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LIGETI'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

A TRIP TO... VENICE, ITALY

**WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE
CHORAL WORLD?**

**FRANK MARTIN'S MASS FOR
DOUBLE CHOIR**

INTERNATIONAL CHORAL MAGAZINE

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EDITORIAL



EMILY KUO VONG

IFCM President

In this issue of the International Choral Magazine, we celebrate the 100th birthday of the great composer György Ligeti (1923 – 2006), who was one of the most important musical figures of the 20th century.

György Ligeti was interested in almost everything and his inexhaustible curiosity made him try all forms of expression to describe the imagination behind his own works. His diverse repertoire covered almost all kinds of performances for the concert hall and the stage, no matter how small or large, instrumental or vocal.

When he was young, he adopted from Béla Bartók and worked on the folk music of his Hungarian homeland, researching, composing, and teaching. Later he practiced the radical avant-garde for a brief period and finally arrived at a synthesis of the old and the new. He absorbed many ideas from the music of medieval mensural notation, the multidimensional polyphony of Guillaume de Machaut, and the metric overlays of Guillaume Dufay. He was also inspired by Conlon Nancarrow's polyrhythmic pianola studies, by the music of the Central African Aka-Pygmies, and last but not least by jazz. However, his music is always amazingly sensual, effective, and intended for expression, even though the structures and influences in his compositions are so complex.

Identity awareness and the course of politics contributed to the creation of his own cosmos as an artist. Throughout his life, Ligeti was always a minority: a Hungarian in Romania, a Jew among Christians, and an intellectual in the countryside. As a result, he did not trust the official aesthetic establishment that grew in a repressive society.

He started his cosmos creation in Budapest, searching for static, self-contained music, that was in no development or traditional rhythmic forms. His goal was to build a new kind of music from scratch, giving himself the challenge holding the music together as its core – intervals and rhythm were completely dissolved to make room for the composition of finely woven musical network structures.

Ligeti incessantly fueled his curiosity for unfamiliar, undiscovered sounds to reinvent the way that we understand and experience music. Along with Apparitions, Atmosphères, and Lontano, he wrote a totally different type – Aventures – which is one of his vocal works, using artificial language to reproduce

onomatopoeically almost all kinds of emotions, including great joy to deep sadness. His music, in the most diverse gradations and combinations, repeatedly oscillates between two extremes – the dramatic alongside the static. Not only does Ligeti have pieces with slowly changing cluster sounds, in which time seems almost suspended, but his works also have rapid developments with rhythmical details.

Nowadays, Ligeti's music is still presented around the world. Many films use the expressiveness of his sounds, for example, Stanley Kubrick used it to great effect in 2001, The Shining and Eyes Wide Shut. Ligeti as a representative of the composers at the forefront of modern music in the 20th century has been widely disseminated, and the freshness of his works has proven that the genuine novelty does not fade with time.

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FOCUS 1 LIGETI'S 100TH BIRTHDAY



A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO LIGETI'S *LUX AETERNA*
Grant Gershon

GYÖRGY LIGETI STREET IN BUDAPEST
Gergely Fazekas

**LIGETI BY FRIEDER BERNIUS, LAURA ANTAL,
SARAH NEWMAN, YUVAL WEINBERG**

A CONDUCTOR'S GUIDE TO LIGETI'S *LUX AETERNA*

GRANT GERSHON

Director of the Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, USA

GYÖRGY LIGETI'S *LUX AETERNA* IS ONE OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY AND ICONIC CHORAL WORKS OF THE 20TH CENTURY. WRITTEN IN 1966, IT IS ARGUABLY LIGETI'S PUREST EXAMPLE OF "MICROTONALITY", A TERM AND TECHNIQUE THAT HE HIMSELF INVENTED. THE PIECE IS SCORED FOR 16-PART A CAPPELLA CHOIR (SSSS-AAAA-TTTT-BBBB), WITH A TYPICAL PERFORMANCE LASTING 9-10 MINUTES. IT BECAME WELL-KNOWN OUTSIDE OF THE WORLD OF NEW MUSIC WHEN STANLEY KUBRICK UTILIZED PART OF IT (FAMOUSLY UNAUTHORIZED BY THE COMPOSER) IN THE FILM *2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY*. WITH ITS OTHER-WORLDLY, DISEMBODIED ATMOSPHERE, IT'S HARDLY SURPRISING THAT *LUX AETERNA* WOULD SUGGEST TO KUBRICK THE WEIGHTLESS AND MYSTERIOUS QUALITY OF DEEP SPACE.

I have had the great pleasure of working on many of Ligeti's vocal works over the years, and I am always struck by the combination of extreme rigor and creative fantasy in his compositional process. I've come to understand that with Ligeti, even more so than with most composers, the clearer a performer understands the compositional technique the more effectively one can rehearse and perform his music. There is no work of which this is truer than *Lux Aeterna*.

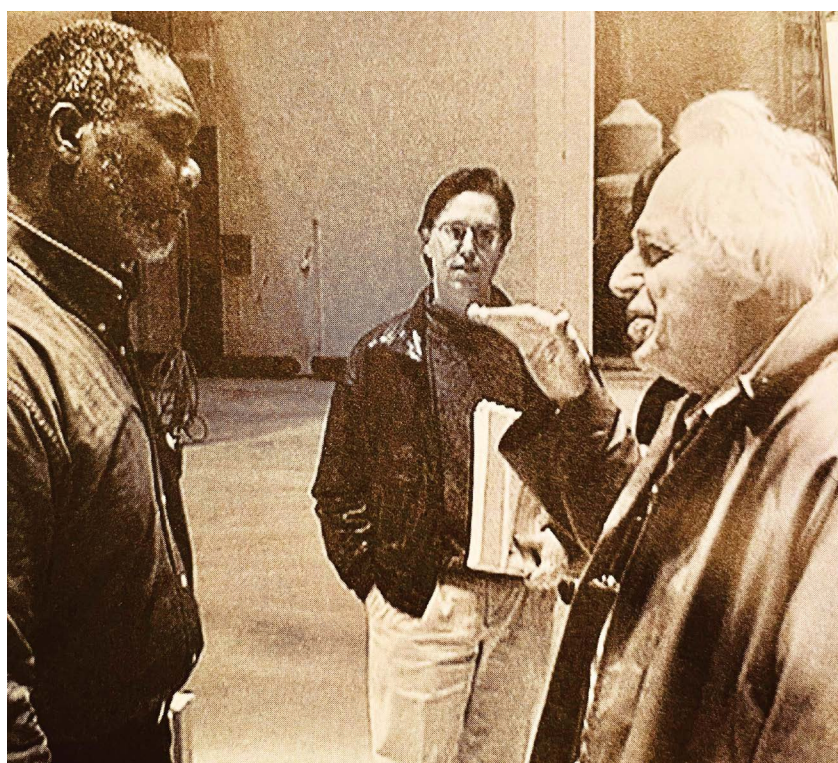
COMPOSITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND GUIDE TO REHEARSING

Lux Aeterna is one of the most tightly constructed works in the choral repertoire. It is fundamentally a series of strict canons at the unison. The pitch material and sequence of each vocal part in the various canons is identical. Ligeti creates the cloud-like sonorities that characterize the piece by closely stacking the individual entrances of each vocal part, and by varying the subdivisions (and therefore the speed) of each individual line. For instance, in the opening section which is scored for the four soprano and four alto parts, S1, S4 and A3 are in permutations of septuplets, S2 and A3 are in quintuplets; and S3 and A2 are in sixteenths. Every

vocal part is rhythmically independent, and the sense of time is obscured for the listener because the note changes very rarely occur on the beat. In fact, in a footnote on the first page of the score Ligeti requests that the singers "*Sing totally without accents: barlines have no rhythmic significance and should not be emphasized*".

The large scale structure of the piece is essentially in four overlapping sections, each with its own unison canon:

<i>Lux Aeterna luceat eis</i>	m1-37	sopranos and altos
<i>Cum sanctis tuis quia pius es</i>	m39-88	tenors and basses
<i>Requiem aeterna dona eis</i>	m61-79	sopranos
<i>Et lux perpetua luceat eis</i>	m90-119	altos



Sony Classical CD of *Le Grand Macabre*, from left to right: Willard White, Grant Gershon, György Ligeti © Guy Vivien

Additionally, the basses have two brief homophonic moments, both on the word “Domine.” The first is in their highest falsetto range (m37-41), while the second (m87-92) “resolves” to a D# minor triad (the only such chord in the entire piece).

Once one understands these compositional principles, a strategy for rehearsing the piece becomes clear. I have created a two-page summary of the musical material which I call “Lux Redux.” Whenever I rehearse an ensemble in *Lux Aeterna* I distribute this to the singers in advance. I have found that utilizing this chart can save an enormous amount of rehearsal time, and it quickly makes the structure of the piece clear to the performers.

Because it’s critically important that each singer be absolutely confident with the pitch material, at the first rehearsal I ask the singers to refer to “Lux Redux.” We begin with all sopranos and altos singing the first section (“Lux aeterna...”) several times in unison on dictation. Once the intervals of this long line are secure, a useful next step is to practice overlapping the entrances like a round (i.e. S1/A1 begins, S2/A2 enters as S1/A1 sings their 2nd note, etc.). By doing this, the singers feel what it’s like to “hold their own” against the other neighboring notes, and some of the implicit harmonies begin to emerge. We

can then work through the opening section as printed. We follow this same principle with tenors (“cum sanctis...”) joined by the basses (“...in aeternam”) and so on until we have worked through the whole piece. The goal of this process is for the pitch material to be secured with clarity and confidence. The more pristine the intervals are within each vocal line, the more the overarching magic of the vertical sonorities emerges.

Once this initial process of building absolute confidence with the pitch material is achieved, it’s easier to focus on the overall vocal color of the piece. The dynamic is sempre **pp** (with a few modifications from the composer to account for differences in vocal ranges), and Ligeti requests that the sound be “wie aus der Ferne” (from afar). For me the key to creating the most luminous quality possible is the opening [u] of “lux.” The placement and resonance of this vowel sets up the tonal color and focus for the entire piece.

As a conductor, the most important thing that we can do for our singers in this piece is to be crystal clear with our beat pattern, particularly making sure that the downbeat of every bar is apparent. I cannot overstate how easy it is for the singers to get lost; the entire piece is in 4/4 with no tempo changes, and no audibly discernable pulse. It’s important that each note change is smooth and un-

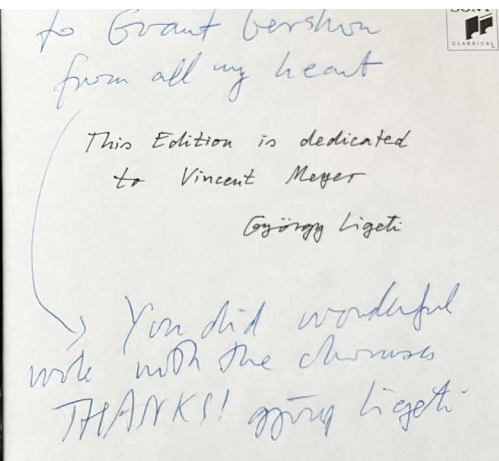
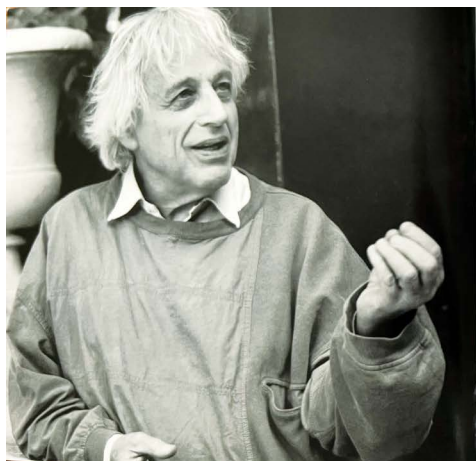
accented, and that the singers stay within the framework of each bar. For the listener, the overall effect should be timeless and light-filled, just as the title suggests!

There are two notorious vocal moments in the piece. The first is the high falsetto passage for the basses at m37. As Ligeti suggests in a footnote, it’s more important to assign this to the most vocally appropriate basses and tenors than to insist that this be sung by B1-3. The other particularly challenging passage is the soprano and tenor high B (**p possibile!**) entrance at m94. Here I have the S3 sing the lower octave with S4, returning to the written S3 line in m100.

One final note: it’s very important for the conductor to continue lightly showing time through the final seven bars of the piece. Ligeti could easily have written a fermata on this silence. His decision to notate these seven bars of rest creates a beautiful sense of continued flow after the actual sound has long died away.

CONCLUSION

Ligeti’s *Lux Aeterna* is an extraordinary study in color and ambience. This work transports the listener to another sonic universe. A carefully and confidently prepared performance is fantastically rewarding and satisfying for singers and audience alike. My hope is that many more people will experience the wonder of this remarkable piece as we celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of György Ligeti.



CD booklet *Le Grand Macabre*, inscription from Ligeti to Gershon

Lux Reduxed

G.G.

sop/alto m 1-37

lux lux lux ae-ter-na lux ae-ter-na lux
ae-ter-na lux ae-ter-na lux ae-ter-na lux ae-
ter-na lux ae-ter-na luceat ei(s)

BASSES m. 37-41

Do - mi - ne

tenors/basses m. 39-88

cum sanc-tis tu-is cum sanc-tis tu-is in ae-ter-
num qui - a pi - us es in ae-ter-num (continue
next page)

Altos m 61-79

Requiem aeternam dona ei(s)

sop m 61-79

Re-qui-em ae-ter-nam do-na e-i(s)

tenor/basses (continued)

qui - a pi - us es qui - a pi - us es Do.....

Bass m 87-92

Alto m 90-119

et lux per pe tu - a (→ continued 4 lines down →)

sop/tenor m 94-102

lu - ce - a(t)

Basses m 101-114

Alto (continued)

sop 110-114

lu - ce - at e - is

lu - ce - at e - is lu - ce - a(t)



Grammy™ Award winning conductor GRANT GERSHON is the Artistic Director of the Los Angeles Master Chorale, which is the "best-by-far major chorus in America" (*Los Angeles Times*). A passionate advocate for new opera, Gershon led the world premieres of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West* and Daniel Catán's *Il Postino*. He has also led premieres of works by Esa-Pekka Salonen, Steve Reich, Tania León and Louis Andriessen, among countless others. Gershon worked closely with György Ligeti, preparing choruses for performances of *Clocks and Clouds*, *Le Grand Macabre*, and the *Requiem*. He has conducted *Lux Aeterna* many times, including for the grand opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall (broadcast on PBS *Great Performances*). Gershon's discography with the LAMC includes recordings of music by Nico Muhly, Henrik Gorecki, David Lang, and Steve Reich. He has worked closely with many legendary conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Pierre Boulez, Simon Rattle, and his mentor, Esa-Pekka Salonen.

ggershon@lamasterchorale.org (Photo: Elissa Johnston)

GYÖRGY LIGETI STREET IN BUDAPEST

GERGELY FAZEKAS

Musicologist, associate professor at the Liszt Academy, Budapest, Hungary

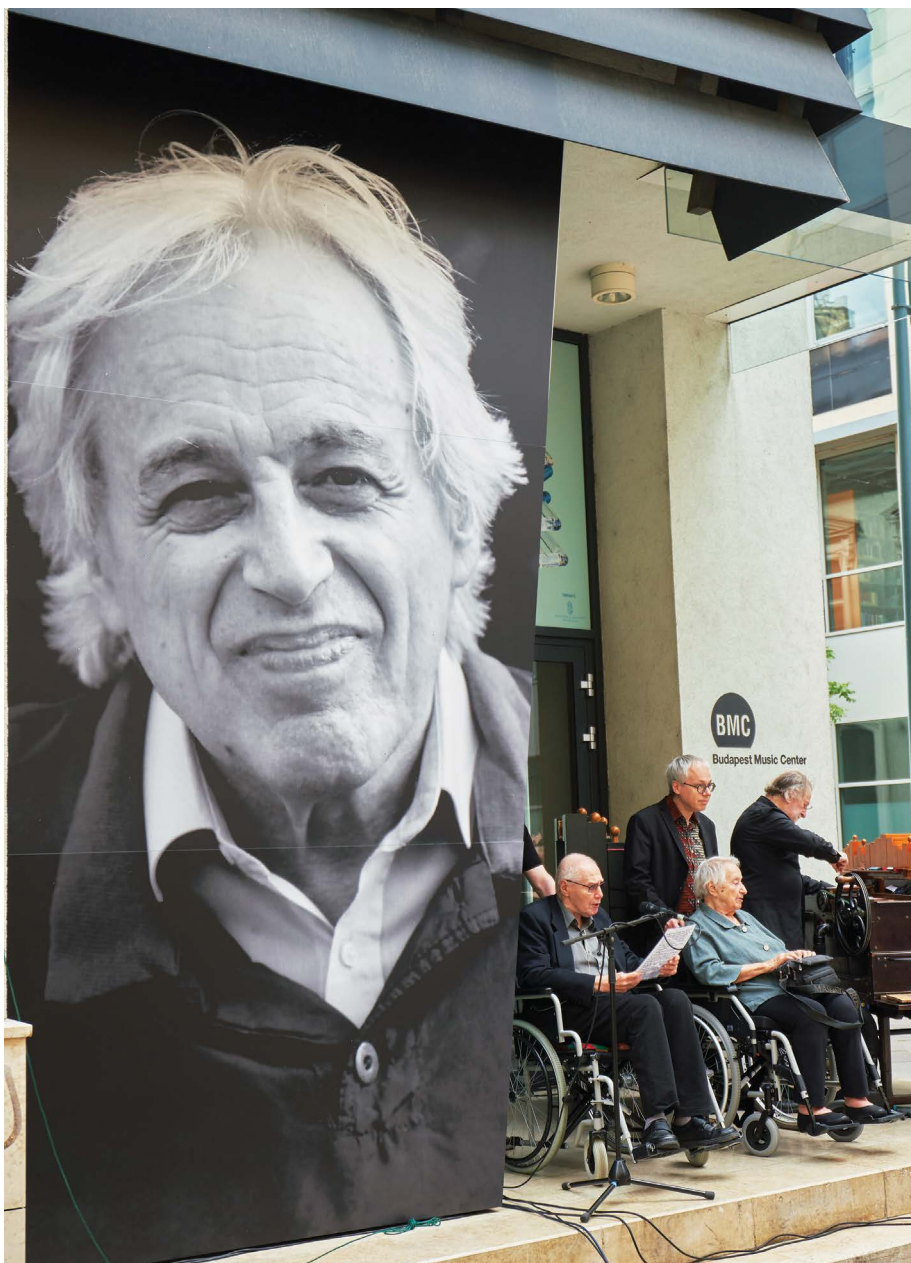
GYÖRGY LIGETI, ONE OF THE GREATEST COMPOSERS OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY, WAS BORN 100 YEARS AGO AND NOW A STREET IN BUDAPEST BEARS HIS NAME. THE COMPOSER'S WIDOW AND SON WERE PRESENT, HIS 97-YEAR-OLD COMPOSER COLLEAGUE GYÖRGY KURTÁG GAVE THE DEDICATION SPEECH, LIGETI'S WORKS WERE PLAYED ON THE HURDY-GURDY, AND BRASS PLAYERS PORTRAYED THE FIGURE OF A 500-YEAR-OLD TURTLE.

On 28 May 2023, the centenary of György Ligeti's birth, a street was named after the world-famous composer. It was a moving moment when Ligeti's old friend, another world-famous composer, György Kurtág, inaugurated the street with an impassioned speech and pulled the string that raised a tiny curtain and revealed the sign "György Ligeti Street" on the side of the Budapest Music Centre. If there's a good place for a Ligeti Street anywhere in Budapest (or in the world), it's at the BMC, the most important contemporary music centre in Hungary, which dedicated a major, nearly week-long festival to Ligeti's art in late May.

The dedication of the street featured some of the performers from the world-star-studded concert the night before, including violist Kim Kashkashian, cellist Steven Isserlis, pianist Víkingur Ólafsson and some of the greatest performers of the Hungarian music scene, but perhaps more importantly, György Ligeti's widow and son, Vera Ligeti and Lukas Ligeti, were present. And of course, Mr. Kurtág, who has lived at the BMC for years (he moved back here from France in 2015 with his wife Márta, who passed away in 2019).

Until now, this small street, about 150 metres long, in the 9th district of Budapest, was called Imre Street (Imre is a male given name in Hungarian). I must apologise to

all the Imres who felt this street belonged to them (if it was named after Saint Prince Imre, son of the first Hungarian king from the 11th century, I apologise to him too),



György Kurtág, György Kurtág Jr., Vera Ligeti, Lukas Ligeti and Pierre Charial at the inauguration of Ligeti Street
© Bálint Hrotkó BMC

but for a music fan like me, the name change has made Budapest a better place. Probably many fans of Franz Liszt felt the same way when the area next to the Music Academy building, which had been part of Gyár utca (literally, Factory Street) since 1850, was renamed Liszt Ferenc Square. There are many Imre streets in the country, but only one György Ligeti street – for the time being..

In his speech, Mr. Kurtág recalled Christmas Eve 1957, when Ligeti visited him in Paris. He had already been living in the French capital for months, Ligeti was there for the first time, and yet it was he who guided Kurtág through the city and knew all the streets and street names by heart. “He had a perfect sense of direction, he could find his bearings anywhere,” Mr. Kurtág said. “On maps as well as on musical scores. He had a special affinity with streets. His musical scores were like maps of cities with a complex road system. Parallel, vertical, diagonal, twisting-turning roads and streets. He always knew which way to go and always led the way. If I couldn’t follow him, that was my fault, my weakness.”

Mr. Kurtág also recalled a statement by Ligeti, recalling Béla Bartók’s last will, that there can be no Bartók Street or Square in Hungary as long as there is a public square named after Hitler or Mussolini. “It is my wish,” Mr. Kurtág quoted Ligeti, “that nothing be named after me, but if it is, let it be called ‘György Ligeti Errant Way.’ [Ligeti György tévút]” Hungarian administrative law does not recognize the term “errant” (at least when naming public places), so Ligeti’s wish is fulfilled by a special plaque on the wall of the BMC. “I am happy to spend the rest of my time in a building on Ligeti Street,” Mr. Kurtág concluded.



Ligeti’s old friend and world-famous composer, György Kurtág giving a speech at the inauguration of Ligeti’s street with György Kurtág Jr. in the background © Bálint Hrotkó BMC

At the opening of the street, barrel organ player Pierre Charial, who worked with Ligeti on several of the composer's pieces, played excerpts from the piano cycle *Musica Ricercata* on his unique instrument. Ligeti, who had a childlike fascination with machines and automata, admired Charial's hurdy-gurdy, and the hurdy-gurdy transcriptions were recorded for the Ligeti Complete Edition. I am sure Ligeti would have been pleased that the sound of this instrument was the first to fill the street that bears his name.

The ceremony ended with a short piece by Ligeti titled "The Big Turtle Fanfare from the South China Sea," played by the brass section of the Modern Art Orchestra in a beautifully harmonised form written by the ensemble's artistic director, Kornél Fekete-Kovács. The short movement, which became a solo trumpet piece in its own right in 1985, was originally written for a puppet theatre performance in 1949. According to a report in the *Népszava* newspaper on 9 October 1949, the puppet show features "the heroic Chinese maiden Spring Flower, the brave shepherd boy Faithful Heart, the 500-year-old turtle, the wise dragon – as well as masons, poor people, court servants and the Chinese emperor himself. 'Help others and help yourself,' the wise dragon teaches, and the oppressed Chinese people understand his mysterious words. Joining forces, they drive out the oppressive emperor, and as the morning star rises in the sky, a song of freedom resounds from the lips of the liberated people." Although his music seems very abstract, Ligeti was a deeply political figure. Even this tiny little piece gives us an important message from the past. A message that is as relevant as ever.



Ligeti's 100th Birthday Festival, Víkingur Ólafsson (piano), Steven Isserlis (Cello)
© Bálint Hrotkó BMC



GERGELY FAZEKAS (PhD) is a Hungarian musicologist. He studied literature and philosophy at Eötvös Loránd University and musicology at the Liszt Academy, where he is an associate professor teaching baroque and contemporary music. Between 2012 and 2017, he was editor-in-chief of the music publishing house Rózsavölgyi & Co. founded in 1850. He collected and translated all of Debussy's writings and interviews into Hungarian (it was published in 2017), and his book on Bach and the musical form was published in 2018. In the 2017–18 academic year he taught music history as a Fulbright Visiting Professor at Bard College, NY, USA. His review of György Kurtág's opera *Fin de partie* was selected as "Best Article of the Month" by the Board of Hungarian Chief Editors in December 2018. He is the musical advisor for the documentary on György Kurtág, which is scheduled to premiere in the fall of 2024. (Photo: Daniel Németh)

LIGETI BY: FRIEDER BERNIUS

My first glance at the score of Ligeti's "Lux aeterna" struck me like lightning. In one fell swoop, it reshaped my understanding of new music, and convinced me that Ligeti was the most important composer of the 2nd half of the 20th century. The score of his "Requiem" has hung over my desk for 25 years, until I found the opportunity and reached the maturity necessary for its performance and recording.

In addition, Ligeti's compositional technique has decisively influenced my understanding of how to achieve the same perfection for voices that is *a priori* self-evident for instruments: by largely dispensing with vibrato, and balancing open and closed vowels in different whole and half step intervals to improve intonation and balance. The closed "u" vowels in "Lux" will always sound softer than the open vowels in "aeterna," so they have to be balanced dynamically, and the open vowels need good tuning technique to keep them on the same pitch as "lux." It was more important to me than other awards that Ligeti wrote me in a letter about the "Lux aeterna" recording: "This is a rare pleasure!"

Frieder Bernius
Founder and Artistic Director, Kammerchor Stuttgart

Translated by Clayton Parr, USA



© G. Bublitz

LAURA ANTAL

A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE WITH LIGETI

In the first concert of the Free Voices Ensemble (<https://szabadhangok.wordpress.com/>) in 2003 two of Ligeti's *Nonsense Madrigals* were performed. In the subsequent years we continued to perform more and more pieces eventually including the entire avant-garde a cappella vocal oeuvre of Ligeti. As a choirmaster and a person who loves a challenge, I have been on the developmental and ever-inspiring adventure of teaching and interpreting Ligeti's music. I prepared special vocal exercises for each work and rehearsing with meticulous methodological steps. I searched for the most appropriate conducting gestures as well as the proper beating technique. One of the most demanding pieces in this regard was *A Long, Sad Tale* which I rehearsed with a twist by beating an even jazz pulse, not conducting the piece anymore when the piece was performed again – although this happened only with a very few pieces being a choir that works on projects out of passion.

In our last concert we worked through Ligeti's compositional techniques used in *Musica ricercata*. The different tonal, structural and atmospheric characteristics of the movements were set to music by directed improvisation with words of Sándor Weöres. In doing so I think we have succeeded in touching the most exciting field of choral improvisation, making reflexions to Ligeti's art with the highest skills an interpreter can contribute.

Laura Antal
Conductor, adjunct professor at the University of Pécs, solfège teacher in the Zoltán Kodály Choirschool Budapest, Hungary



SARAH NEWMAN

This year I had the great fortune of getting vocally intimate with several of György Ligeti's works set to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. In addition to the "Drei Hölderlin Phantasien" for 16 voices, I also performed Ligeti's simple yet multilayered song "Der Sommer". In preparation for both, I learned a lot about Hölderlin's tragically romantic life and the way the different phases of his work reflected his mindset (and mental health). Once you understand that, Ligeti's settings become all the more perfect in their construction. The "Phantasien" consist of gorgeous lyrical lines that the listener only catches a small moment of before the canon causes the colors to swirl together. The melodic and harmonic structures descend into the undefined, but every so often, a moment of clarity shines through (think "das Land" in 1. Hälfte des Lebens or my favorite part of the 3. Abendphantasie "sanfter Schlummer") before taking another dive into "chaos".

His song "Der Sommer" is so simple in its text, yet the composition tells so much of Hölderlin's story in his later years. His daily walks absorbing nature, the beauty and peace of his surroundings, and coming to terms with the fact that it will all still exist even when he is gone are all painted in Ligeti's piano accompaniment while the vocal line dreamily floats along with it, sporadically swelling into desperation before softly resigning itself to the inevitable and dreaming once again.

As a singer, it is a thrill to have the opportunity to bring such deliciously complex and rich music to life. ...you just have to make sure you don't miscount!

Sarah M. Newman
Professional singer, USA/Germany



YUVAL WEINBERG

Some years ago, even before I officially started my term as chief conductor of the SWR Vokalensemble, the choir's dramaturge, Dorothea Bossert, told me she found out about a large number of a cappella works by György Ligeti that were never published. We were both excited and decided we were going to record all his music for unaccompanied choir. Dorothea got in contact with the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel (that had the manuscripts) as well as with Schott Music and some months later we started receiving the newly-printed scores. To our surprise, all of these early works, except for one, were in Hungarian. Many of them are arrangements of Hungarian folk music, and some are his own compositions of different Hungarian texts. The first thing we did was translate everything and find language coaches who would work with the choir and myself.

To me it is fascinating to follow a composer's life through his musical creation; starting with wonderful miniatures from the 1940's such as "Magány" or "Temetés a tengeren"; through to his "Éjszaka" and "Reggel" (1955 – Night and Morning), which I would describe as his first musical turning point; the well-known "Lux aeterna" from 1966 and then – after almost 20 years of not composing choral music – the mighty "Three Fantasies after Friedrich Hölderlin" that explore the full range of a choir's vocal abilities, full of vivid pictures, word painting and polyphony.

Yuval Weinberg, Chief conductor of the SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart



© Katinka Hustad



György Ligeti
Complete Works for a
cappella Choir
SWR Vokalensemble
Yuval Weinberg
SWR Classic SWR19128CD

FOCUS 2 WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE CHORAL WORLD?



**WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHORAL
WORLD?**
Ramona Wegenast

**COMING TOGETHER FOR THE ASIA CHORAL
GRAND PRIX**
Interview by Irvinne Redor

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHORAL WORLD?

RAMONA WEGENAST

Director of the Association of MODfestivals e.V. Marktoberdorf, Germany

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC THE CONDITIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL CHOIR SCENE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY. WHILE SOME STATES IMPOSED A TOTAL BAN ON SINGING FOR LONGER OR SHORTER PERIODS, OTHERS ALLOWED MUSIC MAKING TO CONTINUE, BUT WITH STRICT HEALTH PRECAUTIONS.

Lasting two years, this situation has had various consequences: the musical standards of many choirs have declined, singers have left their choirs, in children's and youth choirs two years of potential talent have been lost, and many schools have stopped singing altogether. Probably our greatest challenge, now that the pandemic is over, is to rebuild the singers' lost motivation and to persuade audiences to resume their former attendance habits. Things seem to be returning to normal in some states. However, it remains to be seen whether the disruption will have had a permanent effect, or to what extent new and positive trends may have emerged. However, it is not only the pandemic that disrupted the choral world. The energy and the financial crises, triggered in part by the war in Ukraine, also affected the running of international choirs and festivals particularly badly.

Against this background, the International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf, together with the European Choral Association and the Choral Festival Network (CFN) produced two surveys (one for choirs and one for administrators). They held a round table discussion under the auspices of the 18th International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf, with the aim of understanding the disruption and the consequent problems, needs and challenges of the international choir scene.

THE SURVEY

By the middle of June, 79 people from 29 countries had responded to the survey which focused on two issues: the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, together with the energy and the finance crises, and the question of what sort of arrangements should be put in place to encourage choirs to take part in a festival or a competition.

THE PANDEMIC, THE ENERGY CRISIS, AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

Following the pandemic, around 42% of choirs reported a clear drop in their musical standards. The same number, 42%, lost singers during the pandemic and 46% are now having difficulty in attracting new members. 24% of choirs and just under 19% of administrators found themselves having to cope with the effects of the energy and financial crises which followed on from the pandemic (the increased cost of concert venues, rents, travel costs, printing costs unheated halls, etc.) Festivals will be particularly affected, as they will be forced to reduce the number of their participants.

PREREQUISITES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN FESTIVALS AND COMPETITIONS

Undoubtedly, the cost of travelling to the event presents the first hurdle. Then accommodation must be found (and paid for). Here, many participants would like more support in finding and accessing accommodation (though not necessarily including financial help). Once on the course, they value the workshops and coaching sessions, finding them helpful in developing their knowledge and technique. Interaction with their fellow participants was also seen as very important. The joint concerts and leisure activities were an incentive to attending a festival or taking part in a competition.

THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Chaired by Sonia Greiner, Germany (European Choral Association and committee member of the International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf), the following made up the discussion panel: Kaie Tanner, Estonia (Choral Festival Network), Burak Onur Erdem, Turkey (European Choral Association and International Federation for Choral Music), Romāns Vanags Latvia (Interkultur), Jeffrey Murdock, USA (ACDA) and Jürgen Budday, Germany (International Chamber Choir Competition Marktoberdorf).

The results of the survey were endorsed in principle by the panel. After the pandemic, choirs had to cope with psychological problems suffered by their singers, with reduced audience numbers and the increased running costs. The administrators, too, were affected by these problems and some Festivals have had to give up. Most however have developed a different way of working, though keeping their original image.

Kaie Tanner is herself a director of several choirs in Estonia. She has found that it was mainly older singers who left their choirs. This was due to the widespread fear of singing, being in crowded situations, or travelling on public transport.

But in her work with children and young people, she has also found pronounced effects from the pandemic. Young people aged between 12 and 19 are suffering from depression. However, once singing is no longer perceived as dangerous, it can contribute to a recovery from depression. So it is vitally important to continue singing with young people. And it is this group, of teenagers and young adults, who are returning to singing and to travelling in increasing numbers.

Burak Onur Erdem agrees that the number of participants attending international events is growing again. Responsible for organising the World Symposium on Choral Music of the IFCM in Istanbul, he received numerous applications from choirs. But even here, the organisation was not without problems. The preparation time was only 9 months and this was interrupted by the severe earthquake that took place in February. The organisers immediately invited 200 music teachers from the affected areas to come to Istanbul to study ways in which singing can overcome trauma.

But symptomatic of the current situation, however, is that, for the first time in its existence, the European Choral Association has been unable to

...it is vitally important to continue singing with young people. And it is this group, of teenagers and young adults, who are returning to singing and to travelling in increasing numbers



Panel discussion *What's going on in the choral world* © MODfestivals

find a host town for the Europa Cantat Festival. Alternative formats are being developed, e.g. smaller festivals will take place in several different European countries.

Jeffrey Murdock reports that the American universities have heard from their students that while the 3 years with little or no music had left large gaps in their lives, the desire among young people to meet with others and share experiences had remained strong. It resulted in their society becoming more inclusive, which is a positive outcome. As a result of the increased use of social media during the pandemic students became much more aware of their social environment. Their awareness of political events has also sharpened.

Romāns Vanags agrees that the loss of musical quality in choirs has been very noticeable. Even in Latvia with its strong choral tradition, many choirs have not been able to maintain their musical standards during the pandemic. Latvia supports its choirs more than many other countries. For example, during the pandemic, the setting for the famous Song Festival was renovated at a cost of round 100 million Euro.

Finally **Jürgen Budday** describes the concrete developments being made in the International Chamber Choir Competition in Marktoberdorf. The pandemic has resulted in a considerable reduction in the number of applications, possibly because choirs have not yet regained the standard required. It has also become clear that fewer European choirs have applied, and more choirs from outside Europe, whose participation is only possible due to financial support from the Goethe Institute.

Overall there are signs that the international choral scene is recovering from Covid-19 – despite the energy and financial crises. It is harder for competitions, where the focus is on musical quality, than it is for festivals where the emphasis is on meeting people and making friends. The current high costs have forced us to develop a new format (shorter duration and fewer participants). But a much more difficult problem concerns the changed characters of the people. Many are suffering from psychological stress, or have developed phobias (of large crowds, of enclosed rooms, of catching contagious illnesses.) Yet singing is therapeutic and can reduce the recovery time from trauma. There is still a very obvious lack of motivation and lethargy. Online access has at least allowed people to experience events from home, although the opportunity of meeting people is completely absent. A further problem is that more and more people like to act at the last minute, so that application deadlines will have to be as close as possible to the event. However this will make the organisation of large events extremely difficult.

For these developments to succeed will require flexibility from the organisers and more forward thinking on the part of choirs. Added to that will be the considerable task of persuading people how therapeutic singing is for body and soul. On the practical side, it is vitally important that any financial support should match the current high prices, otherwise the quality as well as the quantity of the festivals will suffer, as the choirs have.

The Round Table discussion is available on www.kammerchorwettbewerb.org

Translated by Caroline Maxwell, UK

...the American universities have heard from their students that while the 3 years with little or no music had left large gaps in their lives, the desire among young people to meet with others and share experiences had remained strong.



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COMING TOGETHER FOR THE ASIA CHORAL GRAND PRIX

INTERVIEW BY IRVINNE REDOR

IFCM Communication Manager, Philippines

RETURNING AFTER A 3-YEAR HIATUS DUE TO THE GLOBAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN, THE SECOND **ASIA CHORAL GRAND PRIX** WAS HELD IN BALI, INDONESIA. THIS CHORAL EVENT, WHICH STARTED IN 2019 IN MANILA, PHILIPPINES, IS AN ANNUAL COMPETITION BETWEEN THE GRAND CHAMPIONS OF FOUR ASIAN CHORAL EVENTS HELD IN SINGAPORE, BALI, MANILA, AND KUALA LUMPUR. PLANNING IS UNDERWAY FOR MORE ASIAN CHORAL EVENTS TO JOIN THE ACGP, SOMETHING WE ARE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO. I WAS VERY FORTUNATE TO GET A CHANCE TO CONNECT WITH THE DIRECTORS OF THESE FIRST FOUR ACGP EVENTS AND CHAT WITH THEM ABOUT THE CHORAL COMPETITION SCENE IN ASIA.

COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR EVENT?



Mark Anthony Carpio (M): As the Philippine Madrigal Singers was celebrating our 50th year in 2013, the Cultural Center of the Philippines approached us to organize an international choral competition. More and more Filipino choirs had been wanting to go abroad to experience competing with outstanding choirs but were deterred by the high cost of travel. To make it easier for Filipino choirs to experience the international scene without leaving the country, we formed the **Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Festival**. This event is held every two years.



Susanna Saw (S): The **Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod** (MCE) was conceived from the Young Singers Choral Festival. We started a national choir competition because competition is still the main motivation for people in Malaysia to sing in a choir, especially in a school choir. Because we didn't want to focus only on the competition aspect, we also organized workshops. Our Ministry of Education praised the MCE's organization and suggested making it an international event. There are many choirs in Malaysia with high musical standards that have not had the opportunity to travel overseas. Making MCE an international event gave us the chance to bring in international choirs and introduce them to the Malaysian choral scene. We started doing children and youth's symposium. From 2016, we started doing a national level choir competition.



Ai Hooi Lim (A): We started the **Singapore International Choral Festival** 10 years ago and just finished our 7th edition in July, after a break due to COVID-19. We had organized events before in Hong Kong and Portugal and thought, maybe we can organize something in Singapore. We were a bit reluctant at first because we are aware that Singapore is a very expensive country, but we received a very good response to the first edition and just continued from there.



Tommyanto Kandisaputra (T): Choirs in Indonesia are developing very well and have excelled in various international events. The success of so many Indonesian choirs encouraged more groups to perform on the world stage. The **Bali International Choir Festival** (BICF) provides a stage for choirs who want to participate internationally but cannot perform abroad for several reasons, mainly financial. I am very proud of BICF: Not only did the festival contribute to the development of choirs in Indonesia, it also promoted the richness of Indonesian culture on the world stage and helped bring thousands of tourists to Bali.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE HIGH INTEREST OF ASIAN CHOIRS IN PARTICIPATING IN COMPETITIONS?

(M): All conductors are very interested in improving the musicianship and musicality of their singers. Aside from the thrill and excitement, competitions speed up the development and improvement of singers. I always remind choirs: “You are not really competing with other choirs when you join a competition; the idea is for you to become better versions of yourselves.”

(A): Excitement! It’s always very nice to compete, but how you look at competitions depends on the individual. When you have an aim and want to win something, you work very hard for that. However, I always caution my choir: “When you compete, there will be winners and there will be losers.”

(S): In Malaysia, if students participate in competitions at the state, national, or international level, they receive marks for co-curricular activities, which also benefits their school. Because of this, everyone is driven to work for good results in a competition. Also, overall learning culture in Malaysia is motivated by getting a certification or passing an exam, which can be likened to a competition. This serves as the motivation to attend rehearsals, practice better, work harder, and perform well. We must be very clear about our reasons for competing: to try to learn something and to improve.

(T): Many choirs from Asia take part in competitions because singing traditions are firmly embedded in our cultural life. This encourages choirs to continue developing and to share that culture with everyone. The enthusiasm for creating, the urge to interact with other artists, and the pleasure of traveling to various places are all very strong.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU ENCOUNTER IN ORGANIZING YOUR EVENTS?

(M): The most challenging part is that because a lot of people are involved, we need to get volunteers to help with the logistics. Getting participants to meet deadlines is another challenge: We must keep reminding them, and sometimes have to push back deadlines.

(A): The biggest challenges we face are scheduling issues, because we hold many choir events. Aside from the competition, we have workshops and friendship concerts, and need to fit them all in during a few days’ stay in Singapore. We see to it that choir members can benefit from attending these programs without long waits between events.

(S): We need to think of ways to make things work while complying with local government regulations. We are in the private sector and when we organize events that involve school students, we must apply for an endorsement from the government, which requires us to fulfill many requirements. This endorsement serves as our “passport” to the school, so it can utilize school resources to take part in the event.

(T): The biggest challenge is to raise funds to make the event more interesting and to satisfy participants. Other challenges are finding a venue for competition and managing activities related to licensing, convenience, and security.

HOW DID THE FORMATION OF THE ASIA CHORAL GRAND PRIX COME ABOUT?

(M): Before the 4th edition of the AOV International Choral Festival, Ai Hooi, Tommyanto, and I discussed the possibility of holding an Asia Choral Grand Prix with the Artistic Director of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It was in 2019 when we held the first edition of the ACGP, in Manila.

(A): I had previously attended a few European Grand Prix for Choral Music events. One day I wondered if maybe we could have something similar in Asia. We wanted to find festivals that shared the same ideals and vision. I met Tommyanto at an event and spoke with him about the idea. After that, we went to Manila to speak with



The Asia Choral Grand Prix Artistic Council
From left to right: Indra Kurniawan Salama (Indonesia), Tommyanto Kandisaputra (Indonesia), Ai Hooi Lim (Singapore), Susanna Saw (Malaysia), Yong Chee Foon (Singapore), Mark Anthony Carpio (Philippines), and Joey Gianan Vargas (Philippines)

Mark Carpio, Menchi Mantaring, and Chris Millado. That's when we came to an agreement as to how it should be run.

ANDREA O. VENERACION
INTERNATIONAL
CHORAL
FESTIVAL
MANILA 2023

(S): In the early days when Mark, Ai Hooi, and Tommyanto were creating the Asia Choral Grand Prix, they were able to observe the Malaysian Choral Eisteddfod. They felt comfortable working with me and invited me to Manila to be present at the first ACGP. That was when I was able to get to know more about the ACGP and accepted the invitation for MCE to be part of it. This is the first year we've sent a representative to the ACGP. This is good for MCE because it will attract choirs of a very high calibre. Our year to host the ACGP in Kuala Lumpur will be 2024.

(T): The **Asia Choral Grand Prix** emerged from an agreement between the Artistic Directors of the AOV International Choral Festival, the Singapore International Choral Festival, and the Bali International Choir Festival to collaborate and to encourage the development of

choirs in the Asian region and the world at large.

CAN YOU GIVE US THREE QUICK TIPS FOR CHOIRS WHO ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO JOINING COMPETITIONS?

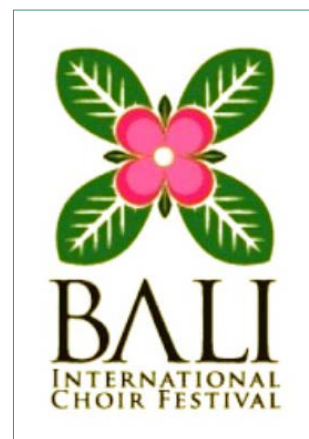
(M): (1) Singers must love what they do, and they can show this by always looking for ways to be better and improve. (2) Conductors must know their singers and what they need. (3) Every rehearsal is an opportunity to be better.



(A): (1) Look for a competition that suits your choir and select one at least a year in advance, so that everyone can prepare. (2) Choose pieces that your choir can perform well and choose the number of categories which can be prepared



on time. (3) When you go to a competition, just enjoy it!



(S): (1) Read through the competition rules and regulations. (2) Find a competition best suited to your choir's skill level by looking at choirs that have joined in the past. (3) Find and choose a repertoire that the choir members can handle.

(T): (1) Choose a competition that is suitable for the situation and condition of your choir; especially consider its artistic achievements and financial capabilities. (2) Plan every aspect carefully and leave sufficient time to meet all needs. (3) Take part in the competition as a chance to improve singers, improve the quality of music, and to build the singers' character and attitude.

Edited by Anita Shaperd, USA





IRVINNE REDOR is a performing arts management advocate and a choral music industry worker with years of experience in organizing national and international choral music conventions, conferences, competitions, and events. He was involved in a couple of pioneering training programs for young choral arts managers in Europe: the Young Event Management Program of the Europa Cantat Festival 2009 in Utrecht, Netherlands, and the Choral Arts Management Program of Polyfollia 2012 in Saint Lo, France. In April 2023, he served as mentor to 10 participants under the 'YOUNG' Program, a Youth International Cultural Management Programme, of the International Federation for Choral Music during the World Symposium on Choral Music in Istanbul, Türkiye. Currently, he is the Communications Manager of the International Federation for Choral Music. He is also the Secretary General of the Philippine Choral Directors Association where he has played part in organizing Provincial Assemblies, Regional Conferences, and National Conventions. He owns The Choir Loft, an online choral music store, and SANGHIMIG Performing Arts Events & Travel Consultancy Services. communication@ifcm.net
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<https://youngchoral.com>

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A TRIP TO...

A TRIP TO VENICE



A MUSICAL SEAT OF POWER: EXPLORING ST. MARK'S BASILICA AS A STATE CHAPEL
Andrea Angelini

VENICE, PLACE OF CREATION, NOW AND FOREVER
Bernardino Zanetti

BIGAGLIA & LOTTI BY KNABENCHOR HANNOVER AND LA FESTA MUSICALE
Reviewed by Jamie Hillman

A MUSICAL SEAT OF POWER:

Exploring St. Mark's Basilica as a State Chapel

ANDREA ANGELINI

Choral Conductor, Professor and Musicologist, Italy

COMPARED TO THE STATE OF RESEARCH IN PREVIOUS YEARS, OUR CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE MUSIC CHAPEL AT ST. MARK'S IN VENICE HAS GREATLY EXPANDED. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATIONS HAVE SHED LIGHT ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE DUCAL BASILICA AND THE CITY OF VENICE AS A WHOLE. RECENT STUDIES HAVE EXPLORED THE STRUCTURE OF THE MUSIC CHAPEL, THE BIOGRAPHIES OF ITS MEMBERS, THE PATRONAGE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM, THE CHURCH'S LITURGY, THE DUCAL CEREMONIAL, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LITURGICAL AND FIGURATIVE CHANT REPERTOIRES USED AT THE BASILICA. IN THIS PRESENTATION, WE WILL OUTLINE THE DATA CHARACTERIZING THE MARCIAN CHAPEL DURING THE COUNTER-REFORMATION PERIOD, ALONG WITH SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND SPECULATIONS.

During the time when St. Mark's Basilica served as the private chapel of the doge until the Republic's downfall, the doge held formal authority over the chapel. Doge Andrea Gritti directly intervened to secure the election of Adrian Willaert as the choir master. Some doges and their successors occasionally interfered with the church's affairs to modify the chapel's regulations. However, the actual governance of the church, including the hiring and firing of musicians, was mainly delegated to the three life-elected members of the Procuratia de Supra. Some of these members were renowned for their cultural commitment even in their personal

lives. The recruitment of new music chapel members involved Marcian singers traveling outside Venice and, more significantly, diplomatic channels represented by mainland city authorities, ambassadors, and Venetian residents abroad. These channels played a crucial role in electing the chapel master (a decision that required careful consideration) and, in some cases, castrated sopranos.

In November 1562, the singers at St. Mark's were divided into two groups: the large chapel and the small chapel. The large chapel, which consisted mostly of the best and most reliable singers, had 20 members (4 sopranos, 5 contraltos, 3 tenors, 3 basses, and 5 putti sopranos). They were responsible for singing "every day of the week except Thursdays and Fridays." On the other hand, the small chapel, comprising 2 sopranos, 4 altos, 3 tenors, and 5 putti sopranos, sang specifically on feast days falling on Thursdays and Fridays. Additionally, the small chapel had to be present in the basilica and



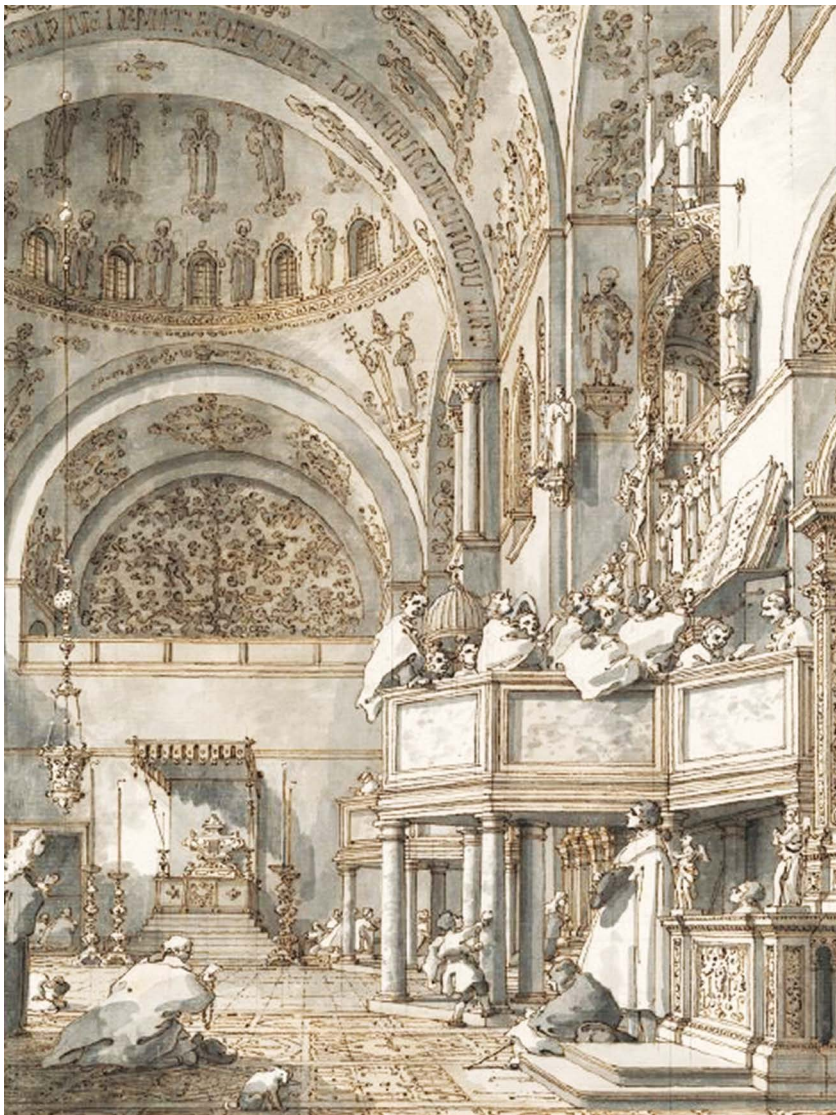
Adrian Willaert



Doge Alvise IV Mocenigo Appears to the People in St Mark's Basilica in 1763, Francesco Guardi



St. Mark Basilica © Ulrike Kristina Härter



La cappella ducale in Bigonzo, pen and ink drawing, 1766, Giovanni Antonio Canal (Canaletto), (Hamburg, Kunsthalle)

at the disposal of the maestro di cappella during the Doge's church visits, on days and vigils of solemn feasts when the golden altarpiece was opened. However, they would only sing upon the maestro's request.

The salaries of the singers varied significantly. In the 1560s, they ranged from a minimum of thirty ducats to a reasonably high maximum of eighty. Throughout the following century, the remuneration of one hundred ducats annually, granted to some singers hired towards the end of the sixteenth century, remained unsurpassed.

Regarding the polyphonic obligations of the singers during Mass and Vespers, an ordinance from 1562 emphasized the importance of singing the Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and post-Communion of the Mass, as well as the Pleni, and Osanna and during the Elevation. The singers were instructed to perform these pieces diligently with their designated voice parts, avoiding hasty renditions.

The relatively large size of the chapel and the prominent presence of polyphonic music in the liturgical ceremonies aimed to create an image befitting a grand State chapel. The concept of exclusivity also played a role in symbolically defining the institution and the State. St. Mark's possessed a unique liturgy, liturgical chant, and ducal ceremonial, fiercely protected by the leaders of the Venetian Church and State against the centralizing efforts of the Counter-Reformation Church in Rome, which sought to standardize the rite based on the Tridentine model. Although not strictly exclusive, the practice of performing the Vesper psalms in double choir on major feasts was distinctive. Historical documents from St. Mark's reveal that dividing the chapel into two groups for these psalms, with four

singers in one choir and the remaining members in another, was rooted in an older tradition of performing the relevant liturgical chant.

A hypothesis suggests that the liturgical and paraliturgical texts set to music for large ensembles served as religious allegories representing significant events in the civil life of the Serenissima, akin to the figurative allegories depicted by artists like Veronese or Tintoretto. As St. Mark's was the official church of the State, it provided a platform to solemnize important events for the Republic alongside regular liturgical celebrations. It is reasonable to assume that, as part of these celebrations, texts from the liturgy that allegorically expressed precise moments in Venetian history were chosen for rhetorical emphasis through grand organ compositions. Non-liturgical texts were likely written with similar intentions. The "mythical" image of Venice, conveyed through historiography, political treatises, and oratory, highlighted the harmonious relationship between temporal and spiritual governance, emphasizing themes such as the city's divine origin and the inspiration behind its laws and constitutions.

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Edited by Mirella Biagi, Italy/UK



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BIGAGLIA & LOTTI BY KNABENCHOR HANNOVER AND LA FESTA MUSICALE

REVIEWED BY JAMIE HILLMAN

IN 2018, KNABENCHOR HANNOVER AND LA FESTA MUSICALE JOINED FORCES TO RECORD AND RELEASE A RECORDING OF MUSIC BY TWO ITALIAN BAROQUE MASTERS, ANTONIO LOTTI (1667–1740) AND THE LESSER KNOWN, YET NOTEWORTHY VENETIAN COMPOSER DIOGENIO BIGAGLIA (1676-1745). IT HAS BEEN REFRESHING TO HEAR THIS COMBINED ENSEMBLE’S SKILLFUL AND INSPIRED PERFORMANCES.

The recording opens with Bigaglia’s pleading *Misere*. Every instrumental and vocal line is intentionally shaped and weaved into the whole. The lines converge and result in a full sound at the homophonic cadences. *Messa di voce* is incorporated on long notes and there is a sense of escalation to the melodic and harmonic sequences that adds to the pleading character of the music and text.

In the duet *Amplius lava me*, the voices of soprano Veronika Winter and countertenor Alex Potter are perfectly coupled. Winter’s and Potter’s voices share clarity of tone. The shaping and direction of the lines in the voices and strings is equally thoughtful and masterful.

In the short duet *Ecce enim*, there is a beautiful colour contrast between the darker timbre of bass Markus Flaig and the lighter sound of tenor

Georg Drake. The singing of Flaig and Drake is innately musical. They sing with an informed sense of the natural stress and emphasis of the text. I didn’t want this short movement to end!

The solo *Cor mundum* is sung skillfully by countertenor Alex Potter. There is a beautiful sense of movement and dance to this performance. Potter possesses an agile voice, singing the melismas with clarity and ease. He and the strings are perfectly united.

The *Kyrie* from Bigaglia’s *Missa in F* begins from a tiny seed that grows and blossoms into a glorious climax. In this fugue, the theme can always be heard because the ensemble performs with great clarity and transparency. It is impressive how the sopranos effortlessly ascend the musical staff, always singing with a focused tone. The melismas are equally effortless-sounding and refined. The young treble singers have been carefully trained. Together, the choir and orchestra highlight the suspensions, resulting in a sense of tension and release.

The *Credo* from Lotti’s *Credo in F* is performed at a brisk, yet perfectly chosen tempo. It is sung and played with great conviction. The diction in this lengthy text is impeccable. Consonants are energized and the



vowels are unified throughout the choir. The decision to use closed vowels works well for the choir.

Throughout the recording, the music making has great integrity. In my imagination, as I listen, I can see the music being performed generously.

I commend this recording to colleagues, students of choral music, and music lovers. I am looking forward to following Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale more closely in the future and I eagerly await their next recording. A hearty congratulations to the singers and instrumentalists of Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale, so capably led by conductor Jörg Breiding. Congratulations, also, to the production team!

Diogenio Bigaglia: Miserere & Missa in F

Antonio Lotti: Credo in F

Knabenchor Hannover

La Festa musicale

Conductor: Jörg Breiding

Rondeau Production ROP7023

www.rondeau.de



JAMIE HILLMAN is a Canadian and American musician, active as a conductor, singer, pianist, music educator, and composer.

He holds the endowed Elmer Iseler Chair in Conducting at the University of Toronto where he is Director of Choral Studies and an Associate Professor. He conducts the U of T MacMillan Singers and leads the master's and doctoral degree programs in Choral Conducting, as well as the annual international Choral Conducting Symposium. Dr. Hillman is an examiner for Conservatory Canada and has adjudicated, guest conducted, performed, and presented throughout Canada and the United States, and in France, India, Indonesia, Portugal, and Taiwan. Most recently he conducted two national festival choruses at Carnegie Hall with National Concerts and Manhattan Concert Productions. He returns to Carnegie Hall in 2024 to conduct. Hillman has conducted world premieres by Shireen Abu Khader, Matthew Emery, and Sarah Quartel, among others. www.jamiehillman.net



VENICE, PLACE OF CREATION, NOW AND FOREVER

BERNARDINO ZANETTI

Organist, composer and conductor, Venice, Italy

VENICE IS ONE OF THE MOST LOVED AND VISITED CITIES IN THE WORLD. IT CONTAINS MANY HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND BEAUTIFUL CHURCHES, AND MANY ARTISTS HAVE FOUND INSPIRATION FOR THEIR WORKS HERE. THE CITY IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF SEVERAL NOTABLE COMPOSERS INCLUDING ANDREA AND GIOVANNI GABRIELI, ANTONIO VIVALDI, TOMASO ALBINONI AND LUIGI NONO, WHILE OTHER ARTISTS, SUCH AS CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI, SPENT LONG PERIODS OF THEIR LIVES HERE. I HAVE RECENTLY BECOME AWARE OF A REAL REBIRTH OF VOCAL AND CHAMBER MUSIC.

Taking advantage of the unique acoustic characteristics of Venetian buildings and churches, many cultural associations and religious institutions have been promoting vocal and chamber music events such as festivals, masterclasses and concerts, thereby keeping alive Venice's ancient tradition. Particular emphasis has been given to many contemporary composers thanks

to performances by amateur or professional ensembles, and it is a clear sign of the sensitivity of many young directors in contemporary music. Among them is Lorenzo Donati, professor and composer at Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello, who has been creating some interesting projects, the results of which are eagerly awaited.

The city of Venice is also visited every year by choirs from all over the world who plan their holidays to include an outstanding performance in one of the city's numerous churches or typical squares called "campielli".

A growing interest in choral music is also manifested by the "Gran Teatro La Fenice", undoubtedly a temple of opera, where I have worked as a choir singer for almost thirty years. In fact, a big concert performed by the "King's Singers" was scheduled for the season 2019, alongside one of my own compositions for choir with five mixed voices, organ and small instrumental ensemble.

In the context of orchestral and choral music, "Teatro La Fenice" is the major musical institution in Venice. The theatre's choir and orchestra are a production centre of fundamental importance. In recent years, the theatre's annual

programmes have begun a deep transformation by expanding and internationalizing the repertoire, both with regard to the symphonic-chamber genre as well as opera.

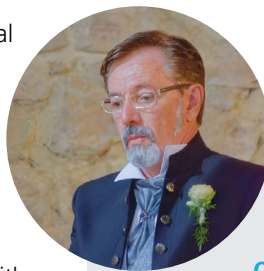
Two important events, involving choir and orchestra, are worthy of mention. First, the New Year's concert at La Fenice, broadcast live by the main Italian television channel RAI 1. Many famous conductors have taken to the podium for these concerts, including Riccardo Muti, Myung-Whun Chung, Daniel Harding, Fabio Luisi. Secondly, the summer concert that takes place in one of the most beautiful squares in the world, St Mark's, which this year includes a performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony under the direction of Juraj Valčuha.

In 2007 the theatre set up the Philharmonic Orchestra, which had its debut under the direction of Riccardo Chailly. The company carries out its activity alongside the theatre's annual production, with particular reference to the chamber music genre.

Of fundamental importance is the international festival "Biennale Musica", which has reached its 67th edition this year. From 1930 to now, the festival has presented numerous events in the field of



contemporary music, focusing on new experimental musical forms that belong to the history of music. This year, the festival is dedicated to digital sound and anticipates a wide spectrum of stylistic trends and innovative creative research in the international music scene. There will be performative and online installation forms as well as many world premieres commissioned by the Biennale and co-produced with the most important international festivals.



BERNARDINO ZANETTI was born in Musile di Piave (Venice). He holds diplomas in Organ and Composition; Piano; Pre-polyphony and Gregorian chant; Choral Music and Choir Direction; Canto (singer branch); Canto (educational branch); Vocal Chamber Music. As an organist he has held concerts in Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, Poland. He has recorded CDs as an organist and choir director, earning national awards and performing concerts throughout Europe. His vocal and instrumental compositions have won prizes and awards in various national and international composition competitions and have been published by: Ed. Europee- MI, ACP-To, Feniarco-Italia, UtOrpheus-Bo, Armelin-Pd, Piles Ed. de Musica de Valencia-Es. Theatre artist at "La Fenice di Venezia" – as a solo singer he has interpreted works by Caldara, Lotti, Fauré, Petrassi, Nono, Bussotti, Sinopoli.
bernardino.zanetti@libero.it

Other orchestral groups active in Venice are:

- I Virtuosi di Venezia (San Marco chamber orchestra) – founded with the intention of reproducing the atmosphere and genius of Antonio Vivaldi's works.
- The Musici Veneziani and The Interpreti Veneziani who work in many of the city's deconsecrated churches, such as San Teodoro and San Vidal. These orchestral groups offer events for the many tourists who visit Venice every year and are often accompanied by solo singers. All their performances are embellished with splendid costumes and jewels made in the 18th century.
- The orchestra of the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello – formed by young students from the Institute. It contributes to enriching the city's cultural and musical offering.

Edited by Laura Massey, United Kingdom



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR CHORAL MUSIC



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Emily Kuo Vong

**THE NEW EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE
IFCM CHORAL MAGAZINE**

**WORLD YOUTH CHOIR ALUMNI SESSION
2023 — SESSION SUMMARY**

Joana Costa

**SHARING SPIRITUALLY-INSPIRED CHORAL
MUSIC: EXPLORING COMMONALITIES AND
PROMISING PRACTICES**

Matthias Balzer & Ki Adams



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



EMILY KUO VONG

IFCM President

IFCM has a fresh new Board after the 2023 Istanbul World Symposium on Choral Music (WSCM). All the members of the new Board are ambitious and eager to offer their energy, knowledge, experience, and passion.

We had several online Board meetings to establish six independent committees to coordinate different matters. The six main committees, each of which has a clear objective, are called the BIG 6, including (1) Programmes, (2) Governance, (3) Education and Outreach, (4) Membership, (5) Fundraising and Marketing, and (6) Communication. In view of the specific requirements of the different committees, the members of the BIG 6 consist not only of IFCM Board members, but we also intend to invite external personnel who are capable, efficient, and wish to join the BIG 6, even if they don't form part of the IFCM Board. Moreover, Some of the BIG 6 have their own subcategories and subcommittees. Those subcommittees will act separately with their own chair and members, but ultimately they have the same strategy and goal.

Since being established, all the committees and subcommittees respectively have started their own meetings and work, with some of them already making quick progress. I am confident that the BIG 6 will fulfill an important responsibility to carry on IFCM's projects, guarantee its healthy operation, and contribute to its long-term development in the coming three years. Meanwhile, I believe this outstanding team will spare no effort, or enthusiasm, to turn the great vision into reality.

In light of the WSCM 2023 being finished, the new steering committee of WSCM quickly devoted themselves to the preparation of the next WSCM. They selected a negotiation committee under the steering committee to reach potential bidders for the WSCM 2026. By June 29, the members of the negotiation committee had already held meetings with bidders. The IFCM Board will decide who will win the bid to become the partner organiser of the WSCM 2026 after careful analysis and evaluation as the WSCM is a significant brand and project for our federation.

I believe the entire Board will select an excellent partner who has the capabilities, resources, and experience in organising an international choral event of the scale, complexity, and significance of the Symposium. It's not only me, everyone is looking forward to another wonderful WSCM in an appealing city with well-established infrastructure, great transportation connectivity, and top-notch venues. Best wishes,

Edited by Bethany Farr, UK



THE NEW EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE IFCM CHORAL MAGAZINE

Sinem Erenturk, London, Türkiye/United Kingdom

Sinem began her career as a young journalist in Türkiye's only English newspaper at the time, then moved to Pharma where she worked for 15 years covering many roles, mostly dealing with digital marketing. Her life changed dramatically after becoming a mum to twin boys and moving to London with her family 6 years ago where she's a member of a local writers' group in Richmond. Sinem has been singing since she was 8 years old in various choirs from children's choirs and youth choirs in Ankara to mixed choirs in Istanbul and then currently in a philharmonic choir in West London. Recently, Sinem was head of communications in the successful launch of WSCM Istanbul 2023.

As a choral enthusiast, in the editorial board of IFCM, she's looking forward to hopefully bring new perspectives to the spread of choral music around the world, which she sees as an important enabler for a truly connected world.



Aksel Tollåli, Oslo, Norway

I am a musicologist and writer based in Oslo, as well as the President of Ung i Kor, the Norwegian association of children's and youth choirs. My main line of work is as a freelance music critic for various outlets, where I cover classical music and opera, both live and recorded performances. In addition, I am a tenor in the Oslo-based Kammerkoret NOVA as well as in other, project-based choirs.

I am passionate about music criticism, and as a member of the Editorial Board, my main goal is to use reviews to capture the sheer diversity of the wider choral world.



Ana María Raga, Caracas, Venezuela

I am a Venezuelan conductor, lecturer, and leader of several music initiatives. My passion is Transformation: of a student, a choral work, a choir, and I enjoy working on this in every setting, especially as college professor. As choral conductor, I find it fascinating how singers are transformed through the rehearsing method. I feel honoured to be part of the Editorial Board of IFCM's prestigious magazine where I am willing to give ideas, not only with regards content but also the reach of the magazine. I believe that through the internet and other digital tools, the magazine can aid stronger interaction between choral actors (composers, conductors, choral singers, music publishers, choral events, choral audience). Let's go!



Arjay Viray, Dasmarinas Cavite, Philippines

I am Arjay Viray from the Philippines. I currently teach at Guang Ming College in Tagaytay City, Cavite where I deal with Choir, Musicianship, and Music Theory classes. I sang with the World Youth Choir from 2008 to 2011. I hold a Master’s degree in Choral Conducting and am currently pursuing a Doctorate in Curriculum Studies. Music and writing are two things that I have always been passionate about and being in the Editorial Board of the International Choral Magazine allows me to pursue both.



Tomoko Yokoyama, Tokyo, Japan

Dear readers, as a choral singer since childhood and a member of the Japan Choral Association’s International Committee, it is my honour and pleasure to be a member of the Editorial Board. I am an English-Japanese conference interpreter with experience in corporate communication at a global company. We certainly live in a flood of information these days, but I believe that “old-fashioned” media like magazines are still valuable (or even more so) as a source of trustable information. I hope I can play a small part there.



Godfred Edusei Derkyi, Accra, Ghana

I have been associated with the IFCM since 2006. I am a former adviser on Africa to the Board of IFCM, and a founding member of the Africa Federation for Choral Music. I am a retired Bank Executive and Board Chairman of the Winneba Youth Choir of Ghana. I am a published author of a number of award-winning books and a choral music enthusiast and organist. I hope to leverage my long connection with choral music associations, faculty, and enthusiasts in Africa to provide relevant African content in the future publications of the International Choral Magazine.



Dr Debra Shearer-Dirié, Queensland, Australia

I am delighted to be serving on the Editorial Board of the International Choral Magazine. I have served as Editor of the Australian National Choral Association’s (ANCA) publication since 2008, collecting interesting articles and informing ANCA’s members of regional and national events. I am looking forward to bringing the choral activity of my region to the magazine and its readers. After receiving a Master of Music Education and Doctor of Music in Choral Conducting from Indiana University, USA, I returned to Australia to continue my career. I have been the Musical Director of the Brisbane Concert Choir since 2005, leading them on three international tours, founder and Musical Director of Fusion who performed at the World Symposium on Choral Music in Seoul, 2014, and Vintage Voices, a singing ensemble that has been enhancing the wellbeing of older people through music, song and performance since 2010. I have served as President of ANCA and am currently co-convenor of the ANCA biennial Research Conference.



Brett Scott, Cincinnati, USA

Originally from Canada, Brett Scott is Professor of Ensembles and Conducting at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music. Brett is in demand as a lecturer on 20th and 21st century music, with a focus on Canadian composers, and as a performer and interpreter of music by living composers. His authorized biography of composer, educator and soundscape activist R. Murray Schafer was published in 2019. An active writer, Brett has served as Associate Editor of The Choral Scholar and Chief Editor of The Research Memorandum Series. He is passionate about furthering research on choral music from around the world and developing the next generation of choral scholars.



The newly selected Editorial Board of the International Choral Magazine also includes IFCM Board Members Ana Patricia Carbajal Córdoba and Yveline Damas, as well as Jutta Tagger, Editor Emerita, Isabelle Métrope, Managing Editor, and Nadine Robin, IFCM Office Manager.



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WORLD YOUTH CHOIR ALUMNI SESSION 2023

Session Summary

JOANA COSTA

WYC Session manager

THE WORLD YOUTH CHOIR (WYC) IS AN INTERNATIONAL ENSEMBLE OF SOME OF THE BEST YOUNG CHORAL SINGERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. A NON-PROFIT PROGRAMME CREATED IN 1989, IT HAS SINCE GATHERED MORE THAN 1,000 SINGERS FROM 70 COUNTRIES IN ALMOST 40 SESSIONS.

The project is powered by the World Youth Choir Foundation, the legal body behind the project, with the support of three patrons: Jeunesses Musicales International, the International Federation for Choral Music, and the European Choral Association.

The World Youth Choir Alumni Session 2023 was the first to be held in four years, following the 2019 session in France and Portugal. It is an important step for the choir to be back after the interruption due to COVID-19.

"It was the being together again after COVID-19 ... the joy and enthusiasm, and just the sheer pleasure they felt after the silence of the last four years [that made it] a fantastic experience on many levels," said **Ki Adams**, President of the Board of the World Youth Choir Foundation.

Graeme Climie, alumni singer (2019 and 2023 sessions) from Canada, added, *"After all of the pain and tears of canceled projects, hopeless dreams, and years of begging the universe for any opportunity to see each other again, I will spend the rest of my life being thankful for those incredible days where we suspended life itself to delight in each other's company, incredible abilities, and endless optimism to build a better world through music."*

For this session, the choir was composed of 40 alumni singers – all of whom had taken part in a WYC session from 2016 to 2019 – from 26 different countries. The choir gathered for a short rehearsal session and international tour in Croatia, Slovenia, and Hungary from 3-12 June 2023.

Various organizations have collaborated to make the 2023 session possible. These partners include Jeunesses Musicales Croatia, the Ministry of Culture and Media of Croatia, Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (JSKD, Public fund of the Republic of Slovenia for cultural activities), Jeunesses Musicales

Hungary, Veszprém-Balaton 2023 and the European Music Council.

The choir performed under the artistic direction of Zoltán Pad in his native Hungary and under guest conductor Sebastjan Vrhovnik (Slovenia) in Grožnjan (Croatia) and Ljubljana (Slovenia).

Zoltán Pad is an internationally renowned conductor. Since 2014, he has been the chief conductor of the Hungarian Radio Choir. He conducted the World Youth Choir in its 2017 session. He is frequently invited to conduct master courses and regularly works with youth choirs. He is a recurring adjudicator at international choral and conductor competitions.

Sebastjan Vrhovnik is an Associate Professor of Choral Conducting at the Ljubljana Academy of Music. He is currently the conductor of the Ljubljana Academy of Music Chamber Choir, the Ljubljana Music Society Mixed Choir and permanent guest conductor of the *Zbor Slovenske filharmonije* (Slovenian Philharmonic Choir). (Conductors' photo © Jovana Kuzmanović)



GROŽNJAN (CROATIA)

The World Youth Choir Alumni Session 2023 started in Croatia, with the group arriving in Grožnjan on 3 June. After four long years of interruption, the group was finally reunited. Hugs, laughter and tears of joy filled the air as the singers embraced the opportunity to connect and be together in person once again.

Even though most of the singers already knew each other from previous sessions, there was also space to meet new faces! The first day ended with some ice-breaking games so the singers could connect with each other and share their expectations about the session. The intense rehearsal session started immediately on the second day, where the choir got the chance to work on the repertoire with Zoltán Pad and Sebastjan Vhrovnik.

Following three days of rigorous rehearsals, the choir performed their first concert at the Church of Sts Vitus, Modest and Crescentia in Grožnjan on 6 June.

Jovana Flipović, alumni singer (2017, 2018 and 2023 sessions) from Serbia, described the project as *“a place where people from different parts of the world, different cultures, different nationalities come to one place and unite into one singing soul and pair of lungs. That is the most amazing way to realize that we all belong and, even though each of us is individually unique, together we are one. World Youth Choir is an experience that every singer in the world should get to live.”*

LJUBLJANA (SLOVENIA)

The choir travelled to Slovenia by bus and the rehearsal session continued.

During the time in Slovenia, the singers had an All-Stars Evening, which stood out as one of the highlights of the session. The singers prepared something special to showcase to the entire group, and it was truly incredible to witness the immense effort people put into this moment. They collaborated with their colleagues to present something representing their own country or simply something immensely enjoyable that brought laughter to everyone.

Outside of rehearsal, the singers also had the chance to explore Ljubljana Castle and the city.

The choir performed at Julij Betetto Hall, University of Ljubljana Academy of Music, on 9 June. The premiere of the commissioned piece “The Bells”, composed by Nana Forte, was one of the highlights of the program. Nana Forte was present in the audience, which added an extra layer of significance to the performance. Furthermore, Matej Kastelic, composer of the piece “Otche Nash”, and Samo Vovk, composer of the piece “Ta na Solbici” also attended the concert.

“The World Youth Choir is truly the most amazing and miraculous thing that I’ve ever seen and experienced. I’ll never stop being grateful that I met you, sang with you, was accepted, and loved by all of you. We gave those of us that fell down the strength to get up and feel at home again, we reforged our bonds to last, and we showed in our own ways how much we care about each other, and how much we love this project. It is a treasure whose richness and profound impact can’t be measured or contained, no matter how much we try to put our feelings and thoughts into words.”

Elias Johansson, alumni singer (2017, 2018, 2019 and 2023 sessions) from Sweden.

BUDAPEST AND VESZPRÉM (HUNGARY)

The choir travelled then to Hungary and performed at the Grand Hall of the Liszt Academy, in Budapest. What a concert! What a venue!

The World Youth Choir’s concert in Budapest served as the grand finale of two significant conferences held from 6-10 June. The first was the third edition of the Bach 2 Future conference, organized by Papageno. The second was the European Forum on Music 2023, a collaborative effort between the European Music Council, the Hungarian Music Council and Papageno. You can find more details of the World Youth Choir’s performance in Budapest on the “Eyes and Ears on Budapest” blog, featured on the Papageno website at <https://papageno.hu>.

NEXT STOP: VESZPRÉM!

During the time in Veszprém, the choir had the opportunity to visit and swim in Lake Balaton, which is the largest lake in Central Europe and one of the region’s foremost tourist destinations.

The choir performed its last concert at Saint Michael’s Cathedral in Veszprém on 11 June. The astonishing acoustics and vibrant audience made the choir’s last concert more than special.

As the singers stood on the stage, basking in the applause and cheers of the audience, tears of joy and gratitude welled up in their eyes. It was a beautiful moment of realization that they had accomplished something truly extraordinary together.

We could feel the bond formed among the singers during their time together. From the initial days of introductions and ice-breakers to the rehearsals and shared meals, they had forged deep connections and lifelong friendships. They laughed, cried, and supported each other through the highs and lows of the journey. Though the session had come to an end, the impact of the music and the connections forged will endure, leaving an indelible mark on the singers’ hearts and the



hearts of all who had the privilege to witness the World Youth Choir 2023 Alumni Session's inspiring performances.

Alberto Fernández, an alumni singer (2019 and 2023 sessions) from Spain put it best when he said *"The World Youth Choir is the most important musical and personal experience I have had in my life. WYC left a deep footprint in my heart and gave me the necessary energy to come back home with a deep desire on being a choir teacher and devote my work on reaching out and making more people to sing, conduct and compose. My career and my life was deeply transformed by this project."*

Stay tuned from upcoming audition [information](#) for the 2024 World Youth Choir Session.

Edited by Karen Bradberry, Australia



*Top: WYC in Veszprém
Middle: Rehearsal in Grožnjan
Bottom: WYC is excellency but also lots of fun
All pictures © Jovana Kuzmanović*



JOANA COSTA is the manager of the World Youth Choir and the main point of contact for singers, organisers and the general public in regard to operational matters of the World Youth Choir session. Besides managing the World Youth Choir session, Joana is a freelance cultural manager, focussed on supporting the growth and development of cultural organisations through project management, events organisation, grant writing and social media management. Joana participated in the YEMP (Young Event Management Program) 2021, organized by the European Choral Association connected to the Europa Cantat Festival, in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She has been the Project Manager of Lisbon Choral Conducting Masterclass and worked as Operations Manager in World Choral EXPO 2022, Lisbon. She is a member of the Youth Committee of the European Choral Association. Joana is also a singer and vocal teacher. manager@worldyouthchoir.org (Edited by Sam Hemsworth, UK)

SHARING SPIRITUALLY-INSPIRED CHORAL MUSIC:

Exploring commonalities and promising practices

MATTHIAS BALZER & KI ADAMS

Sharing spiritually-inspired choral music is a new, innovative, and relevant focus of choir meetings and choral activity all over the world. This topic was at the core of the well-attended panel discussion and dialogue held on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 at the World Symposium on Choral Music (WSCM) in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The panel was composed of participants from various countries with different spiritual backgrounds:

- Ki Adams (Canada), IFCM and moderator of the discussion
- Matthias Balzer (Germany), International Federation Pueri Cantores
- Gábor Móczár (Hungary), IFCM
- Ramona Wegenast (Germany), ModFestivals
- Naomi Faran (Israel), Moran Choir
- Hussein Janmohamed (Canada), composer and independent scholar
- Sherryl Sewepagaham (Canada), composer and member of the Little Red River Cree Nation

The discussion focused broadly on the impact that a conscious exchange of spiritually-inspired choral music from diverse cultural and religious communities might have on the pursuit of deeper understanding between singers and, ultimately, a more peaceful world.

Panelists unanimously agreed that 70% of the choral compositions performed at international choral events have a spiritual origin, even though they are generally selected by choral directors and choirs who have no religious background or affiliation.

This compositional and programming phenomenon was seen as a good starting point for creating and facilitating new encounters and exchanges that focus not simply on the music itself, but also on its origin and background. This is all the more relevant in the case of choral singing, in which the combination of words

and music provides a much more tangible and holistic means of access to other cultures (and religions) than theoretical and academic discussions.

Opportunities for this sharing of spiritually-inspired choral music are provided by choir festivals and competitions, within ensembles whose singers come from different religious/spiritual contexts, and through learning and performing compositions that combine music with different spiritual origins.

Several panelists described their effective, productive experiences with these kinds of exchanges:

- Sherryl Sewepagaham, whose work with the Vancouver Youth Choir (Canada) includes choral music rooted in and influenced by different spiritual practices (Islam and Indigenous communities)
- Hussein Janmohamed, who consciously combines different spiritual backgrounds and practices in his compositions for choir
- Ramona Wegenast, whose biennial festival Musica Sacra International brings together musicians from the world's major religions for a week in Marktobendorf, Bavaria (Germany) for concerts as well as discussions/workshops with schoolchildren from the region
- Naomi Faran, who reported her encouraging experiences when singers who come from different, and sometimes even hostile, regions make music together



The initiators of the panel, Gábor Móczár and Matthias Balzer, expressed their view that spirituality is an essential part of what it means to be human, and finds expression in different religions and spiritual practices. As music crosses linguistic and cultural boundaries, the unique practice of sharing spiritually-inspired choral music could therefore, on the one hand, address the need for transcendent expression among human beings and, at the same time, promote mutual understanding in a multipolar world marked by many conflicts.



MATTHIAS BALZER was born in Fulda in 1955. After graduating from high school, he studied church music at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main from 1975 to 1979, including organ with Prof. Edgar Krapp, and choral and orchestra conducting with Prof. Helmut Rilling. During his organ solo studies, which he completed in 1982, he undertook chamber music and piano accompaniment lessons with Prof. Rainer Hoffmann and Prof. Hartmut Höll, as well as harpsichord lessons with Johann Sonnleitner, among others. From 1980 to 1995 Balzer worked as a church musician at St. Nikolaus in Friedrichshafen, Lake Constance. There he was, among other things, founder and artistic director of the annual "International Organ Academy, Lake Constance". In the period between 1995 and 2021, Matthias Balzer was responsible for church music in the diocese of Trier and directed the Episcopal Church Music School there. From 2007 to 2019, Matthias Balzer was president at the helm of the German Children's and Youth Choir Association Pueri Cantores. He is currently vice-president of the national as well as the international choral association Pueri Cantores, where he is responsible in particular for the planning and implementation of the choral festivals. In addition, Balzer also represents the German choral associations as vice-president in the "Bundesmusikverband Chor und Orchester", the association of all amateur music associations in Germany.
matthias.balzer@pueri-cantores.de

Together with Ki Adams, who carefully moderated the panel, all panelists and delegates agreed that the WSCM session was only the prelude to further steps, in the course of which best-practice examples and ideas will be collected and concrete plans of action will be promoted.

All participants, including the audience, were unanimous in their opinion that this idea of focused exchange should be pursued more intensively and implemented as widely as possible in future choir encounters as well as in choral compositions.

The panel was framed and structured by short vocal performances by Roula Abou Baker (Lebanon), Sherryl Sewepagaham (Canada), and Hussein Janmohamed (Canada), the quality and distinct stylistic and spiritual diversity of which delighted the audience.

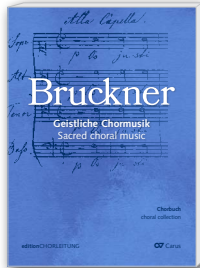
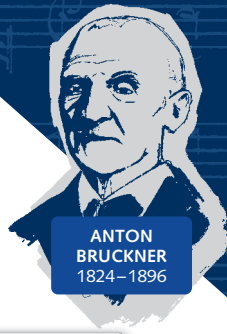
Edited by Katie Sykes, UK



KI ADAMS, a native of Birmingham, Alabama (USA), is an honorary research professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Canada) where he taught in the undergraduate/graduate music and music education programs for 25 years. Currently a board member for the International Federation of Choral Music and President of the World Youth Choir Foundation, Ki is Founding Co-Director of The Singing Network, a collective for generating and producing a series of voice-singing-choral experiences ranging from workshops, seminars, master-classes, and dialogues to the biennial *International Symposium on Singing and Song*.
kiadams@mun.ca

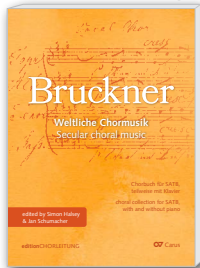
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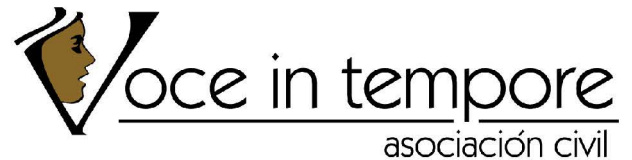
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CHORAL WORLD NEWS



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THE EUROPEAN FESTIVAL OF YOUTH CHOIRS BASEL: 2000 YOUNG SINGERS AT THE HEART OF EUROPE

IVA RADULOVIĆ

IFCM Secretary General

THE EUROPEAN FESTIVAL OF YOUTH CHOIRS BASEL IS A CELEBRATED EVENT THAT BRINGS TOGETHER TALENTED YOUNG SINGERS FROM ACROSS EUROPE AND BEYOND. HELD BIENNIALLY IN THE PICTURESQUE CITY OF BASEL, SWITZERLAND, THIS FESTIVAL HAS BECOME A VIBRANT PLATFORM FOR SHOWCASING THE EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES OF YOUTH CHOIRS AND PROMOTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE.

With a rich history and a commitment to artistic excellence, the festival has evolved into a renowned gathering that not only provides remarkable performances, but also offers workshops, masterclasses, and a range of cultural and social activities. In this article, we will delve into the 13th edition of the European Youth Choir Festival Basel that was held between 17-21 May 2023, exploring its significance, highlighting notable performances and participating choirs, discussing the programme and schedule, and examining the impact it has on youth choirs and their members.

The European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel was first established in 1992, born out of a desire to promote harmony and unity through music. It was the brainchild of a group of music enthusiasts who recognised the transformative power of choral singing. Since its inception, the festival has grown in popularity and has become a highly anticipated event in the European choral calendar.

The 13th European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel promised to showcase a stellar lineup of choral groups from Belgium, Finland, France, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania,

Latvia, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine and, of course, Switzerland. Among the participating choirs were internationally acclaimed ensembles as well as promising young voices on the brink of artistic breakthroughs. This diverse collection of choirs brought a diverse range of musical styles and repertoire, ensuring a captivating and memorable experience for all festival attendees.

CONCERTS

The festival kicked off with a grand opening ceremony and concert, setting the stage for an unforgettable musical journey. The ceremony was a vibrant celebration of music, culture, and unity, featuring captivating performances and inspiring speeches, with all choirs sharing the “stage”.

Throughout the festival, participants and audiences could immerse themselves in a series of daily concerts and performances. These events took place in various venues across Basel, showcasing the immense talent and creativity of the participating choirs. From intimate chamber recitals to large-scale choral spectacles, the festival lineup promised something for every musical taste.

The grand finale of the festival was a spectacular closing ceremony that brought all participants together for a final showcase of choral excellence. It was a joyful celebration of the friendships forged, the music shared, and the memories created.

WORKSHOPS AND MASTERCLASSES FOR CHOIRS AND CONDUCTORS

At the 13th European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel, participants had the incredible opportunity to take part in a variety of engaging workshops and masterclasses. Whether you were a member of a choir or a conductor, there was something for everyone.

Workshop topics and themes covered a wide range of musical and performance aspects. From vocal technique and repertoire exploration to conducting skills and stage presence, the workshops catered to different levels of experience and interests. Participants could delve into the intricacies of choral harmony, hone their expressive singing abilities, or even learn new conducting techniques to take back to their own choirs.

Distinguished conductors with extensive experience in leading youth choirs led workshops, providing valuable mentorship and inspiration. Their infectious passion for choral music and dedication to nurturing young talent

were truly awe-inspiring. One of the highlights of the festival was The Choir Boat where singing enthusiasts of all generations met on a musical level, calmly sailing on the river. The day concluded with musical and culinary delights.

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Beyond the musical realm, the festival also offered participants a chance to immerse themselves in Basel's rich cultural heritage. The festival recognised the importance of social connections and networking opportunities for participants. From casual meet-ups and dinners to lively parties and musical jam sessions, there was a vibrant atmosphere of camaraderie and celebration. These social interactions not only added to the overall festival experience but also created a sense of community and support among participants.

IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH CHOIR FESTIVAL

One of the most significant impacts of the 13th European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel was the opportunity for youth choirs from different countries to come together and collaborate.

By sharing their musical traditions and learning from one another, young singers gained a broader perspective and a deeper appreciation for the power of music as a universal language. These collaborations not only enriched their musical abilities, but also nurtured a sense of global citizenship and understanding. For youth choirs, the festival served as a platform for professional development and skill enhancement. The festival acted as a catalyst for growth, pushing participants to expand their horizons, explore new musical territories, and embrace artistic challenges.



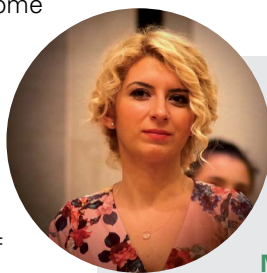
Body Percussion © Ueli Renggli

Lastly, the festival played a vital role in building lifelong connections and friendships among participants. The shared experiences, both on and off the stage, forged bonds that extend beyond the duration of the event.

Participants from different countries and backgrounds came together, united by their love for music and choral singing. The festival created a supportive and nurturing environment where

lifelong friendships were formed, creating a network of like-minded individuals from around the world. The 13th European Youth Choir Festival Basel was an unforgettable experience that left an indelible mark on all who participated. Beyond the captivating performances and musical growth, the festival provided a space for cultural exchange, personal development, and lifelong connections.

Edited by Charlotte Sullivan, UK



IVA RADULOVIĆ has been **Secretary General** at the **International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM)** since **2022**. Prior to that, from **2019**, she was **Operations Manager**. She studied at the **Faculty of Music** at the **University of the Arts in Belgrade, Serbia**, graduating in **musicology** in **2011**. She completed a **master's degree** at the same **Faculty** in **2013**. She was **Executive Director** of **Jeunesse Musicales Belgrade**, where she organised one of the most prominent classical music competitions in Belgrade in **2015**. From **2015** until **2019**, she was **Executive Director** of the academic cultural-artistic society "**Branko Krstanovic**." In the international field, she started as a member of the **YEMP (Young Event Manager Programme)** of the **European Choral Association** in **2012**. After that, she was a member of the **Youth Committee of ECA** and participated in organising some of Europe's major choral events: **Europa Cantat 2012**, **Europa Cantat Junior**, **Eurochoir**, **Europa Cantat 2015**. secretarygeneral@ifcm.net



...by sharing their musical traditions and learning from one another, young singers gained a broader perspective and a deeper appreciation for the power of music as a universal language. These collaborations not only enriched their musical abilities, but also nurtured a sense of global citizenship and understanding.



THE EFFECT OF THE KENYA MUSIC FESTIVAL ON CHORAL QUALITY AND STANDARDS

SYLVESTER OTIENO OGAMA

Composer and Choral Director, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

The [Kenya Music Festival](#)

provides opportunities for artistic and cultural performances that encourage and promote the study, practice and development of music, dance and elocution. Choirs use such opportunities to stage items that both advance the objectives of the institutions that sponsor them and address emerging issues while entertaining the public. In return, composers look forward to the credible artistic evaluation of such items and any necessary instructive recommendations for growth, regardless of the scores given to the choral performances. Therefore, by using definable, consistent and verifiable terminology, adjudicators' remarks go a long way towards shaping the quality and standards of the compositions that proceed to the next levels of that year's festival and the compositions written for subsequent festivals. These remarks also improve the quality of choral performances, provided they are well interpreted. Adjudication is streamlined through the annual adjudicators' and trainers' workshops, where over ten thousand participants receive guidance with regard to systematic compositional analysis, providing instructive comments and rating performances.



48 to 60 members should last between 6 and 9 minutes on stage; performers must be bona fide members of the primary schools, secondary schools, training colleges, universities or teachers' clubs they represent; a neat and accurate music score must be provided to the adjudicators beforehand, and so on. Since the KMF is a mammoth event that accredits and promotes musicians, many composers and conductors take the time to participate and, as a result, the standards here tend to be transferred to other festivals through workshops and performances.

CONSIDERATION OF THE FOUR COMBINATIONAL OPERATIONS OF MUSIC

Consistent evaluation of the appropriateness of music in terms of medium, genre, form and texture means that composers are conscious of the importance of such considerations as they prepare their music for the KMF. As a result, there is a good variety of music for all kinds of choirs.

EFFECTIVE USE OF THE ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

The art of composing music largely depends on how certain tools are appropriately utilised to put together ideas into a song. Since not every composer in Kenya is a music composition major, the KMF provides opportunities for sharing ideas and knowledge. Today, more songs presented at the festival reflect the proper manipulation of rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, dynamic, formal and textual elements than ever before. The same music is used for other events as well.

ADHERENCE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

Principles of composition are tools or devices that help organise sounds and the elements of music into

THE FESTIVAL CRITERIA

The Kenya Music Festival, supported by the Ministry of Education, has two main categories of composition, namely original compositions based on themes of the composers' choosing and special compositions based on themes provided by various sponsors. The criteria state that songs must be written in the vernacular, Kiswahili or idiomatic English; songs can contain either sacred or secular text; songs should be gender-specific in terms of voicing (SSA, TTBB or SATB); standard compositions for choirs with 36 to 42 members should not exceed 4 minutes while advanced compositions for choirs with

cohesive works. Composers for the KMF are consistently encouraged to adhere to principles such as variety of ideas, meaningful repetition, harmonic and formal balance, sensitivity to acoustics in terms of performance directions, aspects of tension and resolution, well-thought-out transitions and unity of purpose. Above all, it is the interaction, not the isolation, of individual elements and principles of composition that makes music enjoyable. Composers such as Henry Wanjala, Sylvester Otieno, Fredrick Ngala, Timothy Njora, Humphrey Kisia, Franklin Etyang, Esther Buyekha, Jackline Bulinda, Joyce Mochere, Mellitus Wanyama, Wilson Shitandi, Gabriel Musungu Boniface Mghanga, Sammy Otieno, Arthur Kemoli, Okuku Zalo and many others have written resourceful music for festivals and pedagogy.

PREPARATION OF CHOIRS

Through the various KMF workshops, choir trainers are guided on how to conduct effective auditions for determining the musical aptitude of individuals. Emphasis is put on vocal range, sense of pitch and rhythm, vocal energy, proper phrasing and expression, alertness and control, tonal blend, choral balance and proper diction, and so on. Other factors such as age, gender, the number of singers per voice section, the preferred song language and text, the structure and the musicality of the piece also matter a lot.

CHORAL PERFORMANCES AS A MEANS OF EDUTAINMENT

As the Kenya Music Festival is an educational event, performances are expected to be decent and reflective of proper choral techniques and standards. The choirs appearing in the KMF work hard on their:

- **Intonation:** Conductors strive to ensure that aspects of tone quality, pitch, blend and balance are approached with care. Intonation is considered one of the most obvious marks of a good or bad ensemble.
- **Vocal technique:** Singers consistently improve their articulation, rhythmic accuracy, fluency, flexibility and breath control, which further contribute to a better choral score.
- **Tone:** Defined as sound or timbre that is pleasing to the ear, the words associated with this term might be “evenness” and “direction”. Adjudicators encourage the coordination of individual sounds in order to produce an effective blend when singing as an ensemble.
- **Rhythmic integrity and interpretation:** This relates to style, tempo, phrasing, dynamic contrast and sensitivity to the main pulse of the music. Too much rushing or slowing down is discouraged, as it impedes good communication of the music. Proper attention should be given to the intricacies of the rhythm in order to maintain cohesiveness and the idiom.

- **Musical effect and diction:** Adjudicators emphasise phrasing and melodic sensitivity, artistry, expressiveness and musical feeling, among other things. Performers are persuaded to convey precise verbal sounds within the context of the musical line; diction is important for communication but should be part of the overall effect of the performance.
- **Musicianship:** This involves sensitivity to all aspects of execution: phrasing, dynamics (loud and soft singing), vocal attack – anything that will convey a sense of security in the performance and will not distract the listener. The performers’ mental preparation of the music should be portrayed; performers are usually guided to think carefully about how the music should be performed.
- **Aesthetic value:** Adjudicators evaluate the work as a whole, rating aesthetic effect and appeal beyond mere technical proficiency. Above all, since Kenya is a dancing nation, choirs are consistently encouraged to perform in a manner that strikes a healthy balance between emotional and physical involvement. Too much dancing that is not an emotional expression of musical appreciation is ineffective, no matter how vigorous and decorative it may be.

THE KMF AND THE RISE OF CHORAL ENSEMBLES

Most of the outstanding choral groups in Kenya are products of the Kenya Music Festival. These include Sylvester Otieno’s Blend Ensemble-K and Talanta Afrika Singers, Ken Wakia’s Nairobi Chamber Chorus, Wilson Shitandi’s STAR Chorale, Elijah Adongo’s Almasi Chorale, David Isindu’s Nairobi Girls Chorale, Joseph Muyale’s African Cultural Choir, William Akunda’s Sifa Melodies, Abbey Chokera’s Bel Canto Chorus, Filah’s Redfourth Chorus and Philip Mbinji’s Coast Chorus. All these groups and many more also contribute to the membership and quality of various church choirs in Kenya as well. It is pleasing to note that Kenyan choral music and performing groups are increasingly in demand internationally.

Edited by Kelly Harrison, USA



SYLVESTER OTIENO OGAMA is a renowned composer and choral director based at Kenyatta University. He is in demand as a music festival adjudicator and is currently the chair of the Parastatals, Ministries, Companies and Counties Choral Organisation in Kenya (PAMICCCO). silvo2009@hotmail.com — [Facebook](#) — [YouTube](#)

PHILOKALIA INSTITUTE AND CHOIR

“THE ART IN MISSION”

S. MARANA SAAD

Founder and the President of Philokalia Institute and Organization, Lebanon

TEN YEARS OF BEING A CONDUCTOR OF A CHOIR OF MORE THAN 200 CHILDREN AND ADULTS WERE A VALIDATION AND A SPIRITUAL INVITATION TO FOUND PHILOKALIA IN 2019, AS A NEW INSTITUTION, ART AS A MISSION IN THE CHURCH, FOR SOCIETY. THE POWER OF ART IN CONTRIBUTING TO ONE'S LIFE INSPIRED ME TO FOUND PHILOKALIA. I WITNESSED ART ELEVATING SOULS, DEFINING VISIONS, AND CHANGING MINDSETS. THEREFORE, PHILOKALIA'S FOUNDING VALUE IS A SOLEMN VALIDATION OF THE SPIRITUAL ROLE OF ART. PHILOKALIA IS THE LIGHT GENERATED BY THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND LIFE, OF LOVE AND BEAUTY.

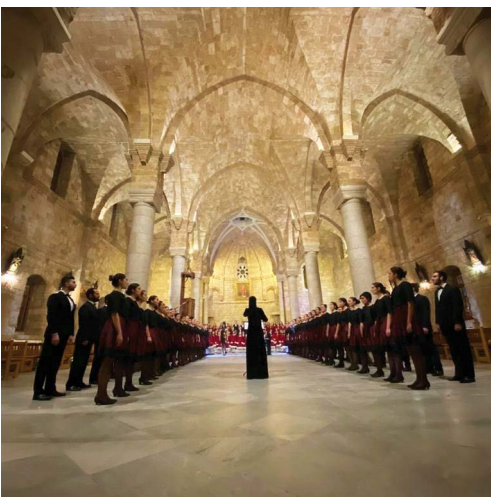
My spiritual and theological backgrounds intertwined music throughout my 22 years in the Lebanese Maronite Order. Sacred Music was the first step that paved the way towards taking on the mission of art. Throughout my musical experience in the monastery, my scope of art became wider, encountering a diversity of people, cultures, and experiences. Therefore, I thought that Philokalia would be home for any artist willing to bring change and positivity to this world, to whomever was dreaming, searching for meaning in art, in love and in life. Philokalia brought the power of art both in and out the church together, towards a new evangelization. Art is in the middle,

with the mission of regenerating the spiritual meaning of an artist's life, and the revival of the call of God.

PHILOKALIA'S HISTORY

It is through “artistic creativity” that Man embodies the “image of God”. One of the bases of Philokalia is John Paul II's letter to Artists in 1999: “*God therefore called man into existence, committing to him the craftsman's task.*” After 22 years in the Lebanese Maronite Order, teaching generations theology and music, I had to respond to a bigger call, which is art in mission. The Institute and the Choir that I established in the monastery in 2018 as the “Saint Rafqa Institute and Choir” were brought to a bigger mission, and then Philokalia was born.

Philokalia, which means “the love of beauty” in Greek, is an artistic Organization and Institute, that I founded in 2019 under the Benediction and Patronage of His Beatitude Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Rai, who dedicated the Visitation Monastery in Mount Lebanon as main campus for this new



mission. Convinced that every change requires an educational journey, Patriarch Rai commended Philokalia to lead a new approach, engaging diverse people, to preserve their identity, to take initiatives in art and in knowledge, to revive the commitment for and with younger generations. Rooted in the rich culture of Lebanon, Philokalia aims to be an instrument for promoting arts and social skills in a welcoming environment.

PHILOKALIA ORGANIZATION

Philokalia is a non-governmental and nonprofit organization bringing together artists from various fields of art, to showcase art in all its dimensions, to encourage young people to become producers of art and culture. It stimulates cooperation between artists from all nations, regions and cultures, improves their economic and social position at national and international levels, defends their substantive and moral rights, highlights and preserves heritage through language, literature and music.

PHILOKALIA INSTITUTE

According to Philokalia's mission, the Institute aims to educate, promote and inspire students to achieve their artistic and musical potential and to leave a mark in their field, providing them with both theoretical and practical disciplines and by developing their capacities throughout their education. Divided into five departments, namely music, arts & crafts, culinary arts, spirituality & culture, and the art of leadership & management, its doors are open to people from all cultures, nationalities, and religions, as well as individuals with special needs.

The Institute has a highly qualified teaching board in the Music Department, combining the traditional, classical, and modern programs for vocal and instrumental disciplines – both oriental and occidental – and meets the professional requirements and the needs of our current modern time.

Aiming to provide all musicians with a welcoming environment and technical support, the music department was behind creating groups, ensembles, and schools to target a specific audience of artists. The *Ashtar Vocal Ensemble* was founded as a professional group targeting Arabic-oriental music in all its aspects. It brings together artists around a unified oriental sound, spreading the Arabic-oriental and Lebanese musical culture. The *Hymnos Vocal Ensemble* of classical singers spreads the Classical music culture in the MENA region.

The Ensemble supports young Lebanese composers, conductors, musicians, singers in the field to express themselves in the country and the region.

PHILOKALIA CHOIR (ADULT & CHILDREN)

The Philokalia Choir has established its reputation as one of the leading choirs in Lebanon. Since its foundation in 2010 as the Saint Rafqa Institute Choir, the many concerts, international festivals and occasions conducted each year have allowed the choir to showcase their work technically, vocally and musically. Consisting of 80 adults and 140 children, the choir has the warm oriental sound of the Orient and Lebanon. The Philokalia Choir provides education in the field of music for both choir singers and soloists.

The goals of the choir are to encourage young people to preserve their heritage and motivate them to research, create and innovate, to form artists through groups of experts and within the framework of specific programs.

The Philokalia Choir covered and mastered a wide repertoire ranging from sacred to secular music, from Arabic Oriental to Classical music, alongside prominent singers, musicians, artists and orchestras. The Choir carried the oriental Lebanese voice to France, Cyprus, Virginia – Washington



(USA), Germany, Italy and Poland. In addition, the Choir has recorded seven albums of Lebanese, oriental and sacred music, performed soundtracks for TV and movies, and sang in media programs as special guests.

CONCLUSION

The ever-deteriorating economic situation in Lebanon is leaving Lebanese citizens in despair and hopeless. The mission of Philokalia becomes harder as art now is no longer perceived as a priority compared to life’s essentials that are now the only need in society. This is leading to neglecting art and culture, the most important components of a nation’s growth. However, the value of art is decreasing amongst state actors, institutions, and society, where the focus now is majorly humanitarian. The critical situation in the country is threatening the preservation of culture, while art is still the supreme means to spread joy and beauty and infuse rays of hope in the hearts those who have lost it and letting the burdened express themselves.

In contrast with all the above-mentioned hardships, Philokalia finds its role and presence among its community to be the most crucial, today more than ever. In all circumstances, Philokalia will always fight for the importance of art in advocacy and will spread messages of change and positive reform, deriving from its belief that civilizations flourish and grow through it. Art and culture are the assets and the identity of each nation.

Therefore, Philokalia considers art to be complementary to the essential needs of life. The institute and organization are keen to promote all forms of art and to take the lead on preserving our heritage and being a therapeutic process that will help students, musicians and artists overcome these challenging crises.



SR. MARANA SAAD is the Founder and President of the Philokalia Institute and Organization. She has a PhD in Monastic Theology from Saint Anselm’s University – Rome and a PhD in Music from Holy Spirit University of Kaslik – Lebanon. S. Marana is a Theology and Musicology instructor at several universities and institutes. She has been a member of the Lebanese National Commission for Unesco Lebanon since 2022. She studied choral conducting under Maestro Walter Marzilli at the Institute of Sacred Music in Rome. In 2010, she founded Saint Rafqa’s Institute Choir (for young people and children), known since 2018 as the Philokalia Choir, where she is currently teaching and conducting. She also founded the “Hymnos” Philokalia Vocal Ensemble and the “Ashtar” Arabic Oriental Ensemble in 2022 as professional ensembles. She obtained Executive Certificates in Strategic Management and Leadership from Georges Washington University, School of Business, USA (2018) and in Sensitization to Music Therapy, Nantes Music Therapy Institute, France (2013). Sr. Marana has participated in many conferences and workshops (Vatican City, Estonia, Richmond, Limassol, Croatia, Sweden) and she has received many invitations to international festivals and concerts (France, Cyprus, Italy, Poland, Germany and USA). She has published several articles about theology and spirituality, sacred music, choir management and leadership. She is also the author of several theological and musical texts and has composed and directed several religious texts. <https://philokalia-lb.com>

AFRICA CANTAT FESTIVAL 2023: SINGING IN THE HEART OF AFRICA

HENRIKE SCHAUERTE

Manager of the Africa Cantat Festival 2020 and member of the Africa Cantat international committee

FROM 1 TO 6 AUGUST 2023, MORE THAN 500 INDIVIDUAL SINGERS, CONDUCTORS, GUESTS, AND CHOIRS FROM 15 COUNTRIES CAME TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE DIVERSITY OF AFRICAN CHORAL MUSIC IN YAOUNDÉ, CAMEROON. THE SECOND EDITION OF THE FESTIVAL WAS THE FIRST AFRICA CANTAT FESTIVAL, WHERE SINGERS GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET, LEARN, EXCHANGE, AND SING TOGETHER IN PERSON.

Five ateliers, led by Sabelo Mthembu from South Africa, Jean Benoit Bakhoum from Senegal, Jean Alexis Bakond from Cameroon, Jean-Marie Puissant from France and Jan Schumacher from Germany, the junior space, a study tour, daily open singings as well as daily afternoon and evening concerts gave the opportunity to discover songs from all over Africa and the world. In this article, we have brought four perspectives of the festival together to present Africa Cantat Festival 2023 and its visions for the future: Yveline Damas, president of the African Confederation for Choral Music and board member of the International Federation for Choral Music; Ann-Valérie Foning, member of the national hosting committee; Henri Mandeng, organising director of the festival representing the hosting association "Les Amis du Chœur Madrigal du Cameroun"; and Lucien Mendy, secretary general of the African Confederation for Choral Music.

Yveline Damas, the Africa Cantat Festival 2023 in Yaoundé was the first in-person edition of the event. What does this event mean to the African Confederation for Choral Music?

The first in-person edition of the Africa Cantat Festival is the flagship project of the African Confederation

for Choral Music. With the support of the International Federation for Choral Music-IFCM, A Cœur Joie International and the European Choral Association, Africa Cantat Festival was hosted and organized locally by the association "Les Amis du Chœur Madrigal du Cameroun". The Africa Cantat Festival has a special meaning for the African Confederation for Choral Music because it embodies our desire to see African Choral singing flourish by promoting exchange and sharing between choristers and conductors from Africa and other continents. The 2023 edition was an opportunity to commune in music, to exchange, to appreciate the hospitality and the joy of African life for all people involved, and more particularly, for the Cameroonian. There was a challenge ahead. That of overcoming all obstacles and finding a partner capable of organizing a festival of such magnitude. After the festival in Yaoundé, we are happy to see that, despite all the challenges, we were able to make the Africa Cantat Festival a great success. We are more than ever determined to make this beautiful festival sustainable, and we are now focussing on the organisation of the next edition.

Ann-Valérie Foning, the Africa Cantat Festival was the first international event organised by



"Les amis du Chœur Madrigal du Cameroun". What did you, as the head of the festival office, experience during the festival?

The Africa Cantat Festival was a new experience for the local team, from the national committee to



our volunteers who supported the festival. It was therefore a great opportunity for us to organise the festival with the support of the international committee. We received scores from festival participants, inspired by the ateliers they attended, showing us their appreciation for the festival. All the festival events could not have taken place without the support of our local committee and volunteers. Several of the volunteers were university students, so the new skills they gained will be very useful in their future careers. Throughout the festival, they were able to experience an international working environment. We also attracted interest from other students who were intrigued by the innovative nature of this festival and its openness to people with disabilities. The concerts, with their variety of styles, showed that choral singing is not just a religious activity (a widespread belief in Cameroon). In short, this festival was not only beneficial to those directly involved, but also to the people we reached through our choral singing demonstrations during the open singing and concerts.

Henri Mandeng, as the organising director of the festival and representative of “Les Amis du Chœur Madrigal du Cameroun”,

what is your musical observation of the festival?

The festival was musically a great success. We were able to bring together choirs of excellent quality and various repertoires: Ensemble Ephémère from Lyon in France, Le Chant sur la Lowé from Gabon, BanAfrika, Bel Canto and Luc Gillon from the DRC, to mention some. Cameroonian choirs were represented by the Mboa Youth Choir and Makuli Ma Nlima. Additionally, the international committee had chosen the African Youth Choir as our guest choir, who were able to meet for the first time after the pandemic to sing together under the direction of Ken Wakia. Above all, the public was amazed

by the originality of the artistic offer: simultaneous concerts in four locations in the city, and as a highlight of each festival day, the outdoor concerts in the evening at the Catholic University of Central Africa. Through the Africa Cantat Festival we were able to introduce the public, but also the festival participants, to the diversity of choral singing, which is a great satisfaction and pride for us. The music offered really contributed to unite hearts in a surge of cohesion, shared joy, friendship, and togetherness. And the public has finally understood that choral singing is a wonderful tool for social cohesion and intercultural integration and understanding.

Lucien Mendy, what is the vision of the African Confederation for Choral Music for the future of Africa Cantat Festival?

The festival has solidified the Africa Cantat network. Thanks to the partnerships with other continental choral organizations, it offers promising prospects within the African continent for the next editions. The connection between African and European festival participants and organisers will generate synergic effects and lasting cooperation in the field of choral singing, and will establish the tradition of an Africa Cantat



Festival, organised in a different African country every three years. The Africa Cantat Festival in Yaoundé was an excellent platform for disseminating and preserving intangible cultural heritage, facilitating encounters, and contributing to intercultural understanding. It served as a catalyst for capacity-building for choral music professionals in Africa, and as a training framework for choristers, conductors, choirs, and festival managers to improve artistic and organizational standards in Cameroon, with an expected multiplier effect in participants' home countries. Another major advance to be mentioned is the networking of choral organisations, choirs, conductors, and managers within Africa and between African countries and other continents. Lastly, choirs' mobility and fundraising have proved to be real challenges in terms of empowering the actors to make Africa Cantat a sustainable and recurring event. The statements were collected by Henrike Schauerte, manager of the Africa Cantat Festival 2020 and member of the Africa Cantat international committee. A special thanks goes to the members of the international committee. Yveline Damas, Ken Wakia and Lucien Mendy (representing the African Confederation for Choral



music), Iva Radulovic (representing the International Federation for Choral Music-IFCM), Sonja Greiner (representing the European Choral Association), Thierry Thiébaud (representing A Cœur Joie International), Henri Mandeng (representing the association "Amis du Cœur Madrigal du Cameroun"), and everyone who brought the vision of the Africa Cantat Festival alive. The event took place in the "Creating in Central Africa" project, co-financed by the ACP-EU.

<https://www.facebook.com/africacantatfestival>
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HE WHO HAS YOUTH HAS THE FUTURE

Europa Cantat Junior 2023 Ghent, Belgium

MARIETTE EFFING

Choir conductor and editor of ZINGmagazine

Member of the Europa Cantat Junior Artistic Committee, The Netherlands

THERE WAS GREAT INTEREST IN THE 10TH EDITION OF EUROPA CANTAT JUNIOR FROM 5 TO 12 JULY IN GHENT. THIS BECAME APPARENT WHEN THE REGISTRATIONS STARTED POURING IN A FEW DAYS AFTER ENROLLMENT OPENED. IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT THE INTEREST WOULD BE GREATER THAN THE EXPECTED 800 PARTICIPANTS, AND THE ORGANIZATION STARTED TO INVESTIGATE HOW TO EXPAND THE FESTIVAL. WHEN THIS PROVED TECHNICALLY AND ORGANIZATIONALLY POSSIBLE, TWO NEW ATELIERS WERE ADDED BY THE ARTISTIC COMMITTEE. THIS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO WELCOME ALL 1300 PARTICIPANTS. THE EUROPA CANTAT JUNIOR 2023 IN GHENT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS IN EVERY RESPECT.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Europa Cantat Junior is an international festival that takes place every three years in a different European city. Singers up to the age of 18 from children's and youth choirs come together to discover new repertoires, to get to know each other, to learn a lot and above all to create a lot of beautiful things together. Every morning, the children and youth work on a repertoire specially selected for the festival during ateliers led by international conductors. In addition, there is ample opportunity to discover the city and to give concerts. In 2020, the 9th edition in Vilnius could not take place due to the corona virus and it was decided to move the festival. Fortunately, the festival continued in a slimmed-down form in 2022 and everyone was

delighted to be able to sing and give concerts together again! But this also means that Lyon was the last major Europe Cantat Junior festival in 2017, more than 5 years ago. That is why this Ghent edition was the first international festival for many young singers. The German children's choir 'Chormonie' from Dresden participated in 2022 in Vilnius. The children had such a good time that they decided to participate again this year in Ghent. Hans Hoch, conductor *'It is impressive to see how everyone works together. Singing connects, those are not just words, you can experience it here.'*



Open Singing with Tom Johnson (Belgium) © European Choral Association

Ghent by boat



ATELIERS

In the end, an impressive 53 choirs participated in Ghent with 1300 participants from 14 countries, from Canada to Israel and everything in between: Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Belgium. In Ghent, the participants could choose from 11 ateliers with a varied selection of international conductors: Tracy Wong (CA/MY), Basilio Astulez (ES), Kadri Hunt (EE), Rohan Poldervaart (NL), Paul Smith (UK), Michael Barrett (SA), Erica Mandillo (PT), Dieter Staelens (BE), Birgitte Næslund Madsen (DK), Ken Wakia (KE/UK) and Jan Schumacher (DE). Each atelier leader prepared a program for the festival with programs varying in difficulty, genre and age group. The atelier leader worked with the participating choirs and singers on that program, presenting it on the last day during the closing concert. It was the first time for Dutch conductor Rohan Poldervaart to lead this kind of atelier. In the Groove Stories atelier, he invited the singers to sing pop music with movement and energy on the basis of storytelling. For Rohan himself it was a fantastic experience: *'At Europa Cantat Junior young people show the rest of the world how you can meet each other based on mutual respect with a strong will to make their voices heard. For me as a conductor it was a rewarding place to be able to work with these young people.'*

Top: Open Singing with Tom Johnson (Belgium) © European Choral Association

Middle: lots of energy, focus and groove in the atelier of Rohan Poldervaart Music (the Netherlands) © Wim Gelders

Bottom: rehearsals are fun too © European Choral Association

CONCERTS

In addition to the ateliers in the morning, there was also free time in the afternoon. All choir members and their supervisors took a boat trip through the beautiful center of Ghent and there were various other activities. But there were also rehearsals for the 9 Choir-to-Choir concerts that took place in different locations. The 3 final concerts took place in the beautiful Ghent Opera House. Of course, Open Singing was also part of this festival, with the leading role for the Flemish conductor Tom Johnson. A true professional who led the 5 Open Singing sessions very well prepared, with humor and above all a lot of positive energy. Johnson used the results of these sessions in the closing concerts that were directed in a truly excellent way. Tom brilliantly invited the audience to sing along during the changes, which created a great singing party.

STUDY TOUR

This year there was also great interest in the Study Tour for choral conductors/teachers. No fewer than 40 participants from all over the world visited the morning ateliers in two groups. In the afternoon,



Tuimbe Pamoja, the Power of Song and Dance with Ken Wakia (Kenya) © Wim Gelders

discussions took place or atelier leaders were invited to participate in discussions. The Study Tour was led by conductors Inge Sykora (BE) and Linas Balandis (LT). Linas Balandis: *'We discussed many interesting topics. Think of the different methods that the conductors applied in their ateliers, how they deal with the children, the warming ups and their choice of repertoire. The participants learned a lot to take home.'*

HIGH LEVEL

Marleen Annemans (Artistic Committee): *'The ateliers had a high level this year. I found it very special that everyone in the C atelier was really well prepared. Already at the first rehearsal the singers sang in several voices and the conductor was immediately able to get into the music. But there was also great singing in the A and B ateliers from the first day.'* After an



intensive week of rehearsing, the result could be heard during 3 closing concerts in the beautiful hall of Opera Ballet Flanders. A fantastic setting for the children who took selfies during breaks in front of the richly decorated mirrors of the foyer with its beautiful chandeliers. What a richness of wonderful memories these children will take home! The home audience was able to enjoy the live stream that can still be seen via www.koorenstem.be/en/ecj/livestream. The registrations have now been viewed more than 20,000 times. In 2026 the Europa Cantat Junior Festival will take place in Girona (Catalunya).



MARIETTE EFFING (NL) studied school music and choral conducting. She is conductor of the City Boys' Choir Oldenzaal and in that position she gained valuable experience in working with boys and young men. In 2015, she organised *Boys, keep on singing!*, a project seeking to encourage more boys to engage with – and continue – singing. She presented this project at Europa Cantat in Pécs, in 2017, at the World Symposium On Choral Music in Barcelona and during various other activities related to boys' singing in Belgium and the Netherlands. In 2020, intent on furthering outreach and engagement, she created the foundation *Boys, keep on singing!*. This year she was a member of the Artistic Committee of the Europa Cantat Junior festival Ghent. Apart from her work as a conductor, she is on the editorial board of ZINGmagazine and works as a music journalist. mariette@boyskeeponsinging.com – www.koorenzo.nl (Edited by Sam Hemsworth, UK)

ORGANIZATION

The organizing team of Koor & Stem, together with the Flemish Federation of Young Choirs and the European Choral Association, created a fantastic festival. Marleen Moorgat, festival coordinator:

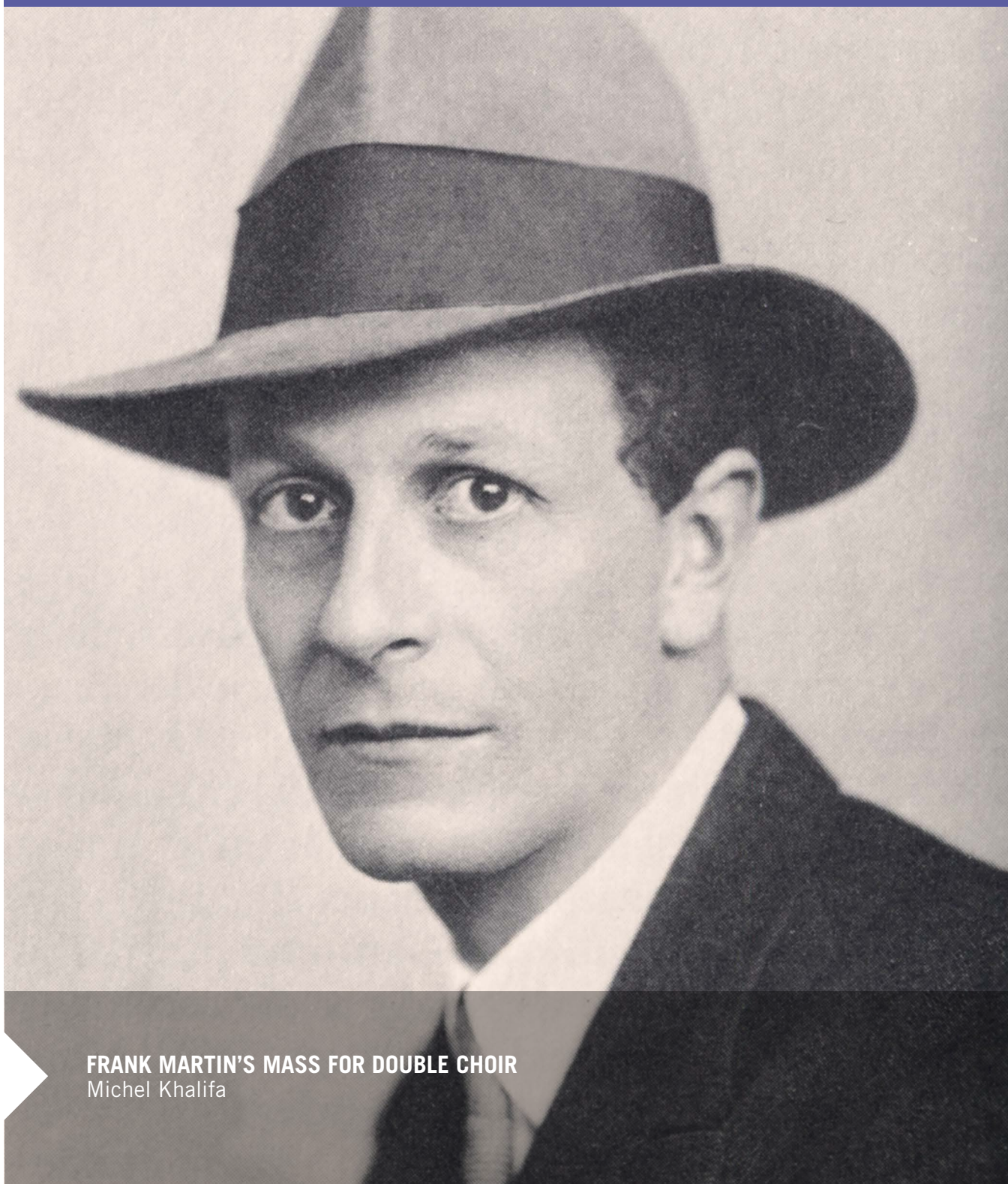
'It was a large team, consisting of Koor & Stem employees, supported by a passionate team of volunteers, from teenagers to adults, artistic volunteers to logistics. At least 50 people were at work every day. Over

the years we have built up the volunteer team consisting of young people who themselves participated in the camps and choir weeks of Koor & Stem and adults who are closely involved in the singing weeks of Koor & Stem. For example, we had several generations of volunteers, parents and teenagers who themselves knew the pleasure of choir weeks and festivals and therefore now made the festival possible for others as a volunteer. In any case, I was over the moon about the atmosphere. This was what I had in mind, and it was completely worth the hard work: to make young people enthusiastic about singing together and to pass on this joy and life experience to future generations.'

Final concert at the Opera House in Ghent © Wim Gelders



COMPOSER'S CORNER



FRANK MARTIN'S MASS FOR DOUBLE CHOIR
Michel Khalifa

FRANK MARTIN'S MASS FOR DOUBLE CHOIR

MICHEL KHALIFA

Musicologist, France/Netherlands

THE POPULAR MASS FOR DOUBLE CHOIR WAS CONSIGNED TO A DRAWER FOR SOME FORTY YEARS. WHY DID FRANK MARTIN KEEP THIS WORK TO HIMSELF FOR SO LONG? THINGS HE SAID OVER THE YEARS GIVE US SOME HINTS AND CAST LIGHT ON HIS CHANGING ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS MUSIC. HIS SETTING OF THE MASS IS A CELEBRATION OF COMPOSITIONAL FREEDOM.

If it had been up to Frank Martin, his *Mass for Double Choir* would never have reached the ears of audiences at large. For decades he considered this composition, dating from 1922-1926, as a private matter, or more precisely, as something between God and himself, which partly explains why he made no effort at all to have it performed. It was not until 1963 that the work was premiered, after a Hamburg choral conductor had requested a copy of the manuscript 'for study purposes'. The person in question, Franz Brunnert, wasted no time in performing the piece with his Bugenhagen choir, and others followed. After it was sung by the NCRV Vocal Ensemble in 1970 (a Dutch radio choir based in Hilversum, near Martin's abode in Naarden), the composer finally agreed to its publication.

'INSTINCTIVE MODESTY'

The existence of the manuscript had been known for a long time. The composer referred to the *Mass for Double Choir* during a lecture in Basel in 1946, also mentioning another early and likewise hidden work on a religious text, the unfinished *Cantate sur la Nativité*, dating from 1929. He said of the two pieces, 'Through a sort of instinctive modesty I have done nothing to have these pieces performed. It sufficed me entirely to have written them (...)'.

In the same lecture, Frank Martin went on to say that he had been afraid that performance would be detrimental to 'the expression of very intimate feelings'. He was particularly wary of drawing attention to himself in this manner. The only acceptable performance would have been 'in a church, without the author's name and as part of the liturgy'.

Besides humbleness there was apparently a personal reason for Martin's lasting 'modesty' regarding sacred music. Towards the end of his life, he confided to the *Zodiaque* journal that he had for a long time been unable

to fathom his own religious feelings. He was the son of a calvinist minister and had first come to terms with the faith he had been brought up with in his own way. He had always sensed a religious feeling, he said, but he had felt obliged to himself 'to momentarily suppress its intellectual expression'. Composition of the *Mass* enabled him to connect once again with religion and express the faith within him.

THE FINEST MEMORIES

Martin's prolonged reticence with regard to religious music disappeared once and for all in 1944, when he was commissioned by Radio Geneva to write a cantata relating to the impending armistice. The solemnity of the occasion, he believed, made a religious subject imperative. The 'short oratorio' *In terra pax* was premiered on 7 May 1945. Thus, the ban was broken. Freed from his restraints, Frank Martin occasionally went on to write religious pieces for performance and publication, the most familiar example of which is the passion oratorio *Golgotha* (1948).

In composing sacred music, Martin continued to struggle to reconcile his own artistic ideals with the presumed expectations of the public. An ideal solution was to compose without a commission. In responding to an inner urge to commence *Golgotha*, for example, a public performance was not anticipated. The hard work he put into this oratorio – on his own conditions – was to remain one of the finest memories of his life.

SUBTLE BALANCE

A similarly high degree of compositional freedom is evident in the *Mass for Double Choir*. First, is that in the 1920s Frank Martin had not yet established his own musical language (which he claimed to have achieved much later in the secular oratorio *Le vin herbé* dating from 1938-1941). In the *Mass*, therefore, all compositional-technical options lay wide open. A

second reason is that originality was not a prerequisite, since the work was intended only for God and himself, and public opinion did not matter. Characteristic of the *Mass* is the pursuit of a subtle balance between age-old tradition and a more contemporary idiom.

One's first impression of the *Mass for Double Choir* is of a homage to the vocal polyphony of the Renaissance. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that many illustrious settings of the *Mass* – from Josquin to Palestrina – date from that period. The connection is made clear by Martin's *a cappella* approach, the imitation technique, meticulous treatment of the text, and particularly the flowing movement without a metrical straitjacket. Besides such general features, occasional specific traits evoke the spirit of early music: halfway through the *Gloria* Martin brings the music almost to a standstill, lending extra emphasis to the name of Jesus Christ.

Martin's *Mass* also offers evidence of the great inspiration which he drew from Johann Sebastian Bach, so that the latter may in a certain sense be viewed as the conclusion – though more than a century later – of that same polyphonic Renaissance tradition. The youthful Frank Martin underwent a transformative experience when, at the age of twelve, he was enthralled upon hearing Bach's *St Matthew Passion* for the very first time.

At the end of Martin's *Gloria* there is a particular reference to Bach, when at the words '*patris*' and '*amen*' the two soprano voices abandon themselves in turn to the rapid notes of an ecstatic, rotating melody. This rhetorical figure, known as *circulatio*, was frequently employed in German Baroque music to depict everlasting life and the power of the Holy Spirit. In a similar fashion, the bitter motif in the *Credo* at the word '*crucifixus*' is strongly reminiscent of Bach; all voices subsequently descend symbolically to their lowest range at the words '*et sepultus est*' (and [Jesus Christ] was buried), just as in the *B Minor Mass*.

EXPRESSIVE INVENTION

The melodic lines of Martin's *Mass* deserve special mention. A general feeling of modality even suggests the influence of Gregorian chant (of which he probably widened his knowledge during a period of study in Rome in 1921). But certain chromatic turns of phrase nevertheless unmistakably belong to more recent times. Already in bar 10 of the *Kyrie*, the shift in the second alto from E to E flat has an undermining effect. Such an apparently innocent detail is comparable to the unexpected C sharp in the cellos by which Beethoven,

at the beginning of the *Eroica Symphony*, makes it immediately clear that he intends to emerge from the shadow of Haydn and Mozart.

Following this local 'lapse' at the beginning of the *Kyrie*, in the *Gloria* in particular Frank Martin demonstrates that the *Mass for Double Choir* is solidly anchored in the twentieth century. The subdued opening of this hymn of praise, combined with an accumulation of intervals of the second in the first three entries of the second choir (B in the tenor, C sharp in the alto, D in the soprano) makes a somewhat recalcitrant impression. A little later, in the extensive *Domine Deus* section, there is a striking passage in which Martin has the second choir maintain an archaic sounding open fifth, while the first choir heightens the tension with a unison melody; the latter, near the climax at '*Qui sedes*', makes way for two- and then four-part writing. A similar distribution of roles occurs later in the *Benedictus* and at the opening of the *Agnus Dei*. Such expressive invention makes the *Mass* especially attractive for singers and listeners alike, as does the introduction of a pentatonic scale to emphasise the exuberant joy of the faithful at the Resurrection ('*et resurrexit*' in the *Credo*).

Although this early composition is essentially different from the works of his more mature period, in 1922 the perfectionist Frank Martin must have found some satisfaction in the *Mass*, though it was yet incomplete. It would otherwise be difficult to explain that four years later, he added the *Agnus Dei* in a style that precisely corresponds with the earlier movements.

The belated success of the *Mass for Double Choir* is inseparably related to the sincere attitude which lies at its basis. Martin's quest for musical means to lend renewed form to his own faith found resonance in the text of the *Ordinary*. As he put it himself in the journal *Zodiaque*: 'what attracted me to the *Mass*, like so many other musicians too, was first the text and also the form, which in itself is admirable, both aesthetically and psychologically'. Without external constraint, and therefore without the obligation to be original, he was able to create a setting of this text which hovers between a bygone age and the world of his own time.

Frank Martin was convinced that the foremost mission of the artist is to bestow beauty upon humanity. To this end he believed it was neither necessary nor desirable to lend expression to the spirit of the time. His enduring *Mass* was the fulfilment of his self-imposed requirements.

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- Martin 1975: "Entretiens avec Frank Martin" [without the author's name], *Zodiaque* 25 no. 103 (January 1975), pp. 7-28.
- Martin 1977: Frank Martin, *Un compositeur médite sur son art: Ecrits et pensées recueillis par sa femme*. Neuchâtel, Editions de la Baconnière, 1977.

Translated from Dutch by Stephen Taylor
Edited by Karin Rockstad, USA



The French musicologist MICHEL KHALIFA (1965) earned his master's degree at Utrecht University. He hosts pre-concert talks for Dutch orchestras and concert halls, writes program notes, and works as a tour leader for classical music travels. Michel Khalifa was the editor in chief of the anniversary book *Bravo!* published jointly by the Concertgebouw and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. From 2004 to 2008, he wrote reviews and articles for the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool*. He teaches music history at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. 2024@frankmartin.org (Photo: Geert Snoeijer)

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Contact: MusikReisenFaszination Music Festivals,
Email: info@mrf-musicfestivals.com - Website: <https://www.mrf-musicfestivals.com/>

4th Juozas Naujalis International Competition for Choral Conductors, Kaunas, Lithuania, 3-5 Nov 2023.

Contact: Lituania Cantat, Email: info@lchs.lt - Website: <http://www.lituaniacantat.lt/>

Musica Orbis Gloria, Prague, Czech Republic, 3-5 Nov 2023.

Contact: Musica Orbis, Email: info@musicaorbis.com - Website: <https://www.musicaorbis.com>

1st International Choral Cruise in the Mediterranean, Genova/Portofino, Italy, 4-9 Nov 2023.

For all choirs of all types. **Contact:** Prof. Giuliano Rinaldi, Email: info@gentesviaggi.it - Website: www.gentesviaggi.it

International Bandung Choral Festival, Indonesia, 8-11 Nov 2023.

Contact: Bandung Choral Society, Tommyanto Kandisaputra, Email: mailbcsevents@gmail.com - Website: <https://www.bandungchoral.com/ibcf2023>

Young Prague Festival, Prague, Czech Republic, 16-20 Nov 2023.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: travel@music-contact.com - Website: www.music-contact.com

16th International Warsaw Choir Festival Varsovia Cantat, Poland, 17-19 Nov 2023.

Contact: MELODY & Polonia Cantat, Email: info@varsoviacantat.pl - Website: www.varsoviacantat.pl

Vienna Advent Sing, Austria, 23-27 Nov, 30 Nov-4 Dec, 7-11 Dec, 14-18 Dec, 21-25 2023.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: travel@music-contact.com - Website: www.music-contact.com

15th International Festival of School Orchestras and Choirs, Karditsa, Greece, 23 Nov-3 Dec 2023.

Contact: International Choral Festival of Karditsa, Email: nke@otenet.gr - Website: <http://festivalofkarditsa.blogspot.gr/>

Romano Gandolfi International Competition for Choral Conductors, Parma, Italy, 23-26 Nov 2023.

Contact: Claudio Monteverdi Choral Competition, Email: aercobologna@gmail.com - Website: www.choralconductorcompetition.eu

12th Krakow Advent and Christmas Choir Festival, Poland, 1-3 Dec 2023.

Contact: Polonia Cantat & Melody, Email: krakow@christmasfestival.pl - Website: <http://krakow.christmasfestival.pl>

Badenia Advent Music Festival 2023, Austria, 7-10 Dec 2023.

Contact: MusikReisenFaszination Music Festivals, Email: info@mrf-musicfestivals.com - Website: <https://www.mrf-musicfestivals.com/Choir-Orchestra-Festival-In-Baden-Germany/>

44th International Congress of Pueri Cantores, Rome, Italy, 28 Dec 2023-1 Jan 2024.

Contact: International Federation Pueri Cantores, Email: contact@puericantores.org - Website: <https://www.puericantores.org>

Allmänna Sången & Anders Wall Composition Award 2024, Uppsala, Sweden, 31 Dec 2023.

Contact: Allmänna Sången and Anders Wall, project manager Simon Arlasjö, Email: award@allmannasangen.se - Website: <https://www.allmannasangen.se/asawca>

International composer's competition MUSICA SACRA NOVA 2024, Germany, 15 Jan 2024.

Apply before January 15, 2024. **Contact:** Erzbistum Köln - Generalvikariat, Hauptabteilung Seelsorge - Website: <https://musicasacranova.com>

Walter Strauss Choral Conducting Masterclass, Ankara, Türkiye, 22-28 Jan 2024.

Contact: European Choral Association, Email: cokseslikoro@gmail.com - Website: <https://cokseslikoro.gov.tr/masterclass/>

4th Sing'n'Pray Kobe, Japan, 24-29 Jan 2024.

Contact: Förderverein Interkultur, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/events/2022/kobe/>

2024 ACDA Northwestern Regional Conference, Spokane, Washington, USA, 24-27 Jan 2024.

Contact: ACDA Northwestern Division, Email: smcgill@acda.org - Website: <https://www.nwacda.org>

2024 ACDA Midwestern Regional Conference, Omaha, Nebraska, USA, 7-2 Feb 2024.

Contact: ACDA Midwestern Division - Website: <https://midwesternacda.org>

2024 ACDA Southern Regional Conference, Louisville, Kentucky, USA, 21-24 Feb 2024.

Contact: ACDA Southern Division, Email: president@acdassouthern.org - Website: <https://www.acdassouthern.org>

2024 ACDA Southwestern Regional Conference, Denver, Colorado, USA, 27 Feb-2 Mar 2024.

Contact: ACDA Southwestern Division, Email: jeffreym@uark.edu - Website: <https://www.swacda.org>

2024 ACDA Eastern Regional Conference, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, 28 Feb-2 Mar 2024.

Contact: ACDA Eastern Division, Email: christopher.kiver@acdaeast.org - Website: <https://acdaeast.org>

2024 ACDA Western Regional Conference, Pasadena, California, USA, 6-9 Mar 2024.

Contact: ACDA Western Division, Email: president@acdawestern.org - Website: <https://acdawestern.org>

Fingal International Festival of Voices, Ireland, 7-11 Mar 2024.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: ireland@music-contact.com - Website: www.music-contact.com

ON STAGE in Israel, Israel, 12-17 Mar 2024.

Contact: Interkultur Foundation, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

Paris International Choir Festival, France, 14-18 Mar 2024.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: info@musiccontact.com - Website: www.musiccontact.com

Cherry Blossom Washington D.C. International Choral Festival, USA, 14-17 Mar, 21-24 Mar, 28-31 Mar, 4-7 Apr 2024.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: travel@music-contact.com - Website: www.music-contact.com

12th International Gdansk Choir Festival, Poland, 15-17 Mar 2024.

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Discover Puerto Rico and its Choral Music, Ponce, Puerto Rico, 15-18 Mar 2024.

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Young Prague Festival, Prague, Czech Republic, 20-24 Mar 2024.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: travel@music-contact.com - Website: www.music-contact.com

17th Fukushima Vocal Ensemble Competition, Fukushima, Japan, 21-24 Mar 2024.

Apply before October 31, 2023. Contact: Fukushima Vocal Ensemble Competition, Email: v-ensemble@pref.fukushima.lg.jp - Website: <http://www.vocalensemble.fukushima.jp/en/>

Vox Lucensis, Lucca, Italy, 22-27 Mar 2024.

Contact: Interkultur Foundation, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

Verona International Choral Competition, Verona, Italy, 3-7 Apr 2024.

Contact: Music Contact International, Email: travel@music-contact.com - Website: <http://www.music-contact.com/>

Misatango Choir Festival, Berlin, Germany, 4-7 Apr 2024.

Contact: CONCERTS-AUSTRIA/COLUMBUS Reisen GmbH & Co KG, Email: info@misatango.com - Website: <https://www.misatango.com/festivals/festival-berlin-2024>

Festival di Primavera (Spring Festival), Montecatini Terme, Tuscany, Italy, 11-13 Apr (aged 6-13), 17-20 Apr 2023 (aged 16-28).

Contact: FENIARCO (Italian Federation of Regional Choir Associations), Email: festivaldiprimavera@feniarco.it - Website: www.feniarco.it

Slovakia Cantat, Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 25-28 Apr 2024.

Apply before December 15, 2023. Contact: Bratislava Music Agency, Email: info@choral-music.sk - Website: <https://www.choral-music.sk/en/Festivaly/>

16th International Choir Competition & Festival

Bad Ischl, Austria, 26 Apr-1 May 2024. Contact: Interkultur Foundation e.V., Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

72nd European Music Festival for Young People, Neerpelt, Belgium, 26-29 Apr 2024.

Apply before October 30, 2023. Contact: Europees Muziekfestival voor de Jeugd, Email: info@emj.be - Website: <https://www.emj.be/>

Cork International Choral, Ireland, 1-5 May 2024.

Fleischmann International Trophy Competition (closing date: 31 October 2023) or the Non-Competitive International strand (closing date: 30 November 2023). Contact: Cork International Choral Festival, Email: info@corkchoral.ie - Website: www.corkchoral.ie

International Children's and Youth Choir Festival, Hannover, Germany, 8-12 May 2024.

Contact: Internationales Kinder- und Jugendchorzentrum, Email: info@internationales-chorzentrum.de - Website: <https://www.internationales-chorzentrum.de/home-en.html>

International Festival of Choral Singing Nancy Voix du Monde, Nancy, France, 8-12 May 2024.

Apply before February 1, 2024. Contact: Festival International de Chant Choral de Nancy, Email: festival-choral@orange.fr - Website: www.chantchoral.org

2nd European Festival JVM (Jeunes Voix Mêlées), Thuir, France, 8-12 May 2024.

Apply before September 30, 2023. Contact: A Coeur Joie France, Email: alix.bourrat@orange.fr - Website: <https://choralethuir.wixsite.com/chanterie-cantilene/copie-de-festival-jvm-2024>

International Choral Competition Ave Verum 2021, Germany, 9-12 May 2024.

Apply before October 31, 2023. Contact: Meeting Music, Email: info@meeting-music.com - Website: www.meeting-music.com

International Choral Competition Ave Verum 2021, Baden, Austria, 9-12 May 2024.

Contact: Wolfgang Ziegler, chairman, Email: aveverum.baden@gmail.com - Website: www.aveverum.at

Harmonie Festival 2024, Limburg-Lindenholzhausen, Germany, 9-12 May 2024.

Apply before November 30, 2023. Contact: Harmonie Lindenholzhausen, Email: information@harmonie-festival.de - Website: www.harmonie-festival.de

13th World Choir Festival on Musical & Competition, Thessaloniki, Greece, 10-12 May 2024.

Apply before March 20, 2024. Contact: Choir Korais, Email: choirkorais94@gmail.com - Website: www.xorodiakorais.com

International Festival of University Choirs UNIVERSITAS CANTAT 2024, Poznań, Poland, 15-18 May 2024.

Apply before December 15, 2023. Contact: International Festival of University Choirs, Email: festival@amu.edu.pl - Website: <http://cantat.amu.edu.pl/pl/>

23th Statys Šimkus Choir Competition, Klaipeda, Lithuania, 16-19 May 2024.

Apply before January 15, 2024. Contact: Klaipeda Choir Association „AUKURAS“, Email: aukuras@ku.lt or simkus.competition.lt@gmail.com - Website: <https://www.aukuras.org/simkus>

PODIUM 2024, Montréal, Québec, Canada, 16-19 May 2024.

Contact: Choral Canada, Email: podium@choralcanada.org - Website: <https://www.podium2024.ca>

Musica Sacra International Festival, Marktoberdorf, Germany, 17-21 May 2024.

Apply before 28 Feb 2024. Contact: MODfestivals e.V., Email: office@modfestivals.org - Website: <https://www.musica-sacra-international.org/>

Chorus America Conference 2024, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 6-8 June 2024.

Contact: Chorus America, Email: service@chorusamerica.org - Website: <https://chorusamerica.org>

12th Kaunas Cantat, Kaunas, Lithuania, 7-9 June 2024.

Apply before March 1st, 2024. Contact: Lituania Cantat, Email: info@lchs.lt - Website: <http://www.lituaniacantat.lt/>

Limerick Sings International Choral Festival, Limerick, Ireland, 7-9 June 2024.

Apply before October 31, 2023. Contact: Limerick Sings, Email: information@limericksings.com - Website: <https://www.limericksings.com>

Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Alto Adige-Südtirol, Italy/Austria, 12-16 June 2024.

Apply before February 15, 2024. Contact: Alta Pusteria Festival Office, Email: info@festivalpusteria.org - Website: www.festivalpusteria.org

Musica Orbis Prague Festival, Czech Republic, 27 June-1 July 2024.

Apply before April 30, 2024. Contact: Musica Orbis Prague Festival, Email: info@musicaorbis.com - Website: <https://www.musicaorbis.com/>

Festival of Voices, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 28 June-7 July 2024.

Contact: Festival of Voices Tasmania, Email: info@festivalofvoices.com - Website: <https://festivalofvoices.com/>

HarbourVOICES International Festival, St. John's Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada, 29 June-4 July 2024.

Apply before September 15, 2023. Contact: HarbourVOICES International Festival, Email: info@harbourvoices.ca - Website: <http://harbourvoices.ca>

42nd International Choir Festival of Preveza, 28th International Choir Competition, Preveza, Greece, 1-7 July 2024. Apply before May 1st, 2024. Contact: Choral Society "Armonia" of Prevesa, Email: armonia4@otenet.gr - Website: <http://www.armoniachoir.gr/festival/index.php>

2nd Choral Composition Competition of Preveza, Preveza, Greece, 1-2 July 2024. Contact: Choral Society "Armonia" of Prevesa, Email: armonia4@otenet.gr - Website: <http://www.armoniachoir.gr/festival/index.php>

7th Choral Conducting Seminar and Masterclass, Preveza, Greece, 1-3 July 2024. Contact: Choral Society "Armonia" of Prevesa, Email: armonia4@otenet.gr - Website: <http://www.armoniachoir.gr/festival/index.php>

EuroChoir 2024, Varna, Bulgaria, July 2024. Contact: Bulgarian Choirs' Union - Website: <https://europeanchoralassociation.org/activities/eurochoir/>

Florence FUN and Music Festival, Florence, Italy, 2-4 July 2024. Contact: FICF - Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Email: info@florencechoirfestival.com - Website: <http://www.florencechoirfestival.com/>

Study Tour to the 100th Anniversary of the Lithuanian Song Celebration, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2-7 July 2024. Apply before March 1st, 2024. Contact: Lithuanian National Culture Centre, Email: s.prockyte@gmail.com - Website: <http://www.dainusvente.lt/>

International Choral Festival "Choral Festivities – Sparkling Voices", Ni, Serbia, 4-7 July 2024. Apply before May 29, 2024. Contact: Ustanova Ni ki kulturni centar, Email: injac.milena@gmail.com - Website: <https://www.nkc.rs/>

58th International Choral Competition, Spittal an der Drau, Austria, 4-7 July 2024. Apply before January 31, 2024. Contact: Kulturamt der Stadt Spittal an der Drau, Email: info@chorbewerb-spittal.at - Website: <http://www.chorbewerb-spittal.at>

16th Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival, Vienna, Austria, 5-10 July 2024. Contact: CONCERTS-AUSTRIA, Email: office@scfestival.org - Website: www.scfestival.org

59th Barcelona International Choir Festival, Spain, 8-14 July 2024. Choirs apply before November 30, 2023. Individuals apply before March 30, 2024. Contact: Federació Catalana d'Entitats Corales, Email: fcec@fcec.cat - Website: www.fcec.cat

Chanakkale International Choir Festival and Competition, Canakkale, Türkiye, 9-14 July 2024. Contact: Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi, Email: info@canakkalekorofestivali.com - Website: <http://www.canakkalekorofestivali.com/>

14th International Youth Chamber Choir Meeting, Usedom Island (Baltic Sea), Germany, 12-21 July 2024. Apply before December 15, 2023. Contact: Arbeitskreis Musik in der Jugend AMJ, Email: info@amj-musik.de - Website: <https://www.usedom.amj-musik.de/en/>

European Seminar for Young Choral Composers, Aosta, Italy, 14-21 July 2024. Apply before March 30, 2024. Contact: FENIARCO (Italian Federation of Regional Choir Associations), Email: info@feniarco.it - Website: www.feniarco.it

International Choir Competition, Miltenberg, Bavaria, Germany, 16-21 July 2024. Apply before December 1, 2023. Contact: Kulturreferat des Landratsamtes Miltenberg, Gaby Schmidt, Email: kultur@LRA-MIL.de - Website: www.chorwettbewerb-miltenberg.de

39th Takarazuka International Chamber Chorus Contest, Takarazuka City, Hyogo, Japan, 20-21 July 2024. Apply before Jan 31, 2024. Contact: Takarazuka Vega-Hall, Email: ticc@takarazuka-c.jp - Website: https://takarazuka-c.jp/ticc_en/

Singing Bridges, Novi Sad, Serbia, 21-28 July 2024. Apply before April 9, 2024. Contact: Serbian Choral Association, Email: info@cx.rs - Website: <https://cx.rs/>

8th Krikor Chetinyan Choral Conducting Masterclass, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 22-28 July 2024. Apply before July 1, 2024. Contact: Plovdiv National School of Music and Dance "Dobrin Petkov", Email: horovalab@gmail.com

Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Florence, Italy, 23-26 July 2024. Contact: FICF - Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Email: info@florencechoirfestival.com - Website: <http://www.florencechoirfestival.com/>

13th Bali International Choir Festival 2024, Kuta, Bali, Indonesia, 23-27 July 2024. Contact: Bandung Choral Society, Tommyanto Kandisaputra, Email: mailbcsevents@gmail.com - Website: <https://www.bandungchoral.com/>

Tokyo International Choir Competition, Japan, 26-28 July 2024. Apply before 28 February 2024. Contact: International Choral Organization of Tokyo, Email: ticc@icot.or.jp - Website: <https://www.ticctokyo.icot.or.jp/>

Arctic Boys Choir Festival, Bodø, Norway, 7-11 Aug 2024. Apply before February 1, 2024. Contact: Ung kirkesang (Young choristers), Email: arcticboys@sang.no - Website: www.sang.no/

World Youth Choir Session 2024 with National Youth Orchestra of Germany, Germany & Italy, 18 Aug-8 Sep 2024. Contact: World Youth Choir Foundation, Email: manager@worldyouthchoir.org - Website: www.worldyouthchoir.org

58th Days of Mokranjac, Negotin, Serbia, Sept 2024. Apply before May 31, 2024. Contact: Festival "The days of Mokranjac", Email: dkmokranjac1@gmail.com - Website: <http://www.mokranjcevi-dani.com/eng/>

Internationales Chorfest, Magdeburg, Germany, 10-15 Sept 2024. Apply before April 29, 2024. Contact: Förderverein Interkultur, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

(Inter)national Congress for Choral Conductors, Puteaux, France, 13-15 Sep 2024. Contact: A Coeur Joie France, Email: communication@choralies.org - Website: <https://www.congreschefsdechoeur.com/>

Study Tour to Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia, 14-20 Sep 2024. Contact: European Choral Association, Email: Jozi.Vovk@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org - Website: <https://europeanchoralassociation.org>

Study Tour to Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia, 20-26 Sep 2024. Contact: European Choral Association, Email: Jozi.Vovk@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org - Website: <https://europeanchoralassociation.org>

Grieg International Choir Festival and NINA Solo Competition for Young Singers, Bergen, Norway, 26-29 Sep 2024. Apply before May 10, 2024. Contact: Annlaug Hus, Email: post@griegfestival.no - Website: <https://griegfestival.no>

[chor.com](http://www.chor.com) Convention for Choral Music, Hannover, Germany, 26-29 Sep 2024. Contact: Deutscher Chorverband e.V., Email: info@deutscher-chorverband.de - Website: <https://www.chor.com/english/>

International Choral Singing Conference Choraliamagna 2024, Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, Oct 2024. Contact: NIPOS Artama, Email: nipos@nipos-mk.cz - Website: <https://www.nipos.cz/choralia-magna-2024/>

Sing'n'Joy Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines, 1-6 Oct 2024. Apply before May 13, 2024. Contact: Förderverein Interkultur, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

17th International Choir Contest Flanders, Genk, Belgium, 4-6 Oct 2024. Apply before March 15, 2024. Contact: International Choir Contest Flanders, Email: ikv.vlaanderen@gmail.com - Website: <https://www.ikv-genk.be>

5th Kalamata International Choir Competition and Festival, Greece, 9-14 Oct 2024. Apply before May 13, 2024. Contact: Förderverein Interkultur, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

Lago di Garda Music Festival, Italy, 17-21 Oct 2024. Apply before July 31, 2024. Contact: MusikReisenFaszination Music Festivals, Email: info@mrf-musicfestivals.com - Website: www.mrf-musicfestivals.com

SING FOR GOLD, Calella/Barcelona, Spain, 23-28 Oct 2024. Apply before May 27, 2024. Contact: Interkultur Foundation e.V., Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

Fosco Corti International Competition for conductors 2024, Turin, Italy, 25-27 Oct 2024. Contact: FENIARCO (Italian Federation of Regional Choir Associations), Email: info@feniarco.it - Website: www.feniarco.it

18th International Choir Festival Tallinn 2025, Tallinn, Estonia, 10-13 Apr 2025. Apply before November 15, 2024. Contact: Estonian Choral Association, Email: kooriyhing@kooriyhing.ee - Website: www.kooriyhing.ee

18th International Choral Competition Gallus – Maribor 2025, Slovenia, 11-13 Apr 2025. Apply before September 23, 2024. Contact: Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti, Email: info.maribor@jskd.si - Website: <https://www.gallusmaribor.si/en/>

Cork International Choral, Ireland, 30 Apr-4May 2025. Fleischmann International Trophy Competition (closing date: 31 October 2024) or the Non-Competitive International strand (closing date: 30 November 2024). Contact: Cork International Choral Festival, Email: info@corkchoral.ie - Website: www.corkchoral.ie

14th European Festival of Youth Choirs, Basel, Switzerland, 28 May-1 June 2025. Apply before Jan 31, 2024. Contact: Europäisches Jugendchor Festival Basel, Kathrin Renggli, Email: info@ejcf.ch - Website: www.ejcf.ch

CantaRode International Choral Festival & Competition, Kerkrade, The Netherlands, 29 May-1 June 2025. Apply before December 15, 2024. Contact: CantaRode, Email: info@cantarode.nl - Website: <https://www.cantarode.nl/en/>

19th International Chamber Choir Competition, Marktoberdorf, Germany, 6-10 June 2025. Apply before December 31, 2024. Contact: Modfestivals, International Chamber Choir Competition, Email: office@modfestivals.org - Website: www.modfestivals.org

Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Alto Adige-Südtirol, Italy/Austria, 11-15 June 2025. Apply before February 15, 2025. Contact: Alta Pusteria Festival Office, Email: info@festivalpusteria.org - Website: www.festivalpusteria.org

6th European Choir Games & Grand Prix of Nations 2025, Aarhus, Denmark, 27 June-6 July 2025. Apply before December 4, 2024. Contact: Förderverein Interkultur, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/>

Florence FUN and Music Festival, Florence, Italy, 1-3 July 2025. Open to choirs, orchestras & bands. Contact: FICF - Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Email: info@florencechoirfestival.com - Website: <http://www.florencechoirfestival.com/>

17th Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival, Vienna, Austria, 4-9 July 2025. Contact: CONCERTS-AUSTRIA, Email: office@scfestival.org - Website: www.scfestival.org

International Choral Festival of Missoula, Montana, USA, 17-20 July 2025. Contact: International Choral Festival of Missoula, Email: info@choralfestival.org - Website: www.choralfestival.org

Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Florence, Italy, 22-25 July 2025. Contact: FICF - Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival, Email: info@florencechoirfestival.com - Website: <http://www.florencechoirfestival.com/>

African Asia Pacific World Choir Games, Port Louis, Mauritius, 26 Sep-5 Oct 2025. Contact: Interkultur Foundation, Email: mail@interkultur.com - Website: <https://www.interkultur.com/events/>

Relaxsing Costa Barcelona, Santa Susanna, Spain, 22-27 Oct 2025. Contact: European Choral Association – Europa Cantat - Website: info@relaxsing.org

55th International Choir Competition of Tolosa, Spain, 30 Oct-2 Nov 2025. Apply before May 15, 2025. Contact: Centro de Iniciativas de Tolosa, Email: cit@cittolosa.com - Website: www.cittolosa.com



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