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(Editorial)

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What the critics are saying...



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- *Voice of African Music*

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- *Chicago choral director*

“The crowd ate it up. Folks
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joy in the aisle...”
- *The St. Louis American*

“Your boys do everything our
New York boys do...
and much more!”
- *Board member of the
Harlem Boys Choir*

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The Boys Choir of Kenya

“Dominant, simply dominant performance,...words really can’t describe this” says an awe-struck gentleman in New York, of the Boys’ live appearance on the CBS’s “The Early Show.” In Chicago a choral director who drove into Kansas City, because she missed their concert in Chicago reminisced, “I closed my teary eyes as they approached the climatic Amen of Carter’s ‘Lift Every Voice and Sing’... These boys got all the genres down...” Perhaps no other African youth choir dominated peer competition like the Boys Choir of Kenya. They’ve earned acclaim in Kenya and abroad as a disciplined group with a work ethic that parallels the King’s College Cambridge Choir and the Harlem Boys Choir of New York. Whether in concert or choral workshop a show by the Boys Choir of Kenya is simply an experience – the wide vocal range, diverse pan-African repertoire, mature artistry, drama, and, oh, the costumes!

Repertoire

They perform a wide-ranging repertoire - from traditional Masaai and Samburu chants to contemporary pieces from around Africa, not forgetting the regular corpus of European and American choral repertoire with other classics from around the world – Bach, Mozart, Negro Spirituals, as well as Caribbean folk songs remain mainstay. In their home country Kenya, however, audiences throng to their concerts to hear renditions of songs and chants favorite among Kenya’s 42 main ethnic groups.

Concerts

Since their first participation 1989 as Aquinas Boys Choir in the Kenyan Music Festivals, the boys have attracted a large following to every concert appearance. In 1999 at a concert to commemorate the 1998 bombing of the American Embassy in Nairobi, the boys’ emotive performance drew tears from everyone in attendance, including President Moi and other world dignitaries. In 2000 two of their songs – *Pitie*, an arrangement of a Lingala pop tune by Bopol Mansiamina, and *Lilova*, a favorite Luhya folk tune by J. Muyale Inzai – received standing ovations, and won first place and the highest marks ever awarded by adjudicators at a Kenya National Music Festivals. In 2001 their rendition of *Kimpa Kisangameni*, a Congolese folk tune, was an immediate audience magnet, and raked in first-place prize at every major music and cultural competition. In 2002 their version of *Lady Issa’s Sesa Sista* and *John Mwale’s Susana* immediately became signature tunes across Kenya. That year they earned high commendation from former Kenya’s President Arap Moi. And at the 2003 Kenya Music Festivals National Level, they won their division handily with two songs, *Mulongo* and *Nasafiri*, which have also become signature tunes! The boys have exceeded many expectations and attained many landmarks, but none perhaps is more legendary than their daring entry into an all-girl competition sponsored by the group *Maendeleo Ya Wanawake*, a local NGO (non-governmental organization) that advocates women education and empowerment in the society: out of the sixteen all-girl entries, the Boys Choir emerged first place winner. As the saying goes in Nairobi, “They [the Boys] talked about the girls better than the girls themselves!” On their North American tour in 2004, audiences and press alike followed the boys through the Northeast, up to Quebec, down to Atlanta, through major cities in the Midwest. Here are excerpt press acclaim from the North American tour:

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To Book the Boys Choir of Kenya Call 314-431-5225 or send email to slac@africanchorus.org