

Following Bearsden Choir's much-lauded 50th anniversary events, the group are now preparing an unforgettable concert performance for Remembrance Sunday

**P**OWERFUL songs about peace and hope will take centre stage at Bearsden Choir's Remembrance Sunday concert in aid of veterans and their families.

The choir – which is celebrating its 51st season – is performing Duruflé's Requiem and Vaughan Williams' Dona Nobis Pacem at Glasgow City Halls on November 10.

All profits will go to Erskine, the charity dedicated to supporting Scottish veterans and their families.

"We are delighted to be supporting this fantastic cause," explains Bearsden Choir chairman John Wotton.

"The programme is very moving, and we hope to have many veterans and their relatives in the audience on the day. Getting the chance to stage our concert in this wonderful venue on Remembrance Day is a marvellous opportunity for us – it promises to be something special."

The choir's musical director, Andrew Nunn, says the two pieces being performed will capture the "reflective and poignant" atmosphere of Remembrance Day.

"I wanted to choose pieces which, while reflecting on the great losses of war, also focus on hope, and of learning from the mistakes of the past," he says.

"The Vaughan Williams piece, Dona Nobis Pacem – 'grant us peace' – was borne out of the composer's experiences serving in the army in the First World War, which makes it particularly relevant."

Dona Nobis Pacem incorporates a range of very different texts – in addition to a Latin mass and lines from the Old Testament, there are poems from Walt Whitman, who cared for thousands of sick and injured soldiers during the American Civil War; and a quote from the speech made by Liberal



# A night to REMEMBER

The highly accomplished Bearsden Choir – presently celebrating their 51st season – will be performing Duruflé's Requiem and Vaughan Williams' Dona Nobis Pacem at Glasgow City Halls on November 10.

particularly poignant part of the Requiem is a fantastic boost for us," says Andrew. "The Pie Jesu is an intimate and personal moment, full of joy, sadness, peace and reflection, and Penelope will perform it beautifully."

"We are also over the moon to have soprano Judith Howarth and baritone Jolyon Loy performing with us in the Vaughan Williams piece, and to once again have teamed up with the excellent McOpera Ensemble."

Andrew explains: "Judith is one of Britain's most successful sopranos, who has performed internationally, and Jolyon is currently studying at the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland – he is one to watch."

Following its hugely successful 50th anniversary programme, which included a gala dinner and gala performances of Handel's Messiah and Bach's Mass in B Minor, the Remembrance Sunday concert will be Bearsden Choir's first public performance of the new season.

statesman John Bright as he tried to prevent the Crimean War. "It is an astonishing piece, written almost as a plea for peace by a man deeply affected by one war amid growing fears of another," adds Andrew. "The Duruflé Requiem is very beautiful and very reflective, written by this young French composer at the end of the Second World War. "It encourages us to take a step back, to consider the terrible losses of war, but to feel hopeful and determined those events should not happen again." Glasgow-born mezzo-soprano Penelope Cousland – one of three outstanding soloists to join the choir for the Remembrance Sunday concert – will perform the Pie Jesu solo in the Requiem. "To have someone of Penelope's calibre performing this

The 2019-2020 programme will also include a concert on December 12 in St John's Renfield Church featuring Faure's Requiem and Vivaldi's Gloria; a performance of Mendelssohn's Elijah in the City Halls on May 10; and a trip to Halifax on October 13, to join the illustrious Halifax Choral Society in a performance of Verdi's Requiem.

John explains: "It is a real honour for Bearsden Choir to be asked to join Halifax, the oldest choral society in the UK, on the occasion of the retirement of their



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Director of Music, John Pryce Jones.

"Around 80 of our 140 members will travel down for the concert and everyone is extremely excited about this opportunity."

The 2020-21 season will include performances of Bach's St John Passion and Brahms' German Requiem, plus a repeat of its successful Choral Education Project when, in 2016, 280 school children from 11 schools across Greater Glasgow came together with the choir, orchestra and professional soloists in a performance of Haydn's Nelson Mass.

"This was a fantastic opportunity for young people who may not otherwise have had the chance to sing classical choral music," says John. "Planning is still at an early stage, but the intention is to extend the invitation to more schools, to allow even more pupils to take part and join the choir in a performance of Handel's Messiah."

This is a project particularly close to Andrew Nunn's heart. The young conductor works

closely with a number of youth choirs, including the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland and NYCOS, the National Youth Choir of Scotland. Since 2012 he has been Director of Choirs

at the RCS Junior Conservatoire where he has developed a choral programme of five successful choirs encompassing around three hundred students aged between seven and 18. "Bearsden

Choir's choral education project is a brilliant way to engage young singers with the kind of repertoire they don't get the chance to perform in school, for a variety of reasons," says Andrew. "The first

year of the project, in 2016, was a huge success and we want to build on that for the next one."

Bearsden Choir has a strong 'youth' membership, as John Wotton explains.

"A substantial number of our singers are in their late teens and early twenties, and that has brought a freshness and vibrancy to the choir," he says.

"We go along to Fresher's Week fairs to recruit new members, and it has been so successful that we are now keen to have a youth ambassador on our management committee."

John adds: "It is vital for the survival of choirs like ours that we bring in new members."

Bearsden Choir was formed in 1968 at the behest of the Provost at the time, David Fisher, who wanted a choir made up of local people to perform Handel's Messiah.

The performance took place in Bearsden's Rio Cinema – long gone – and it was led by

Harry MacGill, organist of New Kilpatrick Church.

"It was supposed to be a one-off," smiles John. "However, it was so successful that it just kept going and 51 years later, we are still here and going strong."

The choir has become one of Scotland's finest, collecting awards and acclaim along the way – it has twice reached the finals of BBC2's Sainsbury's Choir of the Year competition – and it is a regular at prestigious events such as the opening of the refurbished Kelvingrove Museum and the Glasgow celebrations of Bach's 250th anniversary.

John has been chairman for seven years, and a member since the early 1990s.

"It is a great joy to be part of Bearsden choir," he smiles. "There is a fantastic buzz at our Wednesday night rehearsals – and there is nothing quite like the feeling you get when you know you have sung something spectacular, and sung it well."





## REMEMBRANCE DAY CONCERT

**DURUFLÉ REQUIEM  
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
DONA NOBIS PACEM**

**SUNDAY  
10th NOVEMBER 2019  
Commencing at 4pm  
CITY HALLS GLASGOW**

£30 / £25 / £22.50 / £17.50

Children / Students £5

Erskine Hospital: SC006609 Bearsden Choir: SC001117

Tickets available from:  
www.glasgowconcerthalls.com | Telephone: 0141 353 8000 | www.bearsdenchoir.co.uk