

Musicians Ken Medema and Jorge Lockward set for 2010 faith communication congress

NEW YORK, October 15, 2008—Musicians Ken Medema and Jorge Lockward will bring their unique musical talents to Religion Communication Congress 2010, the world's largest interfaith gathering of faith communications professionals, scheduled for April 7-10, 2010 in Chicago.

Medema, who will serve as music leader, is a renowned composer, performer and recording artist whose talent has taken him to diverse venues, from televised religious programs to corporate conventions and annual assemblies of national organizations.

RC Congress 2010 (www.rccongress2010.org), a once-in-a-decade event first convened in 1970, will bring together more than 1,000 practitioners of faith communications for print, broadcast and the Web in the United States, Canada and countries throughout the world. Participants in the gathering will explore the theme *Embracing Change: Communicating Faith in Today's World*.

Medema wowed audiences at the 2000 gathering of more than 1,200 faith communicators by listening to the stories of the speakers and singing songs improvised from their words.

A native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Medema was born unable to see with his physical eyes. "I started banging on the piano when I was five years old," he says, "making up crazy little fantasies on my mom's piano. When I was eight years old my parents got me a wonderful teacher who taught me the classics with Braille music and taught me to play by ear. And every time I learned a piece my teacher would tell me, 'Now you improvise.' So music became a second language."

Medema has been listening to faith stories and giving back the words as songs for more than three decades now. "I know how much people enjoy having their stories sung," he said at Congress 2000. "The power of story will bring community," speaking of his thoughts for 2010. "Story is the currency of people on the street."

He will be joined by musician Jorge Lockward, a native of the Dominican Republic, who brings to the gathering his experience in adding multi-cultural music expression to worship services. He's been praised by hosting organizations that note, "He brings a plethora of multi-cultural music ... that made our event exciting and inclusive."

Lockward has served as consultant on Global Music for several denominational hymnals. He edited *Tenemos Esperanza*, a Spanish, Portuguese and English songbook and recording of congregational songs from Latin America, published in 2003 by GBGMusik, and has performed in a variety of ecumenical settings including the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

When asked how he thought his multi-cultural music experience would work in an interfaith setting like Congress 2010, he said, "I always say that in multicultural worship, the main problem is not language or culture but power. Power is the problem when we think, as we do too often, that worship is something for us instead of something for God." He also added, "Communities share their own personal stories" and "Make your community your parish by becoming spiritually responsible to every person—the biggest responsibility there is."

The three-day congress will feature panel discussions, roundtables, performances, exhibitions and skills-building workshops focusing on the changes in technology, society and perceptions of religions that affect the way communications professionals and others for who communication is important to their ministry tell their faith stories.

To date, 76 religious denominations and communions, ecumenical agencies and religion communications organizations have signed on as cooperating organizations for RC Congress 2010.

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