

THIRD CHORAL CONDUCTING TRAINING SESSION SECOND CHILDREN'S CHOIR CONDUCTING TRAINING SESSION LIBREVILLE, Gabon, 27-31 October 2014

Report from Thierry THIÉBAUT

Organizations : A Cœur Joie Gabon Federation
A Cœur Joie International
International Federation for Choral Music
Conductors Without Borders (CWB)

Despite the unforeseen absence of Anne-Marie CABUT due to a family bereavement, the organizers decided to maintain this training session as cancelling it would have been a big disappointment for the children involved in this project and who were very much looking forward to it.

Yveline Damas took over the task, with the help of Thierry Panghoud and Willy Ondo Beyeme.

Provided by Anne-Marie, songbooks and recorded accompaniments included: *Tongo*, *Do-ré-mi*, *Bubble Gum* (very successful), *My heart will go on* (Titanic), with the addition of the canon *Rock my soul* that had been part of a previous session's program.

On the first day, the children learned the *Fruit Canon* and together we read the melody of the *Cossack Lullaby*.

The children worked every evening from 5 to 7PM and performed with the choir in residence on the Friday night at the Protestant Center Baraka.

Although there was a unique group of children aged 7 to 15, there was no problem related to age difference.

The songbook provided by Anne-Marie included 14 pieces intended to two distinctive groups of age. This songbook will give enough material for the children to further their learning.

We would like to thank the team of local choral conductors who immediately took over the session for the greatest happiness of the children who are already looking forward to the next choral adventure. The quality of the final concert is an encouragement for all.



This session was coupled with a training session for choral conductors.

The children and the trainees could enjoy a very pleasant stay in air-conditioned rooms thanks to A Coeur Joie Gabon, which provided the necessary space. The location downtown in a very quiet neighborhood is an additional advantage for this kind of activity. We would like to thank Yveline for her initiative to restore the building, which is now the heart of A Coeur Joie Gabon and the ideal place to welcome a training session.

We had a total of 10 trainees in 2013, and have 12 this year. Five of them had participated in last year's session and a couple of them in the 2012 session. Their level of autonomy slightly improved. These trainees were able to conduct the final concert.

Music classes are regularly organized by A Coeur Joie Gabon. This is a very good initiative as the trainees are not particularly good at sight-reading. Also a basic level of music theory is required for each one of them: major and minor chords, note identification, etc... could advantageously save some time during these training sessions. Local musical assistances could help getting these essential basics.

The heterogeneity of this group was not in any way an obstacle to the quality of the teaching.

We particularly worked on the rehearsal techniques, the music notations, the binary, ternary and non-isochronous meters, the gestures (beat time and pulsations).

The choir in residence joined the trainees every day from 7 to 9PM and formed a group of 60 singers divided in four very well balanced voice sections.

We usually started with a warm up of the muscles and the voice and some breathing exercises. Every trainee had a chance to conduct during the session.

During the final concert where seven pieces were performed, eight of the trainees formed a small vocal ensemble and sang *l'Amour Sans Amour* (Seghers/Daniel).

The concert went well and allowed the ready to conduct trainees to measure the technical aspects on which they need to focus to improve.

In this spirit and also in order to benefit from the good energy of this session, a next session has already been planned from February 9 to 14, 2015. A progress chart for each trainee will be updated after each session.

A very fruitful three hour meeting with all the trainees took place the day after the final concert. Not only did we get an interesting feedback from the participants on the final concert but it also allowed us to define the points on which further sessions should focus.

The material (specifically the scores) should be sent to the participants in a timely manner before the session to allow each one to be prepared and to allow a more steady progression.

I proposed to add an individual class with each participant every early afternoon in order to help them analyze the scores and work on their vocal training. This was positively received.

The participants are all very enthusiastic to continue the training but they also know that some of them will have to devote themselves to be the future local instructors. Different ability groups will be formed to give the most appropriate levels of education. Following the steps of A Coeur Joie DR Congo, A Coeur Joie Gabon will very soon have well trained conductors that are able to take care of some aspects of the training already completely self assimilated.

Let me thank Yveline Damas again for the perfect organization of this session and for the ideal location I've been given. Her own involvement and the one of the singers of her choir *Chant sur la Lowé* in particular is a very strong support to the future of choral singing in Gabon.



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Thierry THIÉBAUT