

Singing helped me during lockdown

KENNY Douglas is a consultant haematologist with the NHS, based at the Beatson West of Scotland Cancer Centre in Glasgow. His work involves various treatments where blood is processed outside the patient's body, either to remove specific cells or harmful antibodies. Much of his work has to do with blood stem cell collection for transplantation, either from patients with various types of blood cell cancer, or from their healthy relatives. He is also a keen hill-walker and Munro-bagger.

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

"I've enjoyed singing since my school days, and once upon a time also played French horn in the Strathclyde Schools Orchestra – I even did my Higher Music exam (albeit way back in 1983!). A lot of my family are musical, all keen amateurs. Mum was a stalwart of Kilmarnock Operatic Society, so I grew up with singing in the school choir and in shows at Marr College in Troon and then in Glasgow University Choral Society. When I was a junior doctor working a 90-hour week and then having a young family there were five or six years I wasn't singing, but I was keen to get back to it and I knew Bearsden Choir were good and we lived nearby in Milngavie.

"I auditioned and I have been a member ever since. I don't think of myself as in with the bricks, but I suppose I am – it is just that there is a generation who are ten years or more older than I am. What's lovely about the choir is that since Andrew Nunn took over as director he's brought a whole lot of young folk in, which has made the whole experience better for everyone."

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

"The choir has been a bit of a lifeline. There was a period towards the end of last year when I was verging on mildly



depressed as a lot of medical staff probably were. When the second wave kicked off and it had all dragged on so long, having a regular weekly thing that was carrying on as normal to the best of our ability – and was full of fun – was precious, and I can't really overstate that. It kept us all going.

"When we managed a couple of choruses from Mendelssohn's Elijah as a 'virtual' choir it was a proper performance, for all that we were recording separately at home. I am a dinosaur in terms of technology, but when it was all put together, there we all were – and it sounded like a choir. Not to have lost that was very precious; that performance thing is what it is all about for me.

"Communal singing is good for you, and I'm sure human beings have been doing that since the Stone Age. That's what we are risk of completely losing because of the pandemic. OK, it isn't live for an audience and it is much more hassle to do, but it feels pretty similar."

What has been your personal highlight of singing with Bearsden Choir?

"Quite early on in Andrew's tenure, perhaps about five years ago, we did some Holst choral pieces, his Rig Veda settings of Hindu hymns, which were really tricky with complex rhythms. The first one, for the thunder god, Indra, is in slow majestic 5/4 time and has a fantastic bass line.

"You felt like you were marching into battle on the back of an elephant – it was fantastic."

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



Consultant haematologist Kenny Douglas says the choir has been a lifeline during the pandemic