



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

ECA
EUROPEAN
CHORAL
ASSOCIATION

” One Voice for
Collective Singing! “

European Choral Association

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We are



CONDUCTORS | VOCAL LEADERS, ORGANISATIONS, EVENT
ORGANISERS, SINGERS, CHOIRS, COMPOSERS | CREATORS,
MANAGERS, TEACHERS | EDUCATORS

cooperating across borders in the field of collective singing since 1963.

60
MEMBER
ORGANISATIONS

187
CHOIRS

202
INDIVIDUALS

Through our membership, we directly represent **2,5 million** people, amateurs and professionals and reach out to more than **37 million** in continental Europe active in the field of collective singing.

Our members are actively involved through:

- Membership Days
- Working groups
- Consultations
- Online voting

www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org

welcome.

TO THE EUROPEAN CHORAL ASSOCIATION

We connect people through

EDUCATIONAL SINGING ACTIVITIES
FESTIVALS • TRAININGS • PROJECTS
MEETINGS • COMPETITIONS
AWARDS • CONFERENCES

all over continental Europe.

Why?

- We love collective singing, we want to share it!
- We promote peace and solidarity
- We want to exchange and learn from each other

Did you know?

4,5% of the European population are actively involved in collective singing

www.singingeurope.org

Dear readers, members and friends of the European Choral Association,

Collective singing has been severely challenged in 2020 and will continue to be so for an indefinite period of time. And it was precisely the “collective” dimension that was missing in lockdown for most of us and was subsequently the object of hard, limited and precarious reconquests. I have always looked at this pair of words as if “singing” was the broadest category and “collective” a subset of it: among the many people in the world who sing, we are the community of those who love to sing together. The pandemic has shown that the other approach is also true: most human beings need collective means of expression and singing is one of them.

The year 2020, inevitably marked by the pandemic that conditioned the usual methods, procedures, channels and cancelled meetings and events, the challenge of our association, its bodies, and its membership, is to maintain the quality of collective thinking.

Our sector, like many others, has experienced and is still experiencing the sorrow of losses, the difficulties of professionals due to lack of work, and frustration at the cancellation or rescheduling of events. Many of our members have had to give up the fruits of their work, work that may have taken years, cancelling activities that in some cases will be rescheduled. In the Covid-19 storm, our association did not draw an illusory magic wand to solve immense problems but created spaces of exchange where it was possible to listen, inform and share: the Covid-19 information document, the Zoom Cafés, meetings and webinars. It has also supported sector studies and research into new tools for online rehearsals. From the isolation, from the impossibility of the collective dimension, comes a renewed recognition of the role of our associations, which confirms the choice of our long-term vision motto: “One voice for collective singing”. Our task is to keep this voice well trained, well-tuned and ready to sing.

Carlo Pavese
President



Welcome to this fourth edition of our Annual Report. It took much longer to reach you than the previous ones, since it was not so easy to look back on 2020. It will be remembered as the year in which almost all activities across Europe and the world had to stop for a while and collective singing was especially hit. Nevertheless, we felt that 2020 would be a year to remember, and this report could become a historical document we later look back at in amazement and to refresh our own memories of these pandemic times.

While the year 2019 ended with a memorable Membership Weekend in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to present this beautiful city to our members and encourage them to register for the festival EUROPA CANTAT in July 2021 and promote it among their own members, in 2020 physical activities very quickly came to an end. Many people believe that we therefore did not have anything to do from March 2020, but astonishingly enough we were busier than ever.

In this annual report, we will thus look back at everything which happened – often online – within our EU-funded network in Europe. You will also discover what we did as partners in the SHIFT project, coordinated by the European Music Council and co-funded by Erasmus+, and how the project EPIC and Training Leading Voices developed further. We will also look ahead a little and have chosen inclusion as a small focus of this publication, a topic we dealt with within the SHIFT project and will deal with even more from 2022.

We would also like to remind you that 2020 marked the 60th anniversary of the informal creation of the European Federation of Young Choirs in Geneva in 1960, and the 65th anniversary of AGECE, officially founded in 1955 in Strasbourg. Sadly we were not able to raise a glass with you on this occasion, we hope to do this at future occasions. Even though many of our founders are no longer with us, we believe that they would be proud to see that their visions and ideas have survived against all odds and will continue with a new strength gained from the challenges of the years 2020 and 2021.

Sonja Greiner
Secretary General



Chris Marchal



Singing Week Flanders© RoosDevos

our network

2020

our history

HOW IT ALL BEGAN



Collective singing as an international tool to connect people and countries after World War II:

A group of conductors from different European countries many of whom had been soldiers during the war, met during a youth event at Loreley (Germany) and discussed what would be the best way to make sure that their young singers would not want to go to war with each other.

On the model of the French festival Choralies in Vaison-la-Romaine (France) they decided to create a festival in which the singers would not only sing for each other, but also participate together in different workshops.

They would be sleeping in the same accommodation, eating together and spending their free time together, thus making friends for life.

1952

During the Tiroler Sängerkongress in Innsbruck representatives of choir associations in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland established the idea to promote choir singing by exchanging compositions, choirs and other initiatives throughout Europe, followed by official foundation of AGEK in 1955.

1960

Informal founding meeting of the European Federation of Young Choirs in Geneva (Switzerland).

1961

First EUROPA CANTAT festival in Passau (Germany) ending just a few days before August 13th, 1961, when the wall between Western and Eastern Germany was closed.

Since then, we have been organising the festival every 3 years in a different country.

1963

Signing of the Élysée Treaty and foundation of the "European Federation of Young Choirs" in Bonn (later renamed "Europa Cantat")

2011

Merger between Europa Cantat – European Federation of Young Choirs (EFCY), founded in 1960/1963 and the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Chorverbände (AGEK), founded in 1955.

2014

Incorporation of the archives and the history of IDOCO (Internationale des Organisations Culturelles Ouvrières) which dissolved at the end of 2013.

our values

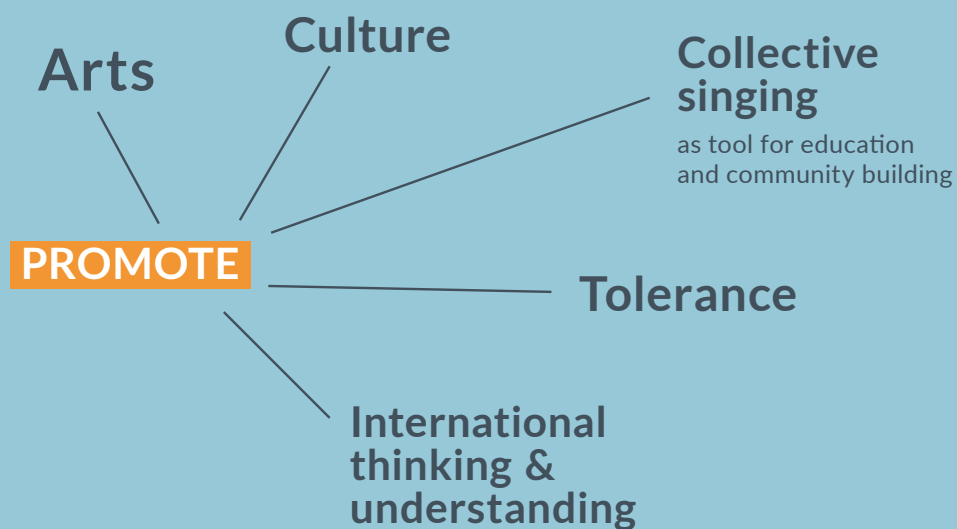
CONNECT PEOPLE AND CULTURES

FOSTER

International cooperation and mutual understanding between cultures, nations and individuals across social and political borders

SUPPORT

Youth involvement



REPRESENT

Interests of the singing community

We endorse the five music rights, formulated by the European / International Music Council:

- The right for all children and adults to express themselves musically in all freedom
- The right for all children and adults to learn musical languages and skills
- The right for all children and adults to have access to musical involvement through participation, listening, creation and information.
- The right for musical artists to develop their artistry and communicate through all media, with proper facilities
- The right for musical artists to obtain just recognition and fair remuneration.

www.imc-cim.org

our vision

FOR COLLECTIVE SINGING IN EUROPE

Being the pan-European non-profit organisation dedicated to **EDUCATION** and **CULTURAL EXCHANGE** in the field of collective singing among singers, conductors, composers and managers of all ages, with a focus on children and young people.

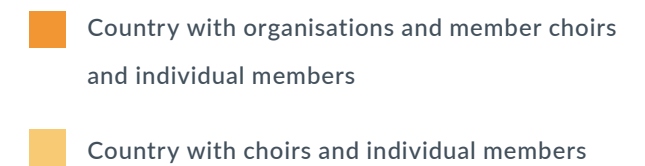
STRATEGY

- Strengthen the network and its members
- Facilitate peer-to-peer approach
- Invest in capacity-building and training
- Reach out to people who do not sing (yet)
- Raise awareness for collective singing in Europe

The strategy has been implemented and developed in tight cooperation with the membership thanks to the project “Upgrade-Connect-Reach Out: raise awareness for collective singing in Europe” [see page 30], co-funded by the European Union Creative Europe Programme. The project aims also to connect and cooperate with other players in the field of Collective Singing and beyond, and promote the benefits of singing for the individual and society.



OUR NETWORK



our members

60 MEMBER ORGANISATIONS BY END OF 2020

ARMENIA

- Armenian Little Singers

AUSTRIA

- Chorverband Österreich (ChVÖ)

BELGIUM

- European Music Festival for young people Neerpelt
- Fédération Chorale Wallonie – Bruxelles – (À Cœur Joie ASBL)
- Koor&Stem
- Vlaamse Federatie van Jonge Koren (VFJK)

CROATIA

- Croatian Choral Directors Association
- Hrvatski sabor kulture-glazba (Croatian Cultural Association HRSK)

ESTONIA

- Eesti Kooriühing (Estonian Choral Association)

FINLAND

- SULASOL (Finnish Amateur Musicians' Association)
- Tampere Vocal Music Festival

FRANCE

- À Cœur Joie (ACJ)
- Confédération Musicale de France (CMF)
- Institut Français d'Art Choral (IFAC)
- Plate-Forme Interrégionale
- Polyfolia International

GEORGIA

- Georgian Choral Society

GERMANY

- Arbeitskreis Musik in der Jugend (AMJ)
- Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Chorverbände e.V. (BDC)
- Deutsche Chorjugend e.V.
- Deutscher Chorverband e.V.
- Internationaler Chorleiterverband (ICV)

GREECE

- Hellenic Choirs Association

HUNGARY

- KÓTA – Association of Hungarian Choirs and Orchestras

IRELAND

- Association of Irish Choirs (since 2019: Sing Ireland)

ISRAEL

- Hallel – Israelian Choral Organisation

ITALY

- Federazione Nazionale Italiana Associazioni Regionali Corali (FENIARCO)
- Südtiroler Chorverband

LATVIA

- Latvian Song Celebrations Society

LIECHTENSTEIN

- Fürstlich Liechtensteinischer Sängerbund

LITHUANIA

- Lietuvos Choru Sąjunga

LUXEMBOURG

- INECC Luxembourg (Institut Européen de Chant Choral)

THE NETHERLANDS

- Dutch Choir Festival
- Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst (LKCA)
- Koornetwerk Nederland
- ZIMIHC

NORWAY

- Norges Korforbund
- Ung i Kor
- Norsk Sangerforum
- Ung kirkesang

PORTUGAL

- Coros Portugal - Associação Portuguesa de Música Coral

ROMANIA

- Asociația National Coral din Romania – (ANCR)

RUSSIA

- Non-profit partnership "All-Russian Choral Society"
- Regional public organization Moscow Music Society
- The Centre for the Creative Development and Musical Aesthetic Education of Children and Youth "Radost"
- The Centre of International Cooperation "Inter Aspect"

SERBIA

- Serbian Choral Association

SLOVENIA

- Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities – (JSKD)

SPAIN

- Confederación de Coros del País Vasco/ Euskal Herriko Abesbatzen Elkarte (EAE)
- Federació Catalana d'Entitats Corals (FCEC)
- Moviment Coral Català – (MCC)
- Secretariat de Corals Infants de Catalunya (SCIC)

SWEDEN

- Eric Ericson International Choral Centre
- Sveriges Körförbund
- UNGIKÖR

SWITZERLAND

- Schweizerische Chorvereinigung / Union Suisse des chorales (SCV/USC/UCS)
- Schweizerische Föderation Europa Cantat (SFEC)

TURKEY

- Koro Kültürü Derneği (Choral Culture Association)

UNITED KINGDOM

- Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD)

UKRAINE

- All-Ukrainian Choral Society "Leontovich"
- Association of National Pan-Ukrainian Music Community
- NGO Osnova Society

Join us

AS A MEMBER ORGANISATION

ADVANTAGES

SAVE MONEY

- Reduced participation fees at activities of European Choral Association
- Reduced fees for the website and brochures



ACCESS TRAINING AND INFORMATION

- Peer-to-peer training and workshops
- Access to a password-protected section of the website reserved for members with documents for the General Assemblies
- Privileged access to the Musica International database (database of the world's choral music) through the password-protected section of the website
- Regular publications (annual report and brochures)

GET INVOLVED IN THE EUROPEAN CHORAL LIFE

- Participate in our General Assembly
- Vote to elect the board (remote voting for individual, family and choir members)
- Endorse candidates for our board
- Participate in our General Assembly
- Membership Day: share your visions with the other members
- Network with your peers
- Get in touch with international contacts with the help of the general secretariat
- Use the logo and mention that you are a member of European Choral Association

HOW TO JOIN?

Read more on www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org/join-us

Write to info@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org

people

BOARD 2020



The governing body of the association elected by, and representing the membership.

CARLO PAVESE (Italy) | President

DERMOT O'CALLAGHAN (Ireland) | 1st Vice-President

JEAN-CLAUDE WILKENS (France) | 2nd Artistic Vice-President

MARTINE SPANJERS (The Netherlands) | Treasurer

MIHELA JAGODIC (Slovenia)

BURAK ONUR ERDEM (Turkey)

FLANNERY RYAN (Germany)

MARTÍ FERRER (Spain)

RAUL TALMAR (Estonia)

LOTI PIRIS NIÑO (Belgium)

MARTIN WILDHABER (Switzerland)

ECA-EC ARTISTIC STRATEGIC GROUP

JEAN-CLAUDE WILKENS (France)

Chair and ECA-EC Vice-President

MIHELA JAGODIC (Slovenia)

ECA-EC Vice-President

BURAK ONUR ERDEM (Turkey)

ECA-EC Board

RAUL TALMAR (Estonia)

ECA-EC Board

MARTIN WILDHABER (Switzerland)

ECA-EC Board

ZEYNEP EREN KOVANKAYA (Turkey)

ECA-EC Youth Committee

YOUTH COMMITTEE 2020



SILVIJA PROČKYTĖ (LT) | Chair
RUBEN TIMMER (NL) | Vice chair and treasurer
ZEYNEP EREN KOVANKAYA (TR) | Secretary
MATHILDE SANCHEZ (FR) | Communication

ANNA BOBRIKOVA (RU/DE)
ALBERTO PALACÍN FERNANDEZ (ES)
BARBARA BARAĆ (SI)

youthcommittee@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org

EUROPA CANTAT 2021 FESTIVAL MUSIC COMMISSION



Responsible for the artistic contents of the EUROPA CANTAT Festival XX and other activities.

JEAN-CLAUDE WILKENS (FR) | Chair
JEROEN BECKERS (BE)
JULIA BLANK (DE)
BURAK ONUR ERDEM (TR)
DÓRA HALAS (HU)

KATHARINA HENRYSSON (SE)
DAMIJAN MOČNIK (SI)
SIMONA ROŽMAN STRNAD (SI)
RAUL TALMAR (EE)
JOSEP VILA I CASAÑAS (ES)

REGIONAL CENTRES

They ensure a better contact with the growing membership and offer activities more easily accessible for interested conductors, singers, composers or managers from the region.

- Central – Eastern European Centre (CEEC) in Pécs, Hungary
- Mediterranean Office for Choral Singing (MOCS) – Mediterranean centre in Barcelona, Spain



people

ADVISORS

Former Board members of Europa Cantat, AGECE and ECA-EC, former members of the Music Commission who wish to stay in touch with the association.

Kjetil Aamann (NO)	Guido Helbling (CH)	Andrew Parrott (GB)
Kari Ala-Pöllänen (FI)	Rainer Held (CH)	Theodora Pavlovitch (BG)
Marleen Annemans (BE)	Volker Hempfling (DE)	Josep Prats (ES)
Urbain van Asch (BE)	Hans Hierck (BE/NL)	Jonathan Rathbone (GB)
Xavier Baulies (ES)	Mihela Jagodic (SI)	Aarne Saluveer (EE)
Barbara Bieri (DE)	Hansruedi Kämpfen (CH)	Michaël Scheck (BE)
Inessa Bodyako (BY)	Reijo Kekkonen (FI)	Jeroen Schrijner (CH/NL)
Filippo Maria Bressan (IT)	Éva Kollár (HU)	Jan Schumacher (DE)
Nicola Campogrande (IT)	Tamás Lakner (HU)	Patrick Secchiari (CH)
Elisenda Carrasco (ES)	Harold Lenselink (NL)	Christopher Simmons (GB)
Darina Chakarova (BG)	Erwin List (FR)	Fred Sjöberg (SE)
Jim Daus Hjærnøe (DK)	Victoria Liedbergius (NO)	Jean Smeets (BE)
Séverine Delforge (BE)	Cecilia Martin-Löf (SE)	Dan-Olof Stenlund (SE)
Julien Dubois (FR/NL)	Koenraad de Meulder (BE)	Kaie Tanner (EE)
Ágnes Erdélyi (HU)	Noël Minet (BE)	Thierry Thiebaut (FR)
Tomaž Faganel (SI)	Donka Miteva (BG/DE)	Alexander Vacek (UA)
Sante Fornasier (IT)	Gábor Móczár (HU)	Aleksandar Vujic (RS)
Lluís Gómez i Roldan (ES)	Erik van Nevel (BE)	Daphne Wassink (NL)
Montserrat Gual (ES)	Maria van Nieuwerkerken (NL)	Anneliese Zeh (AT)
Maud Hamon-Loisance (FR)	Margaret O'Sullivan (IE)	

MUSIC CONSULTANTS

Help the organisation to reach out to countries otherwise not (well) represented in the different bodies of the association and/or among its member organisations.

Zeljka Andric (BA)	Consultant for cooperation with the Russian Federation: Pavel Brochin, Bonn (DE/RU)
Margrét Bóasdóttir (IS)	
Joseph Lia (MT)	
Angelina Nicolaidou (CY)	
Dominika Semaňáková (SK)	
Krzysztof Szydzisz (PL)	
Sasho Tatarchevski (MK)	

team

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Communication and Marketing Manager

Estera.Mihaila@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org

JESSICA HEINRICH (DE)

Communication and Project Management intern

intern@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org

networking

WE ARE MEMBERS OF



International Music Council (IMC)

The world's leading membership-based professional organisation dedicated to the promotion of the value of music in the lives of all peoples.

IMC's mission is to develop sustainable music sectors worldwide, to create awareness about the value of music, to make music matter throughout the fabric of society and to uphold basic music rights in all countries.

www.imc-cim.org



European Music Council (EMC)

The umbrella organisation for musical life in Europe.

It is a platform for National Music Councils and organisations involved in various fields of music from many European countries.

www.emc-imc.org



International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM)

Founded in 1982 for the purpose of facilitating communication and exchange between choral musicians throughout the world.

ECA-EC is a founding member and regional office.

www.ifcm.net



Culture Action Europe (CAE)

European network of cultural organisations and individuals dedicated to promote culture as a necessary condition for sustainable development both at local and European scale.

www.cultureactioneurope.org



Musica International

MUSICA has amassed data on almost 200,000 musical scores becoming an invaluable and powerful search tool and a teaching resource for conductors, musicologists, schools, conservatoires and associations, libraries, music stockists and retailers.

www.musicanet.org



Choral Festival Network (CFN)

Network of qualified international festivals and competitions, whose intention is to give fair and transparent participants' conditions to choirs and individuals.

www.choralfestivalnetwork.org

We cooperate with other European networks for common advocacy statements:



European Alliance for Culture and the Arts

Gathers 37 European networks urging policy makers to rethink the European approach and include culture and arts in the long-term strategic goals of the European project.

www.allianceforculture.com

We have representatives on the Boards of IMC, EMC and IFCM.

networking

IN 2020 WE COOPERATED WITH



Amateo

Network for enhancing information flow, especially about the socio-cultural activities of the member organisations, political support for the importance of active participation in cultural activities and the exchange of information and practice among the member organisations.

www.amateo.info



BTVN2020

Celebrating the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth with the whole world, the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Rhine-Sieg District and the Federal City of Bonn have come together to coordinate this important anniversary under the umbrella brand BTHVN2020.

<https://www.bthvn2020.de/>



EMCY

EMCY is the European Union of Music Competitions for Youth: a network of music competitions for young people across Europe.

<https://emcy.org/> • <https://www.bthvn2020.de/>



ELIA

ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts) is a globally connected European network of Higher Arts Education. ELIA has 250 members in 47 countries.

<https://www.elia-artschools.org/>



European Association for Music in Schools (EAS)

Music education network. It brings together all those concerned with music education to share and exchange knowledge and experience in professional fields and to advocate for high quality music education accessible to all.

www.eas-music.org



European Theatre Convention (ETC-ECT)

Network of European public theatres founded in 1988 to promote contemporary drama theatre, to support the mobility of artists and to develop artistic exchange throughout Europe and beyond.

www.etc-cte.org



FACE

FACE is a platform promoting international cooperation and fresh practices in the performing arts, connecting cultural operators and artists to new perspectives and opportunities.

<https://www.fresh-europe.org/>



IETM

A network of around 450 performing arts organisations and individual members, IETM is working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide: theatre, dance, circus, interdisciplinary live art forms, new media.

<https://www.ietm.org/>



Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI)

Global network of NGOs that provides opportunities for young people and children to develop through music across all boundaries.

Partners of ECA-EC and IFCM in the World Youth Choir Foundation.

www.jmi.net



Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO)

Founded in 1992 as an independent network of national museum organisations represents the museum community of the member states of the Council of Europe. Together, NEMO's members speak for over 30.000 museums across Europe.

www.ne-mo.org



ON THE MOVE

A 15 years old initiative, on the move is the cultural mobility information network active in Europe and worldwide. It nowadays represents 50+ member organisations and individuals in Europe and worldwide.

<http://on-the-move.org/>



Trans Europe Halles (TEH)

A Europe-based network of cultural centres initiated by citizens and artists. TEH has been at the forefront of repurposing Europe's industrial buildings for arts, culture and activism since 1983. As of 2017, TEH has brought together nearly 90 multidisciplinary cultural centres and other cultural organisations from across Europe.

www.teh.net



The German National Youth Orchestra and the German National Youth Choir of the German Music Council

The German Music Council represents the interests of about 14 million people who make music and it is the biggest umbrella organisation for music in the world. With its more than 100 member associations and institutions, countless personalities from the music world, projects and promotional measures, the organisation serves as an advisor and competence centre for politics and civil society.



University of Music Würzburg

The Music university of Würzburg is one of Germany's oldest universities of music located in the city center of Würzburg in the north of Bavaria. Around 250 instructors from all over the world, including numerous world famous artists, prepare about 700 students each year for artistic, academic and pedagogical careers in the field of music.

www.uni-wuerzburg.de



World Youth Choir Foundation

A remarkable educational and social experience at the highest artistic level, aimed at talented young singers (17-26) from all over the world.

Each year a session is organised in different countries under the direction of renowned conductors.

www.worldyouthchoir.org

Network of Cantat festivals

We have an advisory role and cooperate with local and regional organisers of the AMERICA CANTAT and AFRICA CANTAT festivals.

www.america-cantat.org

www.AfricaCantat.org



multiannual projects

2020



UPGRADE – CONNECT – REACH OUT

Raising Awareness for Collective Singing in Europe

2017 – 2021

co-funded by the EU Creative Europe Programme under the strand for network projects with up to 250.000 EUR per year.



The project aims at strengthening the network of the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat, offering capacity-building and developing new (digital) tools under the keyword “Upgrade”, cooperating with other players in the sector of collective singing, enlarging the scope of the network under the keyword “Connect”, and reaching out beyond the sector under the keyword “Reach Out”.

In 2020:

- The Peer-to-Peer learning programme for staff members and conductors was developed further and adapted to the needs of the sector
- Further research on the benefits of collective singing was collected and the basis was set for the European campaign on the benefits of collective singing

Increased membership involvement in different ways:

- The Membership Weekend took place online in November 2020, focusing on important strategic changes for 2021 and 2022: the approval of new strategy of the association and, preparation of changes in membership structure.

- We offered a series of webinars and workshops, as well as hosted a series of zoom cafes for the members of the association;

Increased communication tools and methods:

- Upgraded Website
- Further increase in social media outreach
- Promotion of composers by setting up a special section on our website with information on composers who had commissioned works or won different composing competitions organised under the label of the European Choral Association.

New tools and resources

- Started working on a new, modern database, adapted to the dynamic structure of the association and its events;
- The team and members of the board has undergone a financial training to work on models for income generating activities that will help for the association's long-term sustainability.

The association also reached out to many new partners in the choral sector and beyond and worked on a strategy for 2021–2030:

- Attending different online conferences, webinars and events of other associations
- Discussing concrete cooperation with a number of choral and non-choral associations for the coming years
- Continued working with the Sing Tank on the long terms strategy of the network

www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org
Contact: info@EuropeanChoralAssociation.org



new cooperation projects

EP:IC (Emerging Professionals: Internationalisation of music Careers)

2019 – 2021

co-funded by the Creative Europe
Programme of the European Union

Project coordinator

European Choral Association



The vision of EPIC is to improve the training of emerging professionals, foster the creation of new ensembles across Europe, prove the value and impact of auditioned youth music ensembles for the professionalisation and internationalisation of careers and provide advocacy material for those who need to ensure ongoing support for existing ensembles or new ensembles to be created.

- A data collection, mapping the career path of former members of auditioned youth ensembles (orchestras and choirs)
- An involvement of the EuroChoir and the World Youth Choir as transnational laboratories for providing networking opportunities and the training of new skills
- The networking of existing and potential National Youth Choirs' organisers, to exchange best practices and cooperation opportunities
- Specific ateliers with preferential conditions for national youth choirs at the EUROPA CANTAT Festival in Ljubljana in 2021,
- Online training / Webinars for emerging artists on topics such as how to prepare good audition material / how to build a portfolio / how to find market opportunities
- Dissemination of the results through the network of partners and associate partners

Partners

European Choral Association (coordinator)



Jeunesses Musicales International

<http://jmi.net>



JSKD Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities

www.jskd.si



Sing Ireland

www.singireland.ie

www.europeanchoralassociation.org/epic



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

TRAINING LEADING VOICES

2020 – 2023

Application submitted to the EU Creative
Europe Programme in autumn 2019

Project coordinator

ZIMIHC

Co coordinator

European Choral Association



The project seeks to contribute to the professionalisation of vocal and choral leaders in Europe and the internationalisation of their careers, and is now being adapted to the COVID-19 situation. The first partners' meeting took place in October 2020 online.

Events in the frame of the project:

- Choral Connection | Lille – Bordeaux – Lyon, France | 10 October 2020
- International Competition for Choral Conductors | Turin, Italy | 25 – 27 June 2021
- PULSE – Europa Cantat Festival Programme for Vocal and Choral Leaders, Creators and Educators | Ljubljana, Slovenia | 16 – 25 July 2021
- European Academy for Young Conductors | Fano, Italy | 29 August – 5 September 2021
- (Inter)National Congress for Choral Conductors | Paris, France | 10 – 12 September 2021
- Study Tour at Choralies | Vaison-la-Romaine, France | August 2022
- Leading Voices 2022 | Utrecht, Netherlands | 27 – 31 July 2022
- International Competition for Choral Conductors | Turin, Italy | 27 – 29 October 2022
- Conference at ECA-EC General Assembly for Dissemination and Discussion of Results of Project | November 2022

Partners

ZIMIHC (Coordinator)

www.zimihc.nl

European Choral Association (Co-coordinator)

www.europeanchoralassociation.org

À Coeur Joie

www.choralies.org

Feniarco

www.feniarco.it

JSKD

www.jskd.si

Europa Cantat Utrecht



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

<http://trainingleadingvoices.org>



SHIFT SHARED INITIATIVES FOR TRAINING

2019 – 2021

co-funded by the EU Erasmus+ Programme

Project coordinator

European Music Council



Climate change, gender equality and inclusion of minorities are key challenges for our rapidly changing world. Arts and culture have a recognised role in shaping societies and have the potential to significantly contribute to a better and more sustainable future for all, as recognised in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The partners will produce online manuals and guidelines during the two next years (December 2019-December 2021) on the following themes:

- Cultural Leadership
- Climate Change
- Inclusion
- Gender and Power Relations

The project SHIFT will provide training initiatives for cultural leaders, working together and creating paths to face such global challenges. The outcomes and designed resources include annotated bibliographies, handbooks, interviews and more, designed to help leaders and future leaders of cultural organisations to integrate some of the most important issues of our times into different aspects of their work.

As partners of the project, ECA-EC will be leading on the inclusion intellectual output.

Partners

European Music Council (coordinator)

European Choral Association

ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts

EMCY – European Union of Music Competitions for Youth

FACE – Fresh Arts Coalition Europe

IETM – International network for contemporary performing arts

International Music Council

On the Move

Trans-Europe Hall

<https://www.emc-imc.org/>

www.europeanchoralassociation.org

<https://www.elia-artschools.org/>

<https://emcy.org/>

<https://www.fresh-europe.org/>

<https://www.ietm.org/>

www.imc-cim.org

www.on-the-move.org

www.teh.net

www.shift-culture.eu



article

MAKING THE SHIFT TO INCLUSION IN OUR WORK AND IN OUR LIVES

Written by Sophie Dowden

When we talk about inclusion, it is easy to slip into the trap of thinking that it is something we should try to achieve when we are doing our work. The truth is, many of the inclusive practices that we need to develop are transversal, applying in every corner of our lives.

The essence of inclusion is treating humans as humans and respecting the needs and preferences of each individual. It is about listening - really listening - to each other in order to understand where each of us is coming from, the histories of those in our group and our lived experiences.

Understanding Ourselves: Empathy and Bias

Knowing ourselves is essential if we want to create more inclusive spaces for others. Part of this is empathy. Can you think of a time when you felt like an outsider in a work or social space? What feelings did this bring up in you? What effect did it have on what you were willing to speak up and say? Did you feel heard, respected or understood in this group? Why or why not? What would have helped you in this situation?

Now turn it around. Have you noticed someone else feeling excluded within a group? Do you generally pay attention to this? What do you do if you notice someone feeling excluded?

Your experiences will not be identical, but they give you a starting point for connection and the building of trust. Find the similarities and recognise the differences.

” I was in a situation a bit like this and I felt so many emotions.
I wonder if you might be feeling something similar? Do you want to tell me more about it? “

Now for a quick exercise, if you have the time. Just find a pen and something to write on, and note down the names of the five people you trust the most, who are not in your family. Now, for each of the following characteristics, put a tick next to each person who is the same or similar to you in terms of: age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion and economic status.

Do you have a lot of ticks? If so, this is a sign of affinity bias. Affinity bias is our tendency to feel more trust towards people that share similar characteristics or backgrounds to us. It is naturally ingrained in our brains, but it is also possible to override it, so long as we are aware that we have it.

For example, in a hiring process, you might keep a note of the characteristics (including personality traits) that you share with the candidate, so that you can differentiate between similar characteristics

article

MAKING THE SHIFT TO INCLUSION IN OUR WORK AND IN OUR LIVES

that may be contributing to bias and the skills, experiences and qualities of the candidate that would add to your workplace culture.

Unconscious bias against people in marginalised groups is unfortunately very common - including among members of marginalised groups, who have internalised dominant societal narratives. Harvard's Project Implicit has a range of tests you can take to discover your own unconscious bias. These are also not set in stone. To tackle them, it's time to listen.

The Inclusive Space: Making Space for Difficult Conversations

The ideal is to create a space where everyone can come as their authentic selves, where they don't have to pretend to be somebody else in order to fit in. This means having to deal with conflict and difficult conversations. Conflict is natural and will arise wherever there people come together in a group. Learning to manage conflict is therefore vital.

On the one hand, this involves everyone recognising that people's needs and sensitivities are different. Some people find uncertainty unsettling and need to know everything about what is happening; others are frustrated by detail and prefer to improvise. Some people thrive working alone, others need the feeling of belonging to a group. Some people love public praise, others would rather die than be praised in front of an audience. Understanding what different individuals need to feel psychologically safe can avoid a lot of pain and misunderstanding.

Be prepared! Have processes already in place for when something goes wrong. If someone feels attacked or harassed - who are they supposed to go to? What if the problem arises from that person? Who else can they go to? How can they reach out? Can they write it in an email? How often do you check in with individuals in your teams or choirs? A scheduled 1-on-1 meeting can provide the necessary space and opportunity for someone to bring something up that has been upsetting them but which they didn't see as important enough to bother you with.

Do not underestimate the importance of creating opportunities for people to voice their problems - and give them explicit permission to do so.

Understanding Others: How to Listen

We will never fully understand another human being. This is one of the reasons it is so important to have a diversity of people in positions of power, so that each person can bring their own knowledge, lived experience and skills. "Nothing about us, without us" is a longstanding call for recognition of exactly this.

However, we can always understand someone else better, and the first thing we can do in this respect is listen. Of course, this is easier said than done. We do not get taught how to listen to each other at school, but it is a critical skill to be able to listen to someone in such a way that they feel that they have been listened to. If you are interested in improving your listening skills, take a look at Nonviolent Communication, based on the book of the same name by Marshall Rosenberg.

You might start by listening in order to be able to summarise what the person has said in your own words. Then try telling them the summary and asking for confirmation that you have understood correctly.

” I hear that you are upset because this has happened and you thought it was ignored by the group. Is that right? “

Try to listen to the feelings behind the words that someone is saying too. Oftentimes, angry words are masking pain and sadness - go there, not to the angry words. You can try suggesting what basic needs are present for them, and allow them to agree with you or correct you.

” Because this happened, it sounds like you're feeling pretty discouraged about participating and you are afraid to speak up again. That sounds very stressful, because you need to feel safe to contribute and for others to listen to you and respect what you have to say. Would you say that? “

And before you act on what you have listened to - remember to ask what that person would like to see happen next. Don't risk embarrassing them, making them feel even more excluded, although you are acting with the best of intentions. The counterpart to active listening is asking questions.

Respectful questions show self-awareness and interest in improving. When you are working with someone from a marginalised group, ask them if they would be willing to give you feedback on what is working well and what could be done better. Make sure to ask if they would be willing first; there should be no assumption that they will be happy to talk about this with you.

Into Practice: Normalising Making Mistakes

All of this is going to take us time to learn and it will be a process of making mistakes over and over again. Diversity and inclusion is a topic that makes many of us feel very vulnerable and exposed, which is why normalising a culture of making mistakes is so important.

In your work environment, you can establish in advance that you would welcome your colleagues making you aware if you have made them uncomfortable in some way. Listen to understand, recognise your mistake, admit to it, apologise to those affected and understand and speak to how you would approach this differently in future.

Be gentle with yourself - the process might be uncomfortable, but it is a contribution to justice in our societies. Trust the process, it is worth it.

The European Choral Association leads on the topic of inclusion in the SHIFT project, co-ordinated by the European Music Council and co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme.

article

FACILITATING THE EMPOWERMENT OF TRANSGENDER VOICES THROUGH SINGING

Written by Alexander Pullinger, a summary of his paper, 'Facilitating the Empowerment of Transgender Voices Through Singing'.

To introduce the topic, here are some key terms:

Cisgender (or 'cis'):	anyone who is not transgender (from Latin cis, meaning 'same')
Transgender (or 'trans'):	anyone whose gender does not match the gender they were assigned at birth (from Latin trans, meaning 'on the other side of')
Sex:	often refers to a person's body type or anatomy; can describe their hormonal make-up
Gender:	an individual experience of maleness, femaleness, a combination or lack of both entirely
Assigned at birth:	the process of a doctor determining a baby's gender based on its sex (genitalia)
Non-binary:	anyone whose gender is not exclusively male or female
Gender expression:	how a person outwardly expresses their gender (eg clothing)
Voice type:	'a group of voices with similar vocal ranges, capable of singing in a similar tessitura, and with similar vocal transition points'*; mostly the product of sex hormones

* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voice_type)

As we know, group singing improves mental health, actively promotes a connection to the body, and encourages social inclusion. Difficulties in these areas disproportionately impact the transgender population. In my work as a freelance singer, I have seen that transgender people encounter significant barriers to accessing singing, originating primarily from entrenched, cisgendered expectations about voice type ('men sing low, women sing high'). For instance, in choral singing, we frequently hear of 'men's voices' (tenors and basses) and 'women's voices' (sopranos and altos). These expectations lead to highly gendered and/or cisgendered singing environments, in which voices are both divided along gendered lines, and expected to belong to people with a particular body type. However, voice type is a product of sex hormones, and is not defined by gender, so assigning a gender to the voice does not make logical sense - even if it might seem simpler to do so. As a result of these expectations, an activity that could specifically benefit transgender people is largely unavailable to many of them. Those who do manage to access singing may find the environment to be inhospitable or unsafe, to the point where they have to leave and do not return. It is important to be aware that many transgender people are not out, because of fear of discrimination and attack (<http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Hate-Crime-Report-2020.pdf>). It is not possible to tell if someone is transgender by looking at them, so singing spaces need to be made trans-inclusive regardless of any assumptions about who is present.

Below are some practicable strategies to make singing environments more trans-inclusive.

1. Raising awareness in singing teachers and music directors

It is vital that singing teachers and music directors develop trans-awareness, and do not place a burden on the transgender student or colleague for education about gender identity. A key resource is The Singing Teacher's Guide to Transgender Voices (Jackson Hearn and Kremer). The significant cost of this text may be prohibitive for many individuals, so it falls to institutions to obtain copies for their libraries.

2. Use of language

The use of gendered language in rehearsals immediately dictates how the group relates to voice types. For cisgender singers with higher voices, being referred to as 'ladies' will probably not be noticeable to those who do identify that way. But for those who do not, for example transgender men, it can be profoundly distressing and invalidating. The same applies to transgender women with lower voices being referred to as 'men'. Further to this, choirs described as 'for men' or 'for women' have the potential to deter non-binary singers altogether, as well as those who have a voice type more typically associated with a different gender. All this can be avoided by referring to singers by voice type or grouping, eg sopranos/tenors/upper voices/lower voices, etc.

3. Concert dress codes

Concert dress codes are typically divided along binary, gendered lines (eg black trousers and jacket for men, black skirt and blouse for women). This can be distressing and alienating for many transgender people, who might not conform to cisgendered expectations. By definition, a binary, gendered dress code excludes non-binary gender expression. One solution is to have the same clothing options, without indicating that any particular combination is for men or women. This gives singers the freedom to choose clothing that is appropriate and comfortable, while adhering to the dress code.

To some, the idea of overhauling all classical singing environments for the benefit of a small minority might seem extreme. However, removing oppressive restrictions on the most vulnerable benefits all of us. It will bring diversity of lived experience (meaning richer musical offerings), and foster greater compassion. Ultimately it will allow all of us the freedom to express ourselves without being bound to rigid gender norms about what we can wear, whose voices can be heard, and whose stories can be told.

The full paper is available to download here:

<https://www.sound-connections.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Trans-inclusion-article-FINAL.pdf>

A condensed version is available here:

<https://britishmusiccollection.org.uk/article/empowering-transgender-voices-through-singing>

www.alexanderpullinger.co.uk



Study tour Tampere © Maarit Kyösti

activities

2020

THE YEAR IN A PANDEMIC

Written by Sonja Greiner

How it all began

The year 2020 was strongly marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and we can assume that nobody will forget this unusual year. We had all heard something about Covid-19 at the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020, and when we invited the World Youth Choir Board to Bonn for a meeting at the end of January 2020, we already had a cancellation by somebody who preferred not to fly because of the risks involved. Others, including myself, however, did quite a bit of travelling in early 2020: I was in Italy for a strategic conference of Feniarco, in Ljubljana for a meeting of the Music Commission (the last physical meeting of this commission until July 2021 as it turned out later), in Malta for a meeting of coordinators of European networks, in Valencia and Gent to visit potential host towns for Europa Cantat junior 2023, and in Berlin where we selected singers for our Beethoven 2020 project with Simon Halsey and where I celebrated a friends' birthday for the last time in a while.

Italy was first strongly hit in Europe, but most people in the other European countries did not think that they could be affected in a similar way themselves. I remember receiving a message from my former colleague Giulia in February 2020, urging me to spread the word that the virus had to be taken seriously. In early March 2020, while we were visiting Gent, our Italian President called to ask if we really thought we could hold a physical Board and Youth Committee meeting mid-March, and that he himself would certainly not be able to join. We quickly made a survey, most Board members were still planning and willing to come (and I actually had tickets to fly to Qatar and then Kenya a week later and was not considering a cancellation of this trip, either), while the Youth Committee mostly opted for an online meeting. And then within a week everything changed, and on March 13th, 2020, when our Board meeting was supposed to start, only our German Board member was able to come to Bonn and the physical, then hybrid meeting had changed into a pure online Board meeting. Suddenly all documents had to be uploaded on Basecamp (the project management platform we already used before), and the methodology for a 2-day meeting of the Board and Youth Committee had to be designed within 48 hours.

Changed working conditions

With this weekend, our lives changed considerably – all travels for the coming months were stopped, first events such as the World Symposium on Choral Music in Auckland, New Zealand were cancelled, all staff was encouraged to work from home. We fought with airlines to get ticket refunds, with hotels to drop cancellation fees (partly without success), we had first choirs asking for legal advice on such matters, and we had to struggle with the technical setup that would allow all five staff members to work from home and have access to all the data and material they needed. Zoom conferences started multiplying like mushrooms (we had used Zoom occasionally already before, which helped a lot at this stage) and I had to upgrade my internet connection at home which was not strong enough for video-conferences of this scope. We started buying software rather than using the limited free versions

and discussed how we could keep in touch as a team despite the circumstances. While some offices did daily meetings, checked in and out digitally, we went for a more flexible model. We organised one “Zoom Fixe” a week, and we organised bilateral meetings to discuss specific topics. Basecamp helped us read what the others were doing and share our own topics and concerns online, sometimes also our inspirations. We soon learned to also use other online meeting programmes and we asked around left and right what other similar networks were using. Luckily, our team managed to stay in good spirits throughout the year, the staff appreciated that they were offered to work at flexible times, we started our meetings asking everybody how they felt, and somehow got to know each other better than before. While we were not able to meet physically in 2020 (except for one hybrid meeting in the Netherlands in preparation of the Leading Voices event), online meetings multiplied. We had more Board meetings, more project meetings, and we attended more conferences than before the pandemic. We missed the networking, the informal preparation of decisions over coffee or a common meal, but especially in groups that knew each other well, we also realised that online work could be more efficient than we had imagined. However, the pure number of meetings sometimes became too much: during the most intensive period I had days with 6 or 7 consecutive online meetings, leaving me drained in the evening. International meetings often started at 10 p.m. and sometimes lasted until 1 a.m., the borders between work and private life started dissolving.

Sharing is caring

Already during the Board and Youth Committee meeting in March it became clear that also the focus of our work would need to shift due to the pandemic. We immediately started a “sharing is caring” campaign on social media, encouraging our members to share their experience with online tools or ask questions to others. The most common question on Facebook soon became “With which programme can you sing together online” and the answer was “this is not possible”. With time we learned that there were programmes which could be used, if singers had a good internet connection and decent equipment – and in May 2020 we decided to support the development of the “Digital Stage” programme. In parallel we experimented with other programmes and tested the limits of online music making.

After the first full lockdown the most common question from our member organisations was “how can we restart collective singing safely after the lockdown?”. Due to media reports about outbreaks in choirs at the beginning of the pandemic, singing was considered “dangerous” by many people, and choral organisations were worried how rehearsals and concerts could start again without endangering singers. Collecting research results as well as sample hygiene protocols, we started an online document which was regularly updated and through which we shared all the information we could gather, as well as examples of good practice. I was also invited to several online meetings and conferences to share these examples which included car rehearsals, creative virtual choir videos, first choirs singing with masks, one-to-one concerts and much more.

Being the voice of the sector

We soon also realised how important it was to collect information and speak on behalf of the sector during these difficult times. We were often asked by other organisations how the pandemic had impacted choirs in Europe, so we designed several surveys and collected data and impressions from

the different European countries which showed a huge diversity: While singing remained possible in some European countries throughout the pandemic, choral life came to a stillstand in many countries and even though many choirs used online conference programmes as well as other software to stay in touch, learn new repertoire and try to keep the choir alive, many choirs stopped activities altogether and we know that not all of them survived the pandemic. We also advocated for the need to financially support freelancers who were not earning any money because of the lockdown, and for the need to support the reopening of choral activities under safe conditions.

After some hesitations whether it was the right moment to do so, we decided to continue planning the campaign on the benefits of collective singing, which was to mark the end of our 4-year project “Upgrade – Connect – Reach Out: Raising Awareness for Collective Singing in Europe”. The idea for the campaign was born before the pandemic – could we go ahead with it even though collective singing was considered dangerous due to the spreading of aerosols? In the end we decided that it would be more important than ever to point out the individual and social benefits of collective singing, so we continued to prepare the campaign which then started in 2021.

Webinars, Zoom Cafés and other online gatherings

We had already foreseen to offer Webinars before the pandemic hit, thanks to the pandemic they received more attention, we had higher numbers of attendees and we offered more webinars than planned originally. In addition, we started offering online meetings which we called “Zoom Cafés”, some without specific topics, some centred around a certain topic, sometimes inviting guest speakers.



They allowed us to stay in touch with our membership and to encourage peer-to-peer exchange, and strangely enough this led to the fact that we saw more of our members than in pre-pandemic times and felt that the membership needed a network more than ever. Since international physical meetings were not possible in autumn 2020, even though our members would have loved to meet in Galway, Ireland, we had to organise an online Membership Weekend in the end, with a digital project presentation session, online discussion rounds on important topics concerning the future of the organisation, as well as an online General Assembly. The project presentation session attracted so many members and went so well that we decided to keep it online in future, even when physical Membership Weekends would become possible again. During the breaks and after the formal General Assembly we offered breakout rooms to allow members to informally meet and chat, and we decided to end the year 2020 with an informal end-of-year-meeting with no schedule. Our members had gotten used to the online formats and enjoyed spending time together, even if it was only online.

Cancelling events, reshaping events, flexibility above all

The most sad aspect of the pandemic in 2020 concerning our work was the fact that we had to cancel so many activities and we had to disappoint especially young people again and again. We also quickly learned that the huge insecurity (How long will the pandemic last? What will be the rules in some months' time? Will international travels be possible again? Will collective singing be allowed? Will it be possible to have an audience?) meant that we had to work more for each event, have plans B, C and D, permanently adapt budgets and schedules and be more flexible than ever. The EuroChoir session in Ireland had to be postponed to 2021 (and in the end moved to Slovenia), the session in Switzerland moved to 2022, Europa Cantat junior could not be organised as festival and was directly moved by two years to 2022, though our Lithuanian partners were able to organise a junior week with local children and some invited conductors. The World Youth Choir was not able to join the German National Youth Orchestra to celebrate Beethoven's anniversary, the project could not be postponed, and it was impossible to plan international sessions even for 2021 or 2022. We auditioned great young singers for the final concert of the Beethoven Anniversary Year with Simon Halsey and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and Daniel Barenboim, only to finally inform them that the project could not be realised, and the orchestra would need to work with a German professional choir or without choir due to travel restrictions and other Covid-19 rules in place. And the planned singing week “in the footsteps of Ludwig van Beethoven” had to be reduced to a weekend with only local participants – our first attempt at organising a “hybrid” event, but at least we were able to welcome Jan Schumacher in Bonn and have physical rehearsals with a small group of singers.

Looking ahead

At the end of 2020 we were convinced that the pandemic would be over soon and that our Europa Cantat Festival in Ljubljana in July and other summer activities in 2021 would happen thanks to the vaccination campaign starting in December. Little did we know ... our hopes for a better 2021 were soon destroyed, but this will be part of the Annual Report 2021 when we will look back at the 2nd year of the pandemic which brought about new challenges, and new opportunities.

activities

JUNIOR CHOIR CAMP

The Europa Cantat Junior festival was postponed and is planned to take place in 2022, but, with restrictions constantly lifting and events regaining momentum in the country, young Lithuanian singers were able to remember how good it feels to join their voices. 100 singers who had planned to attend the festival met in a choral camp and had loads of fun in ateliers led by Hirvo Surva (Estonia), Luigi Leo (Italy), Valerija Skapiene (Lithuania), as well as open singing, conducted by Jan Schumacher (Germany).



activities

EUROPEAN AWARD FOR CHORAL COMPOSERS



There was a total of 25 pieces by 19 composers who entered the competition, suggested by seven different member organisations of the European Choral Association - Europa Cantat.

WINNING COMPOSITIONS:

- In category A (works a cappella): "Amor, io fallo" by Jan Van der Roost (Belgium)
- In category B (works with accompaniment): "Autumn Soils", Maarten Van Ingelgem (Belgium)

SPECIAL MENTIONS:

Hans Helsen for "Sanctus Amor", Vigdis Hansa Elst for "How sweet the Moonlight".

The official Award Ceremony will be organised during the EC festival in Ljubljana, with the 2 winning pieces performed there.

<https://europeanchoralassociation.org/activities/awards-and-competitions/european-award-for-choral-composers/>



Jan Van der Roost



Hans Helsen



Maarten Van Ingelgem



Vigdis Hansa Elst

activities

BEETHOVEN ANNIVERSARY YEAR 2020

2020 marked the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven and the City of Bonn celebrated its arguably most famous son with the BTHVN2020 Beethoven Anniversary Year.

We had multiple activities planned in the frame of this project:

- 2020 World Youth Choir Session
- A pan European Youth Choir
- In the Footsteps of Ludwig van Beethoven Festival



activities

BEETHOVEN ANNIVERSARY YEAR 2020



WE'VE GONE HYBRID

Mixing a choral festival and cultural tourism was what we had in mind when designing In the Footsteps of Ludwig van Beethoven, before our world was hit by the pandemic. There should have been a cooperation with a local tourism agency specialised in cultural tourism, to be able to discover Beethoven's home town in his footsteps.

Over the course of one week, participants would have sung in workshops led by Panda van Proosdij and Jan Schumacher, and in several evening concerts in Bonn and the surrounding area.

It became clear very early on into the pandemic, that this idea would be impossible to realise. Therefore, in cooperation with BTHVN2020 as the funding body, we changed the event into a hybrid weekend workshop. 15 singers rehearsed in Bonn with Jan Schumacher, and all the rehearsals were streamed online, allowing many more to join from their homes. While this concept clearly still needs further development, the number of people registered and the positive feedback we received clearly showed that people want to sing together, and doing this via the internet is still better than not singing at all.

Additionally, Panda van Proosdij offered a morning warm-up before the rehearsal day and a webinar on the connection of Voice and Physique.

<https://europeanchoralassociation.org/activities/activities-2020/beethoven-anniversary-year-2020/in-the-footsteps-of-ludwig-van-beethoven/>

The other two activities unfortunately had to be cancelled in the end due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions in place, even though a lot of preparatory work had been done for exciting projects in both cases.

article

CONSCIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH PLAY AND CREATIVITY IS THE ONLY SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD

Written by **Estera Mihaila**

Imagine if the alphabet would only have five letters **M, O, B, S** and **P**. How many words could you make with those? Well, regardless of what you can think of, they're probably not making much sense on their own, so the follow-up thought of having to communicate solely by using them is just ridiculous. Because it's just way too limited, right?

Well, when it comes to our workplaces, to our organisations, to our teams, we actually only have five traditional ways in which we interact:

Managed discussion | **P**resentation | **O**pen discussion | **S**tatus Report | **B**rainstorming

You must've experienced them all and they get you through most of the work you have to do. But they just don't really foster proper innovation and done wrongly, they have the potential to waste time. The main elements to be analysed and counter-balanced are **content control and participation** – who can contribute and when/how often. For the managed discussion, status report and presentations, we have mostly one active participant at the time in charge of the content, having everybody else listening (presenting, asking people to talk, asking a question, answering a question). For open discussions & brainstorming, there is a big lack of control, both in terms of content and in terms of participation.

If you ever felt drained at the end of a full day of meetings, I'm here to tell you it can get better. The solution is simply finding ways to increase participation, allowing more people to contribute at the same time in a way that doesn't feel disconnected, either to the group or themselves. What we want to foster is an environment where people feel engaged, inspired and listened to, so they feel safe to share their experiences and thoughts. We'll know we achieved this when you see creativity and innovation flourish and flow around the room. If the past year has shown us something, it is that connection is vital for our sanity and we owe it to ourselves to create the best working environment we can think of, given the amount of time we dedicate to this.

There are many methods and tools you can start using and I'd like to just give you a taste of what can be achieved when you increase participation and reduce content control. My personal favourites are the Liberating Structures, thirty different settings, with different aims and below you'll be introduced to the easiest to work with:

1-2-4-ALL to help you with your brainstorming

Meet your team, online or offline, and clearly state the topic you would like to work on (solve a problem, gather ideas, collect suggestions, build a network, think of stakeholders, etc.

- Step 1:** Give everybody a few minutes to think and individually write down their input;
- Step 2:** Pair everybody up, allow them to share ideas with each other, get initial feedback, solve possible confusing formulations, discover similarities and differences in their approach;
- Step 3:** Pair two pairs, forming groups of 4, allowing a second round of feedback, asking everybody to choose the best ideas, the ones worth mentioning;

After these three steps, return to the big group and allow the groups to share their input. The difference between this and a regular brainstorming session is that everybody works at the same time, you have two rounds of feedback, ending up with the curated suggestions to help you advance your process. This can be repeated.

Do you want to get more out of it? Add specific prompts:

15% solutions to help you with your open discussions

Are you stuck? Do you want a collective process to search for solutions for the problems you've encountered? We fool ourselves thinking it's big steps to crush big challenges, but in fact, it's our immediate chance of action which will save the day in any given crisis.

State your challenge and ask people to think and answer questions such as:

What is your 15% when it comes to your contribution in solving this problem? Where do you have discretion and freedom to act? What can you do without more resources or authority?

Decide if you want people to share the answers in pairs or in pairs and groups of 4.

Return to the big group with a team that has undergone a reflection process, with a better understanding of each other's freedoms, boundaries and available resources. You should expect more intentional action points to solve the challenge and be surprised by what only took 10 minutes to have your team come in sync with one another has done.

Be curious, be playful, be open. Encourage people to reflect before they contribute. Allow more feedback and exchange, allow your teams and peers to contribute often and be conscious about what they have to say. Creative working environments, with their members in sync, is the only way to move forward. Try it out and allow yourself to be surprised by the outcomes.

Read more about the mentioned methods:

www.liberatingstructures.com

Under the SHIFT project, a training session was organised for cultural representatives on different participative methods which can be used to facilitate and moderate discussions.

www.shift-culture.eu

activities

NEW ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Dedicated Spaces on Facebook and on the Website

The first initiative was to create a Facebook post encouraging the network to share interesting tips and ideas under the title “Sharing is Caring”. Also a sub-page of the association’s website gives an overview over the main Covid-19 related activities:

www.EuropeanChoralAssociation.org/covid-19

Press release

In mid-March a first press release was formulated in response to the crisis and how it affected the choral world and choral professionals. In June the board decided to publish a press on the fact that it is not singing which is dangerous but rather Covid-19, and that those who have had financial losses due to Covid-19 need to be supported.

Surveys

The European Choral Association participated in a number of German and European surveys on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the choral world, among others the surveys of the European/International Music Council and Culture Action Europe.

In order to be able to give a more concrete picture and find out from those concerned how organisations, choirs and professionals in the field of collective singing have been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, the association also designed and disseminated its own surveys during the pandemic.

Resources Document

The answers to the surveys, information shared on Facebook and other information gathered from the network and beyond were gathered in a resources document under the title “Covid-19 information for choral organisations, choirs and conductors”. The document gathers information about the possible risks of collective singing, research available, examples of guidelines and protocols for the restart of physical rehearsals and performances, an overview on available online resources and other tips and tricks as well as examples for inspiration.

activities

NEW ACTIVITIES DURING THE PANDEMIC



Members’ Zoom Cafés & Webinars

Inspired by other organisations, we decided to set up a regular Zoom-Café with members. The first editions of this café mostly allowed our members to meet, to see members of our board and team and to share their concerns, questions, wishes and needs. Afterwards we offered more specific sessions for different aim groups or on special topics.

Also, as the online scene bloomed during the pandemic, we decided to expand the offer of webinars beyond what we had initially planned for 2020:

- Choral Repertoire with Merel Mertens (NL), Patrick Secchiari (CH), Jean-Claude Wilkens (FR) and Sonja Greiner (DE)
- The Intelligent Choir and Choral Painting with Jim Daus Hjernøe (DK)
- How to audition for an (inter)national (youth) choir with Josep Villa | EPIC Project
- Voice and Physique with Panda van Proosdij (NL) | BTHVN 2020

<https://bit.ly/ECAwebinars>





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www.youtube.com/ecaec

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Titelphoto: Picture from Junior Choir Camp in Lithuania, organized by the Europa Contact Junior Vilnius team