

TOWER NZ YOUTH CHOIR
(CHOIRS AOTEROA)
("TNZYC")

TNZYC is a nationally selected choir of singers aged 18-25 years drawn from all over NZ. Many of the members have previously gained invaluable experience with the NZ Secondary Students Choir. The choir runs in 3 year cycles and is highly regarded in NZ and overseas. International tours involve participation in festivals, competitions and presentation of concerts of international and NZ repertoire to a wide audience. We have recently assisted the choir as follows:

- (a) Accommodation costs for a pre-tour camp;
- (b) Pledging individual scholarships over a period of 3 years;
- (c) Costs associated with the 2007 international tour.

It is a pleasure to receive regular progress reports from both individual members and TNZYC Management and to be associated with the choir which represents youth, participation and inspiration and affords access to a wide audience.



**TOWER NEW ZEALAND YOUTH CHOIR'S 2007 TOUR TO CANADA,
THE UK AND SPAIN 27 June – 25 July**

TOWER New Zealand Youth Choir have spent the better part of the last month spreading their enthusiasm, talent and raw passion for music to audiences and other choir participants in Toronto, Niagara Falls, St Johns (Canada); London and Llangollen (UK) and Barcelona and Cantonigros in Spain.

The international tour gave the opportunity to present concerts in non-competitive and competitive environments. Both milieus provided different opportunities for challenge and growth, and the choir members thrived on these elements. Simon Kersten (bass) said he felt the Choir had "really stepped it up a notch musically" while on tour.

The Youth Choir wasted no time upon their landing in Toronto, presenting a concert in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Atrium and an outdoor sing at the stunning Niagara Falls. From here they made their way to the week-long Festival 500 in St Johns, Newfoundland, where they had the chance to work with other experienced international professionals and participate in intensive rehearsals and performances.

The village of Llangollen in a Welsh valley held a valuable opportunity for both experiencing elements of international culture and competing against choirs from all over the world in the International Musical Eisteddfod. The choir had to adjust their singing techniques according to different atmospheric elements such as tent size, outside noise and rain drumming on the outside of the tent. As one of their performances they sang to a full house of 4000 with top New Zealand soprano Hayley Westenra, which had sold out days in advance.

Here the Choir came third in Mixed and Youth Choir categories- an accomplishment they were whole-heartedly congratulated for as the adjudicators noted the standard of competition this year was exceptionally high.



From Wales the Choir made their way to London, singing in front of the stunning newly unveiled New Zealand monument in Hyde Park and showcasing their repertoire to a large audience at St John's, Smith Square.

Some well-known New Zealand names present at the St John's concert highlighted the importance of the event for Choir members. The New Zealand High Commissioner the Hon. Jonathan Hunt attended both the concert and post-concert reception and composer Bob Chilcott, who has worked with the choir in the past also attended, to the delight of the Choir. Similarly Jonathan Lemalu and Madeleine Pierard (both ex-choir members) joined the choir in concert for a reunion of sorts, while ex-members in the audience were able to reminisce on previous experiences with the Choir.

Early the next morning the choir boarded a flight to Barcelona, where they were able to sightsee and sing at a beautiful church- St Maria del Pi. Next on the itinerary was the International Musical Festival in Cantonigròs (2 hours drive from Barcelona) which attracted choirs from all over the world. While at the Festival the choir were billeted in the small village of Cantonigròs, with Spanish families. They also appreciated the presence of the NZ Ambassador to Spain, Geoff Ward, who attended the Opening Ceremony and was also able to watch the Mixed Choir competition. The Choir performed brilliantly- winning first place in the Mixed Choir category, choirs from Russia and the Czech Republic coming second and third. In the Folk section the Choir presented an all Maori repertoire; the men used rakau and the females used poi, including haka as well as singing. They presented a highly engaging programme, coming only 0.3 points behind the winning Puerto Rican choir.



Lee Densem (bass) said that such pieces were very popular- with most audiences never having seen anything like it. Amongst the choir members a few tears could be seen- reminders of the fact that this international tour is the end of an era for this particular version of TOWER New Zealand Youth Choir.



Artistic team James Tibbles and Karen Grylls holding the trophy for winning the Mixed Choir Section at Cantonigròs.

The Choir has now dispersed; half returning to New Zealand and the remainder continuing their travels through Spain and Europe. Choir members sent updates for the Tour Diary to the Choir's website while on tour, which can be accessed

at: <http://www.youthchoir.org.nz/tncycevents.htm> For radio interviews streamed over the internet, Lee Densem (bass) also spoke with Eva Radich on Concert FM Upbeat after the competitions in Cantonigròs - this interview can be accessed on concert FM's website: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/cfm/programmes/upbeat/20070723> for the next couple of days.

The TOWER New Zealand Youth Choir was established to promote choral singing of the highest standard among young New Zealanders. Members of the Choir are aged between 18-25 years and come from all corners of the country. In its 28-year existence it has achieved a remarkable number of awards and accolades, including the 'Grand Prix' in Slovakia, and the 'Choir of the World' award at the International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales, both on its highly successful European tour in 1999. On the choir's 2004 tour they achieved highest marks in several categories at the 43rd International Choral Competition in Gorizia, Italy.

Dr. Karen Grylls, Artistic Director and Conductor of TOWER Voices NZ, TOWER New Zealand Youth Choir and Associate Professor in Music at the University of Auckland, leads the 50 voices. Dr. Grylls is on the Board of the International Federation of Choral Music. Recently she was awarded the KBB Citation from the Composers' Association of New Zealand and the Lilburn Trust Citation for services to New Zealand music.