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Blustery wind doesn't faze choirs: Choral Festival begins four-day run in Pocatello

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POCATELLO - Five choirs representing eight foreign countries and seven additional U.S. choirs got a windy welcome to Pocatello at the opening outdoor ceremony of the fourth Idaho International Choral Festival.

Even the windy weather couldn't mar the event, which had been planned for the last two years by a committee of volunteers with Arlo Luke and Paul Link as co-chairs. Link said the choir members range in ages from 7 to 65. A total of 250 singers are being entertained here in the homes of 80 host families.

As is tradition, the opening took place in the Guy Gates Band Shell at Ross Park and drew a large, receptive crowd. The headliner Moscow Nights and Golden Gates arrived in Pocatello just an hour before the ceremony began. The Boston Eastern Heritage Chorus, which opened the park ceremony, performed without its director, who was delayed in Salt Lake City. They sang a folk song about a boy and a girl under the moonlight.



Members of the Golden Gates, from Russia, perform at the Ross Park band shell during opening ceremonies of the Idaho International Choral Festival 2004 Wednesday evening. Journal photo by [Bill Schaefer](#).

Mayor Roger Chase greeted the choirs and presented them with gifts from Pocatello. He told the audience that "music does so much for us."

Becky Robinson, festival food chairman, agrees with the mayor. She said, "Music is definitely the international language. The Idaho International Choral Festival makes such a difference in understanding other countries."

Robinson doesn't make music for the festival. However, she will keep hundreds of singers happy during their stay with the meals she has planned. She has been food chairman for two of the four festivals. She hadn't intended to do the assignment on a regular basis. However, because she thinks the festival is such a worthwhile project, she finds she can't say "no" when Chairman Luke asks her to do the job.

Becky is typical of many on the festival committee. Once asked to be a part of the festival, they have remained on it from the beginning in 1998.

Among those who have been there from the start is Mike Duersch, who is the city coordinator. He arranged the opening concert Wednesday at Ross Park and is involved with a lot of the setup for the farewell picnic, which is only for participants and their host families. He works closely on the concert and picnic arrangements with William (Bill) Wiench, ISU coordinator.

International harmony: Overseas singers entertain area audiences

By Joy S. Morrison - Journal Community Editor.....

Hunt said arrangements were made for charter buses to bring the singers from Salt Lake City and Boise. Pocatello did take a van to the Utah city to get the Moscow Nights and Golden Gate Singers. The showcase group arrived just an hour before the opening ceremony began.

Verna Buck, the festival's executive director and founder, never dreamed the project would become as large as it is this year.

"It's overwhelming to see so many people working so hard and so enthusiastically," she said. "It makes you feel good."

One festival activity in which she has a special interest is the choir of young people who will be performing at the Saturday finale. Now working on her master's degree at the University of Idaho, she met Tendekai Kuture, a teacher of Zimbabwean music and dance, there. He has come to Pocatello to conduct a workshop with 50 area youths.

The youngest members are from the ISU Children's Choir. Most of the others are from the junior highs with a few from Century High School. In Kuture's workshop they have learned two songs and dances, which they will perform in the Gala Concert Saturday.

In going over festival details, Buck said Estonia and Taiwan have the biggest choirs. The Boy Choir from Maryland, which is made up of all races, won the hearts of the audience at the park opener.

The headliner Moscow Nights and Golden Gates were a hit. Dressed in full costume, the three men and seven women played a variety of instruments, ranging from the accordion to the electric bass, as they sang and danced. Everyone who saw the opening show agreed the performances by all the groups were excellent.

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