

## History of the Festival

In March of 2004, TAISM hosted the first ever Festival of Choirs held in the Middle East. The event was a vision of TAISM's choral music teacher Melanie Brink and TAISM's Director Kevin Schafer. They met in October of 2002 to discuss ways to create collective opportunities in choral music in the region. In addition to bringing students together to sing, a goal was to promote professional development for music educators, including the chance to collaborate, observe rehearsal methods and participate in workshops. The festival carries with it an important message – that we are all lifelong learners!

TAISM's Festival of Choirs has been a great success with the leadership by these special guest conductors:

- 2004 Dr. James R. Johnson – Professor of Choral Music at Augustana College, USA
- 2005 Mrs. Cathleen Britton – High School Choral Educator & President of SD-ACDA, USA
- 2006 Dr. Timothy Peter – Professor of Choral Music at Luther College, USA
- 2007 Dr. Christopher Aspaas – Professor of Choral Music at St. Olaf College, USA
- 2008 Dr. Christopher Aspaas – Professor of Choral Music at St. Olaf College, USA

We are delighted that next year will mark the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Choirs. Traveling with students requires a great deal of time, organization, planning, and financial commitment from the schools and families. We are very grateful to the guest students and teachers, their families, and their school administrators for supporting their presence and participation. We thank them for taking the time out of their busy schedules and for including this wonderful learning experience on their events calendar. During the festival, participating choral students spend approximately twelve hours in rehearsals. TAISM families host the visiting students in their homes. Numerous meals and social activities are enjoyed, including a welcome breakfast, lunches, a picnic dinner at the Inter-Continental Hotel, a student talent show, and a dance. Once again, we have created musical memories for a lifetime.

Approximately 700 choir students, representing over 60 nationalities, have joined their voices in TAISM's Festival of Choirs since it began in 2004. Such diversity enriches every facet of our students' lives, and is one of the benefits students receive from an international education. Festival of Choirs is an outstanding example of how schools can unite their ability to create a broader understanding of humanity through aesthetic learning with a standard of excellence in music education.



Cathleen Britton conducts the 2005 Festival chorus.



Dr. James R. Johnson shown addressing the first Festival Chorus in 2004.