

TRAVEL REPORT

International Congress for Conductors

September 7-9, 2018

Conservatoire Jean Baptiste Lully, Puteaux,
Paris, France

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INTRODUCTION

CONGRÈS INTERNATIONAL DES CHEFS DE CHŒUR or *International Congress for Conductors* is an American convention inspired conference organized over a long weekend. This event offers amateurs, professionals, as well as students a unique opportunity to learn pedagogies, meet pedagogues, specialists, artists in the Choral world, and discover new repertoires.

It is organized by **A Cœur Joie**, the largest Choral Association in France that promotes the development and practice of choral singing, regardless of any political, philosophical or religious commitment. It is open to all and brings together singers, choir directors, choirs of all levels, from the modest choir of amateurs, in the noble sense of the term, to the experienced vocal ensemble of different regions. They provide information, activities, meetings, support, and internships to train, improve, exchange experiences, and a venue to discover new repertoires. Many of its current and former leaders have, or have had, important functions in national and international choral activities.

The Congress offers 9 conferences, 7 workshops, 8 concerts with 10 choirs, a special talk about Vocal Painting by a Danish Conductor Jim Daus, and directories of publishers of new repertoires.

ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION

Venue

The Congress was held in Conservatoire Jean Baptiste Lully, Puteaux, Paris, France. It is located in the western suburbs of Paris, 8.7 kilometers from the centre of Paris. Going there, one has to ride the suburban rail network called Paris Transilien. Since Paris has a very efficient public transportation, it is very easy to get to Puteaux and only costs 1.90 euro one way. It's a 45-minute train ride from the centre of Paris and 10-minute walk from the station to the school.

The organisers provided 3 big rooms where Conferences and Workshops are conducted, 2 concert halls, and another 2 big rooms for the publishers.



Activities

Most of the Workshops are hands-on and involves singing, movements, and interacting with other singers. For the conferences, the participants would observe how rehearsals are conducted and there would also be forums discussing the concerns of conductors in their choir and how to address it. There were also introduction to new ideas of performance such as collaborating with a dance group and doing the performances in venues that are not originally meant for a concert to reach out to diverse audience.

EVALUATION

Strengths and Weaknesses

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Logistics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The venue is accessible• The rooms were spacious, well ventilated, and clean• The facilities of the hosting school was great• There were enough staff• The registration fee was cheap compared to other international workshops and conferences• They were very responsive to inquiries in social media• There were 221 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were no cafeteria open where participants can buy food during lunch or dinner• Some staffs were not very accommodating• The schedule of the sessions were not very strategic
Artistic Programing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They have very competent speakers• The speakers were nice enough and open for an interview after their session• The topics of the workshops and conferences were very interesting• The guest performers were really good• There were a lot of performances• They provided lots of pieces for free• Lots of publishing companies participated in the event as well	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants cannot attend to ALL sessions that are offered because some classes were scheduled at the same time.• A lot of the session were conducted in French in spite of having international participants.

Impact of the Activities

Jazz Choir and Repertoires

One of the reasons why I chose to attend this Conference is because of the discussions regarding Jazz Choir. As a professional choral conductor and seasoned jazz singer, I envision putting these two fields together and see how it can further expand the already vast choral scene here in the Philippines.

There were 2 sessions that focuses on the topic Jazz Choir. One of which was like a choral reading session that involves troubleshooting in teaching Jazz Choir Repertoires. It is an experience very familiar to me since we also do this in other choral conferences but the major difference was the repertoire. The repertoires are very new and fresh. The session focused more on jazz vocal technique, emphasis on the jazz feel, articulations, and expressions that are very different approach from the usual choral repertoire that I encounter and teach.

The other session was about starting up a Jazz Choir. It was originally conducted in French but I had the opportunity to talk and interview the speaker after his session. We had a great discussion about how to start up a jazz choir. I got the chance to tell him what I have been doing in the choral scene here in Philippines, my longing to be able to put up a Vocal Jazz Program, and the things I do to be able to achieve my goal. He affirmed me that I am on the right track and I just have to continue working on it.

Sing Me In Project

Another thing that struck me the most is one of Europa-Cantat's projects called "Sing Me in: Collective singing in the integration process of young migrants". This project aims to provide conductors, music teachers with pedagogical approaches and tools to allow collective singing activities to play a positive role in the integration process of migrants that are at risk of exclusion.

Collective singing as a social act and singing together can create a strong, emotional, connection even between people with very different ways of life. It enables a new relation based on equality that can be used to overcome perceived differences and enter into a phase of dialogue and understanding.



This is Choir Faitouch' under the direction of Marianne Feder. They are one of the choirs of Sing Me In Project. They are composed of refugees from different countries and culture.

It was a very moving experience to watch them sing together and perform. Their repertoires are very simple, their voices are very raw yet it sounds so inspiring and hopeful. They also shared their experiences how singing helped them find a sense of belongingness.



Ensemble A Bocca Chiusa during the Gala Concert, September 7, 2018



Choeur Faitouch' Encore, September 8, 2018



Choeur de Chambre Freia during the Gala Concert, September 7, 2018



Choeur de Chambre Freia introducing the works of Jaakko Mäntyjärvi



I got to interview Monsieur Jean-Claude Wilkens about Vocal Jazz



I had a chance to meet my benefactor, Monsieur Noel Minet, who gave me the Scholarship to attend the Congress



Jazz'Elles performing during the Demo Concert, September 8, 2018



Jean-Claude Wilkens talking about Jazz Choir with Jazz'Elles



La Cigale de Lyon and Madame Anne-Marie Cabut conducting Pedagogy for Children's Choir

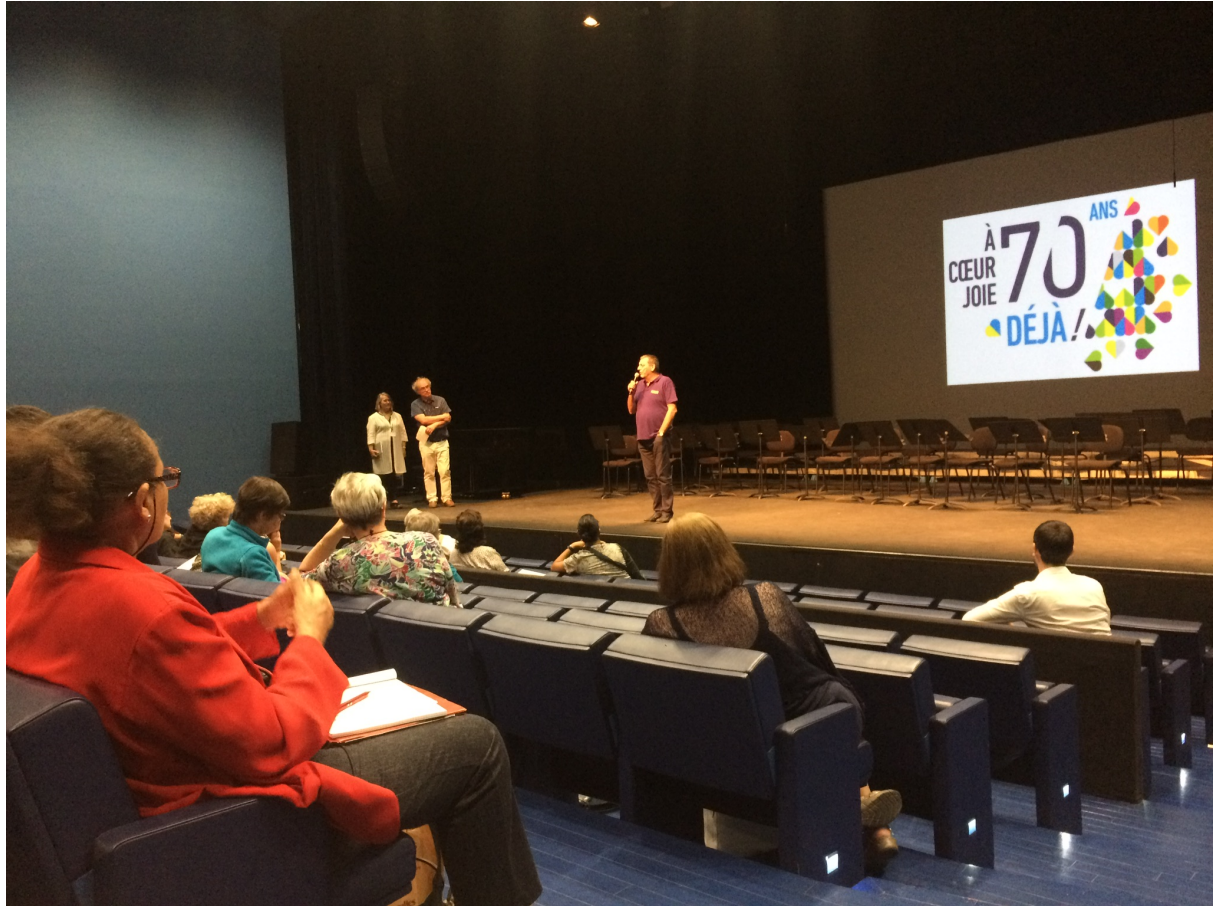


Kava-Kava during the Demo Concert, September 9, 2018



Loïc Pierre and Mikrokosmos talking about the music of Veljo Tormis





Closing Remarks from the President of A Cœur Joie, Jacques Barbier



With the Danish Composer Jim Daus Hjernøe after his session on having an intelligent choir