

Post #1 – Jim Hild

It's Saturday afternoon and I am sitting in the Atlanta airport. I am on my way to Johannesburg, South Africa to celebrate the centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth. The MN Orchestra was invited to perform at the celebration. Osmo Vänskä, the director of MN Orchestra, directed the South African Youth Symphony about 4 years ago. With his personality, his musicality and his keen sense of interpersonal respect, he touched the hearts of the South Africans. A few years later, they requested that the MN Orchestra play for the centenary. In addition to South African music, the program includes Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which requires a chorus. As the official choral group of the MN Orchestra, we were invited to participate.

When this project was first proposed last year, I was immediately intrigued by it. Because the MN Chorale is a project-based chorale, each member indicates which projects he/ she is interested in singing. From the group of interested parties, our director Kathy Salzman Romey selects the voices which will create the sound desired.

I indicated that I was interested in the project. There are professional singers, choral directors, music professors, voice instructors and voice coaches in the MN Chorale. When I had my successful audition in 2011 and attended my first rehearsal, I was humbled. I thought that my memberships in the ND Glee Club and Christ the King choir prepared me. I soon realized that the level of talent and skill was superior to any musical group with which I have sung.

So, when the roster was posted and I saw my name, I was surprised and humbled.

In mid-July, the MN Orchestra and the MN Chorale gave two concerts in Minneapolis to celebrate Nelson Mandela's 100th birthday. Friday evening, July 20 we sang a program of African music. On Saturday night July 21 we performed Beethoven's Ninth. A group of Cape Town singers: "29/11" joined us for both concerts. In our rehearsals they taught us the pronunciation of the words for the African songs and we taught them the German for Beethoven's Ninth. They had never sung this classical masterpiece and they were very excited to learn and perform it. It is a joy working with these young singers. When we parted there were many smiles and hugs. Our lives have been enriched by their courage and enthusiasm.

It is Sunday afternoon. We departed from Atlanta on Delta 200 at 8:06 PM Saturday. We have 1 hour 29 minutes until arrival in Johannesburg.