

Singing for Peace

The World Youth Choir at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremonies,
Oslo, December 2011

Vladimir Opačić

World Youth Choir Project Manager

The World Youth Choir is a genuine educational and social experience that draws on many vocal traditions and aims to perform at the highest artistic level. For some 22 years now, the World Youth Choir has built bridges between young singers from diverse cultures. And for over two decades the World Youth Choir has been the meeting point for young singers from around the world. A thousand individuals have taken part and left an indelible mark on the ensemble, imbuing it with their unique talent, personality, creativity, warmth and humour.



*The World Youth Choir: a
Diversity of Culture
Singers Alenka Bobek,
Slovenia, Grace Nanjala
Nangabo, Kenya and Kaori
Tsushima, Japan – Alenka
Bobek, Slovenia ©
Foundation World Youth*

Choir

The World Youth Choir was, is and will be a unique project which brings people from different cultures and nations together for an unforgettable moment in their lives. It is a global school of understanding, respect and unity of many different nations, speaking one language that all can understand: the language of the world's choral music. It is a unique chance for young people to develop every part of their being and, through music, discover the essence of living. No matter how different our cultures, skin colours, religions, or languages remain, being a World Youth Choir member and speaking a choral language, shows how every one of us is important, how every one of us is the world, wherever we come from. Our choral language is unique; our choir is unique for all people who want to make the world a better place, even if it is only with the sound of music. We feel fulfilled as human beings whenever there is a place for us to be a unique cultural representative of our corner of the world. That place gives us the right to be different. With all past, present and future singers, the World Youth Choir certainly is different from any other choral projects, uniqueness in diversity is at the core of its existence.

It was a fantastic feeling to be in Oslo, in the Aula, the Oslo City Hall and the Spektrum Arena in front of the royal family and three Nobel Peace Prize winners. To be on stage in silence when a thousand people stood to greet the King and the winners was wonderful and once-in-a-lifetime experience. The World Youth Choir deserved this; its mission and motto was recognized. It produced a fantastic sound, facial expressions, smiles, energy and above all, devotion. Our hearts were beating perfectly in time: sixty beats as one, for the planet, in sound and minds.

Vladimir Opačić, Serbia (The Foundation World Youth Choir)

WYC singer 1999-2004, WCC singer 2004, 2009, World Youth Choir Project Manager 2004/05-present, Conductor, music teacher



40 singers of the World Youth Choir at the Nobel Peace Prize Award, Oslo City Hall – Rooz Photo © Foundation World Youth Choir

After a tremendous winter session with the World Youth Choir in Belgium 2004, I was bursting with joy at being able to receive the choir in my own home town, Oslo, in 2011. They came with lots of musical resources, stamina, musical surplus, temperament, forbearance and lots of good humour. Unforgettable days. Thank you so much.

Grete Pedersen, conductor, Norway



*Grete Pedersen, Norway
Conducting the WYC in Oslo,
December 2011- David
Baldwin, Canada ©
Foundation World Youth
Choir*

After a break from holding winter sessions, the World Youth Choir once more gathered its members in snowy climes last December. Sixty singers from thirty-seven countries were invited to Oslo by Jeunesses Musicales Norway, in collaboration with the University of Oslo. The Choir assembled to perform for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony and Awards Concert, as well as for the 200th anniversary of the University of Oslo. The choir members were honoured to perform at such prestigious events, and worked their hardest over the seven days of the session to ensure that their concerts would reflect this.



*World Youth Choir singers
rehearsing ©Bea Uhart*

The choir went straight into a full day of rehearsals at the beautiful Opera House at Bjørvika. That morning we met our conductor, Grete Pedersen, who introduced us to the week's music. We were to perform a full concert programme concluding a year of celebrations for the university's 200th anniversary, with pieces including Brahms's *Warum ist das Licht gegeben*, Schoenberg's *Friede Auf Erden*, Matt Van Brink's *White, Those That Stayed Still* (its European premiere), Nørgård's *Dream Songs* and several traditional Norwegian folk songs arranged for choir and violin by Gunnar Eriksson. The next three days were spent rehearsing at the concert's venue, the Aula of the University of Oslo, before the concert on the session's fourth day. During these rehearsals we also met the Norwegian violinist Gjermund Larsen, who was to perform with us. During these intensive rehearsals we began to create a cohesive sound as a choir, and bonded over our shared memories of past World Youth Choir sessions. Some of us were also brought together by mutual difficulties with Norwegian pronunciation. However, singing in a hall framed by huge Edvard Munch paintings gave us a fair amount to live up to, and thanks to Grete and Gjermund's inspiring instruction, we were able to present a vibrant concert for the university's anniversary.



*World Youth Choir
with Norwegian
violinist Gjermund
Larsen Olso City
Hall – Sebastian
Dahl © Jeuneses
Musicales Norway
and Foundation
World Youth Choir*



*World Youth Choir with
Norwegian violinist
Gjermund Larsen Olso City
Hall – Sebastian Dahl ©
Jeuneses Musicales Norway
and Foundation World Youth
Choir*

The second part of the session saw us preparing for the two Nobel Peace Prize performances. The prize-giving ceremony was to be held at the imposing Oslo City Hall, and we would be performing in front of Norwegian royalty, the 2011 Peace Prize winners, visiting dignitaries and a considerable television audience. No small task, then. We were to close the ceremony with Eriksson's Norwegian arrangements. We arrived on the day of the ceremony, having rehearsed at City Hall the day before, and as we got ready we watched the winners' speeches on a screen. The three winners, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman, were chosen for their work for women's rights and safety. All three women gave rousing and inspiring speeches, and it encouraged us to give a whole-hearted performance, which would pay tribute to their work.

After over four days of solid work, it was a treat to have some free time for sightseeing. Our hosts kindly arranged for us to see some of the city's various cultural and sporting highlights, including the Viking Ship Museum, and the Holmenkollen Ski Museum and ski jump. It was a great opportunity to learn something more of the city's heritage, and it left us with plenty to talk about at the official dinner to which we were invited that evening by the University of Oslo. Next day we were treated to lunch of Norwegian salmon and reindeer at one of Oslo's restaurants, hosted by the United Nations ambassador, Madam Dho Young-shim from South Korea, admirer of the work the World Youth Choir has done in the past. Feeling suitably rested, we departed for the Oslo Spektrum Arena for our final performance at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert.

After the sound-check for we prepared 'O Fortuna' from Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, the concert's opening number. The choir rehearsed it several times with the orchestra, stopping only when Dame Helen Mirren, one of the evening's co-hosts, came over to greet the choir. We were then invited to sing in the concert finale together with the other artists performing that

evening. Our task was to learn the chorus to Angelique Kidjo's infectious song *Move On Up* and we were asked to dance for the rest of the number, something we managed with considerable enthusiasm at the concert. Our opening piece went well. In a celebratory mood after the concert, we began to sing some of the well-loved pieces from previous sessions. Unknown to us, our singing was audible in the surrounding corridors, and it was not long before we were joined by one of the evening's hosts, Rosario Dawson, who ended up dancing and singing along with the choir. It was a magical end to an unforgettable week, and one which none of the participating singers will ever forget.

The World Youth Choir's trip to Oslo could not have happened without the support of several important organisations, namely the University of Oslo, the Norwegian Culture Council, Bergesens Almennyttige Stiftelse, and Skipsreder Tom Wilhelmsens Stiftelse. We as choir members are so grateful for the opportunities they gave us. We are also thankful for the help of Jeunesses Musicales Norway, and in particular to Solveig Riiser, Ingunn Sand, Eivind Lovdal, Ole Albrekt Nedreliid, Sofie Søndervik Sæther and many volunteers for their dedication to the project. We are indebted to the University of Oslo, the Nobel Institute and Committee, and the organisers of the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony and Concert for inviting us to be a part of two very important events. Finally, the session could not have happened without the hard work of two people: Grete Pedersen and Vladimir Opačić. Between them, they gave us the structure, spirit and inspiration to make the trip a success.

Final gratitude goes to all singers of the World Youth Choir in Oslo, for their tremendous work, talent, passion, devotion and above all humanity, so needed in present times. True 'Ambassadors of Peace' in Oslo, were:

Sopranos

De Gendt	Jolien	Belgium
Espedal	Ingvill	Norway
Ho	Chi Mei	Malaysia
Hoeltschi	Sarah	Switzerland
Ip	Wing Wun	Hong Kong
Kovacevic	Ana	Serbia
Maticic	Vida	Slovenia
Nangabo	Grace	Kenya
O'Brien	Clare Bridgit	Ireland
Pecze	Zsofia	Hungary
Renglet	Amélie	Belgium
Rupnik	Tanja	Slovenia
Telnov	Maria	Israel
Tschakert	Katharina	Austria
Zupanic	Sanja	Slovenia

Altos

Arniece	Ilze	Latvia
Bobek	Alenka	Slovenia
Chen	Wei-Ching	Taiwan
De Wilde	Carolien	Belgium
Horska	Lenka	Czech Republic
Juárez Vargas	Betzabé	Mexico
Kanter	Clara	United Kingdom

Liedbergius	Victoria	Norway
Rohwer	Katherine	USA
Ronn	Simone	Denmark
Rovira	Manuela	Uruguay
Szabo	Anna	Australia
Tshupane	Tina	South Africa
Tsushima	Kaori	Japan
Utt	Teele	Estonia

Tenors

Baldwin	David	Canada
Bjorn Moller	Troels	Denmark
Budday	Johannes	Germany
Degives	Geoffrey	Belgium
Gaglianello	Adriano	Italy
Gorrin	Juan	Venezuela
Kristi	Ganda Charisma	Indonesia
Lee	Shiak Yao	Malaysia
Mateos Segura	Juan de Dios	Spain
Neimark	Federico	Argentina
Reimer	Scott	Canada
Salonen	Jussi	Finland
Sequera	Pedro	Venezuela
Simko	Matus	Slovak Republic

Snarby	Kristopher	Canada
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Baritones/Basses

Delvaux	Bertrand	Belgium
Fergusson	Timothy Alan Jack	United Kingdom
Gailey	David	USA
Guirigay	Juan Pablo	Venezuela
Hagfeldt	Daniel	Sweden
Meunier	Lionel	France
Miličević	Nemanja	Serbia/BIH
Olofson	Oskar	Sweden
Pooe	Itumeleng	South Africa
Silva Herrera	Jose Angel	Spain
Sojo	Paul	Venezuela
Svarc	Aleksandar	Serbia
Viray	Arjay	Philippines
Yajure	Jose Jonas	Venezuela

Clara Kanter, United Kingdom

(Session 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 Oslo)



*Singers Kristi Ganda
Charisma, Indonesia and
Paul Sojo, Venezuela –
Sebastian Dahl © Jeunesses
Musicales Norway and
Foundation World Youth
Choir*

World Youth Choir in Oslo, December 2011

Oslo through the eyes of others

Another triumphant appearance by the World Youth Choir, proving itself a unique worldwide ensemble that carries out its mission of world peace and understanding amongst nations. What had been a week of snow and cold weather in Oslo was warmed up through singing, as were the hearts of the singers, the audiences and the high profile guests at the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies. Sixty World Youth Choir singers, chosen carefully amongst the participants at the previous sessions, created a unique, well-rehearsed team of young people guided by an outstanding conductor, Grete Pedersen, a team that delivered remarkable performances during its appearances that week, offering a historically and thematically rich program, showing tremendous ability for transformation which only this ensemble could achieve in three rehearsing days, reaching the highest artistic and social success.

We were all deeply moved by the event, and by the singing. We were also touched and proud by the fact that these appearances were televised for some 300 million viewers across the globe. It was amazing to see how both in the official and in the unofficial parts of the program, the singers had a chance to deepen their friendship and to meet local people, the organizers, and renowned celebrities.

As Mr. Per Ekedahl, president of the Jeunesses Musicales International said: "The power of Jeunesses Musicales International network lies in all the thousands of activities, performances, training and concerts, that go on around the world. It lies in people's devotion to music and youth. It lies in the energy that emerges when young people make music together – across all boundaries; it lies in the power that music has to empower." As a symbol of all the work with music and young people that goes on everywhere in the JMI network, this appearance of the World Youth Choir was perfect in many senses.

It demonstrated involvement, devotion, excellence, and empowerment and confirmed, right on target, the 'across all boundaries' as being perhaps the most prestigious peace-event there is. One thing is certain. The extraordinary event at which the World Youth Choir has performed meant success for us all. The Oslo concerts are a legacy for significant development of the Foundation World Youth Choir and project in general, as well as a highlight for generations of young singers while together all are 'building bridges between young singers from diverse cultures.'

The Jeunesses Musicales International is proud to be one of the three patron organizations which support the World Youth Choir, along with the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat and the International Federation for Choral Music, all joined in the newly created Foundation World Youth Choir: thanks to everyone involved in making the Oslo events come true! The World Youth Choir Foundation Board and the Artistic

Committee had their meetings during this week in Oslo, offering the opportunity to the patron organizations to meet and interact with the singers and the organizers, as well.

These festive moments were a good opportunity to announce the World Symposium on Choral Music 2014 in Korea, organized by the International Federation for Choral Music. The World Youth Choir has been warmly invited to perform for the participants and for the Korean audiences. So, see you soon at the World Youth Choir Summer Session 2012 in Cyprus.

*Blasko Smilevski, Chair of the Foundation World Youth Choir
Secretary General of the Jeunesses Musicales International*

It was a weekend full of contrasts and rich impressions. In December Oslo, covered in snow, hosted the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winners, three strong women from warm countries in colourful dresses – and the World Youth Choir was there to perform.

The European Choral Association – Europa Cantat, as one of the patrons, is very proud that ‘our choir’ was chosen. It is a major aim of our organization to promote singing among young people worldwide, and we consider the World Youth Choir a remarkable contribution to world peace. Watching the award ceremony, it was wonderful to see the choir singing from their hearts, full of energy and enthusiasm, with radiant faces, happy to be performing for such a prestigious audience which included the King and Queen of Norway. One of the singers proudly presented her baby in the evening in a gala outfit: black swallow-tailed coat, white shirt and a bow tie, all hand-tailored by the baby’s grandmother for the great occasion.

The special weekend started with a concert in the Aula of Oslo University which has walls covered in paintings by Edward

Munch. Behind the choir there was a huge wall-to-wall painting, which included a sun that seemed to shine on the choir or on Grete Pedersen, the conductor of the session. The first chord of the concert from *Warum* by Johannes Brahms was impressive and already gave an idea of the excellent quality of the choir. It was amazing to hear how in three rehearsal days, Grete had achieved a magnificent choral sound and a great musical variety.

At the end of the weekend the choir was invited to open the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in front of six thousand people. When looking at the pictures and YouTube films afterwards, we were happy to see that the singers had the opportunity to meet the hosts and other artists of the evening, and we heard that Helen Mirren complimented the choir on their performance.

For the young singers of the World Youth Choir, awarded the title of UNESCO Artist for Peace in 1996, these days in Oslo will certainly stand out from all the other sessions and they will long be remembered. As patrons we hope that those who heard the choir will also remember it as an instrument that can bridge cultural differences and contribute to peace in the world. Or as one of our members wrote after having read the press release about Oslo, "I always thought the World Youth Choir deserved the Nobel Peace Prize".

On behalf of the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat: Gábor Móczár, Vice-President

Jean Smeets, Treasurer – and Treasurer of the World Youth Choir Foundation

Sonja Greiner, Secretary General – and Board member of the World Youth Choir Foundation

For the first time in its existence, the World Youth Choir was invited to perform at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo,

Norway. The invitation was an appropriate gesture considering that the World Youth Choir was awarded the title 'Artist for Peace' by UNESCO in 1996. This comes as no surprise for those of us who are intimately familiar with this exceptional ensemble. But for those for whom this was their first exposure to the choir, it was an eye-opener to realise that there could be a performing ensemble with this level of talent, recruited on a world-wide basis, and one that has existed for over twenty years.

The performances by the choir were extraordinary, as one would expect. However, I was most pleased by the exposure created by such an opportunity. Not since their performance at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics had the choir enjoyed such an audience. The people attending these prestigious events were singular in stature, and the television audience was immense. For global choral music I found several things pleasing, such as the attendance by the Rector of Oslo University and his insightful speech about the world and music's place in it. Also present were many VIPs, who were probably attending a World Youth Choir concert for the first time.

The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony was attended by world leaders, many of whom could be helpful in bringing choral music to its appropriate prominence around the globe, and could help with projects like the IFCM's Conductors Without Borders – a critical project. I was surprised by the sizable amount of money that was prominent at the event. It gives me hope for the future of raising funds and interest in our art form.

Particularly pleasing was the attendance of Ambassador Youngshim Dho, from Korea. As an IFCM Board Member and the host of the 2014 IFCM World Symposium on Choral Music, she took a detour from her travels to open a Small Library, (a project of South Korea in Africa) to attend the event and host a luncheon for the singers. It was greatly appreciated by all the artists. My hope is that more people like Ambassador Dho will recognize the levelling effect that is regularly integrated in

choral music. Everyone is equal; everyone has opportunity; all succeed collectively. I feel that much of the message of the World Youth Choir is exactly that: representatives of the world bringing a positive, unified message to the world: peace.

Dr. Michael J. Anderson, President

International Federation for Choral Music

January, February, March, April... I am constantly watching pictures and clips from the Oslo session. I found myself wondering whether or not Oslo really happened. So many smiling faces... not only with their lips, but with their eyes, their bodies; with their souls.

Dear friends, I love you all. I am the happiest girl in the world, and I keep asking myself how I deserved to have you all in my life.

Ana Kovačević, law student, Serbia (Session 2008, 2009, Anniversary celebration 2009, 2011 Oslo)

The World Youth Choir is a multicultural stage which superbly teaches us the importance of diversity and how much it enriches human existence. We raise our voices as a clamour for new world citizens willing to understand and appreciate differences and to stop misjudging so unfairly. While singing for the Nobel Peace Prize laureates I represented Venezuela, but I also felt responsible for representing every nation on earth, for those which call for understanding and peace.

Paul Sojo, student, Venezuela (Session 2008, 2009, Anniversary celebration 2009, 2010, 2011 Oslo)

The World Youth Choir performing at the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony culminates what this project has been doing for over two decades – being Artists for Peace. Just like the World Youth Choir itself, these experiences will never be matched, replaced or duplicated. I wish for bigger and better things for the World Youth Choir in the future.

Arjay Viray, Philippines (Session 2008, 2010 and 2011 Oslo)

The Oslo session of the World Youth Choir was an amazing experience. Being a part of the Nobel ceremonies and concerts was the chance of a lifetime. I will cherish the memories of singing in such important events with such beautiful people forever.

David Baldwin, Canada (Summer and winter 2005, summer and winter 2006, 2011 Oslo)

The World Youth Choir has given me the opportunity to make music and friends with the most promising and wonderful persons and musicians around the world. Wherever I go, I can be sure to have a friend for life. To make music at a professional level in an early stage in life is the most wonderful thing a musician can do. I will never forget this for the rest of my life.

Daniel Hagfeldt, Sweden, Student of Speech-Language Pathology (Session 2008, 2009 and Anniversary celebration, Oslo 2011)

I thought I would never get a chance like this again, because I had almost reached the World Youth Choir's upper age limit, but when I saw the email from Vladimir Opačić, I was ecstatic. So I decided that I would go back and sing with the best choir in the world – both musically and in the human sense. I spent that week with old friends and new ones, making amazing music,

seeing different cultures. But then dreary life seemed to call us back from heaven and sent us spiralling back down to earth. What an honour for us all to be in Oslo, for such a magnificent occasion and for me to attend and perform in these events. The World Youth Choir has always had a positive impact on my life. Just by mere association with the name, I find that people here are in awe and give you a second chance, especially when I mention that I was in the Nobel Peace Prize Concert with all those other artists.

Grace Nangabo, Kenya (Summer session 2008, 2011 Oslo)

If I have to describe with one word the last two World Youth Choir sessions I was able to attend it would be 'amazing'. It simply was an amazing musical experience, one that changed my life in the best of ways. I am happy that I could be a part of this wonderful choir and hope that many young people can have the same experience in the future.

Sarah Holtschi, Switzerland (Summer 2010, 2011 Oslo)

Since I joined the World Youth Choir in 2004, it has been very important to me in many ways, on a personal and professional level. From a singer's point of view, I have come to know many interesting choral works and it was fascinating to work with so many talented conductors, learning new ways and methods of choral singing. It was a unique opportunity to work with Grete Pedersen in Oslo, one of the best choral conductors I have ever worked with. But the thing I cherish most about the World Youth Choir, is the profound and warm relationships one gets to build with singers from all over the world. It has broadened my vision of the world and has given me some of the best friends in my life.

Carolien De Wilde, Belgium (Summer 2004, summer 2005, summer

2008, 2011 Oslo)

The December 2011 World Youth Choir session in Oslo, Norway was a celebration of people coming together and making the world a better place. By sharing quality music and incredible experiences, young people from 37 countries across the globe learned better what it means to be a human being.

David Gailey, United States of America, High School Choir Director (Sessions 2006, 2007, 2009 Anniversary celebration, 2010, 2011 Oslo)

When I became a member of the World Youth Choir I was totally fired by its energy. It is a great opportunity for making new friendships and broadening horizons, and is altogether a top level musical experience. What more could a young musician wish for? When I was invited to take part at the Nobel Peace Prize session 2011 I felt honoured and proud. Working with Grete Pedersen, making music with friends, singing for the Nobel Peace prize laureates in front of the royal family and the incredible audience has been an unimaginable honour and will remain an everlasting memory. I am so grateful to all the people who make this project possible and bring such great opportunities to young singers.

Vida Matičič, Slovenia, final year voice student (Session 2005, 2005/2006, 2006, 2007/2008, 2011 Oslo)

Being part of the historical moments in Oslo was incredible. It was extremely emotional. The World Youth Choir was and is important; I just hope that in the future, thanks to this event and our singing in Oslo, the World Youth Choir will see brighter days. Someone once said that the the World Youth

Choir changes your life forever. It is true for me and for many others. It summarizes really well why this project was and is important and will continue to be important for a long time for younger generations. We are 'Artists for Peace'.

Geoffrey Degives, Belgium, freelance singer (Summer 2003, 2004, 2008, 2010; winter 2004/2005 – 2007/2008; World Chamber Choir 2010, 2011 Oslo)

I had many beautiful moments in Oslo. Realizing how important our presence at the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony was, as representatives of peace united by music itself, and the honor of sharing our joy in music as a gift of peace to the laureates, took away my breath and left me in awe.

Juan Pablo Guirigay, Venezuela (Session 2009, Anniversary celebration 2009, 2010 and 2011, Oslo)

When I was invited and heard that the World Youth Choir was going to sing at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies, I thought it incredible. But then I realised that the presence of the World Youth Choir at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies is exactly what the choir stands for. The World Youth Choir is truly special, bringing together different people, cultures, and backgrounds, creating understanding through music, and ultimately, peace.

Ingvill Espedal, Norway (Session 2010, 2011 Oslo)

Singing in the World Youth Choir fuels a passion for music. It is an incredible experience for the development of a choral singer and conductor. It creates an opportunity to sing with distinguished conductors and work within a broad field of proficient musicians from around the world, allowing us all to experience an extremely rich intercultural exchange. It is a

blessing that this choir exists.

Scott Alexander Reimer, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

School teacher/construction worker (Session 2009, 2010 and Oslo, 2011)

The World Youth Choir unites people from all over the world. I believe it could announce a new era, an era of peace. I see the Nobel Peace Prize events as an occasion where the World Youth Choir fits in perfectly. Perhaps the World Youth Choir project might win a Nobel Peace Prize some time in the future.

Sanja
Zupanic, medical student, Slovenia (Session 2008 and Oslo 2011)

The World Youth Choir has been a special experience in my life. It breaks down the walls which separate us and strengthens the bond between various races and peoples. It is a chance to change, to learn, to love, and to compromise, sharing with others but receiving the same in return. No matter which corner of the world you are living in, it is an opportunity to entertain, to educate, to ease pain, and to increase confidence among all the souls we touched – all this through music. The World Youth Choir has inspired me to be a better man in every aspect of my life. But what gives a choir life and value? Individual characters sharing the same vision and belief I would say. During this process, we learn to accept others, to lead, to follow, to help, and to support. It lays the foundation for a better tomorrow for humanity. The Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony gave me the courage and determination to continue serving the world with what I do best, knowing there is a whole world of support behind me. There is a great saying in the World Youth Choir's system: 'the World Youth Choir will change your life forever'. It has indeed changed the lives of many over the past twenty-two

years. May the choir continue to blossom forever, for young people and for the betterment of the world.

Lee Shiak Yao, Malaysia, Choral director; Orchestra and Symphonic Band conductor; Vice president Malaysia Choral Federation (Session 2004, 2004/2005, 2005/2006, 2007, 2009 World Chamber Choir and Anniversary celebrations, 2011 Oslo)

Singing in the World Youth Choir and at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies 2011 was like a dream come true. Not only because of the event, but also because of the opportunity I had to sing among sixty excellent singers chosen from around the world. It proves to me and to the others as well how important these passionate singers are for the World Youth Choir project. The World Youth Choir has indeed expanded the borders of my knowledge, culture and experience. I hope the World Youth Choir will be able to help more young people to have a chance like mine.

Ganda Charisma Kristi, Indonesia, church choir member and choir conductor (Session 2010 and 2011, Oslo)

It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience to sing for the three Nobel Peace Prize awardees, amazingly brave and altruistic women –it rarely happens these days that people think first of others rather than of themselves. And for some millionth time already, the session of the World Youth Choir reminded me how beautiful and universal the language of music is.

Ilze Ārniece, Latvia, EU Structure Fund Project Manager (Session 2000, 2008, 2009 and 2011, Oslo)

Being part of the World Youth Choir gave me a heartfelt connection to the world, to people whom I otherwise would not

have met, and to countries I otherwise would not have seen. The Oslo session gave me new perspectives and enriched my life. I am proud to have been there.

Katharina Tschakert, student, Austria (Session 2006, 2007, 2007/2008, 2011 Oslo)

From the very beginning, the World Youth Choir was something very special for me. Finding new friends all over the world, sharing the same passion with them, and spreading the message of peace around the world is a unique experience in life. To perform with the World Youth Choir at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies was a real summit. In times where money unfortunately plays the most important role in keeping such projects alive, I wish the World Youth Choir a very long future. Money should not have the last word. It is so important to spread the message of tolerance. May the project remain alive and gather more and more young singers to live the experience.

Johannes Budday, Germany, Mathematician (Session 2002, 2002/2003, Anniversary celebration 2009, Oslo 2011)

The participation at the Nobel Peace Prize Concerts was an unforgettable moment of my life, to meet, work and exchange different views with musicians of similar age from all over the world. It was an honour to work with Mrs. Grete Petersen from whom I learned much in both musical and human ways. This is the best human, social, live choral school for young musicians and singers all over the world. I was able to understand a different culture, see Norway past and present. To share a stage with Helen Mirren, Rosario Dawson, Jill Scott and Janelle Monáe will remain a life-time memory. And I was glad to represent my country, Hungary, at these great events. Good luck for the sessions in Cyprus in 2012.

Zsofia Pecze, Hungary (Summer 2010, 2011 Oslo)

What could I do for the world as an artist for peace? My goal in life has always been to contribute to world peace as a singer-song writer, participating in the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony as a member of the WYC was a big step towards achieving it.

Kaori Tsushima, Japan (Session 2005, 2006, 2007, 2007/2008, 2009, World Chamber Choir and the Anniversary, 2010, Oslo 2011)

There are moments in life when you feel at the right place at the right moment. And being with the World Youth Choir for the Nobel Peace Prize ceremonies and concerts was one of them. Could there be a better place for this choir to be present to send the message of peace? Fantastic organization by the World Youth Choir and Jeunesses Musicales Norway, great music, and a world-class conductor looking after talented individuals is almost impossible to describe in words. This was simply one of the best weeks I have ever had. Watching the performance now at the Nobel Peace Prize award giving ceremony, I realize just how much this choir can give, not only to its members but to listeners the world. The World Youth Choir changes the life of each of us, both as a musician and as a human being. Long live the World Youth Choir.

Lionel Meunier, France, Professional singer & Artistic director of the ensemble Vox Luminis (Summer 2002, 2003, 2004; winter 2002/2003, 2003/2004, 2004/2005, 2006/2007 and Oslo 2011; World Chamber Choir 2004, 2006, 2007)

*Edited by Aaron Kircher, USA, and Gillian Forlivesi Heywood,
Italy*