

An interview of the opera singer, Tokiko Richardson

February 2016



Question: How did you join the church?

I joined the church in April 1976. At that time, I was studying in Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. My spiritual mother was my classmate, and we had grown up in the same town. I come from an atheist family. My parents were always fighting, so I was always looking for an ideal family. I was thinking to myself, where is an ideal family? Do ideal families exist?

This is the main cause of my joining the church; it was my first motivation. I never felt my father's love before but after I met True Father, I felt his love.

I joined a seven-day workshop. I could not understand the Divine Principle well; the only part I could understand was the providence to receive the Messiah. That caused me to join the church. At the end of this seven-day workshop, any participant willing to become a fulltime member had to make a commitment to God. Even though I did not feel that I wanted to become a fulltime member, I made the commitment. Among all the participants, I was

the only one who made the commitment to dedicate myself to God through my music, to dedicate myself to God's music.

The key point of my faith-building process was the Yankee Stadium event. I had a very strong and moving experience with the Yankee Stadium event. It happened just two months after I joined the church. At that time, I was in Japan and even though I could not fully understand the significance of the event, when I heard what happened, I felt so sad; I felt God's sadness. Despite a rainstorm and a low turnout, our members sang You Are My Sunshine. That struck me and I felt sad but still our members were able to overcome and bring a victory for God.

After I joined the church, I finished my studies and I started witnessing while working as a professional opera singer in one of the biggest opera company. I was also teaching music. My spiritual mother and I studied in Japan's best university, so we wanted to witness a high-class artist to create a true culture and true music. This ideal motivated us to witness a lot.

My spiritual mother, Yasuko Sakata is a famous singer. She was blessed to a Korean in 1982 and lives in Korea. My spiritual daughter, Seiko Lee, is also a famous singer. She sang for True Mother last year in New York. We are all classical singers.

Question: When did you receive the blessing?

On June 30, 1982, I met my future husband. True Father matched us by picture; it was rare at that blessing. During my matching in 1982, many Japanese sisters had to come to America to be matched and to attend the Blessing Ceremony. Father did not allow matching by picture but because I had a music competition, he allowed it. It was a special matching; True Father knows me. Two days after the Blessing Ceremony, on July 3, True Father called all Japanese members to East Garden. We were all excited to see True Father. During his speech, he stopped to look me and said, "You, professor. Why did you come to America?" I was so tired, a few days before I had been performing; I took an airplane the next day, and then I received the blessing and I sang for True Parents in Madison Square Garden. But when True Father talked to me, I was suddenly fully awake. I did not know how to think in front of the messiah, so I answered, "I want to achieve true love, do my best at raising funds and serve America." True Father responded, "Do you know, what your husband is like? Even if you have ten children, your husband would never complain about raising them. He is not a unification-church-type leader; he is not, but he is a deep-hearted person."

When I was in Japan, because I was a famous singer, I received many flowers every day after performances. But as soon as I moved to America, I started selling flowers, in downtown San Francisco. But what Father had said, and some connection, attached to my heart. That gave me absolute faith to follow all my life.

Question: How did your music play a role in your life of faith?

When I was in America, I sang for True Parents many times. When I attended that seven-day workshop, I dedicated myself to God’s music, but it was not easy. If I hadn’t been a church member, building up a music career would have been easy, but because I am a church member, I had many strong experiences. I sang in Madison Square Garden, at Lincoln Center and in many other places for True Parents.

About 1987, we started an Arts Conference for World Peace, which attracted many famous artists. By our invitation, we brought the famous soprano Renato Scotto, the renowned jazz pianist Dave Brubeck and many others to meet True Parents.

In America, there is a strong Japanese community. In all big cities in America, the Japanese community runs a weekend school, to keep the kids educated in Japanese. It is a big community. In Detroit, they had a male and a female choir and I taught both, performing the Southfield Symphony and Beethoven’s Ninth with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

My singing is essential in the Interreligious International Peace Council (IIPC) mission. Through my singing, such as at spring concerts, I make connections to ambassadors through music. For example, I have a part-time job teaching in Seoul. When the Japanese Embassy learned that, they invited me to sing the Japanese national anthem at the Japan–Korea friendship soccer game at the World Cup Stadium in front of an audience of fifty thousand people.

In Michigan, I opened a Japan–Michigan business conference with the governor Jennifer Granholan in attendance.



Tokiko Richardson with her husband, Eric

Question: How did you start your IIPC mission?

In 2005, True Parents founded the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), but earlier, in 2003, Father had founded IIPC. The first thing Father did when founding it was asking everybody to go to New York City. He brought thousands of people to pass out a millions copies of the Spirit World Messages. My husband was there. After that, Father asked them to go to Korea and Japan, for a few more weeks, but then Father asked them to stay for a hundred and twenty days. Then he asked them to remain in Korea. My husband stayed. For five years, my husband was in Korea with IIPC and I was in Michigan working.

True Parents gave deep parental love to the eighty-four members of IIPC, who were like their children. During the hundred and twenty days, Father went through Cheon Seong Gyeong for the first time. Every day, they woke up every day at 3:30 am to do Hoon Dok Hae at 5:00 am with Father, going through Cheon Seong Gyeong.

Being on a mission and having to make money to support a family is not easy. After several years, this severely hurt our finances. I was working in America but was not earning enough. After five years far from my husband, I moved to Korea. My husband started to teach at Cheongshim International Academy, which he did for five years. That is when I moved to Korea and took over his mission. Now he is teaching at Hanyang University, while I teach English to Japanese children, part time.

Question: What is your mission in IIPC?

Our job with IIPC and UPF is to connect to all the embassies and invite leaders to our conferences. We organize events. One thing we do is to connect with the United Nation International Days, like African Day and the International Day of Peace. We make deeper contact with people. Bringing ambassadors, as True Parents had asked us to do is not easy, but at events of this type, making a heart-to-heart connection with ambassadors is easier.

Many people working in embassies here have received the blessing. Embassy personnel are connected to

leaders in their countries and when they return to their countries and may become leaders there.

Father made clear at UPF's founding that we should expand to various countries so that diplomats connected with us in one country can contact our group when they move to their next country. For example, one thing that moved me about the Cheongshim International Academy is True Parents' vision to establish one good school in every nation. This means when diplomats transfer to a new country, they can call us to ask, "Where is your school?"

True Father's vision is for UPF to connect to all embassies in every nation, so when these leaders return home, they establish a relationship with us there. If they have a good feeling toward us, they will bring that feeling home with them.