

BARNSELEY YOUTH CHOIR



AUGUST 2021

INSIDER

Featuring

Virtual Choirs
Inspiring Insights
BIYCF21 Festival
Primary School Partnership
and much more...

CELEBRATING THE WORK THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD



Welcome to the INSIDER

Welcome to our Insider magazine. It's a chance to reflect on what has been an incredibly tough period for everyone involved in Barnsley Youth Choir, but also a chance to celebrate what has been achieved despite the restrictions that we have been faced with. Live rehearsals ceased in March 2020 with our last activity being a Gospel Workshop weekend with the brilliant Carla Jane. It was a fantastic weekend and one full of joy and excitement. The Children's Choirs, Intermediate Choir and Senior Choir all enjoyed workshops with her and she also ran an intensive session for the World Choir Games team, focusing on the Gospel Category that we had entered for Flanders 2020. Whilst there was a sense of concern with the unfolding news about the Covid-19 virus, no-one fully appreciated or recognised how serious this situation was, and the impact that it would have on all aspects of our lives. In times of emergency there are many different stances to adopt. As a choir we made an early decision to do all we could to provide as rich and full an experience to our members as possible. The team worked tirelessly to 'make things happen' - something that is deeply engrained in the DNA of Barnsley Youth Choir. We needed to be innovative, creative, ambitious and brave! Beyond online weekly rehearsals for every choir, we have worked so hard to seek opportunities to work in a different way, engage with partners that we'd not been able to work with before and provide an exciting and comprehensive programme that would support our members at a difficult time. Our stance has been fuelled by moral purpose. We recognise that for many of our young people this has been an incredibly challenging time, and our hope is that the choir has provided some solace and refuge, even virtually. It's come at a considerable cost to the choir, both financially and in terms of people's time, but it has been the right thing to do. I feel so proud and grateful to those that have contributed in some way. We have also tried to be very outward facing and seek to support other choirs and organisations in whatever way we could.

The headline is that BYC, through prudent financial management and tireless fundraising, is not vulnerable to closure. The wonderful support of our community and the brilliant work of Peter Birkby and Jude Wright in terms of accessing funding, has enabled us to continue our work and push the boundaries of what is possible. Thank you to everyone who donated in any of our fundraising events - you will never truly understand and appreciate how important this was, and the impact that your kindness has had on BYC. This short magazine tries to capture some of the highlights of this period, celebrate what has been achieved, and we hope that friends enjoy reading it. I feel so lucky to work in such a positive, industrious and selfless team and hope that members, volunteers, the music team and supporters feel a deep sense of pride in what has been achieved.

BYC has actually grown in so many ways during the lockdown period, and foundations have been laid for some incredibly exciting plans for the 2021-22 season. We are full of optimism and excitement and we are so excited to be starting back again this September with full face to face rehearsals. We have craved and missed the essence of choir - singing together and creating wonderful music with our friends. It's a profound and life affirming experience and one that we will never take for granted again.

Thank you so much for your support

Mat Wright MBE
Artistic Director, Barnsley Youth Choir

Messages of Hope

At the start of this difficult period, members, volunteers and musicians involved with the choir were keen to connect. The BYC family was worried and keen to pass on support and best wishes to one another. What evolved were lots of posts on social media with photographs of children passing on messages. These messages were not only to one another, but to everyone connected with the choir and beyond. We collated these photographs and created a video featuring them so that we could collectively pass on these messages in a powerful and meaningful way.



Messages of Hope

The video is available here:
https://youtu.be/X_cAfM-SODM



Junior Choir

Junior Choir has been on quite a journey through the course of this period...but they've come out fighting! Beginning by rehearsing on Facebook Live they were fully committed to the cause, despite being by themselves and not being seen. It was wonderful to receive video clips and photos of the children in action, giving it their all as they always did in 'normal' rehearsals. Halfway through the year we made the decision to put their rehearsals on Zoom...a risk, you think? Certainly not! They have been INCREDIBLE! These kids are just bursting with talent, perseverance, musicality, charisma and boy have they got the moves! During the course of the year, we have acquired quite a few new members who have joined in brilliantly. Our only concern is that at least 50% of the choir will be ready to move up to Children's Choir in September - we assess that this will be over 30 children. That is only a minor concern, however, as the thought of having them in Children's Choir is an exciting one too.

We were absolutely delighted (and a little emotional) to come back together in June to start rehearsing in person. Once again, this team of superheroes took the whole experience in their stride; a different venue, standing two metres apart with me behind a screen wearing a mask. Nothing seems to faze them - they will go far! We have created a bit of a Junior Choir 'anthem' in the song Big Brave Bill by Kate Rusby. We performed this in spectacular fashion in July, with superhero costumes and teabag box props. Check out the link to see what on the earth we mean! We have also explored other new music including A Whole New World and Life's a Happy Song. Even in these trying times Junior Choir has never been anything other than joyous, and we know the other adults involved feel exactly the same!

Thank you to Gareth Taylor, Bronwen Dooling and Hannah Todd for sticking with us on Zoom. It is particularly difficult to be an accompanist on Zoom as you are out of time with other people because of the delay, but Gareth helpfully provided us with backing tracks for pieces and was always ready to play Happy Birthday at the end of sessions! Tom Masters and Luke Mather have continued to not only provide us with the 'Zoom' option during live rehearsals but have generally helped out with the rehearsals themselves which was such a boost for us all.

Eleanor Wright
Musical Director



Big Brave Bill

The video is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xRVC7eat_8&t=1s



Children's Choirs

Central, East & West

When lockdown began we moved very quickly into the virtual world, beginning with Children's Choir rehearsals on Facebook Live, still run as three separate Children's Choirs. After the success of Zoom rehearsals for Intermediate and Senior Choirs, we took the plunge and moved our rehearsals over to Zoom, working as one Children's Choir team as opposed to three separate groups. By this point our team had altered slightly, with Gavin Usher stepping down as MD of Children's Choir West and Rosie Masters and Sam Gilliatt taking on the role. It was wonderful to see the faces of the children we were working with, but, more importantly, to hear their voices was such a treat! So many of the children from all three choirs braved singing on their own and it has been a joy to behold. We had a recruitment campaign, from which we gained a number of new fantastic members. We were delighted to meet them in person when restrictions were lifted and we were able to sing together once again. We were astonished at the bravery we witnessed; those children who were brand new to choir, those older members who persevered through the 'Zoom era', and those who weren't fans of Zoom but returned when we were back in person. The sound was incredible! Finally we could sing rounds in up to four parts and hear new arrangements in two parts! And St Mary's Church provided the perfect acoustic. We have extended our repertoire to include Superheroes, Dance! and Fireflies and have continued to finish our rehearsals with the beautiful song The Blessing. It would be easy to see the negative side of this situation when we were forced to rehearse on Zoom, however we used the end of the rehearsals as an opportunity to focus on the positive, with children writing their 'blessings' in the chat.

We have certainly been 'blessed' when it comes to the Children's Choir team - exceptional both on Zoom and in person. Thank you so much to Luke, Sam, Rosie, Gareth, Tom, Fiona, Michelle and Helen for their all-round awesomeness!

Eleanor Wright
Musical Director



See the Light

The video is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_iSlinjsqM



Intermediate Choir

Although lockdown meant we were apart, the Intermediate Choir has never been stronger. Zoom Rehearsals were filled with short bursts of Warm Ups, Musicianship and Sectionals to maintain and develop members' singing skills (not forgetting the epic games of Guess Who!). We were lucky enough to welcome fantastic choral leaders from across the world for Workshops and Q+A sessions. The choir is so grateful - never in a million years would the Intermediates have even imagined having access to these awesome opportunities! It was also wonderful to see many Intermediates join Zoom to take part in the Online Singathon, especially those who had not been online for a while. Their efforts helped raise a record amount for the choir at such an important time.

It was brilliant to meet in real life again from May onwards. We had to distance and wear special singing masks and it took a while for the members to get used to the new conditions. Week on week I saw much bravery and commitment from them, slowly rediscovering the sound we make and the fun and focussed atmosphere that had been created before lockdown. The hard work all paid off in July when we could sing normally again, culminating in two fantastic recorded performances of Symphony and Heaven for the virtual BIYCF concert video. I know that the choir members will be able to look back on these videos with pride in the years to come - I certainly am proud of their efforts right now. Quite a few of the Intermediates will now be ready to audition for the Senior Choir and it will be because of their dedicated work over lockdown that they are able to do this. We are looking forward to welcoming the members moving up from the Children's Choirs too!

Thank you to Mat, Sam, Rob, Gorgey, Eleanor and the section leaders for helping to run rehearsals and keeping us all motivated and singing through these crazy times. Finally thank you to the Intermediates! They have shown bravery and resilience throughout the pandemic and I cannot wait to get started in the new term.

Luke Mather
Musical Director



Senior Choir

The Senior Choir has worked incredibly hard during the lockdown period and members have been the real pioneers of harnessing the use of technology to overcome the significant obstacles that the pandemic provided. They have been at the forefront of so many initiatives and projects and have worked so hard. They perhaps gained the most from the Inspiring Insights and Developing Musicians programmes and many have really immersed themselves in projects and activities that we have provided. We have worked on 10 new pieces during lockdown and can't wait to be able to perform them in concerts in the 2021-22 season. In order to rehearse such complex pieces, we have used sectional rehearsals on Zoom really well. Particular thanks go to Eleanor, Gareth, Sam, Rob, Gorgey and Luke who have all helped to lead these sectional rehearsals. It's taken a big team to make this work well and I am so grateful to them for their support.

The recent BIYCF21 Festival Concert featured 3 pieces that were put together quickly with little rehearsal time - 'What About Us', 'Feels Like Home' and 'Fix You'. We were so proud of how well they performed these pieces, despite all of the challenges that they faced. We will be sad to lose some of our members to university this year, but hope that they stay in touch and still play a role in BYC in the future. A number are moving to local universities and we hope that this will enable them to stay fully involved and take advantage of the exciting plans we have for 2021-22. We are also excited to welcome graduates from the brilliant Intermediate Choir and see them grow wearing the Royal Blue of the Senior Choir.

We are so pleased to be rehearsing face to face again and fully involve the over 18s who, inexplicably, weren't allowed to rehearse with the main body of the choir as part of the recent restrictions. This group in particular deserve specific praise, and Luke and Rob who supported them in separate rehearsals outside at a nearby farm. We were so pleased to be able to rehearse in person again and are indebted to St. Mary's Church for providing a safe and wonderful venue for the Under 18s to use whilst restrictions were in place. It was a very moving moment hearing the children sing together again, albeit in masks and socially distanced. Here is a clip of the Senior Choir singing together for the first time after 14 months apart. Watch it in the QR code at the end of this paragraph.

I'd like to finally thank all members of the Senior Choir and their families for supporting them and the choir through this really difficult time. They have been so supportive, positive, resilient and so well humoured throughout and they have also done so much to support one another. I've never felt prouder of the members and the team that support them, and know that this experience will simply make us stronger and more grateful for what we have. We are really looking forward to the 2021-22 season and singing again to the general public. It's going to be a great year!

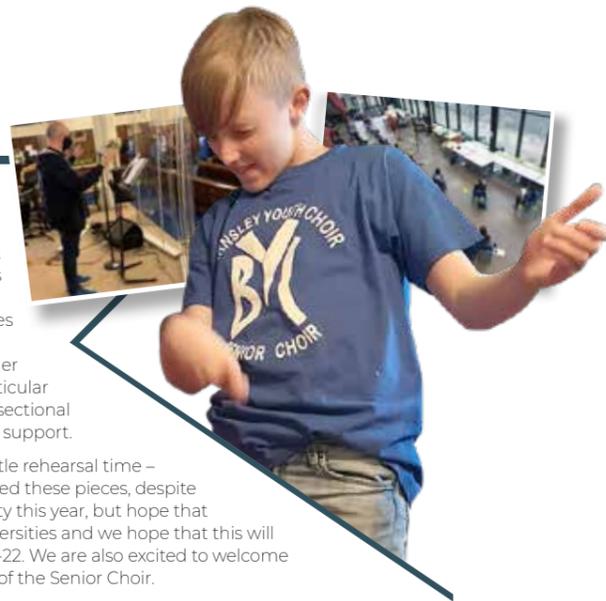
Mat Wright
Musical Director



Symphony

The video is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4heUIQMGMUo>



Everywhere

The video is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mXupK0oQHl>



What About Us

The video is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc5M7kAj4Y>

Virtual Choir Projects



Sing Around the Globe

Barnsley Youth Choir was invited to take part in an exciting international virtual choir project following a recommendation from friend of the choir, Dr. Michael Barrett. The project featured some of the very finest choirs and conductors in the world and it was a real honour to be asked to take part. Hannah Todd, Mila Whitaker, Charlotte Bentley, Zoe Aradipioti, Rosie Masters, Gorgey Bennett, Hannah Rowe, Tom Masters and Luke Henson-Baines represented BYC. Sam Gilliat also featured and Luke Mather and Rob Cooper offered lots of additional support to the singers. It was a real test for our most accomplished singers and there was a quick turnaround to complete these tracks quickly. We are incredibly proud of all of these members who performed wonderfully well in illustrious company.

The acronym for the project, "Sing Around The gloBe" (SATB), is a wordplay on the four voice parts in a choir: Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Basses. Despite the geographical distance that separated the choirs, 167 singers from a total of 21 award-winning choirs joined together to perform Frank Tichell's "Earth Song", a song that prays for harmony and peace in times of darkness and conflict.

The video is available here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEilCaDm4fs>



Participating Choirs:

- Ateneo Chamber Singers (Philippines) Mr. Jonathan Velasco
- Bandung Choral Society (Indonesia) Mr. Tommyanto Kandisaputra
- Barnsley Youth Choir (UK) Mr. Mat Wright MBE
- Birmingham University Singers (UK) Prof. Simon Halsey CBE
- Coro del Teatro de Bellas Artes (Mexico) Mr. Alonso Escalante
- Coroncoro Ensemble Vocal (Colombia) Dr. Ana Paulina Álvarez
- Diocesan Choral Society (Hong Kong SAR) Mr. Ronnie Kay Yen Cheng
- Donald Brinegar Singers (USA) Prof. Donald Brinegar
- Grex Musicus (Finland) Mrs. Marjukka Riihimäki
- Guangdong Experimental High School Choir (China) Mr. Xie Mingjing
- Hamoru Kobe Mixed Choir (Japan) Mr. Masahiro Kishimoto
- Kammerchor der Hochschule für Musik Detmold (Germany) Prof. Anne Kohler
- Kaohsiung Chamber Choir (Kaohsiung) Dr. Chia-Fen Weng
- ONE Chamber Choir (Singapore) Ms. Ai Hooi Lim
- Schola Cantorum (Norway) Ms. Tone Bianca Sparre Dahl
- The Vocal Consort (Singapore) Mr. Nelson Kwei
- Tokyo Metropolitan Vocal Ensemble (Japan) Mr. Ko Matsushita
- Unitus Ensemble (USA) Dr. Anthony Trecek-King
- University of North Florida (USA) Dr. Cara Tasher
- University of Pretoria Camerata (South Africa) Dr. Michael Barrett
- Young Choral Academy Chorus (Malaysia) Mr. Chi Hoe Mak

Let the River Run

Our friends from Pretoria, Tuks Camerata, were due to visit Barnsley ahead of both choirs taking part in the World Choir Games in Flanders in July 2020. Sadly the games were postponed and Tuks Camerata was unable to travel to Barnsley for eagerly anticipated workshops and concerts. Dr. Michael Barrett and Mat Wright were in regular contact and decided to unite the choirs virtually in a really exciting project. Let the River Run was chosen - it was the first piece the choirs sang together in 2017 at the European Choir Games in Riga, Latvia, and it fitted the brief of being an uplifting and fun piece of work. Rob Cooper took on the task of mixing 150+ audio tracks and the multi award winning Andrew Timm from South Africa took a lead with the visuals.

The composer of the arrangement, Craig Hella Johnson, kindly agreed for us to use the song and also sent wonderful praise through to us after seeing the finished video. We had a joint zoom rehearsal with Tuks Camerata which was lots of fun and every singer submitted 9 individual videos (1300+ in total!!) as well as an audio track. The finished video has had over 180,000 views via Facebook and Youtube which is incredible!

Barnsley Youth Choir and the University of Pretoria Camerata would like to thank their institutions for supporting this project, and for recognising the importance of creating art, especially in these challenging times. To the members of both organisations, thank you for working so hard to make this unbelievably inspiring video. This is simply a memoir of the years of friendship our choirs have enjoyed. Let's hope for many more years to come.

The video is available here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RST7QFq5eb4>



We Didn't Stop the Choir

Not to be outdone, the BYC Music Team got together to record their own virtual choir video in secret! They shared this with members at the Christmas Bash in December 2020. The video featured all 13 members of the music team with some questionable singing and some even more questionable dancing! It was just a bit of fun and a small 'thank you' to those that have supported the choir during lockdown. We are so grateful for everything that so many have done to support our young people at a really difficult time. Huge thanks to Eleanor Wright for putting the lyrics together and to Rob Cooper and Studio 5B for supporting with the audio and video editing.

The video is available here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyUZ9y0xwX8>



INSPIRING Insights

Lockdown enabled the choir to connect and be inspired by some of the world's leading figures in choral music. These were informal interviews where the children themselves asked questions and interacted directly with the guests. These 1-hour sessions often overran; such was the dialogue taking place. All children and young people in the Intermediate and Senior Choirs were invited and many of the interview sessions had over 100 participants involved.

All of our guest speakers were incredibly inspirational. They were generous with sharing the wisdom of their experience and skill and our young people relished an opportunity to learn from them.

They were a huge success and we have more sessions planned for the future!

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to this wonderful group of musicians. All gave up their time to talk to our young people and did so much to keep spirits high at such a tough time. They are some of the very finest musicians in the world and we are still a little star struck reading this list! It was a huge honour to speak to them and listen to their advice and guidance.

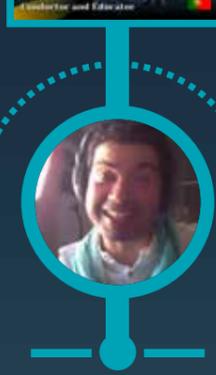
Thank you so much!

Elena Sharkova
(USA)
25th May 2020



Dr. Michael Barrett-Berg
(RSA)
29th May 2020

Simon Halsey CBE
(ENG)
1st June 2020



Myguel Santos e Castro
(POR)
5th June 2020

Ola Gjeilo
(NOR)
7th June 2020



Eric Whitacre
(USA)
8th June 2020

Paul Phoenix
(ENG)
13th June 2020



Paul Mealor
(ENG)
19th June 2020

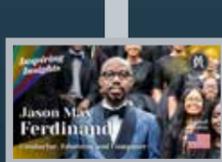
Susanna Saw
(MAL)
21st June 2020



Ralf Schmitt
(RSA)
22nd June 2020

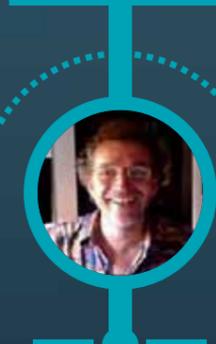
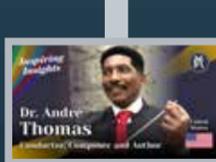


Dr. Jason Max Ferdinand
(USA)
14th September 2020



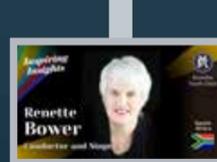
Eriks Esenvalds
(LAT)
7th September 2020

Dr. Andre Thomas
(USA)
19th July 2020



Ben Parry
(ENG)
17th July 2020

Renette Bower
(RSA)
13th July 2020



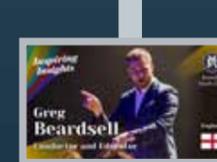
Mia Makaroff
(FIN)
10th July 2020

Johan Rooze
(KOR)
5th July 2020



Dr. Beverly Shangkuan-Cheng
(PHI)
28th June 2020

Greg Beardsell
(ENG)
26th June 2020



DEVELOPING MUSICIANS PROGRAMME

Lockdown has provided us all with opportunities to learn and develop new skills. Members have had an opportunity to learn from some of the world's leading experts in some fascinating workshops and courses. There were superb opportunities to learn new skills and they all delivered really engaging and interesting workshops.



1. Susanna Saw (Malaysia)



KODALY GAMES AND MUSIC FROM SOUTH EAST ASIA

One of the world's leading choral leaders, teachers and Kodaly experts. Susanna led workshops using Kodaly games with members of our Children's Choirs and our Intermediate and Senior Choirs. She also taught us some pieces from South East Asia and taught us about the different traditions and styles of music from this region. She was absolutely terrific and our children really enjoyed learning from her in these sessions. We are so excited that she will be coming to work with us in Barnsley!



2. Dr. Amy Bebbington (England)



BEGINNERS CHORAL CONDUCTING AND CHORAL LEADERSHIP

One of the most important trainers in Britain. She is the Director of Training for the Association of British Choral Directors and an expert in many fields including conducting and choral direction. Amy led workshops with our young people and taught them the basics of conducting and choral leadership. It was fascinating to see how young people coped with this and started to understand more fully the role of choral leadership. A brilliant session!



3. Mia Makaroff (Finland)



SONG WRITING COURSE

One of the world's most famous and brilliant composers. She has composed for groups such as the Kings Singers and is in demand throughout the world. Mia kindly offered to deliver a full 4-week song writing course to our young people. Wow! She worked with a large group and carefully and skillfully taught them about how to write songs, exploring structure, rhythm, chord structures and melodic lines – it was so inspiring!

Members submitted work to her online and she marked it and gave them individual feedback. She carefully facilitated sessions and enabled the group to write their own amazing song – 'Glow'. After the group wrote the song Mia even went away and arranged this for the choir and piano – it's the most amazing arrangement and we can't wait to perform it. What an incredible opportunity for our young people.



4. Ben Parry (England)



FILM MUSIC

The Artistic Director of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, and one of the finest choral leaders in Britain. Ben kindly came to speak to our young people about music for film in a workshop. He talked about his role in recording choral music for films such as The Witches, Interstellar, The Hobbit, Warhorse, Shrek, Iron Man, Star Wars, James Bond – Spectre, The Hunger Games and Aladdin. His work with London Voices has led to recordings for over 50 feature films in venues such as the EMI Abbey Road Studios. It was a really exciting and interesting presentation and provided a unique insight into how choral music is used to enhance the impact of film scores. We had an amazing time with him!



5. Paul McKenna (England)



VOCAL HEALTH

An experienced Specialist Speech and Language Therapist working in Clinical Voice Disorders and Singing Voice Rehabilitation. He helps singers who are experiencing problems with their voices and is a specialist in voice rehabilitation. He also works for the British Voice Association and provides training for voice practitioners. He provided a brilliant workshop on vocal health including information on how the voice works, vocal care and tips, the importance of warm-ups, an overview on alignment and breath support and also provided us with information about what to do if we needed help. He shared videos and lots of great information and diagrams. A brilliant and very useful session!



6. James Botcher (England)



BEATBOXING FOR BEGINNERS

A member of the coveted National Youth Choir of Great Britain Fellowship and one of the country's outstanding young singers. He led 3 workshops with our Children's Choirs, Intermediate Choir and Senior Choir on Beatboxing! Aside from his outstanding expertise in choral singing including an MA in Solo Voice Ensemble Singing at the University of York, he has become highly skilled and proficient in Beatboxing. He has developed a reputation in this country and abroad for this work. Our young people LOVED these workshops – even their parents were joining in! He taught us some of the basics and also made links between this work and choral singing. 3 stunning sessions.

DEVELOPING OUR SINGERS & LEADERS



During this period, we have invested in providing as many interesting opportunities for our singers and leaders to develop. This has taken many forms and we have been keen to make the most from this opportunity to grow and develop.



We have taken this opportunity to invest in our leaders too, recognising that our young people will benefit directly from new skills that they develop. We have been fortunate to be involved in a number of international networks and learn from outstanding colleagues. This has included regular support and counsel from Professor Thomas Caplin from Norway, whose advice and support has been invaluable. He supported us in learning how to use Zoom effectively and has also provided lots of wonderful guidance.



All of the Music Team members have had access to a course led by Dr. Amy Bebbington on Choral Leadership and Conducting. This included groups sessions and individual lessons which they all really enjoyed taking part in. BYC fully funded this high-quality training and we know that our young people will benefit hugely from this.

Susanna Saw also provided choral leadership support. She led sessions for our leaders on how Zoom can be used in an exciting and interactive way, embracing principals of the Kodaly system. Again, BYC fully funded this training and leaders were able to use these brilliant ideas as part of week-to-week rehearsals.



Outward Facing Work

Whilst we have benefitted from the support of others, we have also been keen to provide support ourselves in any way that we can. Our music team has been involved in a number of initiatives and forums, designed to support the choral sector during this period.

Aside from providing lots of direct support to our young people we have signposted our young people to lots of different resources to keep them occupied and engaged. This has included some wonderful video resources produced by NYCOS (The National Youth Choir of Scotland). We posted these videos as challenges for our members and many sent in videos showing that they'd completed this.

'Sing with Mat' was an initiative developed after a number of requests by people outside BYC. Free daily workshops were delivered for school children, free of charge, to keep them occupied and supported through the start of the lockdown period. This developed into an international event, with people logging on throughout the world to take part and join in via Facebook live. Just as many adults as children became involved and took part, and BYC members and their families also took part.

So many people have contributed fun activities for our members during lockdown. Our resident drummer, Keith Ramskill, provided some great drumming videos and games for our members, including 'Guess the BYC song!' from the drumbeat.

As well as informal support there have been a number of initiatives that we have been involved in including:

- Luke Mather, Sam Gilliatt and Sarah Lucy Penny provided a suite of warm-up and technique videos for choir members. These high-quality instructional videos were well received and provided really helpful and meaningful support to members, and to choirs and singers nationally
- Workshops delivered in Sri Lanka, with the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, London Youth Choir, Dublin Youth Choir, Berkshire Youth Choir and Scunthorpe Youth Choir
- Interviews with Tuks Camerata, with Amy Bebbington as part of her CLP Course for international choral leaders and with the UK Choir Festival. Mat was also involved in an ABCD Webinar on Youth Choir Music for choral leaders throughout Great Britain
- Meetings of the Interkultur World Council, as Mat is a representative from Great Britain, and meetings with the Sheffield City Region Music Board

- Mat was selected as a member of the Jury for the Bandung Choral Society – 3rd World Virtual Choir Festival. He also delivered workshops and support to choirs in this festival
- Involvement in the Ignite Music Festival in Ireland delivering workshops
- Presentations to a number of groups including one to the national choral association in Finland
- Mat was appointed as a workshop leader for the International ChoralSpace Programme and also appointed as a founding member for the International Choral Conductors Federation – two key organisations that will provide training and support to choral leaders
- The Barnsley International Youth Choir Festival 21 project – designed as a catalyst to re-engage young people with singing in BYC and many other youth choirs
- The Primary School Partnership Project that involved over 3000 children taking part in 2 workshops and providing resources for classroom teachers to use, all free of charge.





Barnsley INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CHOIR FESTIVAL

During the lockdown period it was very important for our choir members to have something to look forward to; a focal point that would provide a meaningful focus for rehearsals and for the team.

Ever ambitious and forward thinking, the BYC team agreed to host a festival that would provide a special opportunity not only for BYC children but for youth choirs throughout the UK and abroad.

The festival involved the following choirs, all of which had an impressive pedigree:

- Barnsley Singers – Host Adult Community Choir
- Barnsley Youth Choir (all 6 choirs) – Double European and Grand Prix Champions 2017
- Berkshire Youth Choir - Former National champions of Sainsbury's Youth Choir of the year
- Defrost Youth Choir (Norway) - Gold medallists at the 2018 World Choir Games
- Dublin Youth Choir (Ireland) - European Champions 2019
- Farnham Youth Choir - Double gold medallists at the 2019 European Choir Games
- London Youth Choir – One of the most impressive Youth Choir organisations in the UK
- Rastrick High School Choir - Performed at the Royal Albert Hall
- Scunthorpe Cooperative Junior Choir - BBC Radio 3 Choir of the year 2008
- Tuks Camerata (South Africa) – World Champions 2014 / Grand Prix Winners 2017



We were thrilled to engage with some of the world's finest choral leaders and experts who worked with choirs and their leaders during the festival.

- Dr. Michael Barrett (South Africa)
- Elena Sharkova (USA / Russia)
- Susanna Saw (Malaysia)
- Prof. Thomas Caplin (Norway)
- Paul Phoenix (UK)
- Paul Mealor (UK)

We were delighted to engage the services of the world-famous composer, Paul Mealor, who was commissioned to write a new piece for the festival. 'A Curving Flower of Gold' is the most beautiful piece and we were so thrilled to receive it. Sadly, we were not able to premiere this in the way that we intended, but we see this as a postponement rather than a cancellation. The Grammy Award winner and former Kings Singer, Paul Phoenix, was our guest workshop leader and soloist.

Some key events included the wonderful Round Table discussion led excellently by Prof. Thomas Caplin, featuring 12 outstanding choral leaders and accessed via Facebook Live by 1000 choral leaders from across the world.



Rethinking Choral Leadership Roundtable Discussion

The video is available here:

<https://www.facebook.com/569273193086851/videos/1225465191229871>



Whilst workshops were not possible in person, we provided all participants with 3 very different workshop experiences as part of the festival week, each one attended by over 150 singers. The first online workshop took the form of a rehearsal of a piece called 'Spirit' written and performed by Beyonce for the recent Lion King Film.

The emphasis was on fun and enjoyment and it was great to see singers not only from England but also from Norway, South Africa and Ireland. The second workshop was more of an interview / Q&A with the wonderful Grammy Award winning former Kings Singer Paul Phoenix. He provided us with a real insight into his career and how he became a professional singer. The final workshop with Dr. Michael Barrett from South Africa was a real contrast. From the start of the session Michael had all participants on their feet and taught singers about South African rhythms and movement in a brilliant session. He finished by teaching a traditional South African piece in 4 parts – quite an achievement on Zoom with so many involved!

BYC held face to face workshops and rehearsals with over 250 singers and choirs involved in the festival have been provided with 3 separate online workshops each with Dr. Michael Barrett, Elena Sharkova and Susanna Saw that will be just for their choir, and all funded from the festival and BYC. It's wonderful to be able to support choirs in this way and provide so many young people with outstanding learning opportunities.

The festival culminated in a special online concert that has been viewed by nearly 4000 people already! We are so grateful to partners involved in the festival who are too numerous to mention, and thank them for their resilience and flexibility in responding to changes that needed to be made.



BIYCF21 Festival Concert

The video is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSRoJcdN8oo&ab_channel=BarnsleyYouthChoir

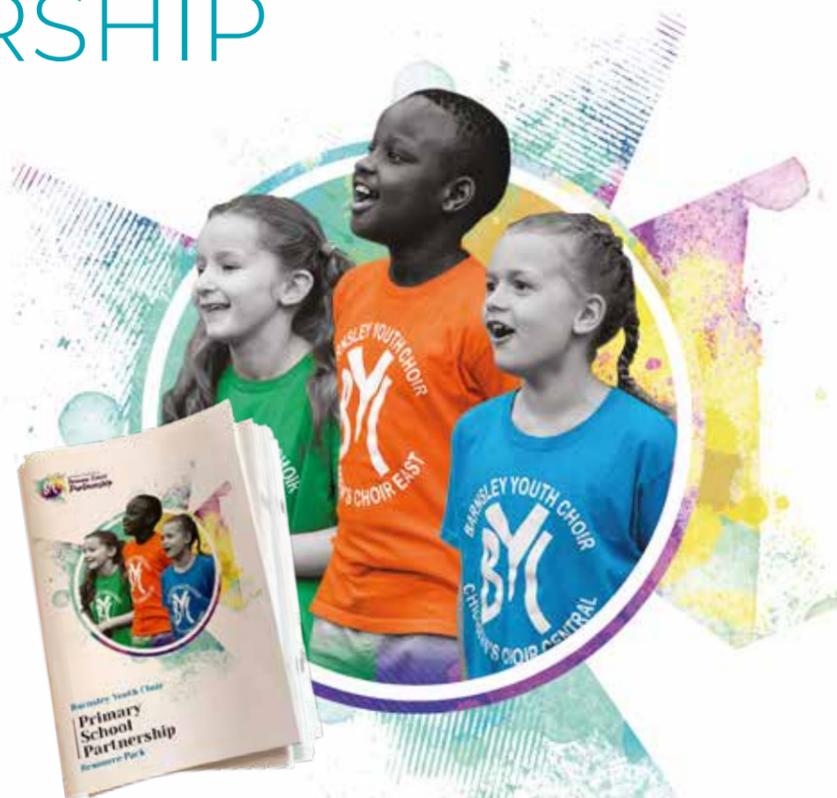
BARNSELY YOUTH CHOIR PRIMARY SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Throughout the Spring and Summer term 2021, BYC's Musical Directors Eleanor Wright, Luke Mather and Sam Gilliat led free online vocal workshops in schools for KS2 children (aged 7 to 11) based in Barnsley, to provide as many children as possible with the opportunity to engage in high-quality music and singing tuition. The choir wanted to support schools at this difficult time and provide them with some free support.

We were overwhelmed with the response. 52 schools signed up and Headteachers across the Borough were really enthusiastic about the project. All schools were provided with 2 free 45-minute workshops delivered by the three directors. The team also created a wonderful resource book for schools to use, and Rob Cooper and Gorgey Bennett recorded professional rehearsal and backing tracks for the schools too, to ensure that they could use the songs in the future.

In all 3000+ children benefited from this support and we were so pleased to work more closely with some fantastic Primary Schools and brilliant children. The evaluation forms submitted have been incredibly positive and we are so grateful to schools that were keen to work in partnership with us.

We are looking at plans to provide live in-person workshops for Primary Schools for the 2021-22 season and are seeking funding to make this possible. What a wonderful and positive project!



“ We had an amazing workshop and the children thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. Would definitely be interested in working with BYC again ”

ST HELEN'S PRIMARY ACADEMY



“ Fantastic songs, which inspired the children. Fantastic workshop leader, who brought out the best in the children. ”

ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY

“ Our children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work with the BYC and the enthusiasm of the leader was infectious! ”

CHURCHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

“ An amazing workshop to take part in! Professional and enthusiastic leaders who fully engaged the children at all times. The children loved the sessions. Thank you so much. ”

THE FOREST ACADEMY

‘Vital’ grant will keep choir singing through hard times

BARNSELY Youth Choir received a ‘vital cash lifeline’ from the government to help the award-winning group bounce back from the costly pandemic.

involved, by continuing to provide exceptional and life-changing experiences.”

Formed in 2009, the choir has members from four to 24 years old.



The £56,000 grant – from the Culture Recovery Fund – was welcomed by Central MP Dan Jarvis. He is delighted to hear that Barnsley Youth Choir has been successful in its application for funding from the Culture Recovery Fund.

BARNSELY YOUTH CHOIR FUNDRAISING

Fundraising has been so important through this period. The choir has seen significant financial challenges due to lost revenue from concerts and events and also a decision to only ask for voluntary contributions for membership. We know that many of our families have really suffered financially during lockdown and BYC essentially became free to all members to ensure that no child missed out, and has relied on the goodwill and support of friends and supporters.

A number of leaders and children raised money in lieu of birthday gifts which was donated to the choir to keep things afloat, and members and supporters have taken part in other fundraising efforts to keep things going. The Patrons' Scheme has continued, with patrons kindly continuing to support the choir, despite being offered reimbursement as we were unable to provide free concert tickets. When we introduced reduced voluntary subscriptions a number of parents offered to pay double subscriptions to ensure that those that were struggling didn't worry about not being able to pay, and our 100 Club scheme has really supported income generation too and has been a real hit, with winners drawn every month.

The annual Singathon event raises vital funds each year, and there was a danger that without this event, BYC would struggle to survive. We took the brave decision to run our annual 13 hour, through the night Singathon on Zoom! As you can imagine, this had its logistical complications but it also provided us with the unusual opportunity to include workshops with some incredible international choral leaders at regular points during the night, due to some rather convenient time differences! We were lucky enough to be joined by **James Botcher** (England), **Paul Phoenix** (England), **Laszlo Duranyik** (Hungary), **Michael Barrett** (South Africa), **Renette Bouwer**, (South Africa), **Thomas Caplin** (Norway), **Susanna Saw** (Malaysia), **Elena Sharkova** (USA), **Ralf Schmitt** (South Africa), **Beverley Shangkuang-Cheng** (Phillipines), and **Peggy Dettwiler** (USA). All provided high quality workshops and helped to maintain and restore energy levels at all times of the night! We are seriously considering this for live Singathons in the future. In addition to these, three Live Streams were aired on Facebook which featured all of the choirs singing along to specially recorded versions of Spirit, Let the River Run and Hallelujah. We were overwhelmed by the support and online donations made to support our children and the choir. Around £17,000 was raised which was really humbling, and the 200+ children who stayed up through the night certainly earned every penny.



We have been fortunate to have had significant support following a complicated and difficult DCMS bid that Jude Wright put together on behalf of the choir. This funding not only supported BYC but a number of choirs both in this country and abroad via the Barnsley International Youth Choir Festival 2021. This funding has been paramount to providing medium term financial security for BYC and we are so indebted to her for her brilliant work with this. Peter Birkby, our development officer, has continued to work hard to raise other funds for the choir to ensure that there were regular pots of money coming in.

We are humbled by the energy, support and selfless approach that the BYC community has shown during this difficult time. The headline is that the choir is not about to fold which, sadly, is the case for some other organisations. We have suffered, and it has certainly been a huge challenge to make things work, but we refuse to compromise on providing the best possible offer to our young people and I am enormously proud of the courage of Trustees and the team who have backed the difficult decisions that we have had to make and have always placed the welfare of children and young people at the heart of every decision.



SOCIAL EVENTS

BYC succumbed to the infamous Zoom Quiz! We invited members and their families to take part in 3 manic, and slightly chaotic, Zoom Quizzes. These were quizzes that were quite different and those taking part needed to be creative and resourceful. Marks were awarded for fancy dress, and for the quality of dancing in between rounds. Having good general knowledge was not an advantage and a real low point was the introduction of the Numberwang Round where participants had to guess what number the quiz masters were thinking of.

It was wonderful to see families joining in, having fun together and we were overwhelmed by the numbers of people involved – this was over 100 people at times.



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION



We have continued to recruit through the lockdown period and have had a number of young people join BYC. It's been wonderful to see new faces on Zoom and we've done everything we can to make them feel welcome. It's difficult to join a choir online, but these young people have worked so hard and been so committed, and it's been really wonderful to see them in a live rehearsal for the first time, enjoying the joy of ensemble singing with others.

We have had a clear stance with attendance at rehearsals during this period. We recognise that our members and their families have faced many challenges and we wanted BYC to be here for them, but not to place pressure on them, adopting a

supportive and empathetic approach. We have checked in with them to ensure that they are all safe, sent them cards and gifts and provided regular updates and information.

Although we have thrived using Zoom and it has worked incredibly well, we also recognise that for some, online singing is really tough. We are so proud that numbers involved in the choir have continued to remain strong and hope that, in the coming months, we may see some of those young people come back who needed to have a break from the choir. They are very welcome and there are no issues about the break that they needed to take.

We are launching a recruitment drive and auditions in September to join the choir, and we hope to see lots of new faces at BYC to complement a superb team that is still in place. We also want to pass on our thanks and best wishes to the group of young people who will leave BYC to go away to university this year.



Join BYC in 2021-22

The booklet is available here:

<https://fcdweb.uk/byc/14540-byc-Auditions-booklet-2021-pf/>

PLANS FOR THE 2021-2022 SEASON

We have exciting and ambitious plans for the 2021/22 season. Initially our focus is to re-establish rehearsals and the high-quality face to face rehearsals and performances in the 3 key venues that we use. We are excited to be welcoming the outstanding South African choir, Tuks Camerata, over to Barnsley for workshops and concerts and then travel together at the start of August 2022 to take part in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. BYC and Tuks will share the stage at the largest arts festival in the world – it's a mouth-

watering prospect! We will sing new pieces by Jake Runestad and Paul Mealor at the Festival and also plan to invite not only our Senior Choir, but our Intermediate and Children's Choirs too, if funds allow.

We are already busy with arrangements for the 2021/22 season and have secured a number of key dates which we are able to share with you. Whilst these are only provisional, we know that members and supporters will be keen to put these in the diary!

Proud of Barnsley Awards	Christmas Concerts	BYC Charity Unplugged Concert	Spring 2022 Concerts	BYC Gala Dinner	Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2022
19th November 2021	3rd / 4th December 2021	18th December 2021	18th / 19th March 2022	14th May 2022	5th - 14th August 2022

Clearly these dates are simply a starting point and we are discussing a number of other exciting projects and events – details to be shared soon!



COMMISSIONS

BYC is so proud to be commissioning new music to be written for the choir by some of the world's leading composers. This is a really exciting development and provides us with a unique opportunity to create a musical legacy for the choir and the town, with World Premieres of pieces by significant composers.

Paul Mealor's specially commissioned piece will now premiere at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2022, where special guests TUKS Camerata from South Africa are due to join us on our tour. We can't wait to perform this piece together and we are honoured that Paul will also be joining us to premier the piece and conduct it for the very first time at this prestigious festival.

We are excited to announce that we have agreed a joint commission with Tuks Camerata and have engaged the services of **Jake Runestad** from the USA – one of the most exciting choral composing talents in the world. Jake has met with Musical Directors **Mat Wright** and **Dr. Michael Barrett** and the contracts have been agreed and signed. The premiere of this piece will take place in Barnsley in July/August 2022. More details to come!

The wonderful Finnish composer **Mia Makaroff** has already arranged a piece for the choir following a fantastic 4 week composition course she led with our young people. 'Glow' is such a lovely piece and we can't wait to perform it in the 2021-22 season. Mia has also agreed to write another piece for BYC at some point in the future. Finally, we have had very positive talks with the Norwegian composer, **Ola Gjeilo**, and he has agreed to write a piece for BYC.

All four of these composers have an outstanding international reputation and it is such an honour for us to commission them to write new music for the choir. We are so grateful that they have agreed to do this for us, and can't wait to share these exciting world premieres with audiences.



Jake Runestad USA
Mia Makaroff Finland
Ola Gjeilo Norway
Paul Mealor Great Britain

The Six Choirs of BYC

For more information on how to join scan here:





Junior Choir

4-7 Years Old

Rehearsals 4.30pm – 5.30pm
on Thursday afternoons at
Barnsley 6th Form College




**Children's
Choir Central**

7-11 Years Old

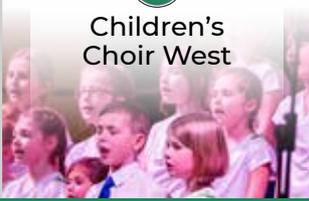
Rehearsals 5.45pm – 7.30pm
on Thursday evenings
at Barnsley 6th Form College




**Children's
Choir East**

7-11 Years Old

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

**Children's
Choir West**

7-11 Years Old

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




Intermediate Choir

10-16 Years Old

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




Senior Choir

14-24 Years Old

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

10 Facts about Barnsley Youth Choir

- Currently 3rd in the Interkultur World Rankings – the highest ranked choir in Great Britain
- An outstanding reputation internationally
- Winner of 8 First Prizes in major international choir competitions
- Tours to Sweden, Latvia, Germany, Edinburgh, South Africa
- TV and Radio Appearances
- The choir works with the finest choral leaders in the world
- Multi-award winning including the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2017
- Over 400 children and young people currently involved
- A registered charity relentlessly focused on providing outstanding opportunities for children in Barnsley
- Released 2 CD albums with critical acclaim, and a number of videos

10 Reasons to Join

- Make new and special friends with brilliant young people
- For fun, joy and happiness! It changes your mood and makes you feel uplifted.
- Singing has been proven to have huge benefits on wellbeing and mental and physical health
- Reduce your stress levels, Improve your immune system, your memory, your concentration and your confidence
- Perform all over the world with famous people and in famous venues
- Sing music of all different styles and develop excellent musical skills and abilities
- Be a proud member of one of the most important choir organisations in the World – it's right on your doorstep!
- Be part of an awesome team – a family that takes care and brings out the best in one another
- Great social events as well as rehearsals, workshops and brilliant concerts
- Exceptional choir leaders who bring out the very best in young people

Contact bycauditions@gmail.com or visit www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk for more information



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



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