



Meet Me in St. Louis . . .

This summer, from June 29 to July 9, the church will hold its 58th world conference in St. Louis, Missouri. While the primary purpose of this meeting, held every five years, is to review the work of the church and make decisions affecting its global work, it is also a time for fellowship, spiritual renewal, and celebration. Traditionally, music has played an important part in these meetings. Planning for its use in this year's sessions began four years ago when a music committee, chaired by Ted Wilson, met for the first time and made decisions about the music to be used and how choices would be made. Their goal has been to choose music that will be inclusive in its scope and appeal, represent the world field, be theologically sound, and uphold the highest standards in taste and performance.

Music planned for this summer's St. Louis world conference of the church will mirror that presented five years ago in Toronto. It will reflect the diversity in cultures represented by the church's 25 million members around the world.

About 150 groups and artists will perform in the 70,000 seat Edward Jones Dome during the sessions. Soloists and groups have been chosen from recommendations made by the thirteen divisions from around the world. Most of the musicians will be paying their own travel and lodging expenses just for the opportunity of sharing their music.

As in the Toronto meetings, the planners hope to provide a truly representative sampling of the best of the actual music used in worship services in these divisions. The result will be a colorful collage in sounds and sights as native musicians perform in distinctive attire, providing a spirited offering of praise that only a truly global church can offer.

And those in attendance will be able to do more than just listen. For the first time, the session songbook will also include phonetic renderings of about ten songs from a variety of cultures so that all can participate in the spirit of that country's worship during the song services.

Another innovation in music for

this session will be the introduction of a new theme song. In a recent interview with Reger Smith, Jr., General Conference Public Relations Officer and a vice-chairman of the music committee, he observed:

While we love We Have this Hope, we felt that since the Lord blessed us with that song back in 1962, perhaps He has something else He is ready to bless us with now.

We sent out invitations to possible composers and had a lot of submissions. We have ended up with a theme song we feel quite strongly about. It will be introduced at St. Louis.

As in Toronto, there will be other stages outside the dome. A smaller performing area, the Ferrara Auditorium, which is located in the complex, will provide an expanded opportunity for those performing in the main auditorium as well as for others who are not scheduled for the larger stage. Additionally, as in Toronto, both Global Mission and the Adventist Book Center will be sites for concerts by a wide variety of musicians and groups. Yet another series of noontime concerts will be given July 5 to 9 in an outdoor performing area in downtown St. Louis known as the Kiener Plaza.

A music-related topic that will be presented and undoubtedly discussed at the world confer-

ence will be music guidelines voted by world leaders in the 2004 Autumn Council. Following considerable discussion and negotiation about a more detailed document presented in the previous year's Autumn Council, the final version became instead a broad set of guidelines.

The church leaders felt that a statement of general principles would most easily accommodate productive discussion about the differences that now exist in cultural and generational music preferences. While some have applauded the document as a practical resolution to the challenges in music faced by the church, others are alarmed over its lack of specific detail.

Both the size and sweep of what delegates and visitors to the St. Louis meetings experience will create lasting memories. Many of those will be created by the music they encounter.

For some, it will be the thrill of joining with literally thousands of fellow believers in singing great hymns and old and new theme songs. For others, it will be the exotic sounds of worship music from around the globe. And, for yet another group, it will be the opportunity to share both their music and their views about the changes happening in worship music.

Dan Shultz