

Inventing the Universal Peace Choir

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Universal Peace Choir is a platform to express our unified love for Father and Mother Moon and their vision by using our unique talents, especially music. Sponsored by the FFWPU International Headquarters, a virtual choir is one made up of voices from all around the world, going beyond the barriers of time and space with the help of technology. Participants create a video, singing along to the song, and those videos are edited together so that we can sing in a unified choir! On August 30, a live choir and the virtual choir will perform together.

How it was created

The idea for "True Parents Dedication Medley" came from multiple sources. For the past few years, FFWPU Korea and Heiwabunka, a Japanese church cultural group, have organized local Korean and Japanese choirs to perform for major holy day events in Korea, such as Foundation Day. We often sang arrangements of Holy Songs, but wanted to be more creative in our artistic expressions. This has always been in the back of everyone's mind.

Miran Kim and Ms. Yasuko Sakata, on the Heiwabunka staff, developed the idea to have a choir sing True Father's favorite folk songs. This started with choosing Arirang and Hollo Arirang, and adding Akatonbo, a Japanese folk song, and then "Amazing Grace" for our English listeners. This merged with the idea of using technology to give a chance to all Unificationists around the world to offer something without physically being there at the event.

Currently, there are participants from Russia, Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Korea, Romania, Brazil, Japan, USA, China, Afghanistan, Austria, Uruguay, Nigeria, Switzerland, Togo and the Philippines (about sixty people so far).

In spring of 2015, the "True Parents Dedication Medley" was officially confirmed and planned to be performed at the third anniversary. Heiwabunka staff members prepared for the launching of the project, and named it the Universal Peace Choir -- a global choir in which anyone can participate, regardless of where they reside. Universal Peace Choir's first project, "True Parents Dedication Medley," was first

composed and arranged on a piano for a four-part choir. The four-part choir was carefully crafted and put in order so as to bring about the character of each song, while having a breath of originality.

When the groundwork had been laid, the music was orchestrated by Harry. Harry is an independent composer, arranger and an audio engineer based in Japan, who has created much of the orchestra and band music that you have heard at our major events.

Harry was also a long-time member of the Hyo Jin Moon band, where he shared the stage as a keyboardist with the leading guitarist and vocalist, Hyo Jin Moon.

Lyrics and music to help participants prepare to record their voices are at universalpeacechoir.org.

There are tips, lessons and guidance for those who have not sung in a choir or are having difficulty, so that anyone is able to learn and be a part of the project.

Background of the medley

One challenge of composing a choral piece is that the music has to tell a story, and the lyrics are what guide the story.

The medley opens with Akatonbo, which gives a "feminine" feel and transitions into Arirang, which is "masculine," with a sense of yearning present through the main melody. As the music transitions to Hollo Arirang, the feeling of yearning is replaced with the encouraging need for togetherness. While Akatonbo and Arirang are rather classical in the style of music, "Hollo Arirang" tends to sound more modern and "pop"-like. It symbolizes that we are entering a new era. We have wept for the ascension of someone who is dear to us, but now we are moving on, as we collect ourselves. The main melody of Hollo Arirang is sung in unison.

When our emotions subsided and we walked forward, arm in arm with our brothers and sisters, we experienced a profound, spiritual awakening. Amazing Grace is a song of inspiration and a discovery of one's faith.

As alto choristers sing Amazing Grace, tenor and bass singers tackle Arirang and sopranos reintroduces the Akatonbo motifs. All those old memories, thoughts and emotion are recollected and organized in the mind. This is the part where the choir sings Akatonbo, Arirang and Amazing Grace at the same time. The song concludes with the choir singing, "We will go over the Arirang pass," which is a metaphor that we will "unite, overcome challenges and complete the journey." The conductor is: Ms. Nancy Kubo, a former conductor of Sun Hak International Children's Choir based in Seattle. True Mother appointed her in 1994 because, True Mother envisions promoting the culture of peace through arts and music.