

Songbridge:

A HANDBOOK

For Organizing a Songbridge Project

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1. Songbridge Application Process

Interested participants should contact the Chair of Songbridge Artistic Committee, Mr. Kari AlaPöllänen by email at [kari.ala-pollanen\[at\]hotmail.com](mailto:kari.ala-pollanen[at]hotmail.com). Songbridge applications are reviewed by the IFCM Songbridge Artistic Committee (SAC) for approval, and their decision is final.

1.2 Modes of Application

To be considered for participation in a Songbridge event, expressions of interest are received by the SAC from organizers and/or potential participants in one of three ways:

- i. Organizers may apply as a proposed event, with a conceptualized program and identified choral/compositional partners already in place; or,
- ii. Organizers may apply as a proposed event, with a conceptualized program, an identified host choir with partner/composer, and a willingness to build a Songbridge, collaborating with IFCM to identify invited choirs to comprise the event; or,
- iii. Individual choirs with their chosen composer may apply indicating a willingness to seek other choral partners in order to build a Songbridge event. IFCM maintains a waitlist of exceptional children's/youth choirs who have indicated their interest in participation in a Songbridge event. While applicants are encouraged to have a project conceptualized before applying (partner choirs, composers and venue identified and secured), this route for individual choirs to apply seeking partners is available. Although this route is open, there is no guarantee that an individual choir will be assigned to a Songbridge event.

2. Application Criteria for Songbridge Event Proposals

Approval of a proposed Songbridge event is made by the Songbridge Artistic Committee, whose decision is final. To be considered for approval, applications must meet certain criteria. Each prospective event proposal must:

- 2.1** Have identified and secured the overall hosting body (e.g., America Cantat or independent host)
- 2.2** Have established the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) and Chairing Co-ordinator from within the hosting organization, including biographies of personnel that demonstrate relevant experience. (Successful experience with having hosted youth choral events is essential)
- 2.3** Have identified 3-4 choirs demonstrating agreed mutual collaboration and commitment to the event and each of which meets the individual Songbridge choir criteria, including composer-partner expectations
- 2.4** Represent a wide cultural and ethnic diversity amongst the participating Songbridge Choirs.

- 2.5** Provide an event description that demonstrates understanding of and commitment to the project criteria. Included is provision for the following essentials:
- i. Human community – (i.e., meals and accommodation, recreation, health care, etc.).
 - ii. Musical issues (i.e. rehearsal and performance venues, instrumentation, etc.)
 - iii. Cultural development – (i.e., regional tours, planned inter-cultural events among participants, etc.
 - iv. Event security – liability insurance, event insurance, etc.
- 2.6** Provide a budget demonstrating proposed revenue sources and expected expenses with contingencies anticipated and accounted for.

Once projects are approved by the Songbridge Artistic Committee, the process of development of the Songbridge commences. There must be close collaboration between the Songbridge Artistic Committee (SAC), the Local Organizing Committee (LOC), and the Songbridge participating choirs in the building, production and evaluation of each Songbridge event. The division of responsibilities for a Songbridge event by each of LOC, SAC and participating choirs are outlined following. Effective communication between these Songbridge partners at every stage of the project is key to its ultimate success.

3. Application Criteria for Songbridge Choirs

Any choir applying to participate as a Songbridge choir, whether as part of a proposed event or as an individual applicant, must meet the following criteria:

- 3.1** Be an established excellent and recognized world-standard upper voice ensemble;
- 3.2** Have an age range between 10 to 18, with an average age of 15. (Some exceptions to this age range may be permitted; such exceptions are to be formally negotiated with the Songbridge Local Organizing Committee.)
- 3.3** Have a membership between 30-50 choristers (*Some exceptions to this age range may be permitted; such exceptions are to be formally negotiated with the Local Songbridge Organizing Committee.*)
- 3.4** Provide its own adult chaperones at a ratio of 1 adult/12 choristers, who will travel and remain on site in a guardianship role for the duration of the Songbridge
- 3.5** Provide a recent concert audio and/or video recording, in addition to an updated biography of both choir and conductor.

- 3.6** Demonstrate the identification of a partnership with an established **composer** from their own country who is willing to compose their Songbridge piece according to the Songbridge guidelines for composition. If the choir, and its proposed composer, is accepted by the Songbridge Artistic Committee, a signed agreement with the partner–composer must be forthcoming as a completion of the application process. It is the responsibility of the commissioning choir to pay both the commissioning fee and the composer’s transportation to/from and accommodation at the Songbridge event, as well as all other expenses connected with the composition e.g. accompanist fee.
- 3.7** If invited to be a Songbridge participant, contract with the event organization to pay the cost of its own return travel to/from the Songbridge event, as well as the Songbridge participation fee for each participant attending.¹

4. Project Management

4.1 *International management*

Songbridge management is endorsed by the International Federation of Choral Music (IFCM), responsibility for which resides in the Songbridge Artistic Committee (SAC). The SAC provides guidelines to help the Local Organizing Committee to organise *Songbridge* according to the established international standard. These standards have been set in order to protect and maintain the integrity of the project as initiated and developed by Songbridge founder Erkki Pohjola. The SAC works in close collaboration with the Local Organising Committee on all management aspects of the project.

Should the LOC wish to diverge from the expected guidelines, authorization must first be sought and gained from the SAC.

4.2 *Local management*

In order for SAC to approve a Songbridge event, the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) must have been able to demonstrate successful experience in choral project organization with children and youth. This LOC is to be chaired by an experienced organizer who will act as the Coordinator of the Songbridge event. Any remuneration for this Co-coordinator is strictly the responsibility of the LOC.

The LOC Songbridge Co-ordinator will be in charge of managing all aspects of organizing the

¹ Each Songbridge event, the Local Organizing Committee will set its own accommodation fee, which is to be approved by the Songbridge Artistic Committee. This fee will be evaluated in terms of the overall budget of the proposed event, which must also be approved by the SAC. This fee is to cover the cost of communal accommodation, meals and local transportation of the participating choirs. This fee is to be set as low as possible to cover costs; it can be further offset if sponsor/donor funding is successfully secured. Every Songbridge event is encouraged to seek sponsors and donors in order to reduce the unit cost of each child attending.

Songbridge event in the host country/venue and will be ultimately responsible for all organizational decisions. (See below for artistic responsibility.) The Co-coordinator and his/her Local Organizing Committee (LOC) will develop their Songbridge guided according to the event criteria outlined by IFCM, particularly with regard to provision for the following essentials:

- i. Human community – (i.e., meals and accommodation, recreation, health care, etc.)
- ii. Musical issues (i.e. rehearsal and performance venues, instrumentation, etc.)
- iii. Cultural development – (i.e., regional tours, planned inter-cultural events among participants, etc.)
- iv. Event security -)liability and event insurance, etc.)

The local Songbridge Co-coordinator and LOC will be in regular communication and work closely with SAC, its appointed, Songbridge’s Artistic Director (AD, see below) and the participating choirs comprising the Songbridge event, to ensure the integrity of the project. This communication and collaborative practice will commence with the project approval by the SAC and extend through to the conclusion of the Songbridge event. Further, the LOC will commit to an evaluation process of their event and submit a summative evaluative report to the SAC following completion of the Songbridge, including recommendations for future events.

4.3 Artistic Direction

The SAC approves each Songbridge project application. Thereafter, the SAC periodically reviews artistic and philosophical matters pertaining to a Songbridge event as it develops. The SAC appoints a Songbridge Artistic Director for each Songbridge project to collaborate in the compositional and choral preparation process of each event. The Songbridge Artistic Director also monitors the facilitation of the event as it pertains to artistic matters.

The Songbridge Artistic Director (AD) has the responsibility to:

- i. monitor the collaboration of the participating choirs, their conductors and the Local Organizing Committee
- ii. advise/consult with the Songbridge Artistic Committee on progress
- iii. be present on the Songbridge site throughout the event
- iv. together with the chair of the SAC retain ultimate decision-making power in all artistic matters relating to Songbridge.
- v. provide a written report to the Songbridge Artistic Committee including written chorister reflections on their Songbridge experience, following the event.

5. Project Design

5.1 The Collaboration of Choir and Composer

The collaboration between each choir and its composer is a key element in a Songbridge project. While the choice of composer by each choir must be approved by the Artistic Committee, the collaborative relationship that is developed and nurtured between the choir and composer determines, to a great extent, the overall success of the Songbridge project. This element

should not be underestimated, and should be kept in mind when initially seeking a suitable composer as a collaborative musical partner.

5.2 Compositional Expectations for Songbridge

Composers are expected to use the following parameters in the preparation of their Songbridge composition:

- 5.2.1 The durational limit of the composition should be 8-10 minutes.
- 5.2.2 The compositions should primarily be a cappella, but may have some instrumentation. However mere piano accompaniment is to be avoided. Some choreography and/or dramatization may also be included.
- 5.2.3 The works should be in harmony with the UNESCO theme “ Music in the service of peace and understanding”. The text should be rather short with a powerful meaning. Various languages could be used, including the choir’s mother language.
- 5.2.4 Works should include three different kinds of section:
 - i. The main body of the composition should be written for the choir which has commissioned the piece.
 - ii. A shorter part should be written for the other Songbridge partner choirs to sing along with the main choir, in each Songbridge piece, and
 - iii. The composer should also include a “Hymn section” which may be sung easily by the audience. That part would preferably be written in unison.
- 5.2.5 As soon as they have finished their work, composers should send a copy (even manuscript) of their composition to the Chair of the SAC and the Songbridge Artistic Director for overall evaluation - to make possible comments and /or offer advice.
- 5.2.6 Songbridge choirs should receive the score **at the latest** four months before the Songbridge event
- 5.2.7 Composers are required to travel to the Songbridge, the rehearsals and also be present at the Gala Concert where they may be expected to address the audience briefly about their composition.

6.Organisation of the Songbridge ‘Village’ at the Event

6.1 Songbridge Village Concept

When the participating choirs arrive at the Songbridge event, they should be accommodated in a “Songbridge Village”, a common living community. (Such accommodation may be arranged, for

instance, in a school, with the classrooms serving as dormitories.) By sharing all their meals, living, rehearsing and recreating together, the choristers form a real international community. The Songbridge philosophy is to create a setting where the young singers from different countries will be able to discover and learn about each other's cultures and music, developing friendships and mutual respect.

6.2 Liability

Issues of liability/insurance with regard to visiting choristers must be organized at each Songbridge, as local regulations would have to apply. However, no Songbridge should proceed without satisfying the SAC that local insurance requirements have been satisfactorily met.

6.3 Accommodation

Choir's accommodation should be appropriate to host children and youth singers in good conditions. Separate showers and toilets for boys and girls should be available in the same building. Conductors could be accommodated with the choir or in separate hotel.

6.4 Food

Full board must be provided (breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks). Meals should be well balanced between warm and cold, with sufficient energy (vegetables and fruits). Special vegetarian food and /or special diet meals should be provided for choristers with such dietary requirements.

6.5 Health care

There should be a possibility to call a doctor on site. The local staff should prepare a minimum first aid kit, with most common non-prescription medicines.

7. Balanced Program

Beside musical work, sports, recreational and cultural activities are a necessary component of the Songbridge experience. These activities are the arena in which all the young participants get an opportunity to build relationships and see not only the other cultures, but the other person's point of view and way of thinking. It is imperative to the Songbridge concept that these events be organized as part of the program.

7.1 Rehearsal Hall

If possible, the rehearsal hall should be in the same area as the accommodation (it should be possible to go from one to the other on foot). The hall must be well ventilated, with good lighting and with good acoustics and must offer a sufficient space to host 3 or 4 choirs comfortably. It will be equipped with good chairs in order to form a semi circle. Considering the room, choral risers would have to be provided if needed. Podium and music stand for the conductor are also requested.

Water should be available to allow singers to drink regularly. Extra rooms are to be provided for each choir to organize separate or sectional rehearsals.

7.2 Musical Instruments

The rehearsal hall must be equipped with a good piano tuned at 440 Hz. Any other instrument is not necessary if not stipulated on the musical programme.

7.3 Rehearsal schedule

It is suggested that a Songbridge event take place over a 5-day period at the least to provide sufficient time for preparation and integrated involvement of the choristers with each other. The total rehearsal time for a Songbridge should be no less than 15 hours + one dress rehearsal in the morning of the concert day. The rehearsal schedule should be planned according to children/youth specific needs. Rehearsal total time by day should not exceed five hours and each rehearsal would not exceed three hours of work.

If choirs have to perform individual concerts in the late afternoon or evening as part of their participation in the sponsoring festival, then Songbridge rehearsals should be scheduled only in the morning.

The dress rehearsal should take place in the concert hall used for the Gala Concert.

8. Performances

8.1 Gala Concert

The Gala Concert is the apotheosis of months of work for choirs, conductors and composers. It should be a wide and warm ceremony where performers and audience have the feeling of living something very special.

- i. A master of ceremonies should introduce the Songbridge concept, choirs, conductors, composers and AD. After being introduced, each choir should enter singing one song characteristic of its own culture.
- ii. As each choir comes forward to present its Songbridge premiere, they begin their segment by presenting a short program of their own culture (two or three songs or one longer song) Before each premiere, the master of ceremonies should introduce each composer who will then briefly address the audience about their composition and possibly teach the audience their part.
- iii. The hymn sections of each Songbridge composition which are to be sung by the audience should be available in a very simple format in the printed program, and the public should be taught their part by the each respective conductor or composer before each premiere commences.

- iv. After all premieres have been completed, all Songbridge choirs will jointly sing a song from each choir's native repertoire, led by the respective conductor.
- v. The gala concert should be closed by the joint performance of the Songbridge official anthem, "Hymn to Freedom" by Oscar Peterson, conducted by AD. (If there are other children's' choirs present in the audience, they may be included in the singing of this song.)
- vi. The Gala Concert should be professionally recorded (audio and/or preferably video), if possible, with a copy being sent to AD and SAC for the Songbridge archive, and for access by other prospective Songbridge builders.
- vii. Arrangements with radio or TV may be authorized.
- viii. A copy of the recording should be offered to choirs and composers with recording rights being retained by Songbridge.
- ix. A copy of all scores used in the Songbridge project, including all premier works, are to be sent to the SAC for the Songbridge Archive

9. Communication/ Promotion

9.1 Name and Logo

The official name of the project is "Songbridge" in English. Translations in other language are not permitted. The Songbridge brand is restricted and may only be used by officially approved Local Organising committee of producing the Songbridge event.

Only the official IFCM logo provided by SAC is authorised for use.

9.2 Posters and Website

The Local Organizing Committee is free to print posters, flyers and invitations to the Songbridge Gala Concert. The official IFCM logo must be printed on any document about Songbridge, and is obtainable from the SAC.

The Local Organizing Committee is also authorized to build a website about their Songbridge project or to add mention in an existing website. In any case, there must be provision of a link to the IFCM website and Songbridge website which will allow visitors to get more information about the International Federation for Choral Music and/or Songbridge.

IFCM will help the organizer by advertising the project in their journal and electronic publication.

9.3 Programme Booklet

A programme booklet should be printed with contents in two languages: English and the local language.

The programme booklet should include:

- A presentation of Songbridge's concept, spirit and organisation (provided by SAC)
- Biographies of composers, choirs and conductors and Songbridge Artistic Director

Musical programme
 Official logo of IFCM
 The audience 'hymns' for their participation in the premières

10.Finances

10.1 Financial responsibilities

The Local Organizing Committee has the duty of financing the whole project. Participating Songbridge choirs are individually responsible and shall be contracted with the Local Organizing Committee to provide:

- Travel expenses to/from their country to the Songbridge site
- Songbridge fee (locally determined by LOC, for choirs' accommodation/meals/local transport/activities etc.)
- The commission fee for the Songbridge premiere
- Travel/accommodation /ground transportation expenses for the composer's compulsory attendance at the Songbridge event.

Local organizers may seek financial support from agencies such as:

Governmental grants (national and local).
 Sponsorship (commercial and organisational).
 Donations.
 Sale of concert's ticket.
 Sale of advertising space in the programme booklet.

Indirect support, negotiated locally by the host country, could help the budget:

Free or greatly reduced prices for performance halls, accommodations, etc....
 Entertainment provided by city, association or business.
 Voluntary staffing of events and office.

10.2 Sponsoring and fundraising

The Local Organizing Committee is free to negotiate any sponsorship to raise money for the project. Sponsors with products/ image which are inappropriate to a children/youth-centred project are prohibited e.g. alcohol, cigarettes.

10.3 Financial commitments of Local Organizing Committees toward IFCM

The Local Organizing Committee will contract with the Songbridge Artistic Committee to provide the following for the Songbridge Artistic Director, the Chair of the SAC (or his SAC designate) and an appointed IFCM representative:

- return airfare to the Songbridge event
- full board/ accommodation in a single room
- ground transportation for the duration of the festival

The fee for the Songbridge Artistic Director is separately negotiated and contracted between the LOC organiser and the person appointed as the SAD by the Songbridge Artistic Committee.