

Mongolia's Got Talent!

By Po Nien (Felipe) Chou, Petra Chou, and Odgerel Ochirjav

Last December a choir from the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia East and West Stakes reached the semi-finals of the nationally televised show *Mongolia's Got Talent*. The choir—composed of seminary and institute students, half of whom are returned missionaries—never thought they would have this kind of opportunity to share their beliefs and talents.

In 2015 an Area Seventy visited Mongolia and provided training concerning the public affairs efforts of the Church. Odgerel Ochirjav, president of the Ulaanbaatar Mongolia West Stake, was unsure how to proceed. Then in January 2016 his brother-in-law called and said, “I was watching *Mongolia's Got Talent*. . . . I had a strong impression that your Church choir should participate.”

President Ochirjav discussed the idea with the choir director, Sister Unurjargal Purev. She and the choir members were enthusiastic about the possibility. The choir became known as Zion, or “SION,” an acronym in

Mongolian for *spirit, faith, mind,* and *unity*.

The First Round

For the first round of the competition in March 2016, SION performed a mash-up of two songs. One judge said, “I see your faces light up! . . . We need to put your video on YouTube to showcase this show to the world.”

Another judge asked the choir what they would do if they won the grand prize of U.S. \$50,000. He was impressed when they said they wanted to donate it all, as a special Christmas gift, to an orphanage.

The Second Round

Of the 400 participants, SION was among the 200 who advanced to the second round, but their performance was scheduled for the same day as a multi-stake youth conference, which involved half of the 35 choir members. The choir decided to go to the second round, so they hired a bus and, following their performance, traveled eight hours to the youth conference.

Of the 200 acts, SION was among the 32 to advance to

Relatively few Mongolians know about the Church, but this choir helped change that.

the semi-finals. The choir began to be featured on social media related to *Mongolia's Got Talent*.

The Semi-finals

They practiced from June to September to prepare for



the semi-finals. On the day of the performance, they woke up at 4:00 a.m. in -29 degrees F (-34 degrees C) weather. Sister Nomuungerel Enkhtuvshin, a choir member, said, “Many members of our group caught a cold. But they got better as we prayed for them.”

People throughout Mongolia viewed the show and texted in their votes.

Brother Shijir Purevdorj said, “As a result of this TV show, many people are cultivating a positive attitude toward the Church.”

The Blessings

Choir members themselves also received blessings. Brother Odgerel Tumursukh said, “We devoted our attention and time for a whole year while managing our jobs and other

facets of our lives. Although it was difficult, we have received many blessings. I have learned to manage my time and make sacrifices for the Lord.”

In addition to increasing their faith, members of the choir gained self-confidence, developed friendships, and learned unity. “Singing in the choir has helped us to learn how to forgive and support one another,” said Brother Ganbaatar Ulziiduuren. “We have become more united.” Sister Bilguunzaya Tungalagtuul learned “that I should never doubt myself or think that I can’t do something.”

Brother Bayartsogt Lhagvajav said, “Singing in the choir has brought many blessings to my family, and it also helped me to receive the answers I was seeking for some time. Our leaders offered us solution[s]. . . . It has affirmed my testimony that our

leaders are called of God.”

“When I participated in *Mongolia’s Got Talent*,” Sister Onon Dalaikhuu explained, “I learned that encouraging and supporting each other [was the] key to [our] success.” Sister Dalaikhuu’s responsibilities included organizing crew members, which helped strengthen her leadership abilities. She added, “We felt that [the] Lord guided and influenced us. Many of us were sick, busy, tired, and feeling overwhelmed. However, when we prayed together, somehow we would find more power and desire to endure.”

Although the choir didn’t receive enough votes to move on to the finals, their performances gave the Church significant exposure throughout Mongolia. President Ochirjav explains, “We were obedient to an assignment by our priesthood leaders, and the Lord prepared a way. . . . Now the whole city [Ulaanbaatar] talks

about the Mormon choir’s participation in

Mongolia’s Got Talent.” ■

The authors live in Utah, USA, and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

