

Start spreading the news... Scots choir to play NY's Carnegie Hall

Sinatra, Billie Holiday and The Beatles have all played the world-famous venue.

Now it's Bearsden Choir's turn, writes **Sandra Dick**

FROM Ol' Blue Eyes Frank Sinatra, jazz legend Billie Holiday and pop icons The Beatles to rockers Led Zeppelin, bluesmen The Rolling Stones and countless rousing classical symphonies and concertos, New York's famous Carnegie Hall has entertained them all.

Now plans are under way for the world-famous concert venue to echo to a spine-tingling performance of Handel's Messiah, performed by no less than the members of Bearsden Choir.

The amateur choristers have answered a call from an acclaimed conductor with more than 65 combined appearances at the Carnegie Hall and Manhattan's Lincoln Centre to take part in what is set to be one of New York's major Thanksgiving events.

Around 50 members of the choir will travel across the Atlantic in November for five days of rehearsals before joining around 150 other choral singers for a stirring rendition of one of the most familiar and powerful of all oratorios.

The invitation took the choir's leaders by surprise and came after Dr Jonathan Griffin, artistic director and principal conductor of event producers DCINY, stumbled over one of the choir's performances on YouTube.

"It all came out of the blue," said John Wootton, chairman of Bearsden Choir. "I received a phone call and the first thought was 'is this serious?'"

"Apparently, they had seen our YouTube channel which has recordings of our performances and it impressed them so much that they decided to get in touch."

"Our contact in New York says that because the performance is the Messiah and because it is taking place on the weekend closest to Thanksgiving, they fully expect it to sell out."

The performance will see Bearsden join other handpicked choristers to form a 200-strong group of talented vocalists specially selected to take part in the event, accompanied by a full symphony orchestra.

It is expected to be among the most significant performances in the 52-year history of the choir, which began in 1968 as a one-off musical event – coincidentally a performance of Handel's Messiah.

Led for the past six seasons by director of music Andrew Nunn, the choir is now made up of 140 soprano, alto, tenor and bass male and female singers from across East Dunbartonshire and Greater Glasgow.

It has just completed its 50th anniversary season, which included performances of Handel's Messiah and



Andrew Nunn leads Bearsden Choir at City Halls, Glasgow. The amateur choristers are to perform at one of New York's major Thanksgiving events



Billie Holiday, The Beatles and Frank Sinatra have all performed at New York's world famous Carnegie Hall

Bach's Mass in B Minor, regarded as one of the great works of choral repertoire.

Mr Wootton said he believed the choir's recent successful anniversary performances, supported by full orchestral accompaniment and a rise in numbers from around 70 to 140 voices since Mr Nunn's arrival as musical director, were behind the invitation.

The choir, he added, is particularly successful at recruiting younger members.

Mr Wootton added: "We recruit through the three Glasgow universities and have around 20 to 30 youngsters. There's a real appetite for choral singing – it's astonishing."

Scotland is currently enjoying a singing boom with rising numbers of choirs springing up. They include rock

and community choirs which usually focus on performing contemporary works and require no auditions, and others such as dementia choirs which harness the power of singing to help improve wellbeing and mental health.

The Bearsden Choir, however, requires participants to audition and focuses on performing classical choral works.

The New York performance is expected to take place in Carnegie Hall's prestigious Isaac Stern Auditorium. One of three auditoriums inside the venue, it is known for its five floors of seats and was home to the New York Philharmonic for more than 70 years.

The Carnegie Hall was named after Dunfermline-born Andrew Carnegie, who funded its construction. It is regarded as an unrivalled concert

venue. Famous performers to grace the Carnegie Hall's stages include Bill Haley & His Comets, Count Basie and Duke Ellington, Harry Belafonte, Nina Simone and Simon and Garfunkel.

Since opening its doors in 1891, it has also hosted many of the world's most famous performers of classical music.

Dr Griffith, DCINY artistic director and principal conductor said: "The Bearsden Choir received this invitation because of the quality and high level of musicianship demonstrated by the singers."

"It is quite an honour just to be invited to perform in New York. These wonderful musicians not only represent a high quality of music and education, they also become ambassadors for the entire community. This is an event of extreme pride for everybody."

Well, it's one for the money: Elvis to appear on Ayr Monopoly game

ELVIS will appear in a new edition of Monopoly dedicated to Ayr, it is revealed today – exactly 60 years to the day after "the King" landed nearby.

Elvis Presley's only known UK appearance was at

Prestwick Airport on March 3, 1960, after the US Air Force transport plane he was travelling in stopped there to refuel.

The rock 'n' roll icon was finishing his army national service in Germany and was

en route back to the US when he was mobbed by fans during the two-hour Scottish stopover.

Winning Moves UK, makers of Monopoly under official licence from Hasbro, revealed Ayr as the next location to be

immortalised in its own official edition later this year.

Elvis will feature, including a Community Chest card reading: "You have won first prize in an Elvis lookalike contest. Collect £10".

Winning Moves UK said

Ayr had won a Scottish "beauty contest" to land its own official version of the Monopoly game.

The town beat competition from 19 other Scottish locations "from Shetland to the Borders".

COMMENT AT HERALDSCOTLAND.COM



TIMES PAST Find out about historical photographs available for home or office from the archives of Evening Times, The Herald and The Herald on Sunday. T. 0141 302 6210

www.thepicturedesk.co.uk

GLASGOW FILM FESTIVAL 2020

26 FEBRUARY - 8 MARCH

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

www.glasgowfilm.org/festival

#GFF20

SCREEN SCOTLAND
SQRN ALBA
The Glasgow Film Festival is a registered charity. It is registered in Scotland No. SC297029 with its registered office at 100 St Andrew Square, Glasgow G1 1HT. It is also registered in England and Wales No. 10502022 with the Office of the Registrar of Companies. It is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity No. SC020202 with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

LUXURY BATHROOMS SUPERIOR SERVICE

Stunning quality, luxury bathroom products with superior service to match. You'll be surprised at what is available for less than you might expect, so you get the best bathroom you can afford!

VICTOR Paris BATHROOMS

60 WASHINGTON ST, GLASGOW G3 8AZ. TEL: 0141 648 8894
Showrooms also in Edinburgh & Dundee

www.victorparis.com

AHH. FINALLY CROSSING "STOP PAYING SO MUCH FOR BROADBAND" OFF YOUR TO-DO LIST.

YOU CAN'T PUT A PRICE ON THAT

Faster Fibre
£22.95
a month, fixed for 24 months

- No set-up fee
- Average speeds of 38 Mb/s
- Switch now for a fairer price

TalkTalk For Everyone

0800 049 1391 | TalkTalk Fibre

Available to new and existing customers. Subject to availability. No mid-contract price rises on Faster Fibre price of £22.95 a month for 24 months. This does not include phone or TV Boosts or other charges. Average download speeds: 38Mb/s. Based on the download speeds of at least 50% of our customer base at peak time (8pm-10pm). Offer ends 26/03/20. Registered in England. Company number 4633015.