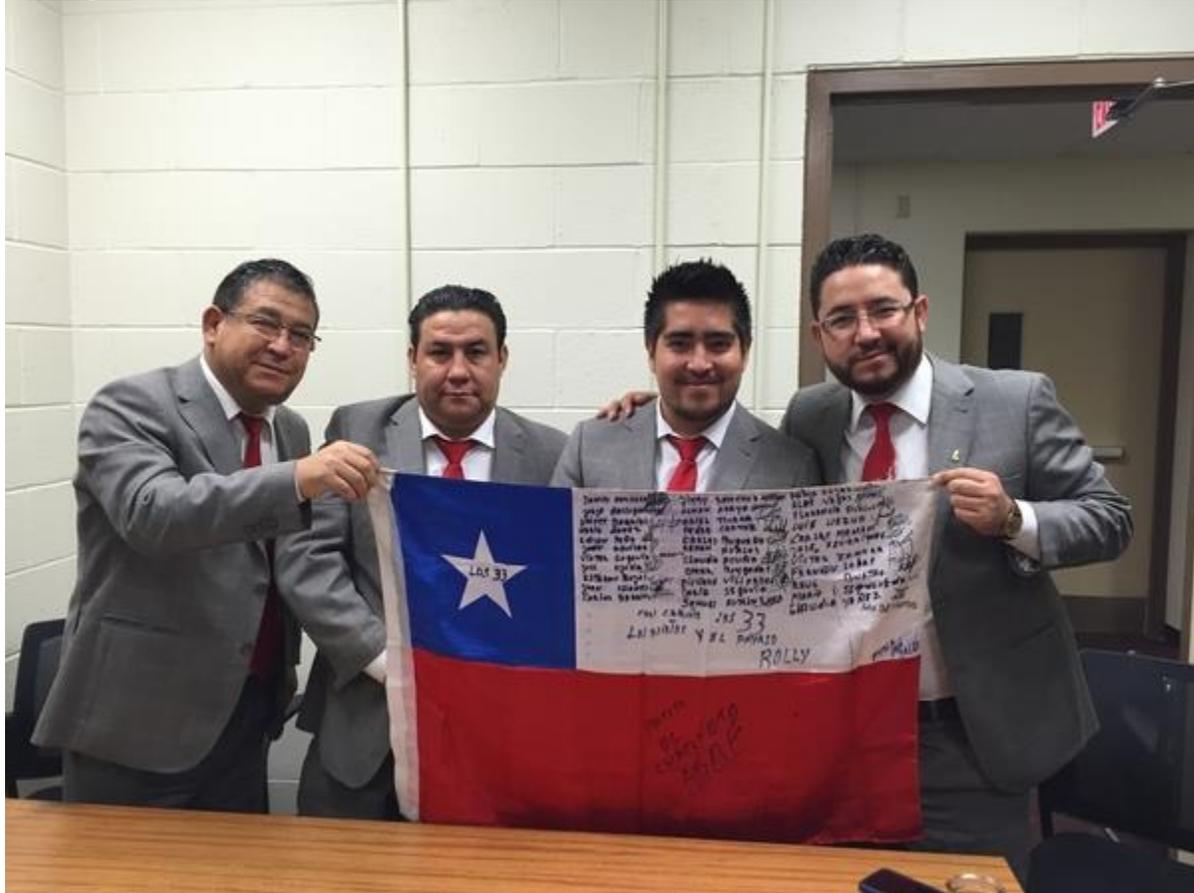


A Clown, A Quartet & Los 33

How an ensemble from Chile uses a flag to bring hope around the world

[Campus News](#) | Posted on June 20, 2016



Cuarteto Asaf visited the Andrews campus this month, performing and displaying this Chilean flag, signed by the 33 men who survived being trapped in a mine for 69 days in 2010. For the story of how this Adventist quartet came to possess this special symbol of hope, read the full story. (Photo by Becky St. Clair)

By: Becky St. Clair

Four men sat in a small office in matching grey suits, white dress shirts, and bright red ties. As one of the gentlemen introduces each of the others, they smile and nod as their name is spoken.

“This is Gabriel,” the young man begins. “And this is also Gabriel,” he says, pointing to a somewhat younger looking man than the first. “He is a junior,” the man explains. “This is Dany, and I am Mario.”

The four make up the vocal quartet Cuarteto Asaf, a Chilean ensemble now from Brazil. For 16 years, Gabriel Bernal and his sons, Gabriel Jr. and Dany, have sung together, presenting a music

ministry around the world in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Mario Saavedra is one of a few fourth members the father-and-son group has enjoyed performing with over the years. They're on the Andrews University campus to hold a special chapel service for the [Seminary](#).

“We started singing because we needed to evangelize and this is how we can do that,” explains Gabriel Sr., through a translator. “We all preach, we all sing, and we participate in evangelistic meetings around the world.”

Asaf has done concerts in 15 countries. According to Gabriel Sr., they have accomplished the objective the group set out to achieve.

The quartet, however, has a fifth member. He travels in a small black box marked “fragile.” When asked to introduce this apparently tiny individual, Dany reaches down into the box and pulls out Pedrito.

“¡Hola!” says Pedrito, whose puppet mouth moves at the will of Dany’s hand. His high-pitched voice and animated movements instantly bring smiles around the room.

Pedrito sings, preaches and tells stories to strengthen the faith of the younger audience members during concerts.

“I’m the children’s evangelist,” he says proudly in Spanish. “I’ve been doing this for 17 years—and I’m only six years old! It’s a little complicated to explain.”

Through Bible stories and tales of his own experiences, Pedrito shares the values and principles of the Bible and how they relate to the real world. He also addresses important issues facing young people today, such as abstaining from alcohol, drugs and other harmful substances, bullying and more.

“Everywhere we go we become known for Pedrito,” says Dany. “The kids bring their parents to the meetings because they want to see him, and they end up staying.”

Pedrito isn’t the only thing that makes Cuarteto Asaf unique. They also bring something else with them to every concert.

Cuarteto Asaf possesses one of three Chilean flags signed by the 33 miners who were trapped underground for 69 days in 2010 when the mine they were in collapsed. The other two are housed in museums: One in Vatican City, a gift to the Pope, and the other in Santiago, Chile, a gift to the Chilean president.

The third flag was given to a gentleman who works as a clown and came to Camp Esperanza, the camp set up outside the mine for families and the press during the rescue operation. The clown worked to entertain the children of the trapped miners and bring them joy while they waited for news of their fathers.

How did this flag make its way into the hands of the members of Cuarteto Asaf? In an unexpected way, thanks to an Adventist pastor who also came to Camp Esperanza to offer what he could: Hope.

The pastor was granted access to the camp with press credentials from the Adventist church. He then proceeded to send down into the mineshaft 33 miniature Bibles—one for each miner—with passages about hope highlighted, and 33 MP3 players preloaded with music by Cuarteto Asaf.

When the ordeal was over and the miners were safe above ground, a special service was held in their honor. Due to the role the quartet had played in maintaining the miners' hope while they were trapped, the group was invited to sing at the service. During the concert, the gentleman who played the clown was in the back of the crowd. As the performance went on, he drew closer and closer to the stage.

“Eventually, in the middle of our concert, he asked to speak,” recalls Gabriel Sr. “He was crying and we felt pressed to allow him his request, so we handed him a microphone.”

The gentleman explained that when he was young he went to church with his mother, and often they would sing together the same song the quartet had just performed. As an adult he had left the church, but he said that listening to their performance had brought hope to him again.

“It was then that he pulled out the signed flag from the miners and handed it to us,” Gabriel Sr. says. “He asked us to take it with us around the world and tell everyone about the hope to be found in Jesus Christ.”

In 2015, 64,000 people attended live Cuarteto Asaf concerts and over 9 million viewed their concerts via YouTube and television.

“Of the 64,000 live audience members, 2,000 gave their lives to Christ for the first time during our concerts,” says Mario. “We regularly receive comments about how our music has changed people’s lives and brought them to Jesus. It’s such a blessing to be able to further the work of God in this way.”

The group will perform in Chicago and then travel to Boston. They hope to return to Andrews someday soon to give a full concert to the entire campus.

We ask our brothers and sisters—whoever reads this—to pray for us constantly,” says Dany. “This is how our ministry succeeds: Through prayers of many and the blessings of God.”

To learn more about Cuarteto Asaf, visit their Facebook page at facebook.com/asafcuarteto.

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