

# philharmonia orchestra

## **Philharmonia in Sorok-do**

*Musical excerpt*

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

Seoul, apart from being the capital, is just the centre of everything that goes around Korea.

### **Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

I mean, it's a big, big place.

*Musical excerpt*

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

My name is Soong Choo and I play the violin in the Philharmonia Orchestra. Today we are in the Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul. This is one of five palaces, but this is the largest and the main palace.

We had a choice between taking a taxi, which would have been the easy option, and instead we did the local metro. We got on at Sinnonhyeon, which is the nearest stop to our hotel.

I'm pretty sure we can get off there and walk about five minutes.

### **David Thomas – Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager**

Is this the castle thing?

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

The Palace, yeah. Gyeongbokgung. And we are at the end of line 9, Sinnonhyeon, which is here. We go one, two stops, to the express bus terminal, change onto Line 3, - are you listening to this? - and then get off at Jongno. One change.

### **David Thomas – Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager**

If you say so!

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

Hopefully about 20 minutes.

Yeah it's different, not just here as a holiday or to see my family, relatives, but doing a concert. I think it will be fantastic. I hear all the concerts are sold out.

### **David Thomas – Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager**

If you turn it that way around.

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

Hang on. That's the mountain. Hang on this is the mountain, up here.

### **David Thomas – Assistant Orchestra Personnel Manager**

This is where we are now...

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

Cut!

### **Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

Fairly typical touring day. Woke up at midday today. At this stage in the game, body clock, you know Korean time, Chinese time, goes straight out the window. As long as you're up in time for rehearsal, that's the most important thing. And concert today. We're at the Seoul Arts Centre. It's one of those halls that you feel the orchestra sounds great, it feels very comfortable, it's very clear, it's a warm sound, so I think it will be a great show.

### **Mark van de Wiel – Clarinet**

I think the concert tonight will be absolutely fantastic. We're nicely played-in after our concerts in China. It'll be the third performance of the Rachmaninov Second Symphony, which is always wonderful to play and particularly with Vladimir Ashkenazy, who is a fabulous interpreter of it. So, very excited to do that for the third time tonight.

*Musical excerpt*

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

On Wednesday we go to this island called Sorok-do, which is in the southwest of Korea. It's a really beautiful area.

### **Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

And this concert in Sorok-do, which is a place where they have a centre for Hansen's disease. I don't know a great deal about it, but it's clearly a highly distressing thing for anybody to have. And any chance to raise awareness and help the development of treatment of it is a great thing to do. And I think everybody from the orchestra who's going there is conscious of that.

### **Gordon Hunt – Oboe**

I'm looking forward to seeing it, and I think probably the island itself could be very beautiful and will be a completely different side of Far Eastern life from anything one could have ever imagined seeing before.

### **Soong Choo – Violin**

We'll be playing Beethoven Symphony No. 5. Then we do a couple of numbers with the famous Korean pop star, Cho Yong-pil who is... he's a legend! Cliff Richard!

### **Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

That's quite something. I don't think Cliff Richard was ever accompanied by Vladimir Ashkenazy, so let's see how it goes. Ask me after the show.

### **Gordon Hunt – Oboe**

Beethoven 5 is of course a revolutionary piece and I don't think anyone can listen to it, not even maybe for the hundredth time, let alone the first time in their lives without responding with more than enthusiasm – amazement, really.

### **Mark van de Wiel – Clarinet**

What a marvellous piece to be doing, to introduce them to that. Couldn't be a more exciting choice.

### **Gordon Hunt – Oboe**

I hope that the people who come and listen to it, who may have never heard anything quite like it before, will go away with something special.

*Musical excerpt*

### **Dr. Park Hyung-Chul – Director, National Sorok-do Hospital**

Our facility was established in order for us to provide Hansen's in Sorok-do suitable health care, as well as looking after their overall welfare. This hospital was established in 1916 during the Japanese colonial period. The purpose of this establishment was supposed to be to treat the illness but in reality its purpose was to segregate the Hansen's from the rest of society.

### **Kwang Moon Kim – National Sorok-do Hospital**

There are more painful stories in this area than the entire island. My name is Kwang Moon Kim and I live here and work here at Sorok-do National Hospital. I live among the Hansens. Hansens were forced by the Japanese government to build this building, even though many of the Hansens were physically too weak or sick to do such difficult labour. Every brick used in this building was made by them. This building was used for detaining Hansens who rebelled against authorities. After they were detained, they were sent to the next building door and get a vasectomy or tubal ligation. And even after the liberation, many of them remained here not because they were forced to be here by the Japanese, but because of prejudice people had of Hansens they could not live among normal people. They were ridiculed and pointed at for their appearances.

### **Dr. Park Hyung-Chul – Director, National Sorok-do Hospital**

During that period the country was poor economically, and also was practicing laws and policies established during the colonial period. But in the 60s, our government officially terminated the isolation policy and allowed the Hansens to be treated as normal like everyone else. I think with wonderful music, it's an opportunity to move beyond the painful past and move forward to becoming one with everyone else. I think the orchestra is playing Beethoven's symphony No. 5 for a reason, and I believe that the power of music will bring everyone together and make us truly feel one. People from Sorok-do already feel great warmth in their hearts, feeling like they are being cared for, like someone out there cares for them. The fact that the Philharmonia is coming all the way from London to put on a live concert will mean to them more than words can say.

*Musical excerpt*

### **Vladimir Ashkenazy – Conductor**

And now we are going to accompany one of your favourite singers, Cho Yong-pil.

*Musical excerpt*

### **Dr. Park Hyung-Chul – Director, National Sorok-do Hospital**

It was so touching, so moving, so great. Especially seeing the Hansens coming together as one like they have today, it's literally a miracle. The fact that London Philharmonia and Jo Young Pil performed in Sorok-do is a huge breakthrough. An event such as this has never happened in Sorok-do ever before.

### **Zsolt-Thiamér Visontay – Concertmaster**

It was very exciting, I have to say it was really exciting. If you just think that, actually, on this island there was never an orchestra before. I think that people really really liked it that we were here, that we *are* here and I think it shouldn't be the last time.

### **Sorok-do Hospital Employee**

I didn't realise the event was going to be this big. Everyone really loved it. Also, eating, listening to music, and dancing together after the concert as we are right now, I think it's just fantastic.

### **Sam Burstin – Viola**

Oh, it's quite amazing. Clearly this is an extremely special event, for them as well as us.

### **Sorok-do Resident**

In the past, you guys were afraid of us and didn't come near us right? But now the famous London Philharmonia has come all the way from Sorok-do to perform for us. I don't have words to describe how much gratitude I feel inside. I got/have tears in my eyes. This is like a dream, not real, but it is real, you know? I wanted to give you guys a gift, but I don't have much to give you.

**Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

If you noticed this, and this. Spot the difference.

**Mark van de Wiel – Clarinet**

This is my starter, fantastic! Fantastic. Extraordinary occasion with more audience participation than we're used to. I mean they showed their appreciation quite vocally which seemed very moving. Didn't it?

**Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

Yes! Completely spontaneous expressions of thanks.

**Mark van de Wiel – Clarinet**

We couldn't understand what they were saying, but we got the idea.

**Robin O'Neill – Bassoon**

But the really nice thing was there were so many happy smiles. It was just beautiful, really.

**Sorok-do Resident**

I don't know music. I don't know the songs. How could we know? But it was so good. I can't tell you how much the music comforted us. It gave us a feeling of hope.

**Vladimir Ashkenazy – Conductor**

We thought we did a good service, you see. That's what is important. That's what we are for. Not just to play for the big crowds all over the world, but for people who really particularly appreciated our visit. It was very nice.

**Clare Thompson – Violin**

And they obviously incredibly enjoyed it and it's not something that has ever happened here before and I just thought the whole occasion was immensely special. I thought it was terrific.

*Musical excerpt*

End.