

John,

25 years ago, you came into the Goethe Institut as our new Musical Director and we can't let this milestone pass without showing our appreciation for all you have done for our choir.

You came at a time of sadness for the choir, we had just lost our much loved founding Musical Director, Cait Cooper. It must have been challenging for you, but you were always sensitive to Cait's legacy and to the choir's history. You respected our traditions and worked with us to develop more and I would like to go through some of the highlights – there are so many!

You have challenged us, encouraging us to tackle works such as 'A Boy was Born', Spem in Alium, Monteverdi Vespers, Mass in Blue, Bach Passions and Cantatas etc. always knowing how hard to push us so that you brought us with you on some fantastic musical journeys. In Milltown, in the presence of President Mary McAleese, we performed Allegri's Miserere with your son, Niall, a solo that you had sung yourself as a boy. For the choir's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2005, we commissioned a new work from you – *Hilariter* - which we performed in the National Concert Hall. And of course, lots of Bach – who can forget the Saint Matthew Passion earlier this year in Mount Merrion and I also remember a special performance of the St John Passion in St Patrick's Cathedral.

You are a marvelous, kind, patient and enthusiastic teacher and have a great turn of phrase when explaining technical musical terms, that gets the message across with a light touch to the varying levels of musicianship in the choir. You know when to cajole or make us laugh. We might think we are 'getting away with it', but secretly we know that you can hear everything. Your calm, confident composure conceals any anxiety you might be feeling and when it comes to the concert, you never forget the choir. We deeply appreciate how you share your extraordinary musical knowledge and experience. You inspire us to work hard and to achieve more than we thought was possible.

Covid was a challenge that stretched all of us, but your videos were a beacon of light in the week – there wasn't a week when I didn't laugh out loud at something you said. And although you couldn't hear us, you made us feel you were in the room with us. With your dedication, we came through and started planning for the St Matthew Passion, performing it this year.

Thank you for making our musical lives richer.

Please accept this gift that I hope you will find useful – contributions came from current and past members of the choir.

Ann Barrett

Goethe Choir Chair