

Reconciled in Christ: A Behind-the Scenes look at the development of the Cape Town 2010 Opening/Closing Ceremony Music CD

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by Ed Willmington

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2012 Update: The Cape Town 2010 Music CD (Reconciled in Christ: Official Music for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies) is now [available for purchase](#).

The creation of the music CD of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies for The Lausanne Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization: Cape Town 2010 has been a truly remarkable journey. The music is now available on the double CD set, *Reconciled in Christ* (soon to be made available for purchase online).

The mandate for the two Cape Town 2010 ceremonies was clear for this unique global gathering: to welcome people to Africa in the Opening Ceremony with an inspiring event, and then send the leaders back to their places in the world with a worship service centered on the Lord's Table in the Closing Ceremony. And, if that task wasn't large enough, the goal was to make the sound as authentically African as possible! Further, when you work inside the Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts, as I do, you possess a passion for artistic and creative expressions with a strong theological foundation. Along with that comes a heart and belief system that the creative use of the arts will play a major role in reaching the world with the Gospel in the 21st century.

Being a part of a creative team was both a life-saving and life-giving part of the process. Dr. Clay Schmit was our group coordinator, and fortunately he and I have adjacent offices at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Between us, a creative group was put together to flesh out the structure of these two events, with guidance from the Lausanne staff. My role was to make the music part of these two events happen. Being a person with generally big ideas, I set to work on several fronts. Prayerfully gathering people in South Africa who would catch the vision and join us became an obvious imperative. When you live in Southern California you don't usually have many friends in South Africa listed in your address file! Gratefully, the electronic media of modern times is immeasurably helpful! I wrote scores of introductory emails to people who knew someone who might help. Those people in turn knew others, who knew others, who knew others...cold turkey calling style.

Eventually that led to face-to-face meetings in South Africa. This was the most rewarding part of the journey for me...relationships made with 500+ people in South Africa who joined in the leadership of these two events that had such a great impact on the Congress. There were dancers, drummers, banner carriers, children singers, two adult choirs, band members, soloists, an orchestra...and the list goes on. What a feeling in my soul when in October 2010 I raised my arms to start the music, knowing that when my arms dropped, all of these people were going to go into a highly coordinated set of actions – all planned to welcome people to their country and send them into the world to honor God and share the good news of the Gospel!

These early visits to Cape Town also became important musical information and acquisition times as well. Trevor Sampson was a real servant and great help on many levels. Related to the recording, he allowed us to use his studio to make initial recordings of African percussion, children's voices, male singers, small choir and demo solos. These recorded sounds were intended to assist the learning process for the live Congress. But, when the decision was made to create the CDs, many of these sounds were edited for use on the final recording. Between visits to Cape Town, writing of scores and other demo recordings were taking place in Los Angeles to assist with the October

Congress. Again, many of these sounds eventually were edited and became portions of the final product. Musical preparation for Cape Town 2010 was a mammoth undertaking. The final orchestrated score for the two events turned out to be in excess of 300 pages, and there were about 80 pounds of musical parts for the orchestra and other musicians.

The Cape Town 2010 music was a great culmination of much labor between LA and Cape Town. There were plenty of edgy moments, and stories to be told, but the end result was astonishing, both for those of us on the creative side and those who attended the Congress. That response led to the request for a high level recording of the music from the Lausanne leadership. That set off another set of schedules and goals. There were portions of the orchestral score that needed to be recorded – those were done in LA.

However, the large issue was that the recording could only be accomplished by having the choirs, percussion, soloists, drummers who were in South Africa involved in the process. They were the ones who knew the music. They were the authentic voices and sounds that needed to be on the recorded product. I had one little window of opportunity that I could reschedule some things that would give me four days in South Africa to get everything done that was needed. Again by God's grace, the key people there could also be available for those four days and the studio availability and personnel were also accessible. It was a grueling four days, going into the early morning hours each day, but it was the only way it could be done. The efforts and investments by the wonderful people of Cape Town reaped a good reward at the recording stage as well.

Once returning from that sixth trip to Cape Town, there were still other bits and pieces that needed to be recorded to fill out the final sounds. After that, the mixing process started. Through this whole process, my wife Mary Lou volunteered her time to act as the main in-studio producer. Along with her, LA engineer Dan Blessinger worked several electronic miracles patching together sounds that had been recording over the course of more than a year from multiple studios in different parts of the world...no small task! There were times in the mixing process when I wasn't sure how it was going to work. There were many things that came up to prohibit good progress – including one computer crash. The musical files were so large, and the computer wasn't always able to handle all the tracks at once on the larger songs. Some of the songs had well over 100 separate sound tracks that we were attempting to mix. Files eventually had to be split between hard drives to make the information access more stabilized. Again, many stories could be told! On one occasion, I mildly complained to Dan that the percussion didn't seem to be in sync. He calmly looked at me and pointed out that *someone* had recorded more than 20 tracks of just percussion at that point in the song so no *wonder* they weren't lined up!

All told, I made more than 50 visits to studios in LA and Cape Town in order to complete the recording process. I'm grateful for the creative opportunity, though it taxed several limits at many points, both technologically and personally. The mandate our group was given was something that grabbed our hearts. Mike Williams, a Disney employee who volunteered his time to help our group in the area of production, said it best in one of our meetings. He stated directly that he felt "called" to do this task. We were all of that same mind and heart.

I had a college professor who once challenged us to "never use Christianity as an excuse for mediocrity." I have never forgotten that! There was a drive on this project to *not* take the easy way out. Our group wanted to model that God inspires in us a total and consuming call for artistic expression in His name. God gave Christ to reconcile each of us to Himself. We give what we have been given in return, praying and trusting that this gift of recorded music will continue to inspire all who listen to live out their calling in a manner worthy of the great calling that we all follow.

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