



הקרן לירושלים
THE JERUSALEM FOUNDATION
مؤسسة صندوق القدس

YAC

The YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus US Tour - June 2015

New Haven, CT
June 17, 5:00 pm

Yale International Choral Festival Performance
Sprague Hall, Yale University

June 20, 6:00 pm

Yale International Choral Festival Gala Performance
Woolsey Hall, Yale University

Boston, MA
June 18, 12:30 pm

"Middle East Harmonies"
Performance with the Zamir Chorale of Boston
Massachusetts State House

New York, NY
June 23, 7:00 pm

"Transmusica: ReSounding Hope Through Music"
Performance with the Young People's Chorus of New York City
& Chicago Children's Choir
Symphony Space

Washington, DC
June 24, 7:00 pm

"Gonna Make This Place Your Home"
Performance with the Children's Chorus of Washington
& Sidwell Friends School Chamber Chorus
Potluck Community Iftar Meal Following
Sidwell Friends School

June 26, 6:00 pm

The Millennium Stage
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Philadelphia, PA
June 28, 7:00 pm

"A Song for Peace in the Middle East"
Performance with the Pennsylvania Girlchoir and Keystone State Boychoir
With Special Guest Al-Bustan Takht Ensemble
The Perelman Theater at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

For tickets and more information: www.jerusalem youth chorus.org/tour



Naomi & Nehemiah Cohen Foundation
Moses and Susan Feldman



New Haven, Connecticut ♦ June 16-20, 2015

The YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus 2015 US Tour was made possible by a generous invitation to the [Yale International Choral Festival](#) and even more generous support from its sponsors, the Yale Glee Club and Yale Alumni Chorus. Opening with a Symposium entitled “[Choirs Transforming Lives](#)”, the Festival brought together leading musicians from all over the world to explore, in theory and in practice, the power of choral music as a tool of social, political, and personal change within and across physical, cultural and national boundaries.

Our five days at Yale were eye-opening and heart-warming. Welcomed after 27 hours of travel with a beautiful rendition of “Home” by the Yale Guild of Carillonneurs, [we made our home in Branford College](#). Our singers explored the vast diversity of knowledge and culture contained at Yale, from the millions of books contained in the towering stacks of Sterling Memorial Library to Yale’s own long singing tradition.



Perhaps most moving was the opportunity to share song and spirit with world-renowned choruses from Cuba, Sweden, Singapore, and the United States. [Celebrating the Swedish midsommerparty with traditional songs and dances](#) was an unforgettable experience for our singers, many of whom continued to wear the flower wreaths given to them by our friends in *Voces Nordicae* throughout the rest of our tour.

The high standard of musical excellence set by our friends from all over the world, combined with the supportiveness to rise to it ourselves and join them brought our musical performance to a whole new level in [concerts](#) at Sprague and Woolsey Halls.

We are beyond grateful to our hosts at Yale for their warm welcome, and look forward to returning the favor in Jerusalem! اهلا وسهلا للقدس! לשנה הבאה בירושלים



Boston, Massachusetts ♦ June 18, 2015




On June 18, we took a day trip to Boston! The 18th was the first day of the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan. Muslims who observe Ramadan fast each day between sunrise and sundown, abstaining from eating or drinking (even water) until the sun sets. As we have many Muslim singers and staff in our Chorus, we viewed our travel during Ramadan as both a great challenge and a great opportunity. Traveling during Ramadan was not only a physical challenge for those fasting, but also an opportunity for each of us to be mindful, both before and during the tour, of the needs of others. Traditionally, each day of Ramadan is ended with a communal *Iftar* meal, providing a chance to reconnect with and give strength to one another. To accommodate and support those who were fasting, all of our dinners happened after 8:30pm. We encountered many challenges around religion and culture throughout the tour, but our dialogues proved a strong foundation that enabled us to work through our differences and constraints together in a spirit of mutual respect and supportiveness.

Our travel during Ramadan also provided an opportunity for us to serve as cultural ambassadors for our three faiths, helping to raise awareness of Muslim observances and traditions in the United States. We taught our beloved Sufi chant “Adinu” to a room of 500 choral conductors from across the United States in our “[Morning Sing](#)” at the Chorus America Conference, the first time many of them had heard or sung in Arabic. Bringing their attention to that day as the first day of Ramadan, we explored together the multifaceted sounds Ibn Arabi’s mystical words, “ادين بالدين الحب” – “I believe in the religion of love.”



We continued that day, after our dialogue sessions, with a [beautiful joint performance](#) with the Jewish Zamir Chorale of Boston in the historic rotunda of the Massachusetts State House. Singing together in English, Hebrew, Arabic and even Zulu, we re-affirmed the connections we all have to one another in the pursuit of social justice all over the world. Finally, we enjoyed a relaxing afternoon on the Boston Common and explored the history of Boston’s revolutionary past, learning about the foundational principles of American democracy and their relationship to our own values. We were home in time for the first *Iftar* of Ramadan, which we shared with the Muslim community at Yale.



New York, NY ♦ June 21-23, 2015

Our three incredible days in New York City began with a classic picnic in Central Park, followed by an afternoon of “choose your own adventure,” in which the Chorus broke up into small groups based on what they were most excited about in New York City. We explored the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, went window-shopping on Fifth Avenue, were inspired by an amazing gospel choir performance in Brooklyn, enjoyed singing in the rain in midtown, and took in the expansive depth of some of New York’s best museums. It was an eye-opening afternoon for everyone, and a great introduction to such a diverse and exciting city.



On our second day in New York, we opened our hearts while visiting Ground Zero and the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, and critically engaged with our own and one another’s experiences of terrorism, violence, and loss in dialogue sessions that afternoon.

It was a moving and emotional process for all, bringing many questions to the table expanding our own understanding of ourselves, one another, the conflicts in which we live, and how we relate to the experiences and narratives of conflict surrounding us.

In New York, we were honored to join forces with the Young People’s Chorus (YPC) of New York City and Chicago Children’s Choir (CCC), two world-renowned, decades-old choral organizations reaching thousands of young singers in New York and Chicago in their missions to bridge socioeconomic and racial gaps through song. Our work with these highly-professional and diverse groups opened our eyes to the many barriers existing between communities in the United States, and challenged our singers to bring our performance to an even higher level. Our triumphant joint performance at Symphony Space bore witness to that transformative process, setting a new standard for what excellence looks, feels, and sounds like for the YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus. We are profoundly grateful to YPC and CCC for sharing the stage with us, and look forward to continuing to work together in the future, hopefully returning the favor with some classic Jerusalem hospitality in the years to come!



Washington, D.C. ♦ June 24-27, 2015



Our time in Washington, DC was particularly intense and meaningful for the YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus. In Washington, we stayed with host families from many different communities, who generously opened their homes and their hearts to our young singers. Home hospitality is always a great challenge and opportunity for our choristers to learn to rely on one another. Our hosts provided a caring environment for this profound interpersonal transformation to take place.



Millennium Stage

It was also an opportunity for us as a group to affirm the inclusive power of choral singing in Washington, as our founder and director, Micah Hendler, had found such community many years before in the Children's Chorus of Washington and the Sidwell Friends Chamber Chorus. Our beautiful joint concert with those ensembles at Sidwell Friends, aptly entitled "I'm gonna make this place your home," and featured in an [inspiring piece by PBS](#), was a particularly moving celebration, welcoming all through communal singing, dancing, and a potluck *Iftar* meal.



In Washington, the political center of the United States, we too engaged with the difficult policies, histories, and narratives present in that city, its history, and its relationship to the Middle East. We performed on Capitol Hill under the auspices of ALLMEP (the Alliance for Middle East Peace) and brought critical, challenging questions from all sides to State Department officials responsible for creating and implementing American foreign policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We immersed ourselves in the African American struggle for freedom and equality in a musical workshop with renowned composer and singer-activist Ysaye Barnwell, formerly of DC's legendary vocal group *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. Bringing together Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities and catalyzing further interaction was our interfaith "Iftar, Havdalah, & Grace."



Finally, our [performance at the Kennedy Center's world-class Millennium Stage](#) drew another 500 people (with at least 200 standing) and reached at least hundreds more [streaming online in HD](#), challenging conceptions of what is possible in Jerusalem and what it means to be, as we sing in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, an instrument of peace.

Philadelphia, PA ♦ June 28-30, 2015

Our last stop of the tour was in Philadelphia, where we were generously hosted by the Keystone State Boychoir (KSB), Pennsylvania Girlchoir (PG), and Al Bustan Seeds of Culture, an Arabic cultural group in Philadelphia.

We arrived at the Kimmel Center for an afternoon of workshops together, sharing musical influences from East and West, all made richer by [the incredible melodies of the Al Bustan Takht Ensemble](#), whose soulfulness and dexterity contributed an even more authentic sound to many of our pieces. The resulting concert that evening was extraordinary, and the [spontaneous celebration](#) that erupted afterwards between the ensembles did not want to stop.



The following day, we had real time for fun interaction between the ambassador singers from the KSB and PG as we explored Philadelphia together, learning about the Liberty Bell (whose replica stands down the street from the YMCA in Jerusalem) and its significance, as well as simply enjoying some time together.

Particularly significant was the [shared dialogue session we had together about race in America](#). KSB and PG seek to bring together singers from diverse backgrounds in their choruses, but have not been able to venture into the kinds of topics we discuss through our dialogue process in Jerusalem. Our visit served as a catalyst for them to explore not only what brings them together but also their differences. The exchange was eye-opening for our singers, who learned a great deal about issues of discrimination, inequality, and structural violence outside of their own sphere, and transformative for the Philadelphia singers, who were able to discuss these difficult and sensitive issues in a safe space created by our singers (who found, moreover, that they could use the dialogue skills they had developed in Jerusalem to help their new friends through these challenging discussions). The sessions were masterfully facilitated by our professional dialogue team and our incredible translators. Our shared dialogue was so successful that the director of the Keystone State Boychoir announced that he was going to incorporate this kind of dialogue into the year-round programming for KSB. It is precisely this kind of impact that we hope to have when we travel and meet other youth choruses. We hope to be able to welcome KSB, PG and Al Bustan to Jerusalem in the future to continue the discussion, and, of course, share the music.

Back in Jerusalem, looking to the future:

The YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus 2015-2016 Season

As we return to Jerusalem with the wind in our sails, we look forward to our fourth season, during which we plan to deepen and broaden our impact in Jerusalem and beyond.

We are particularly excited to be implementing a groundbreaking integrated music-dialogue curriculum, which we are co-developing with Shoshana Gottesman and Heartbeat. The deeply meaningful and absolutely unique [original composition](#) premiered on our US Tour is the outcome of this curriculum's pilot. We are thrilled to see how much of themselves, their identities and their voices our singers can bring to a year-long integrated creative process.

We have also drawn the attention of a number of internationally-renowned performing artists who wish to perform with us in Jerusalem, ranging from the Welsh choral superstars "[Only Men Aloud!](#)" to the Philadelphia-based Palestinian/Israeli virtuoso string duo [Hanna Khoury and Ohad Bar-David!](#) We will thus be starting the YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus Concert Series, a program of free concerts in the beautiful lobby of the Jerusalem International YMCA featuring the JYC and various international guests.

After three years, we have a growing base of alumni, in addition to singers in our current program. Our new Chorus Manager, Suhaib Qaraqe, is himself a young Palestinian JYC alum. He'll be helping us create an alumni program to keep our singers connected, singing, and talking with one another as they move into the world. We hope this program will include an alumni ensemble, allowing singers to continue performing together and sharing our message of hope and possibility for real change in Jerusalem.

Beyond Jerusalem, we have been generously invited back to Japan, the site of our inaugural tour, and look forward to continuing to build deep on-going relationships with our hosts in Tokyo and Kyoto. We are exploring a tour to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, which would focus on efforts to resolve the longstanding ethnic conflict between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus.

Each of these groundbreaking new initiatives for the YMCA Jerusalem Youth Chorus is only a dream without extensive new sources of funding. To deepen our impact through an integrated curriculum and an alumni program, and broaden our impact through a local Jerusalem concert series and international tours, we need your support. To find out more about how your contribution can make our chorus community flourish, feel free to contact Micah Hendler, our founder and director, at micah@jerusalemyouthchorus.org. Thank you for your belief in the power of our work and your support in the realization of its potential.

www.jerusalemyouthchorus.org/donate