



Daybell chosen to take part in royal carol service

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Two-time Paralympian and doctor Kim Daybell, who sacrificed his own ambitions of competing in Tokyo to work full time on the NHS frontline in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic, will feature in a star-studded *Royal Carols: Together At Christmas*, which will be shown on ITV later this month.

Hosted and spearheaded by The Duchess of Cambridge, and supported by The Royal Foundation, the event will pay tribute to the incredible work of individuals and organisations across the UK who have supported their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Combining traditional elements with a modern and inclusive feel to encompass people of all faiths and none, the hour-long festive special will feature carols sung by the world-renowned Westminster Abbey choir alongside musical performances by Leona Lewis and Ellie Goulding. Daybell was chosen to deliver a reading alongside other speakers including The Duke of Cambridge, actor Tom Felton and broadcaster Kate Garraway.

The *Together At Christmas* community carol service was recorded at Westminster Abbey on Wednesday 8th December and attended by The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, accompanied by other Members of the Royal Family including Zara and Mike Tindall, Princess Beatrice and husband Edoardo Mapelli Mozzi, Princess Eugenie and The Countess of Wessex.

Unsung heroes from across the length and breadth of the nation were invited to attend the service in recognition of their tireless efforts and selfless acts of kindness despite incredibly difficult circumstances. Nominations were drawn from Lieutenancies across the UK, alongside community networks, charitable organisations and patronages of Her Majesty The Queen, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, and The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. England footballer Jordan Henderson, comic Jason Manford and singer George Ezra were also amongst those invited to attend the service, in recognition of their efforts to support others during the pandemic.

Individuals who The Duke and Duchess have met and spent time with during their recent engagements and project work were also present, alongside those working in some of the key areas that Their Royal Highnesses and The Royal Foundation continue to focus on. The congregation also included armed forces personnel who were involved in Operation Pitting, young carers, faith leaders, and guests who may be more vulnerable or isolated within our society.

Daybell was due to start training full time for Tokyo when the pandemic hit last March but instead returned to the Whittington Hospital in North London where he worked on Covid wards as a medical senior house officer. As the only Paralympian in the world working as a doctor on the frontline, he became an inspirational ambassador for Paralympic sport in the fight against the coronavirus, and the 29-year-old was delighted to be part of such a unique and special event.

"It means a huge amount to be asked and it was a really wonderful experience," he said. "It was obviously very different to what we do normally when we are competing and playing our sport. It is recognition on a different level to be asked to do it and to get some positive feedback from people you only really see on TV and for them to be impressed by what you've done was lovely.

"The Duke and Duchess did a meet and greet with us – they are wonderful and complete professionals at meeting people and talking to them. We talked about the Paralympics and my work as a doctor through the pandemic and they were very complimentary to me, which was really nice.

"It's a big honour just to be thought of in the same bracket as some of the people who were there. To be asked to take part in an event that is all about being together at Christmas after last year feels quite validating in a lot of ways after the last 18 months that I've been through. It shows how much everyone cared and how much everyone appreciated the work of the NHS. I just felt very lucky and very privileged to go because there are lots of people who did amazing work and hopefully I could represent them in some way."

Although used to playing table tennis in front of large crowds Daybell admitted that reading in front of more than a thousand people in Westminster Abbey was an altogether different experience.

"I was completely relaxed until we arrived," he said, "and then my partner Phoebe said she had never seen me so nervous. In the sporting world you are doing something you've practised over and over again and reading in front of lots of people is not something I do day-to-day. All credit to those who perform and act because it is very nerve-wracking."

The carol service will be broadcast as part of *Royal Carols: Together At Christmas* which will air at 7:30pm on Christmas Eve on ITV.

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