

# The Roads of Friendship

PIACENZA - RAVENNA - NAIROBI

The adventure of the *Roads of Friendship* began in Sarajevo in 1997: this project, promoting brotherhood through art and culture, has now become one of our Festival's inalienable moments. Today, like fifteen years ago, the Festival answers another call and heads for the heart of Africa for a big music happening that will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, on July 9<sup>th</sup>.

The call was received at the end of the concert Riccardo Muti and 'his' Cherubini Youth Orchestra held about a year ago at the Teatro Municipale in Piacenza to raise funds for Francesca Lipeti, a Piacenza-born medical doctor who has been working in Kenya since 1994, and for Father 'Kizito' Sesana, a Combonian missionary operating in Africa since 1977, where he has founded the Koinonia communities.

On that occasion Riccardo Muti was confronted with a dream — dedicating a concert to the dwellers of the Nairobi slums. The purpose: awakening souls through music's universal and boundless message and actively supporting the development and social promotion of Kibera, the largest shantytown in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Riccardo Muti's immediate enthusiasm was promptly backed up by Ravenna Festival and Piacenza Municipality, with the collaboration of *Amani*, a non-denominational association co-founded by Father Kizito, whose main purposes are the care and education of abandoned children in Kenya, Zambia and Sudan. The project was also endorsed by Rai Trade and Rai 1, who will broadcast the event in Italy, and immediately and enthusiastically welcomed by the Nairobi Municipality with the precious collaboration of the Italian and Kenyan Embassies.

It will be a great party, open to everybody by free admission: on the morning of July 9<sup>th</sup> Nairobi's famous Uhuru Park (Freedom Park), the city's green heart, will welcome the inhabitants of the boundless slums of the metropolis. The festive event will be dedicated to the humble and disadvantaged slum dwellers, especially the youngest, who never lose their will to smile and hope in a better future.

Riccardo Muti will conduct the Cherubini and the Nairobi Youth Orchestras, joined onstage by the African youth locally assisted by numerous Italian missionaries (these street urchins from Libera and other Nairobi slums will perform as traditional singers, drummers and acrobats).

The programme includes symphonies, arias and duets from the well-known Italian opera repertoire, and will close with the famous "Va pensiero" chorus sung by more than 200 young students from the Nairobi Italian missionary schools, coordinated by Father Kizito and Nino Valerio, a Ravenna-born collaborator of AVSI (Association of Volunteers in International Service), who has been working in Nairobi for several years.

A Promoting Committee for the event, headed by the Mayor of Piacenza, Roberto Reggi, will be created to raise public and private funds in Piacenza and Ravenna, to sponsor several projects: scholarships for former street urchins and students deserving higher or specific education; a health unit in the especially needy Masai rural territory; logistic facilities for a kids' help centre in the Kibera slum.

The *bridge of friendship* will be launched from Italy, with the two concerts of Piacenza (July 6<sup>th</sup>) and Ravenna (July 7<sup>th</sup>).

