

'It was a really touching concert'

George Swann, 20, is from Paisley and a baritone. He is hoping to make a career as a composer.

"I grew up in a musical family and I've always been around singing, although I actually studied piano and cello first and came to singing a bit later on. Paisley Grammar School had a fantastic music department and I am now studying music at Glasgow University, composition specifically.

"I have just finished my third year and my hope is to become more involved in the Scottish composition scene and do some conducting work as well. When I was younger the Scottish Chamber Orchestra played a piece of mine, and I've conducted youth orchestras in Paisley as well as some small choral groups."

How did you begin singing, and become involved in Bearsden Choir?

"Towards the end of high school and before going to uni I tried my hand at writing choral music, and I soon realised that being involved in a choir would help me learn how it works from the inside. I came to know Bearsden in their 50th anniversary year when they performed Handel's Messiah. One of my close friends joined soon after that and I followed suit.

"I was drawn to the choir because of the high standard of repertoire and also because of the direction of Andrew Nunn. I was welcomed so graciously, and settled in very quickly although my first concert was Bach's Mass in B Minor, which was something of a baptism of fire – a very tricky, complex work.

What has being in the choir meant to you during the pandemic?

"During lockdown, it looked like music wasn't on the cards, but the choir kept going with online sessions and the social aspect of that was fantastic, because there are so many wonderful people in the choir.

"Those weekly meetings were one of my major sources of music and Andrew added the Inspire Sessions with professional musicians and composers. We really got an insight into their backgrounds and how they were



copied. My favourite ones were with well known British composers including John Rutter and Paul Mealor. I really enjoyed hearing how they came to composition, and about their current work. What was really inspiring was learning that there is no set way into the industry.

"Most of my writing I do electronically, with a keyboard and music notation software, and one of the benefits of using technology at university was that I was able to adapt quite easily to working online, recording our own voices at home, with a guide track. It is very exposing and there are frustrations with it, but we are able to make music in the current situation. I had the opportunity to lead some of the bass section rehearsals so I was able to help others record their best singing."

What has been your highlight of singing with Bearsden Choir?

"The concert I loved most was the Remembrance Sunday concert in 2019 with the Durufle Requiem and Vaughan Williams' Dona Nobis Pacem. Vaughan Williams is one of my favourite composers and one who I draw a lot of influence from. It was a really touching concert with gorgeous and profound music."

The Bearsden Choir's "virtual choir" performance of Vivaldi's Gloria will be free-to-view online at 4pm on Sunday, May 30. www.bearsdenchoir.com