**MEDIA STATEMENT FOR RELEASE WITHOUT EMBARGO**

**ISSUED BY THE DRAKENSBERG BOYS CHOIR SCHOOL**

**DRAKENSBERG BOYS CHOIR UK TOUR POST TOUR OVERVIEW - BEARERS OF JOY**

Dave Goldhawk, academic educator at the Drakensberg Boys Choir School

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**JOHANNESBURG, 03 OCTOBER 2024 – From the moment they arrived at OR Tambo Airport to embark on their highly successful tour of England to the minute they emerged from the exit gates on their return, the Drakie boys brought joy to those they encountered wherever they went – echoing the sentiments of the school hymn, "Lord make us instruments of Thy peace".**

Even before the first concert, the boys garnered the applause of curious onlookers on the banks of the River Thames when they recorded Jamie Cullum's "London Skies" and sang the Drakie version of "Happy Birthday" to Sam Wang and Aaron Hampshire.

For most of the tour, we stayed at Youth Hostels, where the boys enjoyed hearty English breakfasts which more than made up for the countless flights of stairs we had to negotiate. The hostel staff were dazzled by their polite and considerate behaviour. "I love your boys," remarked one of the refectory ladies. "They are so well-mannered."

At St Paul's Church, Knightsbridge the Drakies brought joy to our special guests, the South African High Commissioner to the UK, His Excellency Jeremiah Nyamane Mamabolo and Mrs Mamabolo, whose toes were soon tapping nostalgically to the sounds of Africa. Our celebrity guest performer, Innocent Masuku, proved to be a great hit with both the audience and the boys.

Although the rain gods turned against us in Oxford the next day and precluded a scheduled walking tour of the city, the boys - especially the Harry Potter fans - enjoyed a pre-concert tour of the New College grounds. The concert venue, New College Chapel, was remarkable both in terms of its magnificence and the acoustics.

At Southwark Cathedral in London, where William Shakespeare was once a congregant, we were joined by the Eton College Chapel Choir, the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School Choir and the choir of Westminster School. The Drakie boys wowed the audience with a selection from our Afropop repertoire. The arched roof contributed to the acoustics, adding extra oomph to the Drum Squad's performance.

At Wells Cathedral, we were honoured by the attendance of HRH Sophie, the Duchess of Edinburgh, whose smiles and body language during and after our performance suggested that the boys brought joy to her heart. Both Zipho Dzanibe and Sam Cunningham enjoyed a personal audience with her, and she spent time with the choir during interval.

By this stage of the tour, we were staying at the Bath Youth Hostel where we enjoyed a well-earned free day on Thursday which allowed us to have a 14 km hike around this beautiful Georgian city. We then transferred to Stratford-upon-Avon, where the constraints of time and inclement weather unfortunately prevented us from exploring Shakespeare's birthplace. We completed our cathedral concerts in Worcester, where our hosts went out of their way to make us feel welcome.

For the last leg of our tour, we travelled to Barnsley in Yorkshire, where we were hosted by the Barnsley Youth Choir. Artistic Director Mat Wright had spent hours preparing his choir for the songs to be performed with us. His choir's performance was polished and energetic, and the talented soloists were a joy to hear. Our boys were treated like celebrities at their three performances, two at the Horizon Community College and one at St Mary's Church. The audience was enthralled with songs selected from our Afropop repertoire, and gobsmacked when they witnessed the energetic and flawless displays of our gumboot dancers and drum squad, and spellbound by numbers such as "Elephant Charge".

Barnsley proved to be the cherry on the cake for our boys, whose host families appear to have spoilt them rotten. They thoroughly enjoyed their rehearsals, performances and workshops with the Barnsley Youth Choirs as they were able to interact personally and meaningfully with people of a similar age, as well as with the friendly local community. The host parents invariably commented on the fine manners and politeness of the boys. We look forward to welcoming the Barnsley Youth Choir when they tour South Africa later this month.

In spite of some rainy days, the boys' spirits were never dampened and they enjoyed visiting popular tourist attractions such as Buckingham Palace, the Natural History Museum and the Imperial War Museum in London. They also had time to explore the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, escaping the rain and enjoying the free wi-fi, as well as looking at the exhibits. The pilgrimage to Old Trafford and the Manchester United Megastore brought obvious joy to the many Man U supporters amongst our boys and staff.

Soon after that, we made our way to Manchester Airport for the long journey home via Istanbul, tired but joyful after a highly successful overseas tour.

**FIN**

**(779 words)**

**EDITORS' NOTES**

**Media release issued by Stone on behalf of Drakensberg Boys Choir**

**To purchase DBC UK Tour 2024 concert tickets, visit** <https://share.stone.consulting/Drakies_UK_24>

Visit the website: <http://www.dbchoir.com>

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**More helpful website links for media reference:**

* Please visit the Facebook page for views of the sold-out performances and activity during the four-day Music in the Mountains festival that took place on the Freedom Day long weekend and more information on the choir – <https://www.facebook.com/dbchoir>
* The photo page on the Facebook page gives a good view of the diversity, life and extraordinary talent of the boys at Drakensberg Boys Choir School – <https://www.facebook.com/dbchoir/photos>
* Visit these links for a glimpse of the world-renowned choir's international and local choral work, both in the classical and distinctly African genres – <https://www.youtube.com/user/DBCHOIR>, <https://youtu.be/C521O4XHO_I>, <https://www.facebook.com/dbchoir/videos/934329527988775/> and <https://dbchoir.com/web/videos/>