

## Young music ambassadors forge links



Members of the Cork Children's Choir who will take part in the International Music Festival in Youth in Japan. Picture: Richard Mills

# Cork singers to tour Japan

**A**ROUND 70 young singers from Cork city and county will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in July when they travel to Japan to perform in concert.

The Cork Children's Chorus, whose members are aged between ten and 17, will perform three concerts in south Japan as part of an ongoing cultural, artistic and social exchange programme.

The cultural exchange arose last year as part of the Cork 2005 celebrations, when representatives of the EU-Japan Fest first made contact with Cork Opera Works.

The Cork Children's Chorus hosted the Japanese Junior Jazz Band, Little Cherries Tamae, in October.

Next month the hospitality will be reciprocated when Cork Children's Chorus will tour Kyushu and will

By LOUISE GEANEY

perform in the International Music Festival for Youth, while staying in traditional host family accommodation.

The young ambassadors will be accompanied by 20 young artists, including Seraphim, an eight-voice female chamber ensemble; Sonya Keogh, mezzo soprano; Ciara Moroney, piano; and John O'Brien, conductor.

"We're very excited about the tour and the children are really looking forward to it now," said director of Cork Children's Chorus, Allin Gray.

"It really is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these children to travel to a country like Japan and see how things are done there.

"It's a fantastic chance for them and they will be treated very well over there by their Japanese hosts."

While in Japan, the members of Cork Children's Chorus will experience Japanese culture first-hand when they attend school, rehearse, socialise, and perform with Little Cherries Tamae in the Third International Music Festival For Youth as part of EU-Japan Friendship Week.

As well as participating in the music festival, the young travellers will also get an opportunity to tour the region, as well as exploring the city of Tokyo.

"It's a very safe place to visit and the children will see just how disciplined the Japanese system is in comparison to the Irish system," added Mr Gray.

"While in Japan, the troupe will perform, in concert, a true celebration of our Irish heritage, identity and culture."

As a non-profit cultural integration pro-

gramme, the Cork Children's Chorus promotes an equality of access to artistic opportunities among communities throughout Cork county.

Its status has grown steadily over the last 12 months.

Thus us due in particular to its involvement in both the official opening and closing ceremonies of Cork 2005: European Capital of Culture, and their Irish television debut in *Carols From Cork 2005*.

"We recruit kids from a wide variety of backgrounds, and from every walk of life in Cork," explained Mr Gray.

"We don't require that they have any training as such but what we look for is that they can mix well as part of a large group.

"It's about the group, as opposed to the individual."

The programme was developed by Cork Opera Works and is supported

by Cork City Council, Cork County Council, RAPID, Culture Ireland, EU-Japan Fest and the Arts Council.

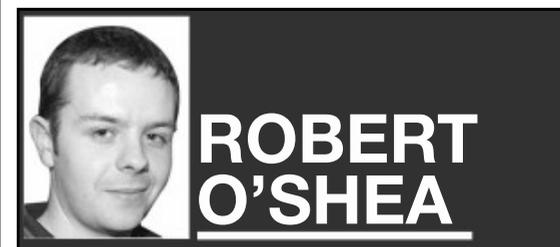
Fundraising for the Japanese trip began last year and will culminate in a gala night in Cork City this Wednesday.

On that night, the Cork Children's Chorus will accompany Seraphim, Sonya Keogh, Ciara Moroney and John O'Brien on stage at City Hall where they will perform their programme line-up for Japan.

Joining in the double bill celebrations will be Madrigal '75, Four Star Trio, The Fuchsia Band and Crawford Piano Trio.

The Roaring Forties, Flying Monkeys and Cartoon will take to the stage later that evening.

Tickets for the gala evening cost €20 and are available from Pro Musica, Oliver Plunkett Street. Ring (021) 4271659 for more details.



A FEW years ago, out of sheer boredom, I climbed a mountain.

It was an unplanned expedition. I didn't know what the mountain was called, I did not have specialist climbing shoes or equipment, and anyway, it was more of a hill.

Up I went and after 15 minutes of light sweating, I realised I was descending again. I must have passed the apex, I thought. Several paths seemed to lead uphill in various directions and I decided to take the one that appeared to have the greatest incline. After another hour, and after scanning the horizon, I decided I was on the highest area of land around.

I thought I would feel elated. But no, I felt empty. It had seemed rather pointless really. If I was feeling anything, I guess it would be fear, because it was getting kinda dark. And I was lost. It was winter and I was getting cold. I started shouting.

Luckily, a few minutes later, a woman who was closing the post office nearby heard my screams and calmed me down. She said I was in Mayfield and brought me to a bus stop. When I got home that night and shivered in front of the radiator, I promised myself never to climb again.

I haven't. And I'm perplexed: Why are people still climbing mountains?

Today is the 53rd anniversary of Hillary and Norgay's successful assault on Everest. I hold them in high regard.

But since then around 1,500 people have scaled the highest peak in the world.

There was a time when reaching a Pole was the accomplishment. Then there was Everest. Then there was the Moon. Then there was Rubik's Cube. Man is always searching for new and pointless challenges.

Why do we do this? It is my conjecture that daily life is already armed with enough challenges to keep us occupied for the rest of our lives.

You do not believe me? Take the following for instance...

**Untangling wire:**

Christmas lights, internet cables, twine... I'm sure we all have our personal favourites. While I will admit that if you give in to untangling totally, you can reach a sort of zen-like state, there is nothing quite as intimidating as the moment you find and pull on both ends and witness the true quagmire that awaits you over the next 20-30 minutes.

**Getting a scone out of a toaster:** A test of the nerves. Should you be sticking a stainless steel knife into the toaster? Probably not. Is there anything that tastes nicer than gently toasted, buttered scones? No. Will it break your heart to see up to 50% of said scones crumble to the bottom of the toaster? Yes.

**Removing something from a cupboard:** The cupboard in question will usually be the one that contains the phone-books. It will also contain other books and items and loose sheets of paper. It is these sundry items that will come pouring out on to the floor when you wish to only grab the phone-book.

**Holding it in:** Three pints of lager are consumed. The bus journey is known to take an hour, but has been delayed because of traffic for an extra half hour. Somebody sitting close by should have a nearly empty plastic soft drinks bottle. Do you dare ask? The southwest face of Everest would be a mere doddle after this. Never has been getting off two stops and eight miles early been so relieving.

Another self-explanatory challenge that you may wish to undertake is: turning on the light switch with your nose when your hands are full.

I would be interested in finding out our readers' own most difficult domestic challenges and include them at some stage in the future, rather than having to think up another topic.

Feel free to e-mail your own struggles to, robert.oshea@hotmail.com.

The best four will not win an all-expenses paid trip to the top of Mayfield, or as they call it in Nepalese: Rykeenagon.