



Barnsley  
Youth Choir



# Join Barnsley Youth Choir in 2020

## A life-changing opportunity for 4-24 year olds

It is rare in life to be presented with genuine life-changing opportunities. We hope that you will consider joining the Barnsley Youth Choir family, seen by many as one of the finest choral organisations in the world. Over 400 children and young people are now involved with BYC which is a non-profit charity that seeks to provide exceptional opportunities for young people in our town.

There has never been a more important time for children to sing together. The challenges that we face in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact on young people's mental health and general happiness is well documented. Singing has been proven to have significant physical, emotional, academic and social benefits and I believe passionately that children who sing become happier and more successful.

I'll start by dispelling some myths.

**Children don't need to be great singers to join the choir.** Our world class vocal coaches and leaders will help them become great singers – that's our job and we take it seriously. We are simply looking for potential and we argue that all children and young people have wonderful potential. They will also learn from some of the world's leading international leaders and choirs.

**It's not expensive to be involved.**

Our fees are lower than most other groups available to your child, and are a fraction of the cost of other similar choirs in this country. We also have bursaries available to support lower income families. No child should miss out because of financial worries – this is something that is really important to us and we work hard to keep costs and fees as low as possible.

I hope that the information in this booklet is useful and will give you an insight into the wonderful opportunities that are available to you and your child. Due to the current restrictions we have put in place a wonderfully rich online package including live rehearsals, workshops and Q&A sessions with some of the world's most famous musicians. We've seen this as a brilliant opportunity to work in a different way but we do hope to start rehearsing face to face in the near future. I am enormously proud of the tireless work that the BYC team is involved in and the progress that the choir has made since it was established in 2009. We are at an exciting point in our journey and are thrilled to be able to welcome new members to the choir and continue our desire to unlock young people's talent and potential.

We look forward to hearing from you!

**Mat Wright MBE**

For more information on how to join, email- [bycauditions@gmail.com](mailto:bycauditions@gmail.com)



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[www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk](http://www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk)



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# The story so far...

**BYC is a remarkable organisation that was established in 2009. It is a registered charity run by volunteers that seeks to provide outstanding opportunities for young people who live in Barnsley and has developed a reputation for excellence.**

The choir is ranked 3rd in the World Rankings in its category and has won 8 first prizes in some of the biggest international competitions in the world. Barnsley Youth Choir was presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in January 2018 and the choir's Artistic Director was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Years Honours list in January 2020 for his services to Music and to young people.

BYC is first and foremost a community choir and is highly inclusive and now has over 400 singers involved in regular rehearsals aged 4 - 24 years old. The choir contains 6 separate smaller choirs: BYC Junior Choir (4-7 years), BYC Children's Central (7-12 years), BYC Children's Choir East Dearne (7-12 years), BYC Children's Choir West Penistone (7-12 years), BYC Intermediate Choir (10-16 years) and BYC Senior Choir (14-24 years). There have been numerous appearances on BBC TV and BBC Local Radio and BYC has released 2 albums, 'When You Believe' (2016) and 'Joy' (2018) to critical acclaim. It has raised significant amounts of money for local charities including £10,000 for Barnsley Hospice after releasing a charity single.

The choir also has a newly formed Alumni section and close links with sister organisations Little Singers (0-4 years) founded by Eleanor Wright and Barnsley Singers (24 years+) founded by Mat Wright and Luke Mather. BYC is not publicly funded and relies on the support of the local and wider community to operate and maintain viability.

The use of the Kodaly system, through a close association with choirs from the Kodaly School in Kecskemet and Laszlo Duranyik, has been significant in developing young people with little prior experience or formal training. The choir has had the opportunity to work with some of the world's finest conductors and choirs in this country and abroad, and has appeared in outstanding international venues. The choir is unusual in that it maintains a wide and diverse repertoire including Popular, Gospel, Spiritual, Folk and more Classical genres, and audiences appreciate the variety of music performed in concerts.

The choir has developed close associations with the Aurin and Miraculum Choirs from Hungary, Tuks Camerata from South Africa and choirs from the Adolf Fredriks School in Sweden. It has also performed with outstanding choirs from this country including Farnham Youth Choir and the National Youth Choir of Great Britain Fellowship. It has worked with soloists such as Lesley Garrett OBE, international folk star Kate Rusby and Paul Phoenix (Kings Singers) and has been conducted by and received training from some of the world's best choral leaders including Dr. Michael Barrett (RSA), Laszlo Duranyik (HUN), Tony Margreta (SWE), Romans Vanags (LAT), Thomas Caplin (NOR), Johan Rooze (NED), Fred Sjoberg (SWE), Prof. Ralf Eisenbeiss (GER), David Slater (AUS), Joanna Tomlinson (GB), Dr. Amy Bebbington (GB) and Steven Roberts (GB).

Those who join BYC say that it has changed their lives. They have become more confident, have developed excellent vocal skills and are able to perform and present themselves with professionalism and discipline.

BYC prides itself on providing exceptional experiences for young people and engenders a sense of aspiration. Being a member helps young people to develop skills and qualities that will support them throughout their lives.

We seek to inspire and change lives through music and provide life changing opportunities for those involved.





# How to join

If you or your child is aged 4 – 24 years old then we are keen to hear from you! No experience is necessary and we will guide you through a simple process and get you involved as soon as possible.

BYC is a very inclusive choir and the vast majority of children and young people who contact us are offered a place in one of our choirs.

We know that auditioning can be a daunting prospect, particularly for those that haven't sung before. In these unprecedented times we have moved to a different system to ensure that children can still join BYC. We won't let this pandemic deny young people the chance of joining the choir and we're committed to do everything in our power to make joining a really exciting and positive experience, even in the light of the short-term challenges we face.

Anyone wanting to join our Junior Choir (aged 4 – 7 years old) can do so straight away.

Instead of a vocal test or auditions we are simply asking those wanting to join one of our three Children's Choirs (7-12 years old) based in Central Barnsley, East (the Dearne) or West (Penistone) to send in a short video of them singing. We don't expect this to be perfect! This certainly isn't X-Factor and only the Musical Director team will see this. We are simply looking for potential and have chosen the simple and well-known song, Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen, for them to sing. It is fine to sing it unaccompanied or with a backing track. Words, music and rehearsal tracks are available on our website. For these choirs we'll look at the video and get back to you quickly about whether we can offer you a place.

If you are interested in joining our Intermediate Choir (10 – 16 years old) then please send in a short video of Hallelujah (see above) and another short video of any song of your choice. You have freedom to choose anything at all. Just sing something that you like and enjoy.

The Senior Choir performs at a higher level and we would like to do some singing with you in a very relaxed way using the online platform Zoom. Essentially a music director will give you a short singing lesson (free of charge!) and will teach you a short piece. They will put you at ease and we certainly don't expect you to sing perfectly – we're more interested in your potential and how you learn. Your parents are welcome to also be involved so you don't feel on your own and we will guide you through this simple process – there's absolutely nothing to worry about!

There is a short application form to fill in that's available on our website or simply contact our wonderful Membership Secretary, Lynne Veal on **bycauditions@gmail.com** and she will guide you through this simple process and answer any questions that you have too.

Don't delay – get in touch.  
You've got nothing to lose and have SO much to gain!

**For more information about how to join the choir,  
email – [bycauditions@gmail.com](mailto:bycauditions@gmail.com)**

“  
**WHEN MY DAUGHTER JOINED THE CHOIR IN SEPT 2016 HER DAD AND I WERE REALLY HAPPY THAT SHE HAD JOINED, BUT TO BE TOTALLY HONEST HAD ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT A WONDERFULLY AMAZING, EMOTIONAL, PRIDE FILLING EXPERIENCE SHE AND WE WERE EMBARKING ON. IT'S NOT JUST YOUR OWN CHILD THAT YOU ARE SO PROUD OF, IT'S EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM. AS A PARENT I CANNOT THINK OF ANYTHING BETTER IN THE WHOLE WORLD THAT I WOULD WISH MY DAUGHTER TO BE PART OF. ONE OF HER TEXTS TO ME WHILST IN RIGA WAS ‘MUM I'M NEVER EVER, EVER LEAVING THIS CHOIR.**  
”



**Dan Jarvis MBE**

Member of Parliament for Barnsley Central, Mayor of the Sheffield City Region and Honorary Patron of BYC.

*"They are wonderful ambassadors for our town. It gives our young people a fantastic opportunity to showcase their talents. I've been inspired and impressed by the standards that they have reached"*



**Zoe Aradipioti**

Member of Barnsley Youth Choir

*"BYC has helped me grow as a person. I now have confidence and feel really proud of the choir and how my voice has improved. I don't think I'd be the person I am today without BYC and am grateful for all of the opportunities and experiences it has given me"*



**Darren Henley**

Chief Executive, Arts Council England

*"The talent, commitment and achievements of Barnsley Youth Choir are hugely impressive, and I enjoyed a wonderful evening of uplifting performances"*



**Alex-Terry Hoult**

Member of Barnsley Youth Choir

*"BYC is the best thing that I do in my life outside of school. It has made my life so much more enjoyable and I have made so many friends. The experiences have been absolutely amazing and I have been given opportunities of a lifetime."*



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[www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk](http://www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk)



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# The six choirs of BYC



## Junior Choir



**4-7 Years Old**

Rehearsals 4.30pm - 5.30pm  
on Thursday afternoons at  
Barnsley 6th Form Centre

### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Facebook Live  
on Thursdays  
**4.30pm - 5.15pm**



## Children's Choir Central



**7-11 Years Old**

Rehearsals 5.45pm - 7.30pm  
on Thursday evenings  
at Barnsley 6th Form Centre

### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Zoom Live  
on Wednesdays  
**5.45pm - 6.45pm**



## Children's Choir East



**7-11 Years Old**

Rehearsals 5.45pm - 7.30pm  
on Wednesday evenings  
at Astrea Academy Dearne

### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Zoom Live  
on Wednesdays  
**5.45pm - 6.45pm**

# The proven benefits of Singing

### Physical Benefits of Singing

#### Singing strengthens the immune system

A study included testing professional choir members' blood before and after an hour-long rehearsal. Researchers noticed that the amount of proteins in the immune system that function as antibodies, known as Immunoglobulin A, were significantly higher immediately after the rehearsal.

#### Singing is a workout

Even if you're healthy, your lungs will get a workout as you employ proper singing techniques and vocal projections. Other related health benefits of singing include a stronger diaphragm and stimulated overall circulation. Since you pull in a greater amount of oxygen while singing than when doing many other types of exercise, singing can increase your aerobic capacity and stamina.

#### Singing improves your posture

Standing up straight is part of correct technique as you're singing, so with time, good posture will become a habit! As your chest cavity expands and your shoulders and back align, you're improving your posture overall.

#### Singing helps with sleep

According to a health research experts believe singing can help strengthen throat and palate muscles, which helps stop snoring and sleep apnea. Reduced stress levels through singing also help with this.

For more information email [bycauditions@gmail.com](mailto:bycauditions@gmail.com)

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## Children's Choir West



### 7-12 Years Old

Rehearsals 5.45pm – 7.30pm  
on Wednesday evenings  
at Penistone Grammar School

#### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Zoom Live  
on Wednesdays  
**5.45pm – 6.45pm**

## Intermediate Choir



### 10-16 Years Old

Rehearsals 6.15pm – 8.15pm  
on Thursday evenings  
at Barnsley 6th Form Centre

#### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Zoom Live  
on Thursdays  
**5.45pm – 7.00pm**

## Senior Choir



### 14-24 Years Old

Rehearsals 6.45pm – 9.00pm  
on Thursday evenings  
at Barnsley 6th Form Centre

#### COVID-19 REHEARSALS

via Zoom Live  
on Thursdays  
**7.30pm – 9.00pm**

### Psychological & Emotional Benefits of Singing

#### Singing is a natural anti-depressant

Singing releases endorphins, the feel-good brain chemical that makes you feel uplifted and happy. Not only that, but singing can simply take your mind off the day's troubles to boost your mood.

#### Singing lowers stress levels

Making music in any form is relaxing. Singing releases stored muscle tension and decreases the levels of a stress hormone called cortisol in your blood stream.

#### Singing improves mental alertness

Improved blood circulation and an oxygenated blood stream allow more oxygen to reach the brain. This improves mental alertness, concentration, and memory.

### Social Benefits of Singing

#### Singing can widen your circle of friends

One of the unexpected health benefits of singing is that it can improve your social life. The bonds you form singing with others can be profound, since there's a level of intimacy naturally involved.

#### Singing boosts your confidence

Performing well and receiving praise from your friends and family may be the key to eventually overcoming your fears and boosting your self-confidence. Many find it easier to present material in front of a group with poise and good presentation skills.

#### Singing broadens communication skills

Music is just as important as teaching reading and writing at a young age to prevent language problems later in life. If you enjoy writing your own lyrics, honing this talent can improve your ability to communicate in different ways!

#### Singing increases your ability to appreciate other singers

Sometimes, you don't realise how difficult something is until you try it yourself. As you grow you'll be looking to the masters for inspiration. You might even find a new style of music to appreciate that you wouldn't normally listen to!



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[www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk](http://www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk)



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# | Putting Barnsley on the map

## Foreign Tours

Tours to Latvia (x2), Germany, Sweden, Edinburgh (x2) and South Africa.



## Media

Numerous appearances on regional, national and international TV and radio. We have released CD singles and 2 albums ('When You Believe' 2016 and 'Joy' 2018) as well as YouTube videos. We also have developed a strong social media presence.



## Workshops

We have worked with world famous leaders including:  
Thomas Caplin (Norway), Tony Margeta (Sweden),  
Romans Vanags (Latvia), Laszlo Duranyik (Hungary),  
David Slater (Australia), Susanna Saw (Malaysia),  
Joanna Tomlinson (GB), Mia Makaroff (Finland), Dr. Amy  
Bebbington (GB), Paul Phoenix (GB), Dr Michael Barrett-  
Berg (South Africa), Renette Bower (South Africa),  
Bernard Krüger (South Africa) and Carla Jane (GB).



## International Visitors

Hosting the Aurin & Miraculum Choirs (Hungary)

Adolf Fredriks Music School & Stockholm Catherderal Choir (Sweden)

Drakensberg Boys Choir & Dr. Michael Barrett (South Africa)



## Competitions

We have represented Great Britain internationally in the World Choir Games and the European Choir Games as well as taking part in national festivals and competitions.



## Fundraising

We have fundraised for important local causes such as Barnsley Hospice and Local Homeless Charities. We also work hard to raise money for the choir which has included events such as the annual Singathon and the Gala Dinner.



## UK Visitors

We have hosted and sung with many UK choirs, soloists and choral leaders including Farnham Youth Choir, Newham Youth Choir, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, Honley MVC, Skelmanthorpe MVC, Carla Jane, Dr. Amy Bebbington, Kate Rusby, Steven Roberts, Lesley Garrett OBE and Paul Phoenix.



## Performances

Regular performances in venues in Barnsley, at local and regional Awards Ceremonies, at important venues in the UK such as The Bridgewater Hall, The Royal Northern College of Music, the Olympic Stadium and Stratford Circus and at significant venues abroad.



# International Competition Results



## 8th World Choir Games Riga, Latvia 2014

### Runner Up Open Category 022

Gospel / 22.65 Gold Diploma III

### 1st Prize Open Category 026

Popular Choral Music / 21.30 Gold Diploma II



## 2nd European Choir Games & Grand Prix of Nations - Magdeburg, Germany, 2015

### 1st Prize - Grand Prix Category 5

Pop/ Jazz / Gospel / Spiritual 96.50 Gold Medal

### 1st Prize - Champions Category 8

Jazz/ Pop 90.50 Gold Medal

### 1st Prize - Champions Category 9

Gospel/ Spiritual 92.00 Gold Medal



## 3rd European Choir Games & Grand Prix of Nations Riga, Latvia, 2017

### 1st Prize - Grand Prix Category 7

Gospel / Spiritual / Music of Spirit and Faith - 94.40 Gold Medal

### 1st Prize - Grand Prix Category 8

Jazz/ Pop / Show - 95.5 Gold Medal

### 1st Prize - Champions Category 7

Gospel / Spiritual / Music of Spirit and Faith - 91.88 Gold Medal

### 1st Prize - Champions Category 8

Jazz/ Pop / Show - 94.63 Gold Medal



## INTERKULTUR WORLD RANKINGS

POP, JAZZ, GOSPEL, SPIRITUAL & BARBERSHOP CHOIRS TOP 10

POS	CHOIR	COUNTRY	POINTS
1	Stellenbosch University Choir	South Africa	1234
2	The Aeolians of Oakwood University	USA	1209
3	Barnsley Youth Choir	Great Britain	1162
4	Dekoor Close Harmony	Netherlands	1150
5	Kearsney College Choir	South Africa	1148
6	Drakensberg Boys Choir	South Africa	1116
7	Hotumese Choir	Indonesia	1113
8	Mt. San Antonio College Singcopation	USA	1093
9	Singakademie Graz	USA	1061
10	Harmonize	Republic of Korea	1055

OVERALL WORLD RANKINGS INCLUDING THE MANY THOUSANDS OF CHOIRS THAT COMPETE INTERNATIONALLY, IN ALL CATEGORIES.

POS	CHOIR	COUNTRY	POINTS
1	Stellenbosch University Choir	South Africa	1272
2	Kamerniy Devichiy Khor by Lysenko	Ukraine	1233
3	The Aeolians of Oakwood University	USA	1221
4	Tygerberg Children's Choir	South Africa	1220
5	Gnesins' Ensemble of Contemporary Music "Altro coro"	Russia	1211
6	Children's Choir "Alye Parusa"	Russia	1205
7	The Müller Chamber Choir	Chinese Taipei	1193
8	Guangzhou Little Petrel Children's Choir	China	1191
9	Guangdong Experimental Middle School Choir	China	1181
10	Children and Youth Studio "Gaismina"	Latvia	1177
11	University of Houston Moores School Concert Chorale	USA	1173
12	Kvindelige Studenter Sangforening Oslo	Norway	1165
13	Barnsley Youth Choir	Great Britain	1162
14	Akustika Chamber Singers	South Africa	1157
14	Emila Dārzina Jauktais Koris	Latvia	1157

The Queens Award for Voluntary Service  
January 2016



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service  
The MBE for volunteer groups

Proud of Barnsley Awards  
Mat Wright – Winner of the Main Special Award  
Barnsley Youth Choir – Winners of the Exceptional Achievement Award

November 2016



Artistic Director Mat Wright awarded the MBE for services to young people and music.  
January 2020



### Professor Thomas Caplin

Conductor of Nordic Blue and Defrost Youth Choir, International Adjudicator, Clinician and Composer, Norway.

"I have had the pleasure of both working with Barnsley Youth Choir and also adjudicating them in all Choir Games in Riga, 2014. To experience them singing with such sincere happiness and joy is a true inspiration to everyone, and it touches all hearts."



### Dr. Michael Barrett

Conductor of Tuks Camerata, Pretoria International Adjudicator and Clinician, South Africa.

"Working with BYC and conductor Mat Wright reminded me of the importance of choral music in all our lives. This choir has the ability to make us feel. They sing with such passion, honesty and above all integrity. It is evident that they love to perform and in so doing, captivate their audience, taking them on an extraordinary journey."



### Tony Margeta

Conductor, Adolf Fredriks Music School & Adolf Fredriks Boys Choir, Sweden.

BYC is an amazing group of dedicated and musically talented young people. Since the first time I heard them in the European Choir Games in Magdeburg 2015 I've had the choir as a role model for my own youth choirs at Adolf Fredriks Music School in Stockholm, Sweden.



### Aleksandr Ryzhinskiy

Conductor of Gnesin Ensemble 'Altro Coro', Academy of Music, Moscow, International Adjudicator and Clinician, Russia.

"Barnsley Youth Choir is one of the most wonderful choirs that I have ever heard! They have energy, artistry and delightful young voices. Above all they have a very professional sound. They have large numbers of remarkable soloists who are vocally talented and have a natural feel on the stage."



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Volunteer Team



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Junior Choir



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Children's Choir Central



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Children's Choir East



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Children's Choir West



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Intermediate Choir



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Senior Choir



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Alumni Choir



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Music Team



Barnsley Youth Choir  
Technical Team