**Semi-structured interview schedule**

**Date: 12/06/22**

**Signature of researcher: JL**

**Name of participant: Jack Johnson (Bass Voice Group Leader)**

**Interviewer:** Can you briefly tell me about your choral singing experiences.

**Jack:** I started off quite young, probably **Grade Four**. In **Junior Primary** I always took part in **talent shows** and things like that. In **Grade Seven** I went to the **Drakensberg Boys Choir**, which is a big singing school and that is where I went full on. We had choir every day and as you arrive at that school you are thrown into the deep end. From Grade Seven to Nine I was there for **three years**, and that was incredible. It was choral every day, intense like you learn quickly. **After Grade Nine** I moved on to another school **(Kearsney)** and, I joined the choir very quickly.

**Interviewer:** Did you go somewhere else before coming here [Kearsney]?

**Jack:** No, I came straight Kearsney.

**Interviewer:** So, you have sung in the Primary School choir, Drakensberg Boys Choir, and how long have you been a member here [Kearsney College Choir]?

**Jack:** Three years. This would be my third year.

**Interviewer:** Explain your initial reasons for wanting to join the Kearsney College Choir. Like the name. What were your reasons for joining?

**Jack:** Obviously coming from Drakies (Drakensberg Boys Choir), **you always hear about Kearsney.** They are like the **two powerhouses in terms of choir singing**. I always wanted to come to Kearsney, and it was between Kearsney and Michaelhouse because I lived closer to Michaelhouse, but the **choir made me want to join Kearsney**. That was the big focus for me. We **saw them perform and it was almost like having seen the older brother of the Drakensberg Boys Choir**, and I **loved my time** there, so it appeared to me choir focused on a lot of sport and academics.

**Interviewer:** So, you are like an all-rounder? Do you want to focus on all areas?

**Jack:** Yes, and Kearsney stood out for me.

**Interviewer:** What are some of the highlights if you have any, of being a member in the Kearsney College Choir?

**Jack:** With Covid, it was quite sad, we had one proper big performance.

**Interviewer:** So, you missed on a lot? This is so to say your first year.

**Jack:** This is basically my first proper year of choir singing at Kearsney College. In Grade 10 (2020) we had **one performance that is one of my highlights** and this was probably a week before lockdown.

**Interviewer:** How does that make you feel? Knowing that you missed two years at Kearsney and in the choir?

**Jack:** It’s a **dreading and horrible feeling**. **In my first year (2020) we were supposed to go to Belgium, Flanders for the World Choir Games.** We started hearing about Covid and we were like “no, it won't do anything”, and the next thing, we went straight into lockdown. **Missing out on a beautiful tour to Flanders**, which I have never been to, was quite sad. ***Just the experiences of being in the choir, you just miss it, it was like two years of your life, gone…***

**Interviewer:** The next question, I would really like you to explain to me in detail. How does choral singing make you feel internally and overall?

**Jack:** With choral singing, **you feel at home**. You with people you enjoy spending your time with, even outside of choral singing, you all go to the choral singing, and you all contribute in your different ways because there are different voice groups. Everyone contributes to choral singing and you all **focus on one thing which is a good sound and has a unique sound**.

**Interviewer:** Do you guys focus a lot on the sound?

**Jack:** We try to. With the Kearsney Choir, there are quite a few boys who are not musically trained which makes it quite difficult. We do try, but coming from Drakies, everybody there is musically trained and that is just a completely different sound and feel. Choral music is **like a massive team**. No sport that you play would give you the same teamwork. In rugby there are 15 players, soccer 11, so that’s a small number of people which is like a voice group in the choir. In choir, you can have 60 people all contributing to one goal and focused. That’s another thing that choral music helps with, it really **focuses you on the conductor and music through the conductor**.

**Interviewer:** I assume you have friends in the choir? How important are these friendships to you in the choir? Compare it to the ones you have outside of choir.

**Jack:** **Teamwork binds the friend group closer**. Outside of choir you have your own problems and issues and once you get into the choir, **you can push those things away and almost just enjoy your time in the choir with your friends singing**, you can enjoy **performing and focus on getting better to perform better**.

**Interviewer:** What makes the friendships in the choir special for you? Is there something that stands out with the friendships you have in the choir?

**Jack:** When the friend groups are in the choir, you **both enjoy each other’s company and being in each other’s company in the choir**. In a classroom, you can enjoy spending time with your friends but in a Maths classroom it is not like you enjoying the Math, so you have **something in common with the people in the choir**. **It has to do with the music-making aspect of it.**

**Interviewer**: Is there a unique brotherhood amongst the boys in the Kearsney Choir?

**Jack:** **This year has been tough**. **Normally when you are with the Kearsney College Choir, you are with each other for three years before you go on a big tour** or even a big performance. **Now with Covid, we have lost that**. It is a tight-knit group. If you see a guy in the choir, we usually say hello, but if it is a person from outside of the choir, you wouldn’t normally greet them. **It's nice to have people you can connect with and it's nice having something in common.** **That binds us together**. But it is not as strong as it used to be. **There is a divide amongst the leaders**. T**here are many misunderstandings** and things like that divide you, **there are separate groups in the choir**.

**Interviewer:** What kind of divide is there in the choir?

**Jack:** **With the heads of the choir, I personally think that there could’ve been a better head of choir and I firmly believe there was a better option.** The better option didn’t even get a position anywhere in the choir. He is a good leader and chorister. For me, it wasn’t a good choice. But it isn’t a huge train smash**, I think we could’ve been better by this time if we had better leadership.**

**Interviewer:** Do you think singing in a choir can bring diverse cultures together?

**Jack:** **It can bring diverse cultures together and it opens your eyes to different languages and through different languages, you see different cultures.** I can't remember how many languages I have sung in but it's like 15 and that's from Japanese to Xhosa**. It’s a hugely diverse range.** **You sing different types of music in the choir for example classical European culture, and then you can sing folklore African things.** **Choir appeals to everyone.** Y**ou can sing however you want to sing, and you can be a part of something.** That **brings diversity into the choir**.

**Interviewer:** How do you experience cultural integration in this choir?

**Jack:** If you want to join the choir you can join through auditions. There isn’t really a way to get in with different guys. After that, **you do find people joining the choir that speaks different languages and are from different cultures.** Once you are in the choir there isn’t really a set or routine or system to integrate different cultures. **Through singing, different cultures and those cultures are represented in the choir, but the music integrates it slightly. You are never forced to make friends from different cultures.**

**Interviewers:** What do you value most about being a choir member in the Kearsney College Choir?

**Jack:** **It's the reputation of the Kearsney College Choir**. That goes with all our big and well-known choirs. **When people think of Kearsney they normally think of the rugby and the choir**. Upholding and just because I am a leader, I want to show the guys if I'm there on time and setting a good example and happy to be at the rehearsal, even pretending to be, just **holding up the reputation of the choir**. I would even wake up to go to a 05:00 rehearsal**. I would do anything to show I care, and I want to make a difference in this choir.** **This helps the younger guys and newer members**. There are loads of them. To go on a tour in your first year is scary, you must know your music compared to most years. **You must understand the stakes and understand what you must do.** Knowing that you must put in work to achieve want you want to do. **That drives you**.

**Interviewer:** Have you experienced any personal negativity as a consequence of singing in Kearsney College Choir?

**Jack:** Thankfully for me I am not a small person. I am an all-around person. I focus on academics, sports, and choral. **I never really got that label of just being a choir boy. I know that there are a few guys in the choir that have that label**. The only thing they do is choir, and **they get a negative connotation and get pushed aside**. Being at a big boys' school people ask you “how can you be a guy singing in the choir? Choir boys are soft…” the generic thinking of all of that. I do not agree with it. I think in everything there is, there are different people. You cannot say all choir boys are soft or gay, and that’s another generic thing. I do not agree with any of those. I haven’t suffered this, but I have heard “look at the choir boys”, but I have learned not to take too much offense to that.

**Interviewer:** What are some of the benefits of singing in the choir for you?

**Jack:** **You get to meet new people**. **You tour** much more than any other activity at school. **You tour a lot as a choir and get to meet different choirs and in those choirs are different people**. It **teaches you confidence and cooperation**. Being with 40 other guys singing in the choir, it is not easy to stand up there and do movements and put yourself in the spotlight. As a choir, **you must relate to everyone and blend, otherwise, there is no point in singing.** I enjoy that blending. **You sing in and as choristers, you can hear four or five other voices and you can balance yourself and hear various things**. That cooperation in the choir can be taken out of anywhere.

**Interviewer:** What are some of the disadvantages of singing in a choir?

**Jack**: It takes a lot of time. **Being in Matric, time management is very difficult.** Choir takes four and a half hours a week, which is a lot of time. **You need time for academics and sports and everything else**. That’s one of the disadvantages is the time**. But everyone understands it takes time.** It's not easy teaching 60 boys challenging music. Normally in the higher grades struggle, often they are the boys who were less motivated to join the choir in the first place. **Choir takes a lot out of you because you focus a lot**. I try to do my schoolwork before rehearsals.

**Interviewer:** What motivates you to continuously participate in choral singing?

**Jack:** The memories that I have had been in **past choirs**. There are **moments when you are singing a song, and you kind of still singing and moving but almost stop and realise that this is an incredible experience, it is what I want to do**. I want to put myself out there**. I want to join as many choirs as I can. I know I have a talent**. It would be a waste and I wouldn’t do myself any good if I didn’t participate. **I pride myself to say that I have been in various choirs. It’s a unique thing to be a guy in choral music. Lots of guys are sporty or academic, but there aren’t many choral guys**. That i**s something I strive to be**.