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Recording 21 Holy Songs (backing tracks) in Hurlach, South Germany

Kazuha Canak - November 7, 2019

*Hans Campman*

During the past weekend three musicians came together in the house of Stefan and Jae Sook Schmid in Hurlach, South Germany with the purpose to record backing tracks of the 40 (“standard”) Holy Songs once again. Stefan himself was the drummer of the project, Takanari Wakayama (2nd gen, brother of Kazuha Canak) was the bass guitarist and I myself, the 3rd person, played the keyboard.

THE ORIGINS AND UNDERLYING IDEA OF THE PROJECT

Several initiatives to do a makeover of the Holy Song arrangements had already been developed in Germany over the past years. Many members in the nation had expressed a desire in that direction.

Heidi Wakayama (mother of Kazuha and Takanari) who over the past many years had invested herself in order to develop and inspire musical activity (for 1st gens and 2nd gens) in Europe, decided to take action. She picked up on an idea of another German

this purpose Heidi slightly lowered the keys of the songs and transposed them into keys easy to accompany, for instance for guitar. She started the printing of a new version of the Holy Song book (in German language) with the songs put in their new, “easy” keys. At the same time some errors in the original scores were corrected. Some samples of the new book have been printed out, which are now being reviewed and finalized.

Stefan Schmid, as a next step, had the idea to organize audio recordings corresponding to the revised scores in the new song book, produced by Heidi. The main purpose of the recordings would be to support communities who have no musical accompaniment for their worship services and local events. The recordings may also be used by brothers and sisters (and couples) individually, when they sing Holy Songs.

WE MADE NEW AUDIO (KARAOKE) RECORDINGS OF THE HOLY SONGS

For this purpose Stefan, Takanari and I were found available. Dr Balcomb, the EUME Hyojeong Arts & Culture Department and European Office gave their full support for this project. The three of us came together in Hurlach in the weekend of 1–3 November, where one room in Stefan’s house had been set up as a recording studio.

We formed a rhythm section (drums, bass guitar and piano) to make a karaoke sound track of the Holy Songs. We played the songs in the new, lower (easier to sing) keys; the drums and bass guitar added dynamics to the songs while ensuring a stable tempo (the drums playing in a constant, unchanging speed). The challenge for us was to provide a new drive and energy to the songs without losing the sacred atmosphere. All songs are to project holiness. Nevertheless the songs differ from each other in character. Some songs will sound bright and light, others are powerful, others again will be more solemn.

WE FOCUSED ON THE TWENTY-ONE MOST

Heidi Wakayama had held a survey in the German local communities to find out which Holy Songs were appreciated most by the members. As a result she produced a list of the 21 most popular Holy Songs. (Number 1 - most popular = ‘Grace of the Holy garden’, Number 2 = “Spring Song of Eden” exc.) These were the 21 songs which we recorded. We added some songs that have been generally known by our membership, such as “Arirang” and “Holo Arirang”, we did two Japanese songs, two current Gospels and also two of Stefan’s own delightful compositions (called “My desire” and “Spring”). Takanari did the technical recording work in the studio. He will do the editing of the songs in the coming weeks. We hope he will find time amidst his very busy schedule of study, work and of church events.

We hope the Karaoke recordings may be useful in various ways. The recording is an experiment. We have yet to see and evaluate the result, starting with Germany. If the accompaniments turn out to be useful for the church centres, we will set out to record the remaining 19 holy songs in a similar way. If we find that the recordings need some adaptation and can then be useful, we will make the adaptations. If some songs need to be fully redone we will do so. We hope, of course, that the recordings can bring some kind of benefit generally and that they will enhance, or even revive the singing of Holy Songs in the local communities.

STUDIO SCHMID IN HURLACH – SOURCE OF MUSICAL CREATIVITY

Stefan is expert in drums and percussion. During all his life he has played in bands, ensembles, rock groups and orchestras. In the last 20 years he has been a music teacher in a renowned school in Landsberg in Bavaria, which we took time to visit between our recording sessions. Besides investing in his professional work he has been musically active in our movement. Many years ago he had been a member of the [Go-World Brass Band](#); after that he had set up a percussion group of young 2nd gens.

is not only a great musician. Stefan and Jae Sook are the loving parents of seven children, of whom some have already been blessed. Also they have been brilliant hosts for brothers and sisters (musicians and non-musicians alike). They treat their guests like kings, as Takanari and I had the privilege to experience. We enjoyed their warm hospitality as they treated us to delicious food, a comfortable bedroom and uplifting conversation. In this atmosphere it was a real joy to make the recordings and develop musical ideas.

Earlier this year a highly successful project, the 2nd gen [songwriting workshop](#), initiated and led by Kazuha Canak, had taken place at this very location, the house of Stefan and Jae Sook Schmid, with its stimulating atmosphere. No wonder that in less than a week's time some 12 brand new songs were written here by a group of 10 of our 2nd gens; some of the songs were truly rich with excellent melodies as well as lyrics. No doubt more musical projects will be done at this place in South West Bavaria, which offers these wonderful circumstances.

Again, we hope the recordings of the Holy Songs may bring some benefit and inspiration and that, just like the songwriting workshop, they can trigger more and more creativity.



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