



## Christchurch / Kurashiki Sister City Committee



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### Report on the Visit of the Kurashiki Junior Philharmony Orchestra to Christchurch 29 March to 4 April 2003.

#### Background

This visit was the first of several planned events by the Christchurch / Kurashiki Sister City Committee, to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the link between Christchurch in New Zealand and Kurashiki in Japan.

Twelve months ago a small group of 25 members of an Ensemble from Kurashiki spent 8 days in Christchurch rehearsing and holding a Concert in the city. They also enjoyed a brief tour and sightseeing programme arranged for them by the Committee. Members of that group were so enthusiastic over their experiences that they encouraged the interest of the Junior members of the Kurashiki Orchestra to visit Christchurch in 2003.

Over the next 12 months, planning was undertaken to arrange and see through the project.

#### Planning

In the 12 months leading up to this visit, many emails, faxes and phone calls were made to put together a programme that would give a large group of visitors a good insight into our city life. Sayuri Ando the daughter of the groups manager, played a great part in the transferring of information with her ability to translate Kiwi words and expressions into the local Japanese understanding. Having lived in Christchurch for the past 2 years, Sayuri made a valuable contribution towards the planning process.

Mikio Ejima and a representative of their group made a pre visit tour of the city in September 2002 and visited most of the venues chosen and was then treated to a long weekend at Tekapo, Mt Cook, Queenstown and Milford Sound. An advance part of 6 arrived one full week before the main group and put the final touches to the Concert Programme.

Among the planning tasks done by our local team were the arrangements for a group of 100 visitors for accommodation, rehearsal arrangements, an evening concert, evening meals at six different restaurants, city attractions and sightseeing visits, a Maori Concert and Hangi, a Mayoral courtesy visit. Two full day trips were also arranged to include Arthurs Pass, Farm visit, Jet Boat rides and Dolphin viewing at Akaroa. A final night farewell party was arranged to cap off the full week of programme.

One late change was made with approx 15 members of the Orchestra deciding not to travel with the group to NZ because of the threat of war in Iraq during those weeks.

## **The Concert**

After the dismal efforts we made promoting their last concert, plans were made to book a top class venue and a professional promoter for this concert. It was decided to use the services of the Christchurch Youth Orchestra to be part of a combined Concert programme and to hold the Concert at the new Aurora Centre at Burnside. Although a very expensive venue, all agreed that it was worth the exercise.

Joanna Drimatis the conductor/manager of the Christchurch Youth Orchestra was very cooperative in her efforts to work with the Kurashiki Junior Philharmony Orchestra in putting together a Concert Programme of both local Christchurch and NZ music as well as some Japanese pieces. She had the added task of finding 20 or so local Christchurch players who could supplement the visiting Orchestra because of those not able to attend from Japan.

Howard Harvey was brought on board to plan and arrange all the advertising, promotion and ticket sales for the Concert. Later on he also accepted the additional role of stage manager for the Concert. Both of these tasks he did with ease and perfection, using his previous knowledge and experiences with the CYO. The name of 'The Sounds of Two Cities' was adopted for the Concert name, and a 6 page Concert Programme was produced for free distribution to the Concert goers.

The Aurora Centre staff and management were very helpful in all the pre concert arrangements and planning, as well as their cooperation on the concert night.

Tickets were produced and numbered for sale by the CYO players and members. Adverts were placed in both local newspapers as well as features and news items in the Arts page of the Christchurch Press. A simple but effective flyer and poster was produced overnight for distribution to members of the CYO, News Media, English Language Schools, Japanese Restaurants, Internet Cafés and the like.

As the Concert day drew closer, it became obvious that we were likely to be short on ticket sales to fill the Aurora Centre to its capacity of 700 seats. The Committee agreed to circulate Intermediate and High Schools and offer some complimentary tickets to members of their school orchestra members. This turned out to be very successful as the final attendance numbers on the night showed 610 seats were taken.

It was also agreed to deviate from the usual concert protocol of presenting flowers by presenting NZ Native Timber and NZ Paua Shell gifts to the soloists, lead players, conductors and managers of each Orchestra.

Our Mayor Garry Moore spoke words of greeting and welcome at the commencement of the Concert. He spoke of his meetings with the Mayor of Kurashiki and of his intending visit to Kurashiki and Japan in August of this year as part of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the link between the two cities.

A professionally produced Video and an Audio Tape of the Concert were ordered and paid for by the visiting group. Copies of these are available at a small cost.

## **Rehearsals**

The group put a lot of emphasis on the rehearsals at the Aurora Centre during the afternoons of Sunday, Monday and Tuesday before the Concert. The visitors used the facility to practice their pieces from 2 - 5 pm each day followed by the Christchurch Youth Orchestra from 5 - 6pm. Afternoon tea was provided for the players at the centre each afternoon.

It was not possible to do their rehearsals in the mornings and visits in the afternoons, as the venue was being used by other groups on those days. So it was mornings play and afternoons work, instead of their accustomed reversal of the day.

On Tuesday the Concert day, the group requested a finger food meal be provided for the players between the rehearsals and the Concert. This turned out to be a larger than expected event, as the CYO members decided that they too needed a meal. So, result 160 meals provided at short notice.

## **Accommodation**

With 100 visitors, we needed to spread the members over two separate Bed & Breakfast establishments (Windsor B & B, and the YMCA) and the group placed their 3 VIP's at the Rydges Hotel.

This split did place additional planning and logistical arrangements for collection and delivery of the members each day, but it was finally not a real problem.

Most of the Orchestra members at the YMCA and the Windsor were placed in twin or triple rooms with the younger members in 8 & 10 person dormitories. The breakfasts each morning were a new experience for the members with choices of kiwi cereals, fruit and toast (with vegemite) as well as the choice of bacon, eggs, sausages, tomato and hash browns.

## **Evening Meals**

The group decided they preferred to eat as a combined group each evening at a different restaurant. Therefore a balanced and varied Kiwi Style meal was chosen to keep them from their traditional Japanese food for the week. The younger members of the orchestra really appreciated this move, but a few of the older supporting group felt by the end of their visit that they needed some rice and noodles meals. That can be understood.

We visited, Nga Hau E Wha Marae for a Hangi meal, The Cabbage Tree Restaurant for a general Smorgasbord meal, The YMCA for a home cooked style meal, The Garden Restaurant for a Buffet style Asian and Kiwi meal, The Woolston Club for a traditional Roast meal and on the concert night they chose a finger food meal at the Aurora Centre.

## **City Visits**

The group requested they visit several of the popular city attractions during the mornings before they undertook their rehearsals at the Aurora Centre.

These included . . . .

A trip to New Brighton Pier, Sumner Beach and Cave Rock, as well as a quick look at Lyttelton Port,

A guided walk around the Arts Centre, Museum, and the Botanical Gardens,

A visit to the Antarctic Centre including the snow room and video presentation as well as the popular and exciting Hagglund ride,

A visit to the Kiwi house and farmyard at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve,

A trip on the Christchurch Tram and Yellow Electric Shuttles and the Duty Free Shops.

During these days, a variety of lunches were provided, which included a full cooked lunch at Willowbank, finger food lunch at New Brighton Club and a boxed lunch in the Gardens,

## **Mayoral Courtesy Visit**

On Monday morning a selected representative group of the visitors (18) were welcomed by the Deputy Mayor Cr Lesley Keast and in her usual manner gave them a great welcome. She presented gifts to them and a greeting from our Mayor Garry Moore who was in Auckland that day, and spoke of her past visits to Japan and Kurashiki.

## **Farewell Party**

On the night before departure a very much appreciated farewell party was held at the Woolston Club for both the Japanese visitors, and representatives of the Christchurch Youth Orchestra. Also present were members of the Kurashiki Sister City Committee,

the visit organisers and a selection of local people who had contributed to the success of the visit. These included Coach drivers, Interpreters.

A very well prepared and served Kiwi Roast meal was provided at a fraction of the budgeted price and the table seating was planned as a mix of local and visitor members. The visitors played a couple of light hearted and amusing musical pieces and then proceeded to teach all the locals the art of Origami and made these into chains of friendship between the two groups. Some farewell and thankyou speeches were made from both group and then a photo and gift exchange filled in the rest of the evening.

## **Day Trips**

As a separate exercise the group asked for two days of sightseeing and visits after the concert was over. I was asked to provide a programme for a full day trip, including a Farm Visit, Sheep shearing, Dog Trials, Jet Boat Rides and Lunch on the farm in Springfield, Visit to Arthurs Pass and Flockhill Station for afternoon tea.

On the second day, a trip to Little River and Akaroa including a trip out on the 'Canterbury Cat' to view the Dolphins. This was to be capped off with a traditional Kiwi picnic lunch of local Fish 'N Chips straight from the paper wrapper with Watties Tomato sauce and a bottle of fizzy soft drink. An hour or so was allowed for visiting the shops and a game of ball on the recreation reserve.

Both of these day trips were privately funded by the individual members of the Orchestra. Coaches, interpreters and coach managers were provided for the day.

## **Finance**

The Sister City Committee agreed to meet the full costs of the Concert AND the cost of the Farewell Party as part of its financial contribution to the visit.

All other costs including the Advance Party visits, Rental vehicles, Accommodation, Meals, Local visits and Coach hire were met by the Orchestra Group. The cost of the two day-trips were paid directly to the organiser, by the members of the Orchestra as a private contracted arrangement.

## **Benefits to Christchurch**

The basic principal of the Sister Cities movement are to foster the interest and friendship between two countries and cities. This project certainly fulfilled all of these desires and allowed many opportunities for Christchurch people to experience a little of Japanese culture as well as allowing the visitors to experience heaps of Kiwi experiences.

## **The useless information section**

79 members and supporters came from Kurashiki for the visit. . . . . 56 of whom had never been to NZ prior to this visit. . . . . finally only 18 members of the orchestra did not arrive . . . . . A total of \$70,000 was expended by us on the groups behalf while they were in Christchurch. . . . . I have produced a document which shows that almost \$250,000 was spent by the group during this visit . . . . . no weddings eventuated this year. . . . . 85 'Kiwis in a Can' are featured in the homes of the visitors. . . . . 128 emails, letters or faxes were issued or received . . . . . plus and estimated 230 phone calls making, confirming or amending bookings and / or venues . . . . . since the initial inquiry to run the project Cheryl and I spent a total of 550 hour on the project plus the help of many other volunteers . . . . . A total of 4,500 km's were travelled by the coach company on the groups behalf. . . . . an order of \$350 worth of fish 'n chips lunch were devoured for lunch at Akaroa.

## **Thanks**

As the overall tour manager/coordinator, I offer my thanks to the many people who did their part in making the overall programme and visit go without any disastrous hitches. I wish to make particular mention to Barbara August from International Relations Unit who was a great sounding board and backstop for me in the planning processes. Barbara attended the full programme for almost every day and acted as one of the local Coach Managers on some of the days. To my secretary Cheryl who will now need her job description altered to include Japanese Tours, I thank her for her 'beyond the call of duty'. She made a valuable contribution to the planning over the twelve months leading up to the visit and for both the full week of the advance party and the full week of the visit proper.

## **Newton Dodge**

For the Committee  
and Project Manager

**20 April 2003**