Students perform with opera star

A group of performing arts students from the University of Sunderland have worked with an internationally renowned opera star to produce a lockdown music video.

The seven students have been rehearsing for more than a week with Mezzo Soprano Valerie Reid and music director Andrew Clarence on a new arrangement of the song As Long As I Have Music.

You can view the video on You Tube HERE.

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And within minutes of the song being posted online, there was an endorsement from the song's writers Don Besig and Nancy Price:

"Our thanks to you for this sensitive recording. We hope its message of inspiration and hope will touch many hearts during this challenging time."

Valerie, who has appeared in opera houses and concert stages around the world, said the song was chosen because of its harmonies and uplifting message. "It's a lovely song – very popular with choirs. Its message of hope is particularly relevant in this period of lockdown."

The students were able to work with Valerie and Andrew using video links to rehearse and perform the arrangement. The performance was captured and mixed by award-winning producer

Ed Westman who has posted the song on the university website.

Valerie, who is a visiting professor of vocal studies at the university, praised the students for their work on the project. "Rehearsing the song and its harmonies when you're on your own at home having to rely on earphones is not straightforward," she said. "But the students quickly got used to the process and I am delighted with the results."

Pro Vice Chancellor for External Relations Graeme Thompson said: "This online collaboration between students and professional musicians has been a wonderful opportunity to showcase performing arts talent.

"I am pleased the video is getting so many views online because it is such a calm and positive watch. And it's one of the those songs that lingers long after the final notes fade away."

You can view the video on You Tube HERE.