**Semi-structured interview schedule**

**Date: 12/06/22**

**Signature of researcher: JL**

**Name of participant: Brent (Musical Leader)**

1. Briefly tell me about your choral singing experience. **Which choirs have you sung in** and **how long have you been a member in the Kearsney College Choir**?

Well for myself, I’m mostly an **instrumentalist**, I play the violin. The only choirs I participated in were mostly **school choirs**. I sang in the **Highbury choir** from the age of **eight** till about 13 and then I've been in the **Kearsney College** choir ever **since grade eight, so this is my fifth year.**

1. Explain your initial reasons for wanting to join the Kearsney College Choir.

As a **musician**, I have always looked for every opportunity that I can get to **broaden my musical knowledge and understanding**. Just the **collaborative aspect** of a choir contrasted with a certain orchestra is a whole lot more dynamic in the way that you **interact with one another.** Especially in the Kearsney College choir, you'll find that most of its populists can't read music, so it's largely reliant on ear teaching. It's a lot of engaging, getting people to respond back and talk. It’s a lot of feedback and giving and it's a lot more involved on a one-to-one level in terms of learning. Whereas in an orchestra, most of those musicians come in with the skill of being able to read music and so maybe you'll have sectionals and have a few discussions of this an up bow or a down bow, but it's largely quite individual in the sense that you play your music and in the grand scheme of things you fit in with the orchestra. **A choir adds a lot more dynamic in the sense that you must listen to each person next to you**, **blend with that sound, and learn together.** Overall, **I wanted to experience something different.**

1. What are some of the highlights (if any) of being a member of the Kearsney College Choir?

I have enjoyed the **tours** that we did, well the very few that we did do because of **Covid**. I was lucky enough to do it in 2018 and 2019. In **2018, the World Choir Games were amazing**, just the **sheer amount of people** that were there, and **being a part of all those choirs and singing together at the opening ceremony. It was crazy!** Also, you found yourself coming much **closer together as a choir when you are away from home.** When you're at home, you are very comfortable in your own house, but when you're **touring you almost must bond even closer together** because you're all one against the world and so you find that you **make incredibly good friends over tours.** Those friends will see you through your career but yeah, I enjoyed the touring. I also enjoy the **aspect of learning the music** itself. The way it's taught, I'm good at sight-reading myself vocally, but just being able to hear and that **whole feedback system** that is there in the choir, is something I have seriously enjoyed it’s just a **new element of learning**.

1. How does choral singing make you feel? **Explain in detail**.

**Whole**. It’s different from orchestral music. I think there's just something so **naturally beautiful about the human voice compared to that of an instrument**. **It's earthy and vibrant.** When you're singing in a choir, **singing something beautiful that has harmonies that just build on one another, it makes you whole**. Your insides resonate and your rib cage vibrates and that’s just beautiful. It gives that **sensation of presence**.

1. Do you have friends in the choir? If so, how important are these friendships to you?

Most of my friends are outside the choir, but **I do have some very close friends in the choir**. I'll say those **close friends in the choir with everything that we've been through**, going on **tours**, and **learning together has helped us grow closer**, in the sense that, for a boy singing in the choir, it's something that is different because people often expect boys to be sporty or academic, and so when you have boys involved in the drama, entertainment, and music industry, **it's incredible to see how much a boy can open up and how much of his inner being shine through**. It’s almost like **we know each other so much deeper and personally**, you have been through the choir together than a normal friendship which is quite something.

1. Do the members of the Kearsney College Choir share a unique brotherhood (separate from the rest of the school)? **Elaborate**.

Yes. In 2018 and 2019, there was an **insane sense of brotherhood in the choir**. **Everybody stood up for one another**. The **matrics and the hierarchy in the choir** in those years, **stood up for the juniors even in the school block when they ran into trouble**. I think **since Covid, our choir and the brotherhood of it and the connectivity that we found with ourselves has taken a hit because of the idea of we haven't been able to be together in that learning space**. There are only four original members from the 2018 choir that have been through up until this choir, so everybody else is new. **It’s the sense that you must build this idea of discipline and brotherhood with this new generation** and so it'll take a while to get it back but yeah, you can still feel that especially now, **we are preparing for a tour and you're getting to know everyone so much better**.

1. Do you think singing in a choir can bring diverse cultures together, and if so how, and if not, why do you think that is?

I think **it does up to a point**. I say up to the point because **it's all up to the individuals who are in the choir** and **how open they are to learning new things and engaging with something that is strange to them.** I think **if you are already in the choir, as a boy, that's setting you aside from other men because you already have this openness and desire to learn more**, to be more in touch with yourself, and so I think it does. In a way, that is different from sport or different to literature and academics, because **you're making art together** and what's different about the Kearsney College choir, **we try and perform art from different cultures**. We will all come together to **learn about this culture and perform music from this culture, and then will perform another piece of music from another culture and we will come to learn and understand this culture** we go through t**he process of learning how to pronounce things in that language properly and fully engaging in it**. I think it is still up to the individual whether they are going to fully commit to that. **I have learned so much about just other cultures and their beliefs and their practices and their way of life through the Kearsney College choir.** Maybe not even just through interacting with different people but through the music we sing and the translations and what it's all about. **It has built a lot of strong relationships cross-culturally.** 10:07

1. How do you experience cultural integration (if any) within the choir?

**I enjoy learning about other cultures**. While I might not agree with some of the things that are part of those cultures, **I'm a performer and it's part of my obligation and responsibility to be able to fully connect with these cultures and express the way that people from that culture would express. I think it's grown in me a lot and I can have a lot more real conversations with people from other cultures because I no longer have this prejudice of cultural barriers.** **It's the sense that you and I can come to learn more about each other through understanding one another's cultures** and working past that to see the good of what we are talking about.

1. Could you explain what you value most of being a choir member of the Kearsney College Choir? **Elaborate**.

**I value it quite a lot.** The memories that are made with this choir, even though it's a new generation it's a new start, **I value honoring what I have been through and what others before me have been through and carrying on that.** Like I said earlier, **I just value the feeling that it gives me**. **It's a feeling that you don't get anywhere else, the feeling that sends shivers down your spine and gives you goosebumps**. **Just that earthy, surreal feeling of feeling those voices in your chest just around you.** When the boys were walking out of the Chapel now, they were just **holding their notes for the start of a new song, and it was this resonant feeling which passed off the walls of the Chapel**.

1. Have you ever experienced personal negativity because of singing in a choir (Kearsney or other)? **Explain**.

It was **in primary school**; **it was different for boys to be singing in the choir**. It was largely like: “why aren’t you playing sport? Or why aren’t you doing this?”. It was such a sudden shift coming from there to Kearsney, **just the respect that this school has for the choir is something that I haven't seen in any other school**. Particularly **in my earlier years, there was none of that,** it was quite admired for you to be in the choir because the choir did amazing things. **The choir went on tours and represented the school; it was a big part of the school's body**. Even then, **it was strange to see all that negativity like coming back after Covid when people weren’t at school and people have been isolated and people weren’t playing sports or singing.** The whole idea of you and the choir ‘why aren’t you playing sport or something?’, but then it was quite strange to see that sudden shift again after the choir performed for the school the first time again and the school realised what we were doing in the choir. We do not perform for the school very frequently, but there are often assemblies that take place at school, such as Founder’s Day assembly and then we do assemblies for the old boys, Heritage Day assemblies, and often at those assemblies, the choir will perform. We have two different types of choir music that we do, we have very choral music which is solely choral and it's about the voice and there's no movement involved in that. Then we have our more choreography-heavy type of performance where we’re singing and dancing and there is this whole idea of embracing the cultural aspect of that. So, for a lot of these assemblies we are often in our school uniform, we can't do choreography and we’re stuck in the Chapel pews. That does really give us the chance to sing, and I think **when the school does hear that sound just bouncing off walls and ringing in their chests of a full male choir, singing with that power, I think it changes that negative perception of the choir entirely.**

1. What are some of the benefits of singing in a choir for you?

**Engaging with people better helps you collaborate better**. Even just the way that I've had to **collaborate and teach people in the choir as the musical leader, helps me collaborate and teach people better outside of choir even in the academic sphere**, it's **easier for me to talk to larger groups of people because I must teach a larger group of boys for choir.** Singing for them even, giving them their notes, and **being part of a choir breaks down that barrier of maybe social anxiety or stage nerves**. It really **helps to deal with public people and be more confident on the outside too**.

1. What are some of the disadvantages of singing in a choir?

**Here at Kearsney, it's horrible trying to find that balance between choir, sports, and academics.** Trying to be able to do all of that is almost like **each suffers just that little bit because you don't have the time to focus on that.** I'd say in a school, people underestimate how much time they put into that choir, and **all that time that you're putting into the choir, you are not putting into your studies.** B**eing in a choir is hard because you find yourself under time pressure a lot of the time.** A lot of our guys only finish the school day at 8:00 o'clock at night because that's when the choir finishes. They **have less prep time than everybody else to do the same work, even more sometimes because we have other time taken up by the choir**. Being in a choir while you are trying to do other things, t**he choir negatively impacts the time you get to spend building your other passions and talents**. For me personally, this year it was the sacrifices I had to make between the KZN Youth Orchestra and the choir because they practice at the same time on a Friday. The choir is going on tour this year and I got elected as the musical leader, so **I had to make that choice between stepping back from the orchestra and sacrificing that to spend time here**, and that meant that I got cut off from that side which was a big part of my life being an instrumentalist. Stepping down as concert master and first violinist was heart-breaking, but **I really hope that the time I am putting into this is solely worth it**, and I am sure it will be.

1. What motivates you to continuously participate in choral singing?

I watched the Kearsney College choir perform. I specifically wanted to be a part of that because it was different from any other school choir I had seen perform. **I’m a fan of professionalism, the sense of discipline and professionalism that comes with Kearsney College choir compared to other school choirs was just something that amazed me**, and it was something **I wanted to identify with and be a part of and so I just had to be here.**