

The **Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)** choir, formerly University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) choir, consists of 55 members, both students and alumni, who come from different walks of life. The choir prides itself in being multi-cultural in both membership and the music it performs. Since its inception in 1994 the choir has gained a reputation for its unique ability to successfully interpret both Western and African repertoire and has since become sought after at choral festivals internationally.

Between 1994 and 2004, this acclaimed multi-cultural choir enjoyed numerous national and international invitations and successes, performing before President Nelson Mandela, Queen Elizabeth II and participating in the FICU International University Choir Festival, Valencia (Spain), the Centennial Celebrations of Philippines and the Voices International Choir Festival in Trondheim (Norway). In 2000 the Choir featured in a film based on the life of Nelson Mandela commissioned by Norway and filmed on Robben Island.

In 2007 the NMMU Choir performed in Jacksonville, Florida (a Port Elizabeth sister city) as well as with Chicago Children's Choir and the Lyric Opera Orchestra at the Civic Theatre, Chicago, for the world premiere of Windy City Songs by South African composer Péter Louis van Dijk. They also performed at the Ravinia Festival (Chicago) and in Hyde Park (New York State). In 2008 the choir performed Vivaldi's Gloria and Van Dijk's Windy City Songs with both the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra (Cape Town) and the Eastern Cape Philharmonic Orchestra (Port Elizabeth) under the baton of Péter Louis van Dijk.

The choir won the 2009 choir competition in Spittal-an-der-Drau, Austria and was highly acclaimed by all who attended. They also won the *publicum* prize as the most liked choir by the concert attendees. In 2010 they were invited to partake in prestigious *Fabbrica Del Canto* Choir Competition in Northern Italy. As no university funding was available, the choir costs were fully sponsored by the organizers. Once again they were singled out as one of the top performances. (They also performed at the opening of the FIFA World Cup activities in Milano before the Sky news, BBC, RA 1 and regional television stations). The choir has cut one very successful CD/DVD and are presently doing another DVD for release by June.

In 2011 the choir was very privileged to be selected as one of 24 choirs (chosen from 120 choirs from five continents) as the **ONLY** choir from South Africa to perform at the prestigious **IFCM's 9th World Choral Symposium** in Puerto Madryn, Argentina in August 2011. This is one of the most important events on the international choral calendar and is scheduled every 3 years in a different country and preferably a different continent.

In 2012 the choir received an invitation as one of five choirs (each from a different continent) to represent Africa at the **11th China International Choral Festival and IFCM World Choral Summit** in Beijing, China in July 2012. The theme of this global initiative was voices in Harmony. The choir performed in the opening ceremony for the festival in front of 18 000 people. A special performance was also held for around 700 delegates, consisting of internationally renowned choral conductors. In addition to these performances, the NMMU Choir hosted a workshop. Here, attendees were taught African singing techniques and walked out practising the famous "African Clicks."

The choir toured the Western Cape of South Africa during 2013 to much acclaim, whilst recording the "Zulu-kingdom" music for the soundtrack of the critically acclaimed video-game, Civilization 5: Brave New World.

2014 saw the choir once again visiting China as representatives of the African continent at the **IFCM World Choral Summit** and **12th China International Choral Festival** in Beijing, China during August. The choir performed during the opening and closing functions, as well as at two 90-minute performances in which the choir took centre stage. This year also marked the choir's 20th year since inception, with this being celebrated at a special Reunion Concert held in August where various old-members joined in for several mass-choir pieces.

In 2015 the choir attended the **BeKoor/AChaired Taste** festival at the Grand West Theatre in Cape Town during August, and hosted the bi-annual **Kuesta** festival, the prestige choral festival for university choirs in South Africa, during September. They were furthermore invited to partake in the **IFCM World Choral Expo** in Macau, China during November. As part of this inaugural event, the choir performed at the opening and closing function, during several

lunch-hour concerts as well as presenting a choral workshop to the heightened enjoyment of all attending. It was during this tour that "as is the sea marvelous," a piece composed by one of the choir's longest singing members, Madelie Olivier, had its world premiere.

In 2016 the choir is participating in the first *Varsity Sing* choral competition hosted by Varsity Sport and KykNET, as well as once again touring to Cape Town for the *BeKoor/AChoired Taste* festival in August. The choir will be touring the United States of America and Canada in November.

## **2012 China Tour**

The International Federation for Choral Music(IFCM) invited the NMMU Choir to represent Africa at the 11th China International Choral Festival and IFCM World Choral Summit in Beijing, China in July 2012. The theme of this global initiative was voices in Harmony. The choir performed in the opening ceremony for the festival in front of 18 000 people. A special performance was also held for around 700 delegates, consisting of internationally renowned choral conductors. In addition to these performances, the NMMU Choir hosted a workshop. Here, attendees were taught African singing techniques and walked out practising the famous "African Clicks."

## **2011 Argentina Tour**

In 2011 the choir was very privileged to be selected as one of the 24 choirs (chosen from 120 choirs from five continents) as the only choir from South Africa to perform at the prestigious IFCM's 9th World Choral Symposium in Puerto Madryn, Argentina in August 2011. This is the most important event on the international choral calendar and scheduled every three years in another country and preferably on another continent

## **2009 European Tour**

At the 46 Internationaler Choir Wettbewerb in Spittal an der Drau, Austria, the Choir, with very strong competition from 10 other international choirs achieved the following:

First place: Volkslied (Traditional) with 96%

Third place: Kunstlied with 90,5%

Publikum prize: Most popular choir at competition

The Choir, reflecting our multi-cultural country in image, song and dance were not only ambassadors for NMMU, but also our metropole and country. They are the only choir in the 46 years of the competition to receive a standing ovation after their performance.

## **2007 USA Horizons Tour**

- Nelson Mandela Trust fundraising concert at SA Embassy, Chicago - part of outgoing SA Ambassador Barbara Masekela's farewell to the US.
- Opening Concert, Ravinia - largest music festival in Chicago
- Joint performance with the Chicago Children's Choir - world premiere, *Windy City Songs* by South African composer, Péter Louis van Dijk
- Concerts: Du Sable Museum for African American Cultural History, Chicago.
- Concerts: Hyde Park (NY State) hosted by the DR Church, New York.
- Concerts: Jacksonville, Florida (Univ. of North Florida, St John's Cathedral, etc)

Performances at the University of North Florida and St Augustine were planned to coincide with the visit to Jacksonville by the Executive Mayor of Nelson Mandela Bay, Nondumiso Maphazi, and her entourage. These performances were also attended by the Mayor of Jacksonville and other dignitaries.

Reviewers in the US wrote of the NMMU Choir performances:

*"...wows audience with versatility and skill"*

*"...amazingly talented, highly skilled"*

*"...brought the audience to its feet with high energy African drumming, dancing, and traditional African songs"*

*"...the audience burst out of their seats"*