



Press release for immediate use, Monday 17 May 2021

## National Youth Choir of Scotland returns to singing after 14 month wait

- Today restrictions in Scotland move to level 2 enabling up to 30 people to gather outside to sing.
- Members of the National Youth Choir of Scotland gathered on Calton Hill, Edinburgh at 6am to be the first to sing again in Scotland.
- This is the first time the choir, one of Scotland's best, has physically sung together in 2021, NYCOS's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.



Photo caption: National Youth Choir of Scotland with founder and artistic director Christopher Bell meet on Calton Hill, Edinburgh to sing. Photo by Ian Georganon.

Images here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/nyd7sdduj0einj/AAB4bYJwd0mGnv6V02vMxgYYa?dl=0>

Today, Monday 17 May, most of Scotland moves to Level 2 restrictions enabling up to 30 people to meet outside to sing! Singing face to face has not been possible since March 2020 which is when the choir last met and performed together.

With 2021 marking National Youth Choir of Scotland's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary it has been a big blow to not share in meeting to make music or performing the planned celebratory concerts across Scotland.

This morning at 6am 29 singers and conductor Christopher Bell gathered on Calton Hill to be the first to sing in Scotland this year. Their rehearsal of *Let All the World in Every Corner Sing* by Vaughan Williams and *Why We Sing* by Greg Gilpin surprised and delighted dog walkers and early birds as the sun rose over Edinburgh.

Founded in 1996 by Christopher Bell as a single choir of young singers aged 16 – 24, it has expanded to become 7 National Choirs, a network 15 Regional Choirs across the country and an extensive creative learning programme. You can read more about NYCOS here. <https://www.nycos.co.uk/about-us/>

From today members of NYCOS National Choirs, NYCOS itself and National Boys Choir and National Girls Choir will hold rehearsals in outdoor locations in areas which are level 2 or lower including at Holmhill in Dunblane, Falcon Bowling Club in Edinburgh and other spots across the country. Hopefully before long that can also include Hidden Garden at Tramway and other locations in Glasgow.

Christopher Bell, founder and Artistic Director of NYCOS said: “NYCOS is the organisation dedicated to encouraging singing for young people the length and breadth of Scotland. It has been incredibly hard to not be able to truly nurture the talent that exists here in Scotland over this past 14 months, and to see the effect that not being able to meet and sing has had on our wonderful singers/musical family. Being part of NYCOS and being able to sing with their peers from across the country is an incredibly important part of their young lives, with all the health, development and wellbeing benefits that singing brings.

“It is a huge relief and delight to be back together making music here this morning on Calton Hill and we look forward to popping up across Scotland in outdoor locations for rehearsals with the various regional choirs in Aberdeen, Highland, Dumfries, Glasgow and here in Edinburgh. Hopefully those passing by will get a wonderful surprise!”

Mollie Quigley, who took part in the 6am Calton Hill rehearsal said: “We are all excited to be back singing altogether again. A lot of us have sung together for 10 years and it is good to hear everyone finally back together again. On Zoom it doesn’t feel like you’re singing together, it feels isolated. This morning has been wonderful hearing everyone together again.”

Marcus Wylie said: “It has been great seeing everyone together again this morning. On zoom you cannot hear the harmonies and it is not the same as being together with your friends. This morning has been amazing and I'm looking forward to lots more singing now this year.”

ENDS

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Images here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/nyd7sdduj0einqi/AAB4bYJwd0mGnv6V02vMxgYYa?dl=0>

## **NYCOS**

NYCOS is dedicated to providing high-level singing opportunities for Scotland's young singers. It was established in 1996 to provide a national infrastructure for young people, teachers and choir directors to support and develop choral singing in Scotland.

### **3 National Choirs**

There are annual residential courses, concerts and tours:

National Youth Choir of Scotland for singers aged 16–25 years. Structured in two sections: Training Choir, National Youth Choir

NYCOS National Boys Choir for singers aged 10–16 years. Structured in three sections: Training Choir, National Boys Choir, Changing Voice Choir

NYCOS National Girls Choir for singers aged 12–16 years. Structured in two sections: Training Choir, National Girls Choir

### **National Youth Choir of Scotland**

Formed in 1996 by its Artistic Director and Conductor, Christopher Bell, the National Youth Choir of Scotland is an outstanding choir for young people aged 16 to 25. Membership is granted by yearly auditions to singers born, resident or studying in Scotland.

The choir, exceeding 100 members at full strength, has established itself as one of the leading youth choirs in the UK having won an Ensemble Award from the Royal Philharmonic Society. The choir has performed major choral works at events all over the UK, the highlights of which include the Edinburgh International Festival, BBC Proms, XX Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony, BBC Passchendaele Centenary Broadcast and the Grant Park and Grand Teton Music Festivals in the USA. The choir has also toured internationally.

In 2018, the National Youth Choir of Scotland was in residency at the Edinburgh International Festival. The singers were awarded a Herald Angel Award for their performance at the Opening Concert in Haydn The Creation followed by their own sell-out a capella concert in the Usher Hall conducted by Christopher Bell. The choir then travelled to New York to perform Berlioz L'Éléonore under the baton of Sir John Eliot Gardiner alongside the the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique in Carnegie Hall. In May 2019, the choir will took the performance to the Philharmonie de Paris alongside Les Siècles under the baton of François-Xavier Roth.

### **NYCOS Artistic Director, Christopher Bell**

Belfast-born Christopher Bell is the Artistic Director of NYCOS. He is also Chorus Director of the Grant Park Music Festival, Chicago, and the Artistic Director of the Washington Chorus.

Christopher has worked with many of the major orchestras in the UK and Ireland, including the Royal Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, BBC Scottish Symphony, Ulster, Scottish Chamber, City of London Sinfonia, London Concert, RTE National Symphony, RTE Concert and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestras. He has been Associate Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra since 2009.

He was largely responsible for the formation of the National Youth Choir of Scotland in 1996 and has been its Artistic Director since then. The organisation (now called NYCOS) has grown, not only as a choral group with 4 national choirs and 14 regional choirs across Scotland but as a provider of educational training and resources for teachers and choir directors.

Christopher has received the following awards: a Scotsman of the Year 2001 for Creative Talent, the Charles Groves Prize in 2003 for his contribution to cultural life in Scotland and the rest of the UK, an Honorary Masters Degree from the Open University for Services to the Arts in 2009 and an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2012 for his contribution to the performing arts in Scotland. In 2013, Chorus America awarded Christopher the Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art. In 2015, he received the degree of Doctor of Music, Honoris Causa, from The University of Aberdeen.

### **NYCOS National Girls Choir**

NYCOS National Girls Choir was formed in 2007 for singers aged 12 - 16 years. The choir meets annually at Easter time for a six-day residential course where its time is split between high quality vocal coaching, musicianship training and full choir rehearsals with highly qualified staff who are experts in their fields. Performing regularly throughout Scotland, NYCOS National Girls Choir has been invited to sing at world-class music festivals including BBC Proms in the Park, Edinburgh International Festival, Aberdeen International Youth Festival and Lammermuir Festival. The choir has released three commercial CDs to date, on the Signum label, all of which were critically acclaimed. The first is a recording of two complementary works: Britten A Ceremony of Carols and the rarely-performed Poston An English Day-Book (2010). The second is Bennett Letters to Lindbergh (2012). The most recent, Only a Singing Bird (2015), was recorded with patron and international mezzo-soprano, Karen Cargill.

### **NYCOS National Boys Choir**

NYCOS National Boys Choir is for boys aged 10–16 with both changed and unchanged voices. Members sing with other boys to the highest standard, receive expert vocal tuition and develop musicianship skills. The choir meets annually around Easter time for a residential course where the time is divided into full rehearsals, sectional rehearsals and musicianship games sessions. Concerts are organised at the end of the course and at other times, as appropriate. The choir has performed in Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Linlithgow, Derry, Paisley, Stirling, Kendal, Dumfries, Galloway, Dundee and Aberdeen. High-profile performances by the choir have included BBC Proms in the Park and Edinburgh International Festival, as well as BBC TV and radio broadcasts.

### **14 NYCOS Regional Choirs**

There are 14 NYCOS Regional Choirs across Scotland, with children recruited at the end of P3 for entry at P4: Aberdeen, Angus, Dumfries, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire boys only), Edinburgh, Falkirk, Inverness, Isle of Lewis, Midlothian, Perth (boys only), Renfrewshire, Stirling and West Lothian.

### **Mini Music Makers**

Musical sessions for babies, toddlers, nursery age children and their parents/carers in:  
Bathgate, Dalkeith, Falkirk, Glasgow, Linlithgow and Stirling.