome was, ‘a miracle of love’, and the fruits of this labour of love will, we hope, reach far and wide. In fact we have already received many comments from people who have received the CD: ‘As I listened to the new CD “Treasures” today I was reminded of all I love about the charism of unity. I realised for much of the time I just hold it all together and live moment by moment but not always feeling that much. Offering everything, yes, but not always allowing myself to go too deep. Somehow today the music together with such beautiful lyrics entered deeper into my soul and I wept. I was so moved and encouraged to carry on loving. Thank you to all who contributed to producing this true treasure which is more than the words or the music. It is for me pure love.’

Perhaps the effects of the CD will be diverse and widespread. For the thirty of us who participated and contributed in so many ways to its creation, we all agreed that there was something built far beyond the music which, for us, will remain forever. 🍷

‘Up until the early hours, sharing meals, occasional breaks – there was an unspoken unity between us.’

‘For me the outstanding aspect of the weekend was the sense of unity between everyone. We were all exhausted, coming from home/school/work followed by a long weekend of recording, but everyone had this feeling of excitement and the outside world was left at the door. That weekend was about creating a CD for our community and the wider Focolare that’s been wanted by many people over the years. I think you can really hear on the CD the love we all had for each other and for the project. I absolutely loved the experience along with most of my family who were also involved in the recording.’

Mum, Dad and Baby Francis participated and wrote afterwards: ‘Every time we play “Treasures”, there are warm memories of laughter, singing with friends, great food and Welwyn hospitality which helps us feel the love that went into making the CD all over again. Thank you to all those who made it happen.’

‘Treasures’ (CD) is available from New City. Cost £10.00