



Bearsden Choir's online festive performance is set to be just as entertaining as their acclaimed rendition of Bach in B Minor at Glasgow's City Halls in May last year

Rehearsals are now over and Bearsden Choir is preparing to share their online performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, reveals **Ann Wallace**

# Choir casts the net wide for top tier performers

**W**ORKING for the NHS in the middle of a global pandemic has been a huge challenge for consultant haematologist Kenny Douglas. His escape, he says, has been singing. Kenny is a member of Bearsden Choir, which has kept going throughout 2020 against the odds with an online programme of weekly rehearsals and regular 'inspire' sessions featuring former members and guest speakers.

The choir is preparing for its first ever virtual performance later this month, of two famous choruses from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. "It's not been an easy year, to state the obvious," says Kenny, who is based at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre.

"The psychological fallout has been substantial and really, I'm one of the lucky ones.

"It has been much more like 'business as usual' for my team than it has for many - but it

certainly hasn't felt remotely normal."

Kenny, who joined the choir 18 years ago, adds: "I honestly don't know how I'd have managed without the Wednesday virtual rehearsals. It has allowed me to step through a door into a really fun world that has nothing to do with work, and that demands my full concentration."

Judith Bain, from Bearsden, has also been working on the frontline of healthcare throughout the pandemic.

"I'm a pharmacist, and was due to retire in March - and then lockdown happened," she says. "I kept on working because I couldn't see my grandchildren or go travelling as I'd hoped.

"And I have been very busy - pharmacists have been right on the frontline with GP surgeries closed and access for patients more difficult. I have been so grateful Andrew and the committee have kept our Wednesday night rehearsals going. The turnout has been amazing."

Judith joined Bearsden Choir in 1985, shortly after the birth of her second child. "I had sung in choirs all through school and university and was keen to continue," she says. "It was also a good way to meet new people in the area. The choir has given me so many opportunities to learn new music, take part in different types of concerts and perform in amazing venues. Our conductor Andrew is always helping us so much vocally too and encouraging us to achieve these special performances."



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Glasgow University music student Beth Taylor joined the choir in September - so she has never had a face-to-face rehearsal.

"Everyone has been so welcoming," she smiles. "In a time when we can't make music together, it's allowed me to keep singing and rehearsals are always fun and uplifting.

"That's down to Andrew's enthusiasm in teaching and the 'inspire' sessions that happen each week - it's a fun environment to be part of."

Beth, from Bishopbriggs, adds: "The most challenging thing about the virtual performance is the actual recording of it. We had to sing as a choir in isolation and sing our parts on our own. It has been a pleasure to have something to look forward to."

Zach Claudino, a town planner in Glasgow who is originally from California, joined Bearsden Choir in 2016 but left two years ago. He is delighted virtual rehearsals have allowed him to return.

"It has been nice to reconnect,"

he says. "I joined when I came here from America - it definitely helped ease me into my new life in Glasgow.

"There is something special about singing in a group. The shared experience of working on a piece of music together is fun."

Doing things virtually did not take away from the experience, he adds. "I probably practised more because of the pressure of having to sing solo into a camera at the end of it," he laughs. "I tip my hat to the members who took the time to facilitate us all being able to perform at home."

Around 90 members of the choir took part in the performance and are looking forward to seeing the end result. Kenny sums it up.

"We've already had a sneak preview of a smaller group of us giving it a first shot, which was great," he says. "Seeing the whole choir in a virtual performance should be overwhelming, in a good way. I expect there will be tears - but happy ones."

**Watch online two exclusive virtual performances from Bearsden Choir**

• starts tonight Sunday 20th Dec 2020 'He That Shall Endure To the End' by Felix Mendelssohn

• starts Christmas Eve 24th Dec 2020 'He, Watching Over Israel' by Felix Mendelssohn

produced during Covid 19 lockdown for Christmas in conjunction with [HeraldScotland.com](http://HeraldScotland.com)