

*Magazine*

# COUNCIL TALK

THE CHORAL WORLD IN EXCHANGE

NEW YEAR, NEW LUCK - WHAT AWAITS US IN 2021



REVIEW AND OUTLOOK | CHOIRS AND CORONA - LEARNINGS AND INSIGHTS |  
INTERVIEW WITH AARNE SALUVEER | 20 YEARS OF WORLD CHOIR GAMES



SINGING  
TOGETHER  
BRINGS NATIONS  
TOGETHER

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# World Choir Council

# EVENTS & PROJECTS 2021



## WCC MAGAZINE – COUNCIL TALK

A NEW DIGITAL MAGAZINE WITH DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK OF THE WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL, ITS MEMBERS AND CURRENT NEWS FROM THE CHORAL WORLD

Digital Publication twice a year – JAN and AUG

## HELLO COUNCIL

VIRTUAL LIVE TALKS – CONNECTING THE CHORAL WORLD

Mar 12, 2021 | Apr 23, 2021 | May 28, 2021 | Jun 18, 2021 | Sep 24, 2021 | Nov 13, 2021

(Changes of dates might be possible)



## VIDEO PROJECT

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE - EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE BETWEEN MEMBERS AND THE CHORAL WORLD

Publication of a new video on every 15<sup>th</sup> of the month

## ONLINE REGIONAL MEETINGS

ONLINE DISCUSSION ROUNDS WITH THE MEMBERS OF YOUR REGION ON CURRENT TOPICS – EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE AND INFORMATION

### MARCH:

Mar 24, 2021 ASIA, PACIFIC, MIDDLE EAST

Mar 25, 2021 NORTH, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

Mar 26, 2021 AFRICA, EUROPE

### NOVEMBER:

Nov 17, 2021 ASIA, PACIFIC, MIDDLE EAST

Nov 18, 2021 NORTH, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

Nov 19, 2021 AFRICA, EUROPE

## WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL GENERAL CONFERENCE

THE WCC GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THE WORLD CHOIR GAMES 2021 IN FLANDERS, BELGIUM

Jul 7, 2021



World Choir Games

FLANDERS 2021



World Choir Council c/o INTERKULTUR  
Ruhberg 1, 35463 Fernwald (Frankfurt/Main) Germany, worldchoircouncil@interkultur.com

[interkultur.com](http://interkultur.com)

\*Dates might be subject to change.

## GREETING

**Dear colleagues, dear friends,**

A difficult year has passed. 2020 has changed the world and demanded a lot from humanity. But we all made the best of the situation!

Looking back on the past months, I am truly grateful to see how the international choral world has been united in the crisis and with what creativity it has responded to the challenges. And not only the choirs of this world, also our World Choir Council has come closer together. Numerous projects were initiated in 2020 and will now be continued and expanded this year.

Our digital magazine COUNCIL TALK is one of these major projects that will start in the new year. The exchange of information, the presentation of choirs and choral work from all corners of the world and the sharing of experiences are central elements of the work of the World Choir Council. This magazine now provides another tool for this.

It is my great pleasure to present to you the first issue of the new magazine and we hope you enjoy it. With a mixture of news, articles and guest features, the magazine offers you a colorful collection of information. The next issue will be published in August this year. If you are interested in contributing to this issue, please feel free to contact our colleague Franziska Hellwig directly ([hellwig@interkultur.com](mailto:hellwig@interkultur.com)).

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our WCC colleague Aarne Saluveer (Estonia), Tian XiaoBao (China) as well as our (now former) colleague Gent Lazri for their guest and interview contributions in this issue.



Now it is time to look ahead! In 2021, a “new” normality awaits us, which no one can foresee with certainty at this time. However, we know that humanity has grown even closer together in the past year, united by this common crisis. This solidarity and bond of closeness will hopefully accompany us this year and in the future. And we should cherish and preserve what this crisis has taught us: Resilience, strengthened community, never-ending love of music, and newfound creativity.

*“Let's continue to work side by side in 2021 and strengthen the choral world together!”*

Thank you and all the best,  
Yours sincerely

**Günter Titsch**  
President INTERKULTUR & World Choir Council



## REVIEW OF 2020 AND OUTLOOK ON 2021

### EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING

*2020 has demanded a lot from the choral world, but in that darkness, a lot has also blossomed. A letter of encouragement from Fred Sjöberg to his fellow members of the World Choir Council.*

#### Dear choral friends

It is a pleasure to greet you in the New Year 2021 with our first edition of the World Choir Council digital magazine COUNCIL TALK. Through this magazine, we hope to provide you with information about current and future events. We also invite you to send us ideas or write articles yourself on topics you would like to share with the worldwide choral community in more detail. The magazine will be published twice a year.

I am proud to see how the World Choir Council is growing month by month. Today we are already 124 members from 94 countries in our community. The strength of the WCC is that it will act, be and develop as we, you and I and all members want it to. My hope is that it can be an umbrella platform for many dear choral friends around the world. The World Choir Council plays a great role in the international choral community and you are welcome to be an active member of this fellowship.

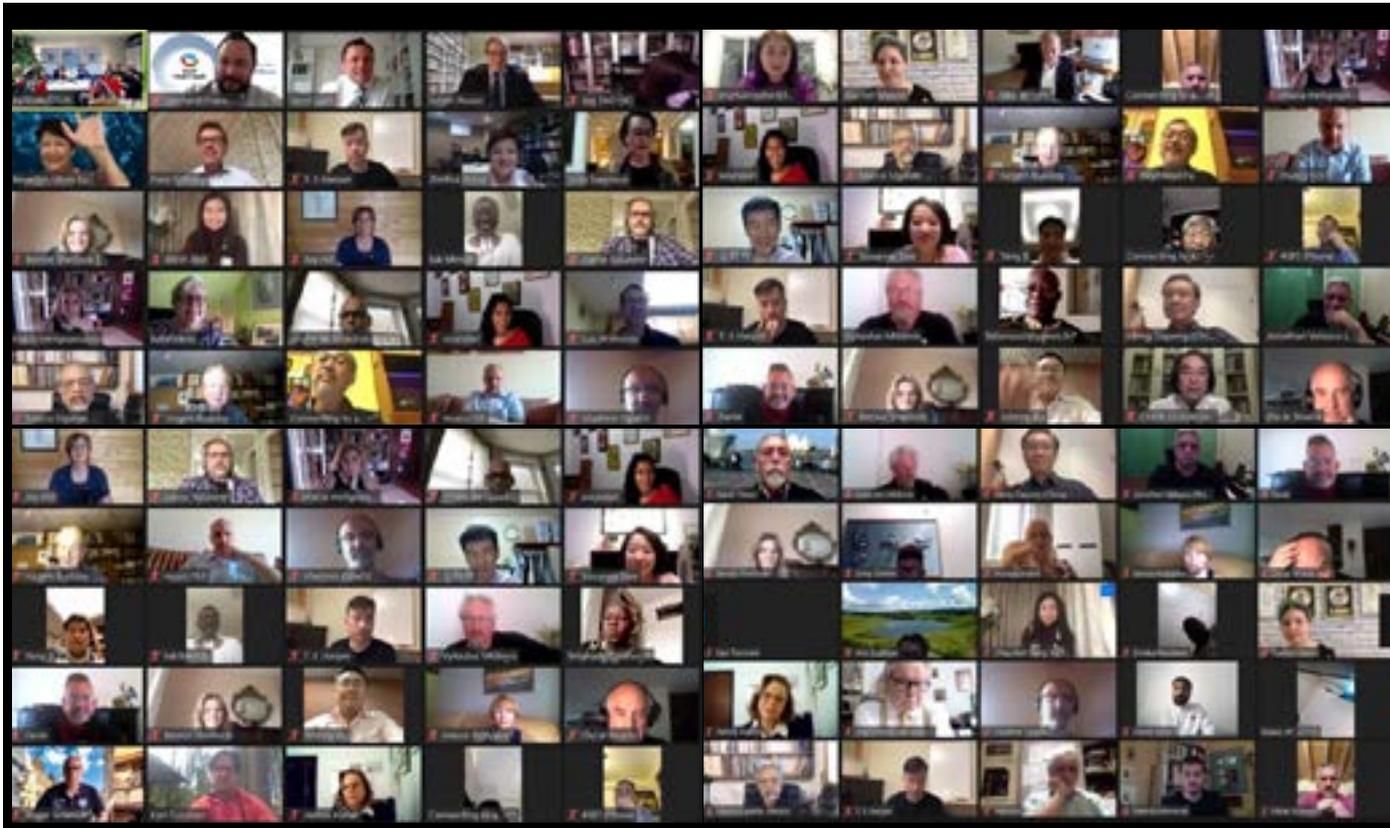
The year 2020 has unfortunately brought us a lot of sadness and sorrow. Some have lost their dear relatives or friends. Also, in our circle this year we had to let go dear friends to sing and conduct on a "higher level": Prof. Yang Hongnian († July 26, 2020, aged 86) and Jacques Vanherle († August 16, 2020, aged 71). We thank these dear friends for what they meant to all of us, as friends, colleagues and supporters! Their lives, their influence, their voices will never be forgotten.

Rest assured, however, all dark times are followed by brighter ones! We go on and strive for a better future and I am sure that if we work together and support each other, we will succeed.

This is where the Council and you can play an important role. You can contact each other directly or use some of our WCC platforms like Facebook or We Chat. Feel free to post a positive, helpful greeting to the choral world – it might be the best thing for a choral friend somewhere right now. You matter!

2020 was a year full of challenges, especially for choirs around the world. We have all been or are affected in some way. And in this, it is all the more wonderful to see how hard times can also bring forth and foster new and creative ideas. You and your choral friends have shown this in a remarkable way. So many new ideas on how to work, how to implement events, concerts and rehearsals, using new technologies. Very impressive, that gives hope for the future. Please don't stop!

The World Choir Council became very active in 2020 and here, too, the pandemic played a decisive role. We had to rethink and find new ways to come together because of the Corona crisis, just as the rest of the world had to do. We have organized a total of seven different meetings with you, dear friends, and this has not happened before in the 20-year history of the World Choir Council. We have worked hard to find new ways of communicating with you, to build a new structure for the World Choir Council and also to develop educational activities. I remember with pleasure our first global Council meeting in July 2020 on the internet and the following 6 regional meetings in July and November. Another project that we launched in China in the fall with great success is the monthly Live Talk "Hello Council". For the last meeting this



year, more than 800 conductors and choral enthusiasts had registered! This format will continue in 2021 and will also be opened to the global choral community. I would like to take this opportunity to again extend my sincere thanks to all of the invited guest speakers who played such an important role in the success of all of these meetings, as well as to all of the WCC members who had the opportunity to attend. This is one of the most important things for the World Choir Council, that we as a global choir family share our knowledge and support each other!

I have the feeling that the pandemic has also led us to a new way of thinking, which helps us to make the WCC even more active and to constantly develop it further. In terms of structure and organization, things have changed a lot for the World Choir Council. The Advisory Board has been activated and completed by some new faces. We are very happy that they will support and assist us and the World Choir Council in all important matters in the future. The INTERKULTUR Organizing Team has also grown closer together in recent months and has worked even more intensively on the future of our network. At this point, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues from the Organizing Team. Without you and your self-sacrificing energy and hard work, we would never have gotten to where we are today!

We are hopeful and confident that the year 2021 will be a better one and that we will be able to meet in person again soon. I think this is one of the most desired things for all of us as conductors and of course especially for our singers. Hopefully this can happen in July 2021 in Flanders at the World Choir Games and our General Conference. And in the meantime, we will meet in spring at the next Regional Meetings or at one of the live talks "Hello Council" and learn from each other with the educational web seminars that will be published every month. In addition, we have our own communication platform on Facebook and We Chat, where you can easily contact each other directly to share news and discuss current issues.

I wish you all a great start into the new year, much strength and confidence! We will make the best of it and hopefully we will be able to return to some normality very soon. I think we need it, the singers need it and the whole world needs it.

*Stay healthy and  
all the best!*

**Fred Sjöberg**

Senior Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR and  
Vice-President of the World Choir Council

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# THE CORONA CRISIS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE CHORAL WORLD

*2020 IS A YEAR THAT HAS SHAPED THE WORLD - AND THE CHORAL WORLD IN PARTICULAR - LIKE NEVER BEFORE.*

*by Franziska Hellwig*

## **And then there was silence...**

Around the turn of the year 2019/2020, the first news about the novel Corona virus reached the world. China in particular, but also numerous other countries, found themselves in a difficult situation and everyday life came to a standstill. The virus continued to spread and new infections were reported daily.

The Chinese city of Wuhan was hit hardest at the beginning of the year. But the rapid spread of Covid-19 soon meant that the entire world had to face the pandemic and all the challenges it entailed. This globe-spanning crisis had a profound impact on humanity - and the choral world in particular. We all had to keep our distance - and yet we have moved closer together - even across national borders!

The pandemic brought public and private life to a standstill. In many places, a state of emergency was declared and a lockdown imposed. Stores, restaurants and cultural institutions had to close, and schools and workplaces were moved home.

This life at a distance also hit the choirs of this world especially hard. Concerts, festivals and even choir rehearsals had to be cancelled or postponed and stages remained silent. In most countries, choral life has come to a complete standstill and many choirs and choirmasters have lost their financial support and perspective. Li Peizhi, president of the Chinese Choral Association, described the feeling of these drastic impairments of everyday life in an interview as a "train that comes to an abrupt halt".



Örebro Chamber Choir & South China Normal University Choir | Stay with me  
<https://youtu.be/LHHnLT411xA>



*Bringing the neighborhood together with music from balconies. Photograph: Pawel Kopczyński/Reuters*

In all areas of life and also in choral work, the technical possibilities of our time and global networking with the help of the Internet gained completely new relevance and significance from one moment to the next. The choirs around the globe did not lose confidence and developed ideas to continue to live out their passion for choral music, to maintain their choral community together with their fellow singers, to stay positive and to break new ground in terms of rehearsals - and the silence of the choral world did not last long.

### **...but not for long**

Tim Sharp, a member of the Advisory Board of the World Choir Council, wrote in an interview that "singing not only gives something to the listener, but also to the individual singer. Singing requires us to use our bodies and connects us directly to our emotional lives.

Every single aspect of the singing process is physical. And, while the experience of singing is highly individual, choral singing connects and harmonizes these individual sounds into a community."

Music is a powerful, courage-giving force that connects people and inspires spirits. In many places around the world, music was played together just as the pandemic began. Neighborhoods sang together on their balconies, at their windows or on the street and grew closer. This community at a distance, this community in music and song, has also given hope to many people.

The choirs were particularly limited in their work and could only meet virtually. But they got creative and took advantage of the new technologies: choir rehearsals online, classes at home in the living room, virtual choir projects, video premieres instead of performances in concert halls.



*Neuer Kammerchor Berlin at their first digital choir rehearsal*



*Cantabile Youth Singers | I Hear America Singing (by André J. Thomas)*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwXvQ2SSKgl&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwXvQ2SSKgl&feature=emb_title)



*Sing Along Concert ONLINE with Simon Halsey |*  
*Wie lieblich sind Deine Wohnungen (Best Of)*  
<https://interkultur.tv/sing-along-concert-online-with-simon-halsey-%e2%80%a2-wie-lieblich-sind-deine-wohnungen-best-of/>



*Little Singers of Armenia Choir | Make the Covid go*  
[https://interkultur.tv/little-singers-of-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR3xAFdbU-FaO6Z5ZzjWCSOQDlc5VVxLmZrOxrmT4x20p\\_o00iHRYNvr5myg](https://interkultur.tv/little-singers-of-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR3xAFdbU-FaO6Z5ZzjWCSOQDlc5VVxLmZrOxrmT4x20p_o00iHRYNvr5myg)

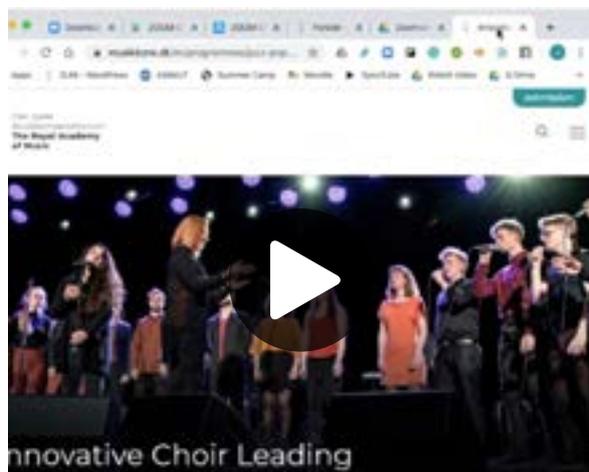


*Choir rehearsals in times of COVID-19*



Besides all these creative projects and new approaches to choral work, this time of special challenges has also brought the choral community closer together.

With the help of workshops, online tutorials or direct exchange in social networks or forums, choirs and choir directors helped and supported each other.



*Instructions for setting up online classes from the Royal Academy of Music, Denmark.*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50NoWiiYECA&feature=youtu.be>



*Sing with Mat Wright series – A free daily 30 minute singing session for children of all ages and abilities*  
<https://www.facebook.com/singwithmatwright/>

### **The (choral) world has come closer together**

Of course, all these approaches and the virtual choir projects cannot replace the community of the choir and the experience of a live performance, but they have given confidence to the singers of this world. New ways were tried out to continue learning together and to continue singing together.

Following INTERKULTUR's motto "Singing together brings nations together", many choirs have also used these projects and collaborations to come together virtually with other choirs from all corners of the world.



*International collaboration project between Tuks Camerata (South Africa) and the Barnsley Youth Choir (Great Britain) | Let the river run*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RST7QFq5eb4>



*A choir is more than the sum of its voices...*

The new possibilities of technologies were used extensively and became a popular tool to overcome creative self-isolation, which also affected the rehearsal process. Even though synchronous singing and choral rehearsals in large groups are technically impossible or difficult, the digital applications are a good opportunity to maintain social contacts and community.

Li Peizhi, president of the Chinese Choral Association, said in an interview, "I think people, and especially musicians, are using their ability and energy to express and transmit their emotions and their thoughts. [The] projects are wonderful because the message they send out is consistently positive and has made people realize the great power of music."

This bond and solidarity that has united the choral world in recent months, even if only virtually, will hopefully accompany us in the future and we should continue to cherish it.

### **What will the new normal look like after the pandemic**

The questions that now arise at the beginning of the new year, as vaccinations begin worldwide and (hopefully) with the end of the crisis in sight: What are the lessons we learn from this crisis? What impact will these experiences have on the choral world and how will choral work change?

Russian choral legend Vladimir Minin commented on this in an interview: "Digital technologies are a temporary means, a way out, a tool for information exchange - but nothing more. No technology can

convey the living energy of the choir, and the subtle intricacies of the movement of its collective soul."

Li Peizhi, President of the Chinese Choral Association, has a similar view: "These new forms of singing and online lectures are currently very popular all over the world. I personally think that this is a special countermeasure in a special time to satisfy the strong desire for singing. Choral singing is a fantastic way for people to communicate emotions, but this requires contact and time to rehearse. Therefore, it's imperative that we experience the artistic engagement that occurs in actual rehearsals to unleash the full beauty and charm of the choral art."

Tim Sharp, a member of the Advisory Board of the World Choir Council, hopes "to be able to use these tools when we sing together again. I firmly believe that we will emerge from this time stronger, and we will also have learned how to teach and communicate with new tools that are appropriate for choral music education, performance, composition, and advocacy."

Digital technologies are good and valuable tools for the current time and they will certainly be able to enrich choir work in certain areas in the future. However, it is also clear for the choral world that the virtual will not be the new normal. What is missing is the interpersonal aspect, the dynamics, the immediate communication with fellow singers - the essence of singing together that we all sorely miss.

We don't know what the future will look like, but we are confident that it will be beautiful and, above all, full of singing!

# “SPRING CAME DIFFERENTLY”

## INTERVIEW WITH AARNE SALUVEER

*Largest live performance of a virtual choir on Tallinn Song Festival Grounds in May 2020 – Interview with Aarne Saluveer, conductor, producer, educator and representative of Estonia in the World Choir Council*

*by Franziska Hellwig*

In 2020, the Corona Crisis had the world in suspense and in particular impacted the choral world severely. Collective singing, concerts and choir rehearsals were restricted and at times banned in many places. All this presented unprecedented challenges to the choirs of this world and pushed choir directors and singers to get creative.

Estonia is a singing nation and choirs here – as well as in the rest of the world – were hit hard by the Corona crisis last year. On May 17, 2020, a special virtual concert was held at the Tallinn Song Festival grounds to celebrate the end of the first Coronavirus emergency in Estonia. The concert, titled “Spring Came Differently,” brought together 2,500 choral singers under laulukaar (the arch of the Song Festival Grounds) in the Estonian capital of Tallinn. Estonian choral singers from abroad also participated in the concert virtually. The choir, conducted by Aarne Saluveer, could be seen on the screens of nearly 1,000 tablet computers, and more than 200,000 people watched the live broadcast from the comfort of their homes.

In this interview, Aarne Saluveer talks about the idea and implementation of this fascinating large-scale project and the difficult situation last year in his home country of Estonia as well as the future of the choral scene.

# INTERVIEW



**ESTONIA IS A COUNTRY WITH A RICH CHORAL CULTURE. THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE PANDEMIC HIT YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR CHOIRS HARD. HOW IS YOUR CHORAL SCENE DOING NOW? HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THE PAST YEAR?**

There are different kinds of Christmas miracles. One of them is that in this unusual year we were able to find many extraordinary expressions of humanity and organize our lives, work and activities so that there is still music in the world, both in live performances and recordings.

Inevitably, COVID caused disruptions and, as everywhere, restrictions due to the pandemic occurred in Estonia. In choir rehearsals via video platforms, we missed sound quality, conducting and dynamics, and video productions were used to try to satisfy people's need for music when concert halls were half-empty. Compared to other countries, we have a small population and live at greater distances, so until mid-November the number of people in hospitals was small, but then it began to increase here as well.

Estonian professional and amateur choirs had to cancel and postpone concerts and tours, as well as participation in many major international events, including the World Choir Games. The restrictions were enormous, but fortunately the Estonian Choir and Conductors Association was able to successfully negotiate with the government and receive financial support to survive the damage to musical life.

Although we were forced to cancel several invitations and concerts with the ETV Girls' Choir at the end of the painful year 2020, we can consider ourselves lucky and satisfied with the successes we amazingly managed to achieve after all. We have found new technical solutions to bring singers together in the virtual and real world. We were happy to be able to perform four Christmas concerts with two different programs of music from different eras and cultural areas, in a time when many events were stopped, as well as to accompany the anniversary concert of the Estonian National Male Choir on TV.

**2020 HAS DEMANDED A LOT OF STAMINA AND CREATIVITY FROM SINGERS WORLDWIDE. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO KEEP MOTIVATION HIGH?**

We're all just people – but perhaps our passion for music sometimes inspires us even more in the hardest of times. Choirs got creative and recorded videos, tried to reach new listeners, and sometimes even succeeded. Unfortunately, the weakest are the young singers whose lessons require human contact, and we will see and hear the shortcomings in the years to come of primary education.

However, we also tried to keep them active through lessons in solfege, sheet music and preparation for future performances and the singers felt they belonged together, as members in a musical team should. The concerts that were able to take place became more meaningful and valuable than before – both for the performers and the audience.

Looking positively and hopefully into the future, our choral community begins preparations for the next Youth Song Celebration in Tallinn with up to 40,000 singers and dancers from schools and universities.

**IN MAY, ESTONIA WAS ABLE TO CELEBRATE THE END OF THE FIRST CORONA EMERGENCY WITH A CONCERT OF A DIFFERENT KIND. WITH A MIXTURE OF LIVE PERFORMANCE, VIRTUAL CHOIR LIVE ON STAGE AND CAR THEATER, THE CONCERT "SPRING CAME DIFFERENTLY" WAS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL. HOW DID THIS PROJECT AND IDEA COME ABOUT? AND HOW COULD SUCH A GIGANTIC PROJECT BE REALIZED IN SUCH A SHORT TIME?**

At that time, ideas and solutions were born very quickly and were like a ray of sunshine in a stormy sky. Estonian musicologist Jaan Ross described the role of music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "Music tells the truth and brings people together..."

Therefore, when the Prime Minister and the government wanted to send a message to the people about ending the restrictions of the pandemic, it was obvious that it would be emotionally powerful to create an unprecedented musical project. In less than a week, the recording was made and invitations were sent to participants; rehearsal performances were made in collaboration with Eesti Television and IT-Solution.

One question everyone asked was, "How do you feel and how was it different from normally conducting a mass choir of 25,000 singers in Laulupidu/Song Celebration when the communication with the singers was through the iPad screens?"

Before the first attempt, I felt unusually awkward and very different. It is certainly not wise to compare this to a situation where the combined choir of the Singers' Festival grounds is at full strength with 25,000 singers. But as soon as the virtual singers, of which we felt there were many, appeared on their iPads, waved, and showed up face to face, the communication changed, and we felt like we were making music together. The singers' feedback on the live broadcast was very positive, and the organizers were praised for a bold and innovative event.

*"Music tells the truth and brings people Together..."*

Jaan Ross, Estonian musicologist



**WHAT TIPS CAN YOU GIVE YOUR COLLEAGUES AROUND THE WORLD FROM THIS PROJECT? WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO TAKE WITH YOU FOR YOUR WORK?**

Music changes and changes the world. It is important to preserve the best part of tradition and to find valuable new ones. Music and technology go hand in hand, and our job is to do our best to ensure that the magic and messages of music touch the souls of as many people as possible. Take a moment. Don't be afraid to let yourself fall. Be grateful for all your companions and experiences.

Of course, sometimes it's a leap into an unknown ocean – but that's human nature. And you know, the moment you see faces of singers and the music starts, the flight begins....

According to the classical music database Bachtrack, Arvo Pärt, the most performed contemporary composer in the world, said: "The most sensitive musical instrument is the human soul, followed by the human voice. It is necessary to purify your soul until it begins to ring."

This reflects the recognized composer's deeper understanding of music and its beginnings, which lie within the human being himself – both in our material, physical being, and in that elusive something that makes us human and gives us the ability not only to make music, but to understand it, as well as to understand ourselves and others through music.

**THE PANDEMIC WAS AND IS A DRASTIC EXPERIENCE FOR MANKIND. HOW HAS THE CHORAL SCENE IN YOUR COUNTRY CHANGED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE CRISIS? WHAT WILL CHORAL WORK LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE?**

What the pandemic leaves us with are two types of learnings – depression (how to deal with the situation) and innovation (how to adapt and use it for some kind of evolution). People's inner beliefs and attitudes determine whether the glass is half full or half empty.

In reality, for professionals as well as amateurs, there are some similar but also some very different effects. While professional musicians have lost their regular jobs and the income that goes with them (to some extent) they have been able to better maintain their professional skills. Amateurs on the other hand have suffered more from the loss of rehearsals and a lack of concert quality and social interaction.



*A special virtual concert in Estonia brought together over 2,500 choir singers and was screened at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds; watch how the choir performed "Isamaa ilu hoieldes" – one of the five songs the late composer, Alo Mattiisen, wrote just before the 1988's Estonian "singing revolution".*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Lt2CwaKRY&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0Lt2CwaKRY&feature=emb_title)

We need to remember that we are positive opinion leaders and responsible role models - so we care about our communities, their health and emotions. We rely on vaccines - but nature is still one step ahead of us. So, we are hopeful and grateful for the precious moments so far. If the new normal limits travel and large gatherings in the future, then any performance of live music will become much more valuable than before.

Me and my colleagues will do my best to make 2021 a memorable year for music – there are events on the calendar and scores on the stands – but we must always be prepared that not everything will turn out the way we want it to.

**DO YOU THINK THERE IS A POSITIVE ASPECT THAT REMAINS FOR THE CHOIRS FROM THIS CRISIS? WHAT COULD THAT BE?**

While most of us usually prefer to communicate through music, now we especially need to find time for verbal communication and interaction. The most important positive aspect, from my point of view, is that our passion for music is even stronger and there is no virus that can stop us from being human or stop the music in our soul. There are many other aspects, but in particular the drive for innovation has grown, the progress of developing and using new IT solutions and also the focus on developing new event formats for competitions, workshops and master classes. Conductors are looking for clever ways to attract and motivate singers and audiences, and singers are realizing the importance of live contact with the conductor and how much energy they need to invest to increase their individual quality.

# “HELLO COUNCIL” TO THE WORLD

## A SUCCESSFUL START TO A BRAND NEW JOURNEY

HELLO COUNCIL is a series of live talk and online pedagogical workshop organized by INTERKULTUR China under the umbrella of the Musica Mundi Academy with the support of INTERKULTUR and the World Choir Council. The pilot episode went online in August 2020 and has since then received overwhelming support and numerous positive comments from the audience and experts in the industry.

by Joy Ran Tao

### WHY - DID WE START IT?

Ever since the pandemic gloomed over the world and severely affected the choral world we have been trying to find a way to connect the World Choir Council members and to make them more approachable for choral lovers all over the world. It is one of the central goals for INTERKULTUR and the World Choir Council to solidly unite the choral world.

The aims and initial idea of HELLO COUNCIL is to promote and raise awareness of the World Choir Council and its work, to find a solid foothold among the online projects in the Chinese market, to establish a long-lasting pedagogical project and finally to enhance the cooperation with partners in China. As the project grows fast and has received positive feedback from both the audience and the public in general – it is likely that HELLO COUNCIL will expand its activity to the whole world.

### WHAT - IS IT ABOUT?

Two things that are crucial about HELLO COUNCIL are “theme” and “platform”.

The initial idea was to provide “real issues” rather than general talks that are commonly seen in the existing online workshops. It is fairly obvious to learn the most interested topics in China, yet difficult to stand out as there are already plenty similar cases. The few topics that have been mentioned during the past three HELLO COUNCIL live talks are “Post-COVID and how do we adjust”, “Children’s choir and what have we missed”, “What are the most important things to do when preparing for an international competition”, “How to truly understand the music itself rather than simply choose the most difficult repertoire” and “How to find the unification and harmony in your choir”. The general audiences would be asked prior as to what topic is most wanted and what their questions lay and the result would be discussed with the Senior Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR, then with the World Choir Council member that could be the guest speaker of the respective topics. A follow up feedback would also be collected as to figure out what can be improved.

As for the format of HELLO COUNCIL, WeChat is used for pre and post communication with potential audience and viewers, Zoom and Tencent Meeting for the actual HELLO COUNCIL. It is important for HELLO COUNCIL to maintain “fruitful” in terms of content and format. “O or X” is a special corner that the guest speakers would react to a certain statement regarding the topic and the audience could do so as well. It is important to keep the audience active in the meantime, so “Live Q & A” also plays a crucial role.





## WHEN - DOES IT HAPPEN?

HELLO COUNCIL launched in August 2020 and aims to make two live talks every season. The second live talk took place in October, followed up by the third live talk in November and will resume in March 2021.

## WHO - IS IN IT?

The initial idea for HELLO COUNCIL was for the World Choir Council members to connect with each other and with the audience in a better yet easier way. Each live talk consists of two World Choir Council members that are best known for the respective topics. Project Director of INTERKULTUR China, Iris Huting Byrd, and Senior Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR, Fred Sjöberg, act as the hosts of HELLO COUNCIL and hence add more value to the project itself.

HELLO COUNCIL was lucky to have hosted in 2020 Yang Li (China), Zimfira Poloz (Canada), T. J. Harper (USA), Johnny Ku (Chinese Taipei), Wu Lingfen (China) and Steen Lindholm (Denmark) as guest speakers and plans to include more World Choir Council members in the coming editions.

Due to the nature of the platform used for the live talks, the number of viewers is limited to 200 each time. The total number of audience that watched the live talks has reached nearly 500. Potential audiences that are interested and have joined the HELLO COUNCIL WeChat group are at the moment 827. And the number of viewers that have watched related news and posts has gone over 50,000. These positive numbers have shown the overwhelming feedback and popularity the format possesses and give great confidence to a welcoming future of the project.

## HOW - WILL IT DEVELOP?

HELLO COUNCIL already started in August 2020 and is currently in the planning process of implementation until the end of 2021. In addition, it is planned to expand the project worldwide in the future and to use HELLO COUNCIL as a connective communication platform between the World Choir Council members and the choral world.



# THE BEGINNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE CHORAL MUSIC IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

by Tian Xiao Bao

## The discussion about the beginning of choral music in China

In China, lots of musicians and scholars regard “Chun You (Travel in the Spring)” composed by Mr. Li ShuTong as the very first Chinese choral piece. This is because before its appearance, the western music, together with its way of record and publication, had not been introduced in China, the multi-part music with scaled score did not exist. Mr. Li ShuTong, having learnt western music in Japan, composed this small three-part choral piece (SSA or SAB) in a typical Chinese music style. As the score of this piece was firstly published in the year 1913, lots of scholars mark it as the beginning of Chinese choral music. According to this statement, the history of Chinese choral music lasts just 100 years.

Such point of view is based upon the western-music paradigm. Because choir is an “imported” art form, and because western choral music has its own mature system (e.g. scale, harmony, texture, etc.) which today’s Chinese musicians have fully accepted and use, this viewpoint enjoys a great popularity among today’s Chinese music scholars.



However, other scholars don’t agree with this – they think such definition neglects the real meaning of the term choir. In fact, almost all of the mainstream English dictionaries don’t put the way of recording and presenting music under the western paradigm as the prerequisite of choral music. For example, the Longman Dictionary define choir as “**a group of people who sing together for other people to listen to**”. Such definition highlights choir as a way of musical performance rather than other aspects. If we use this definition to measure the history of Chinese choral music, Chinese choral music can be traced back to over 2,000 years. In Chinese historical documents, it is noted that during the Han Dynasty, Emperor Wu Di once gathered 70 children in his palace who sang songs together in unison to praise the heaven and the emperor. This, as the earliest recorded choral performance found in the formal written document in China, took place at roughly 100 B.C. Besides, along the history of China, we can see lots of ethnic ancient singing groups that may sing their old folk songs in unison or two parts. Dong Zu Da Ge, one of such old singing styles that has already appeared on the stage of world choral festivals, has also over thousand-year history.

In short, the dispute of the beginning of Chinese choral music comes from different perspectives. One is based upon the western paradigm, the introduction and the application of western music style in a Chinese way; the other is the based upon the first record of choral performance found in the history. To make clarification, we name the former one as the beginning of “modern Chinese choral music”. Under this definition, the beginning of “modern Chinese choral music” takes place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Mr. Li ShuTong



## **FIVE STAGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN CHINESE CHORAL MUSIC IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

*Generally speaking, the development of modern Chinese choral music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced five different stages.*

### *Stage I:*

**from 1913 to the early 1930s  
(the budding period).**

This is the budding period of Chinese choral music. At that time, several Chinese pioneer musicians studied western music in the U.S., Europe or Japan, brought back western music elements to China, and made the initial attempts to write songs for school children by using these elements. This was the first trial to promote musical education in China. The so-called first Chinese choral piece “Chun You” was born at this period for such purpose. The musical styles and characteristics of the choral works in this period are very “westernized”. The representative choral pieces in this period include “Hai Yun (The ocean’s voice)” by Mr. Zhao YuanRen (Harvard University Graduate, U.S.), and “Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye (Spring’s flowers and moonlight by the river)” by Mr. Xiao YouMei (Imperial University Graduate, Japan). All the choral works at this period laid very sound foundation for the Chinese choral music in the later stages.

*Mr. Zhao YuanRen  
Mr. Xian XingHai  
Mr. Huang Zi*



### *Stage II:*

**from the early 1930s to 1945  
(the warring period).**

Almost all the choral pieces in this period have a remarkable feature: the theme is closely connected with the fight against Japanese invaders, and the music style is closer to the common people who didn’t receive formal western music education. The most representative choral works in this period include “Chang Hen Ge (Song of everlasting sorrow)” by Mr. Huang Zi and “Huang He Da He Chang (The Yellow River Cantata)” by Xian XingHai. The former work is the first Chinese Oratorio, and the latter work is the first symphonic Chinese choral work. Both these two works mark the first milestone in the history of modern Chinese choral music.



Moreover, unaccompanied choral pieces (a cappella) have appeared during this period, such as “Mu Lian Jiu Mu (Moginlin’s rescue of his mother)” by Mr. Huang Zi and “Ken Chun Ni (Farming in the spring)” by Mr. He LuTing. All these choral works during this period have pushed the choral composing techniques to a very high level, and it greatly affected the later Chinese choral composition.

## Stage III:

**from 1945 to 1966  
(the period before the cultural revolution).**

In the history of modern Chinese choral music, this period has great weight. On one hand, choral music in China stepped into "professionalization". In terms of choral performance, in 1949, the first professional choir group, China National Chorus, was founded; later in 1952, Shanghai Orchestra Chorus was established; in 1959, China National Chorus performed Beethoven Symphony No.9 as the premiere in the history of China. The conductor was Mr. Yan LiangKun. In terms of choral education, in 1955, the Chinese Choral Conducting Seminar was held, the instructor was Former Soviet Union choral conductor Dumashev. This seminar is the milestone of Chinese choral music because all the students in this seminar later became the first generation of professional chorus educators and promoters and the backbone of Chinese choral music development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1963, the very first Chinese choral academic work: "Choral Music Studies" (written by Professor Ma GeShun) was published; shortly afterwards, both Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Central Conservatory of Music established "Choral Conducting Major" to cultivate professional choral conductors to meet the needs of the society.



On the other hand, large amounts of Chinese choral compositions appeared. Among them, a lot of pieces have become the classics and the representatives of Chinese choral music that almost every choral group in China is still singing now. Such pieces include: "Pastoral" (Qu XiXian), "Please stay here, friends from afar" (Mai Ding), "Yang Guan San Die" (Wang ZhengYa), etc. At the same time, there also appeared some big symphonic choral works like "The Praise of China" (Liu Zhi), "Lyrics of Yangtze River" (Xie GongCheng), etc.

## Stage IV:

**from 1966 to 1976  
(the cultural revolution period).**

Due to the social instability and the political pressure, the whole country halted the production and the presentation of every aspect of "westernized" art form, including music. The only music form occurred during this period was called "the revolutionary model drama", an inherited opera-like stage-performance form adapted from traditional Chinese opera. As a kind of "westernized" music form, the choral music was almost stopped during this special period. However, one choral work was created that cannot be neglected – the choral suite "Choral works written for Chairman Mao's five poems" by Tian Feng in 1971. This work was among the greatest choral compositions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and till today, it is still among the must-sing repertoire of a lot of professional choral groups.

Mr. Yan LiangKun

## Stage V:

**from 1976 to 1999  
(after the cultural revolution).**

Due to the “reform and opening-up” policy, Chinese economy experienced an unprecedented development since the late 1970s. Accordingly, the economic booming calls for the demand of music development. Moreover, international exchange started to appear, and Chinese choral conductors started to step out of China and get in touch with choral music globally. Lastly, chorus began to be paid great attention by the Chinese government, and various kinds of chorus festivals received big support by the government. All of these factors lead to the booming of Chinese choral music. In the year 1982, the first “Beijing Chorus Festival” (renamed “China Chorus Festival” in 1996) was held. It marks the very first chorus festival in the history of China. In 1986, China Chorus Association was set up, and Mr. Yan LiangKun was elected as the president. In 1992, the first “China International Chorus Festival” was held. This festival is now the most authoritative chorus festival in China. The choral works in this period soared in quantity and achieved high artistic standards. Some famous choral pieces include “Fluttered flower-petals” (Qu XiXian), “WuSuLi Boat Song” (Qu XiXian), “Beautiful scenery of Yunnan” (Tian Feng), “Song for Yangtze River” (Wang ShiGuang), “On the hopeful farmland” (Shi GuangNan), etc. Symphonic Choral Works include “The Sky, the Sun, and the Pursuit: for orchestra and female choir” (Lu ZaiYi), “The Rainbow after the Rain” (Lu ZaiYi), “China, My Dear Mother” (Lu ZaiYi), “Walk with difficulty” (Lu ZaiYi), “Huang Shi, the Beautiful Mountain” (Qu WenZhong), “Hu Jia Song” (Li HuanZhi), “Five Pieces in the Book of Odes” (Jin Xiang), etc. More importantly, the music style became more diversified, with the implement of modern composing techniques by some spearheading composers. It is these composers’ brave attempts and explorations that paved the way for the diversification and prosperity of Chinese choral music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## About the author

Dr. Tian XiaoBao, a leading figure in the new generation of choral conductors in China, is the doctoral supervisor / professor of Choral Studies at the School of Music in Central China Normal University, as well as the founder and director of the Tiankong Choir. He is the Vice-President of the Chinese Chorus Association and the Vice-President of the Chinese Choral Music Federation. As a recipient of numerous awards in choral conducting, he has led his choirs onto the stages of China and the world.



# INTERKULTUR: FROM VISION TO WORLD SUCCESS IN 30 YEARS

*A CHRONICLE OF THE DECADES, OF THE CHORAL WORLD,  
OF SINGING AND, ABOVE ALL, OF FRIENDSHIP*

*by Henriette Brockmann, Franziska Hellwig*

## WORLD OF VOICES | 30 YEARS OF INTERKULTUR



1. The magic of the beginning  
<https://youtu.be/Ygr1X-sEiiQ>



2. The game of the games  
<https://youtu.be/1maLdqhmvsE>



3. Reach for the stars  
[https://youtu.be/\\_GApawqNNPA](https://youtu.be/_GApawqNNPA)



4. Around the world  
<https://youtu.be/DRy4kn4oh3Q>



5. Eastwards  
<https://youtu.be/xFXldeYi6C0>





The story of INTERKULTUR began more than 30 years ago with a simple idea:

*"Singing in a choir creates peace through the means of enthusiasm! Offer choral singers an enthralling competition on an international level and their music will build a bridge between their nations that will cross all borders!"*

(Günter Titsch)

How this idea was born and where it has led in over 30 years has now been documented in a total of five different videos: "World of Voices | 30 Years of INTERKULTUR" looks back on 30 years of choir history and gives an overview of INTERKULTUR from its beginnings, the founding and evolving of the World Choir Games, our international choral family and our cherished partners and along the way - to all of you and your great and unwavering support this video series is heartily dedicated.

30 years of INTERKULTUR - that is more than 30 years of work for international understanding, for choral singing, for peace among people. Günter Titsch, together with like-minded people from all over the world, has spent a large part of his life building bridges between people and making a small contribution to the greater whole: to harmony and friendship between the people, countries and states of the world. And through this work, INTERKULTUR's worldwide network has grown and more and more people have joined the mission of bringing people together and building bridges through song. INTERKULTUR has become a big family that grows bigger and bigger every year.

This video series is not only to give an insight into the last 30 years of international cooperation and development, but also to inspire people and show the ways we want to go in the future. With your help, INTERKULTUR will continue to work for the choirs of the world and unite people in song in the years and decades to come!

The first broadcast of the videos run on [interkultur.tv](https://www.interkultur.tv) on January 28, 2021 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of INTERKULTUR President and World Choir Games founder Günter Titsch.

On the occasion of these two great anniversaries, there will also be a special fundraising campaign for choirs. The last year and the Corona pandemic were especially hard for choirs all over the world and it is the wish of Günter Titsch, on the occasion of his birthday, to actively pursue INTERKULTUR's vision and to offer special support to choirs in need.



## 20 YEARS OF WORLD CHOIR GAMES

*A JOURNEY TO TODAY'S STATE OF THE LARGEST  
INTERNATIONAL CHORAL EVENT –  
THE ORIGINS, THE EVOLUTION AND THE FUTURE.*

*By Gent Lazri*

### **A simple vision and yet a powerful idea**

An important journey starts very often with a simple and intriguing idea. Choir Olympics was one of these ideas already from the first draft. An open stage for the whole choral world with the most important but simple aim: Participation is the highest honor!

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the world had changed and was more connected than ever. Eastern and Western Europe were again one continent and choirs from both systems had already opened their stages for each other. International events, especially international choir competitions, started to be popular in many countries and the number of participating choirs was growing from year to year. The choral scene was indeed calling for a global event.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Choir Olympics staged in July 2000 in Linz, Austria answered that call, connecting choirs from all over the world for the first Olympic event of choral music. A unique experience for the choral pioneers. At the same time, the organizers recognized that the Choir Olympics were much more than a bigger choir competition. The event was already on the focus of politics and media and the Olympic movement of choral music embraced the opportunities of the time. The international jury and the international guests of the first Choir Olympics gathered to formulate a Resolution of the International Choral Music handed over to the Secretary General of the International Music Council at the closing of the event. Expectations and targets were set for a long successful way.

The international acceptance and the global reach of the event was very well visible already at the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the event 2002 in South Korea. The Opening Concert of the Choir Olympics was broadcasted live on the Korean Television and

marked a new record for the media visibility of choral competitions in general. The diversity of international choral music now became the focus of attention and the event acquired its distinctive colorful image.

*Linz, Austria 2000 (top)  
Busan, Republic of Korea 2002 (below)*





# World Choir Games

## Singing together brings nations together

The Choir Olympic idea was born in Germany, but did not come home until the third edition of the event in July 2004. This home event was the starting point for the creation of a grand finale event called "The Choral Fireworks", culminating today in a Festival Stage Choir with hundreds of singers from around the world. In the third edition of this major global event, the underlying aspiration to bring together people and nations united by song in a peaceful competition was once again manifested. The international understanding and the peacemaking role of choral music became very well visible when choirs from South and North Korea joined the

stage for the first time at the 2004 Choir Olympics. Another big step in the development and history of the World Choir Games took place in 2004 as a group of jurors, educators and international guests came together to form a consultative network called the World Choir Council. Representatives of the (choral) nations of the world met for the first time and formed henceforth as the highest advisory committee of INTERKULTUR and the World Choir Games, supporting and promoting the exchange, progress and development of choral art and culture worldwide.

*Bremen, Germany 2004 (top)  
Xiamen, China 2006 (below)*

*Graz, Austria 2008 (top)  
Shaoxing, China 2010 (below)*



# World Choir Games

## The World Choir Games were born – and conquer the world

The first edition of the event in China, 2006 in Xiamen, was the first one with the new title The World Choir Games. The choir Olympic movement was now a real global event with a record in participating numbers and visibility.

Milestones of the following years were the premiere of the gala TV show “We are the world”, recorded during the World Choir Games 2008 in Graz, Austria, the highest number of performing ensembles with 472 choirs at the World Choir Games 2010 in Shaoxing, China and the premiere of the Games on the American continent in Cincinnati 2012.



*Riga, Latvia, 2014*

The US Games were nominated as the Event of the Month by the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama, and ABC’s “Good Morning America”, the No. 1 rated morning news program, broadcasted live from the World Choir Games on July 9, 2012.

Coming back to Europe for the 2014 World Choir Games was much more than the simple due event change after two editions in Asia and America. The World Choir Games 2014 were hosted as the major event of the European Capital of Culture festivities in Riga, Latvia. 15,000 singers at the historical stage of the Baltic Song and Dance Festivals in Mezaparks in Riga and around 25,000 people in the audience set a new, until today unbroken record in the history of the World Choir Games.

The next edition of the Games, which took place in July 2016 in Sochi, Russia, was highly affected by the many conflicts of the time. The crisis in the Ukraine, the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Paris and Istanbul and the coup in Turkey on the last day of the Games had a major impact on the world and its most global choral event.

The cultural-political significance and relevance of the Games were once again in the spotlight this year.

The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Choir Games in 2018 also marked the event’s premiere on the African continent. Tshwane in South Africa delivered an unforgettable, colorful celebration of the world’s choral cultures unlike anything seen before, a first for guests and hosts alike.



*Cincinnati, USA, 2012*



Sochi, Russia, 2016



Tshwane, South Africa, 2018

### Current challenges and a resounding future

The path to the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Choir Games scheduled in Flanders for July 2020, could not have been more challenging. The event was designed as the most inclusive Games and the unprecedented number of 570 registered choirs was the best result reached so far. As many events of 2020, the World Choir Games were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and had to be postponed to 2021.

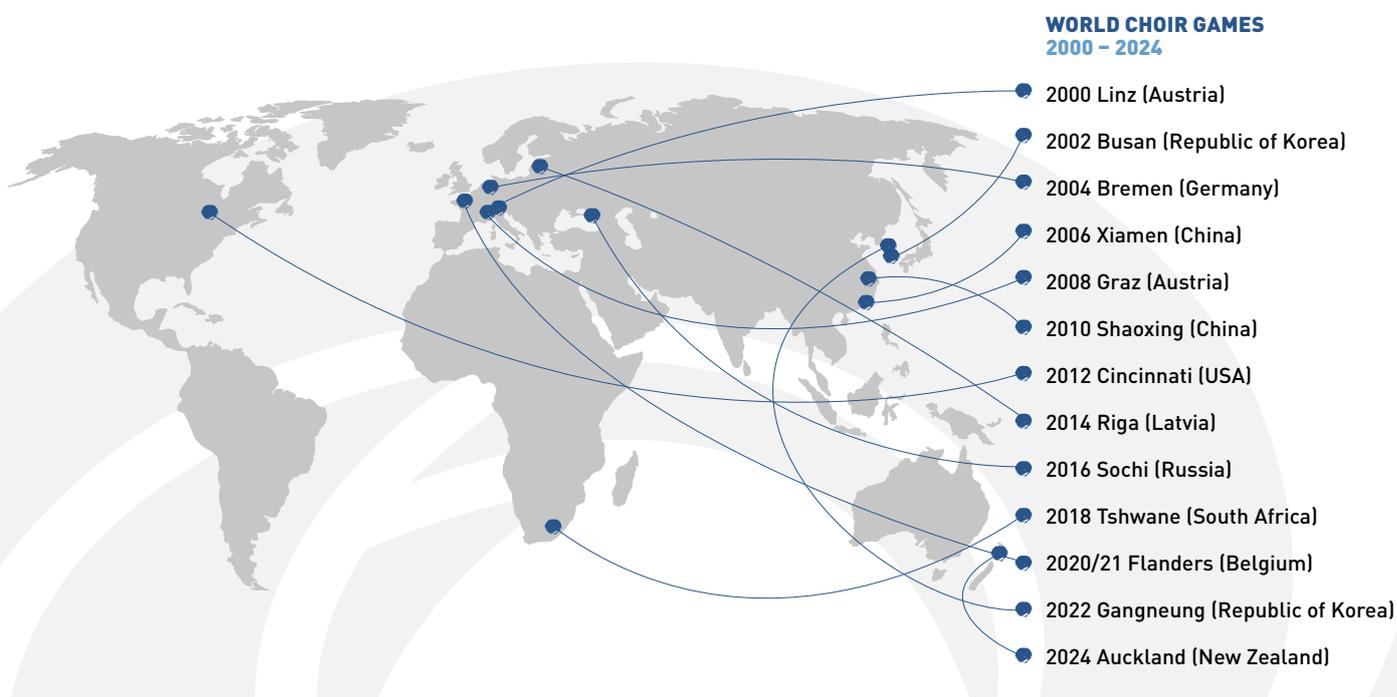
This pandemic has raised many questions about the feasibility of major events and their future. Choirs in particular have been hit hard by the restrictions and bans on contact, and the stages of the world have had to fall silent.

Despite the difficult situation worldwide, however, it is a great joy and affirmation that the World Choir Games continue to attract new host cities with extraordinary visions for the world's

leading choral competition. In 2022, after 20 years, the Games will return to South Korea, this time to Gangneung, located in the Gangwon province. And it is also already certain that the World Choir Games after that will have another fantastic premiere in store for the choral world - after more than 20 years, they are now also conquering the 5<sup>th</sup> continent with the 2024 World Choir Games in Auckland, New Zealand.

It is a very good and encouraging signal in these times of crisis that the World Choir Games have now already been awarded for three consecutive events in advance. This long-term planning will be extremely helpful and motivating for all choirs planning their next performances after the pandemic.

The colorful stage of the World Choir Games is set for the future!



# CHOIR COMPETITIONS AND FESTIVALS 2021 - IMPORTANT INFORMATION

*PLANNING IS IN PROGRESS, CONFIDENCE IS HIGH,  
BUT THE (CHORAL) WORLD REMAINS CONFINED BY THE PANDEMIC IN 2021*

2020 was a year like none of us could have ever imagined. The crisis not only brought many challenges for politics and economy, but also an unusual silence for the choral world.

However, the vaccine that was found brought a surge of new hope at the end of the year, and in many places the gradual vaccination of the population has already begun. Nevertheless, this is of course a process that cannot contain the pandemic overnight and so we continue to live with the consequences of the crisis.

Due to the ongoing restrictions and in order to ensure the health and safety of the international participating choirs and visitors, INTERKULTUR, in consultation with local partners, has decided to postpone the choir competitions and festivals planned for the first half of 2021.

We are confident about the coming months and the progress of the vaccinations. The first positive news can already be heard and we are sure that the positive effects will be felt in the second half of the year. We are looking forward to rehearsing, singing and finally meeting on stage together again.

And until that time comes, we will continue to work together with the choirs and you on the realization of digital projects in the coming months, in order to stay in touch with the singers and to let the world resound, at least virtually.

Towards the summer, it may again be possible to realize events with an appropriate security concept, but of course we will continue to closely monitor the development of the global crisis and consider all the consequences for our event planning.

We will keep you closely updated on all the decisions and planning regarding the rest of the INTERKULTUR World Choir Events 2021.





**World  
Choir  
Games**



**2022**  
**Gangneung**  
Republic of Korea



**JULY 4-14, 2022**



# PROF. HAK-WON YOON APPOINTED HONORARY ARTISTIC PRESIDENT

*SOUTH KOREAN CONDUCTOR COMPLEMENTS THE BOARD OF  
HONORARY PRESIDENCY AT INTERKULTUR*

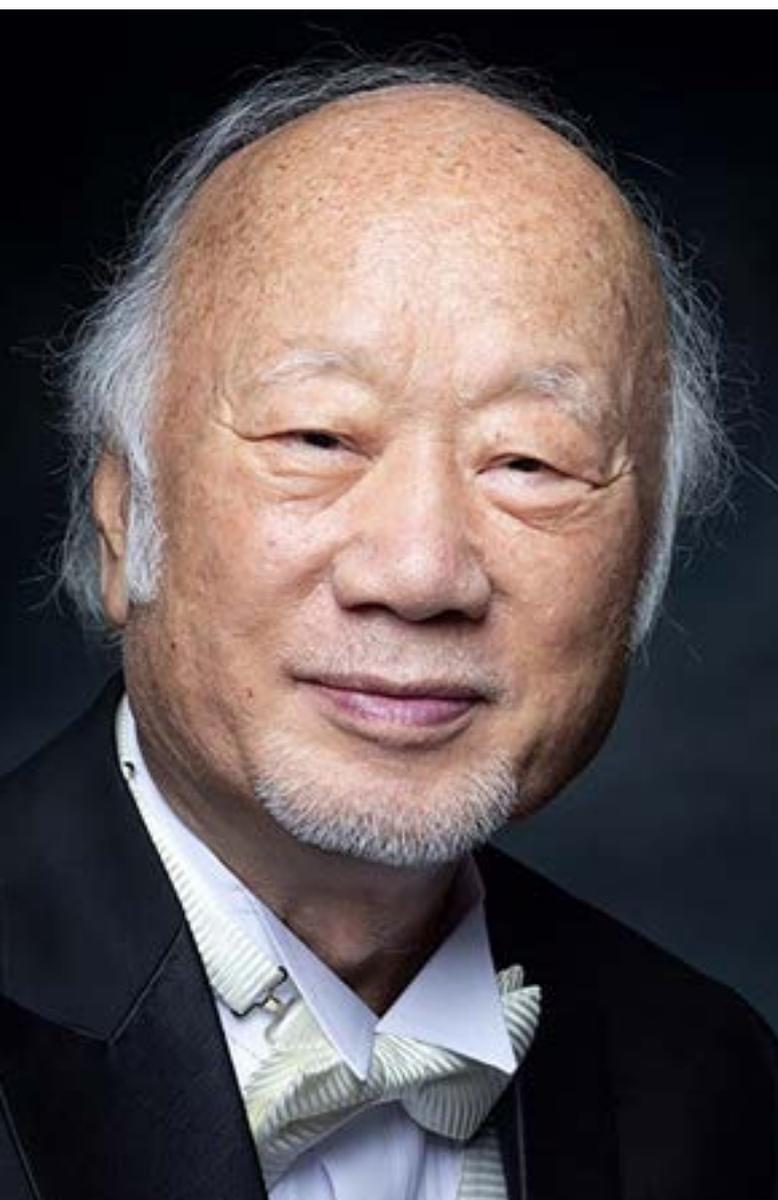
*Hak-Won Yoon*

In the course of South Korea winning the bid of hosting the next World Choir Games in 2022, INTERKULTUR took the opportunity of appointing one of the most famous choral personalities in the country to complement its board of Honorary Artistic Presidents: Prof. Hak-Won Yoon.

In a short greeting he addresses the choristers of this world and says: "Singers from Korea have joined music universities around the globe and returned home with international music experience, education and fantastic memories of their academic hosts. They are all looking forward to welcome and share these memories again with the choirs of the world. I hope all of you from all over the world to join us in Korea to experience this wonderful festival."

Following his early passion for the world of choral music, Maestro Hak-Won Yoon graduated from Yonsei University, completed Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts and received honorary doctorates from Midwest University and Shepherd University. Prof. Yoon began his conducting career in 1970 when he led the World Vision Children's Choir. While directing choirs such as the Daewoo Choir, the Seoul Ladies' Singers, and the Incheon City Chorale, he sought to bridge the gap between Korean and global choral music by aiming for the worldwide spread of Korean choral music. At the same time, he sought to popularize choral music in South Korea, which used to be considered an exclusive activity of a certain social class.

Maestro Yoon's numerous choral activities include his involvement as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Korean Federation of Choral Music, as permanent conductor of the Daewoo Choir, as Director of IFCM, and as Dean of the College of Music of Chung-Ang University. Currently he dedicates himself to choral music, among other things, as Honorary Professor at Chung-Ang University, as Artistic Director of the Seoul Ladies' Singers, as Director of the Korean Academy of Choral Conductors, and of course as newly elected Honorary Artistic President of INTERKULTUR.





## PROF. DR. RALF EISENBEISS APPOINTED HONORARY ARTISTIC PRESIDENT OF INTERKULTUR

*LONG-TERM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR HONORED FOR HIS GREAT COMMITMENT*

### *Ralf Eisenbeiß*

After almost 30 years as Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR, Prof. Dr. Ralf Eisenbeiß was appointed to the ranks of Honorary Artistic Presidents of INTERKULTUR, the World Choir Games and the World Choir Council at the beginning of the year.

Born in Zeulenroda in 1952, Ralf Eisenbeiß studied pedagogy, German language and literature, as well as music education at the Zwickau University of Education and choral and orchestral conducting at the "Franz Liszt" Academy of Music in Weimar. As holder of the chair of choral conducting and choral singing at the Pedagogical University in Zwickau, Ralf Eisenbeiß was appointed professor in 1987. He was the director of the choir of this institution, which was well-known at home and abroad and won numerous prizes in national and international competitions.

In 1990, shortly after the fall of the German wall, Ralf Eisenbeiß met Günter Titsch – the beginning of a long lasting friendship and cooperation with INTERKULTUR. Ralf Eisenbeiß initiated the Robert Schumann Choir Competition in Zwickau, which took place in 1992 for the first time and developed into a successful competition in Germany in the following years. Since then Ralf Eisenbeiß served as Artistic

Director for INTERKULTUR and is one of the co-founders of the Choir Olympics, which later had a grandiose development as the World Choir Games. Until the end of 2020 he was artistically responsible for more than 150 international competitions of INTERKULTUR worldwide.

According to INTERKULTUR President Günter Titsch, the decision of the INTERKULTUR Presidium and Artistic Committee to appoint Prof. Eisenbeiß as Honorary Artistic President is based above all on precisely these achievements: "Ralf Eisenbeiß has made a considerable contribution to the success of our organization. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for his always goal-oriented work, for his tireless commitment and for his valuable work. Over the past 30 years, he has always accompanied us with great dedication, loyalty and trust. Without his professional commitment and his guarantee of artistic quality, our events could not have taken place with the great success they have, which is ultimately confirmed by the considerable number of participants. He has always been, and still is, wholeheartedly involved and has contributed significantly to the further development of INTERKULTUR."

# Obituaries



## **JACQUES VANHERLE** († AUGUST 16, 2020, AGED 71)

Jacques Vanherle dedicated his entire life to the choral art: he was the founder, President & Artistic Director of the renowned Polyfolia Festival for choral singing and also founder and director of the Centre of Polyphonic Art of Normandy.

He contributed to the international choral community and development not only through his engagement in the World Choir Council, but also in the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) and the Institut Français d'Art Choral, etc.

He always had an open ear and eye for the belongings and needs of choral music on the international level and was respected and appreciated by his international colleagues in the World Choir Council. His voice will be missed in the Council meetings.

As it was announced by his family, "a memorial concert in tribute to this man who was so committed to culture, music and choral singing will be organized in 2021".

## **PROF. YANG HONGNIAN** († JULY 26, 2020, AGED 86)

Professor Yang Hongnian, conductor, music pedagogue and Honorary Artistic President of the World Choir Games, died on 26 July 2020 at the age of 86. Professor Yang was a leading personality in the Chinese choral community and was one of the most famous choral conductors and teachers in the country. For many decades, he promoted the development of choral music in his home country with great commitment and all his strength.

Since 2002, almost since the start of the World Choir Games, Prof. Yang supported INTERKULTUR's work and the various activities for the international choral community as a close advisor and friend. His innovative ideas and his professional and friendly manner have had a lasting influence on the development of the World Choir Games.

As an educator, his advice to all choirs was that in order to improve, one must go out into the world and broaden one's horizon. For him, choral music was the key to connecting people and living together peacefully. His departure leaves a great void in the world of choirs. However, his achievements and his influence on the Chinese, but also the international choral community remain unforgettable and his spirit will continue to embrace us during the World Choir Games.





# World Choir Games



JULY 2024  
NEW ZEALAND

AUCKLAND

[WCG2024.COM](http://WCG2024.COM)

AN INTERKULTUR EVENT

# WELCOME

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL

### INTRODUCING THE NEW WCC MEMBERS OF 2020

*Johnny Ku  
(Chinese Taipei)*

"I received my D.M.A. from the College-Conservatory of Music in University of Cincinnati, and hold a master degree from Temple University, PA, U.S.A. Currently, I am the Music Director of Taipei Philharmonic Foundation, which consists of 15 musical groups, including Oratorio Chorus, Chamber Choir, Youth Choir, Women's Choirs, Senior Choir, Children's Choirs, Youth Orchestras, Children's Orchestra, Opera Studio, and Musical Theater.

I am also the Music Director of Taipei International Choral Competition and Festival, an executive board member of Taiwan Choral Association, an Assistant Professor in the Chinese Culture University of Taiwan, a member of the World Choral Council, a member of the Asia-Pacific working committee in the International Federation for Choral Music, co-founder of the World Choral Championship, and one of the founding directors of the Asian Choral Association.

I am an active conductor and choral expert. My repertoire ranges from a-cappella pieces to choral-symphonic works, operas, musical theaters, and cross-over pop productions. I have given concerts, masterclasses, workshops, and lectures around the world, including Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Hong-Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Macao, Malaysia, Philippines, Poland, Russia, Singapore, U.S.A., Vatican, and so on.

I also served as the Chorus Master for more than 50 operas and choral-symphonic productions, working alongside with Frieder Bernius, Charles Dutoit, Günther Herbig, Jahja Ling, Helmuth Rilling, among others. I have been an adjudicator in international competitions, such as the World Choir Games, Bali International Choral Competition, Singapore International Choral Competition, Oriental Concentus International Competition, A Voyage of Songs Festival, Penabur International Choir Festival, Busan Choral Festival and Competition, and several others.

In addition to music, I am also known as a culinary expert. My refined palate and knowledge on food make me an avocational food critic writer. Not only can I write about food, I can also cook like a real chef. And, I am currently working with my mother, Chef Chu, on our first joint project – a cookbook featuring gourmet Chinese recipes for home cooks.

I am also a LGBTQ+ activist dedicated to the equality events in Taiwan."





## *Rachel Mason (Great Britain)*

"As a multi-award-winning singer, songwriter, best-selling author, vocal coach, speaker, workshop leader and musical director, I am honoured to be the only musician in history to be named Freelancer of the Year. In addition to my charity work, caring for and raising my two young children, I run an artist management business, a record label, and several choirs. I have directed over 20 choirs throughout my career, both professional and amateur, and mentor choirs around the world to foster a musical community of unity, kindness, and support.

In 2017 I was one of the expert panel of judges for UK Sky Television's National Television Award-nominated series *Sing: Ultimate A Cappella*. As an experienced international vocal expert, I have judged the ICCAs, *Masters of Show Choir*, *Showchoir Canada*, *The Voice Festival* and many others. I have also been made the British representative for the International Singer Songwriter Association and The Intercontinental Music Awards. As an award-winning songwriter for established pop stars I share my skills as a judge for the UK Songwriting Contest, The Strive Awards and alongside Glastonbury Festival's Michael Eavis for the Snowdrop Songwriting Festival.

As a vocal coach, I work with amateur and professional singers and hold a 100% vocal exam pass rate. Some of my students now grace the West End and Broadway stage and are established recording artists.

As a survivor of postnatal depression, I am an ambassador for mental health and give my time to run the award-winning Lyrical Light songwriting workshops for those with maternal mental health issues, creating an anthem for their recovery. I also work with families who have suffered baby loss, writing a song with them in memory of their child to help with their grieving process.

I am heavily involved in charity work and an ambassador for WellChild, Children's World and Vine Counselling Services. I have also given my time and expertise to charities for mental health, anti-bullying and carers, helping them raise funds.

During the coronavirus pandemic I singlehandedly created an online international arts festival which has raised thousands of pounds for mental health support, written a song which is raising money for maternal mental health support charity PANDAS foundation, co-written an anthem with Hamilton cast member Aaron Lee Lambert for Black Lives Matter and recorded a song to celebrate the carers who have continued to work through the pandemic.

I am honoured to be one of the British representatives for the World Choir Council and I am hoping to encourage unity through singing."

# WELCOME

## Ana Laura Rey (Uruguay)

"My name is Ana Laura Rey, I am a choir director, teacher, arranger and mother of two beautiful girls.

I grew up in the city of Libertad, located 50 km from Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay. I had my first musical training with my mother Ana María Méndez, who taught piano, guitar and accordion. I sang in the parish choir and in the choir of the Liceo. Since I was a child, music was something I fully enjoyed. Besides music, my other passion is sports. I especially enjoy playing soccer and currently I also participate in Masters athletics tournaments as a javelin and shot thrower.

I completed my formal music studies at the School of Music of the University of the Republic in Montevideo. I first started with piano and composition, but two years later I began choral conducting, in which I graduated with a bachelor's degree. Considering

myself a restless and eternal apprentice, since there are no postgraduate courses in music in Uruguay, I traveled to Buenos Aires to continue my education.

Parallel to my studies I began conducting high school choirs in Libertad and the surrounding area, which allowed me to discover and experience the joy of making music with such a wonderful instrument. Since then, I have conducted numerous choral groups, independently, institutionally, and with a wide variety of age groups.

In the year 2000 I began my teaching career at the Escuela Universitaria de Música, where I was trained. There I have taught the courses of Choral Practice, Gregorian Chant and Choral Conducting, a chair I have held since the year 2017. I have been directing the EUM Choir since its formation, and in these 20 years of work we have had the pleasure of sharing choral music in the most diverse scenarios of our country, as well as participating and being recognized in various international competitions.

I started writing choral arrangements about our folk music when I felt the need to have them to approach different repertoires and as a contribution to our choral music. It was a pleasant reunion with the creative vein.

Another important chapter in my life has been the Gregorian Chant. For many years I deepened my study and practice in it, which allowed me to pursue a specialization degree at the Abbey of San Pedro de Solesmes in 2008.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this prestigious Council, and no doubt it will be an opportunity to continue to grow and share."





*Ricardo  
Curihuinca Vergara  
(Chile)*

"I'm from the city of Santiago, capital of Chile, a southern country full of contrasts and diversity in its landscapes, from the driest desert in the world to forests and snow landscapes. Chile is a long country of more than 4.000 km, a distance that influences us culturally, as it gives us a rich variety of traditions.

In my training I am Professor in Musical Education and a certified professional in Education at the Metropolitan University of Educational Sciences, with a major in Choral Conducting, with the teacher Ruth Godoy P. (1992-1997). I have a postgraduate degree in Music with a major in Choral Conducting from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, with Maestro Alejandro Reyes (2001-2002) and a Master's degree in Cultural Management from the Universidad Academia Humanismo Cristiano (2019-2020). As complementary courses I have done a diploma in Choral Conducting at the Municipal Theater of Santiago with Maestro Guido Minoletti, as well as several courses conducted by visiting professors at the Catholic University of Chile, among them: Néstor Andrenacci, Néstor Zadoff, Virginia Bono (Argentina), Steve Nabona (Spain), Felicia Pérez (Cuba), T.J. Harper (United States).

In 2011, I was invited and proposed to join the board of directors of the ALACC-CHILE (Latin American Association of Choral Singing) whose organization was founded by maestro Waldo Aránguiz T. Since then I have worked and collaborated intensely with the association. As part of the board of directors, we have continued with the realization of the prestigious International Choral Festival "Mario Baeza", so in the future we hope to have the visit of international choirs for our festivals. On the other hand, we established the Youth Choir Festival "Waldo Aránguiz T", dedicated to school choirs. I invite you to visit our website: [www.alacc-chile.cl](http://www.alacc-chile.cl).

In the years 2007-2020 I founded the choral group "E'Boca", a self-management project, whose purpose is to perform choral works, with scenic proposals and a pedagogical-artistic approach. We have achieved a good specialized critic within the Chilean choral circle, being invited to perform in various cultural and educational centers both in schools and universities. As a complement, we have made international tours: Sao Paulo - Brazil, X Choir Competition, Trelew-Argentina, where we received a prize for the scenic proposal, 3° International Choir Festival, Alajuela-Costa Rica Festival and Paraguay-Brazil tour. We have also participated in the VI, VIII and IX Editions of the Mario Baeza Festival, organized by ALACC-CHILE.

In my beginnings as a director, an important milestone was to have directed the Choir of the El Sembrador School (1996-2013), a youth group with which we came to stand out in the national school environment. We obtained in six occasions the first place in the choral contest organized by the Municipal Theater of Santiago in all its categories. Thanks to this the choir was invited to collaborate with the choir "Crecer Cantando" of the Municipal Theater of Santiago in the works "Requiem" by W.A. Mozart, "Carmina Burana" by Carl Orff and "Ninth Symphony" by L.V. Beethoven.

I want to conclude that I feel very honored to share and be part of this community through INTETRAKULTUR and to be able to collaborate and generate a network. If there is something that I am passionate about, as you are, it is choral conducting and the field of management. I hope that in the future we will be able to have exchanges and visits from choral delegations through ALACC-CHILE, in future festivals or tours that they want to do in our country. But I also leave the invitation to generate spaces of dialogue."



*Reyna Maritza  
Somarriba Molina  
(Nicaragua)*

"I grew up in a poor neighborhood, I studied my primary and secondary school on the floor, because there were no desks, I thought that was normal until I discovered otherwise, but I was very happy. In spite of the material things I did not have, I received a lot of love and the best education. I got the best gift I could get as a child, music, I was taught with love, I was filled with passion. Music transformed my life and I am convinced that with it we can transform society, for that reason I am and will continue to work hard to give access to music to those who want it.

I was lucky to grow up immersed in music, because only 4 blocks from our house there was a cultural center where I received my first musical knowledge with father Angel Torrellas (Spanish priest). At the age of eleven, the program Música en los Barrios

(Music in the Neighborhoods) appointed me as a flute instructor, where my passion for teaching captivated me and I developed to become the Music Director of this musical program. Here I learned to teach, to conduct orchestra and mainly to be a leader.

A few years later, at the young age of fifteen, my interest in the art of conducting began, receiving constant courses under the tutelage of the Swiss maestro Urs Leonhardt Steiner. The lack of choral conductors in my country caused my career to begin without professional studies, conducting various groups while still a young girl, thus returning all that I had learned from my own experiences, becoming the only female conductor who conducted alongside teachers with a long career in the country.

Unfortunately, there was no possibility to study music in Nicaragua, so I had the dream to go abroad to professionalize in choral conducting. And this dream became reality very quickly. Although I did not have the economic solvency to pay for my studies, I was admitted to the National University and decided to leave my home country and embark on a new adventure to Costa Rica. I was supported in this by Pan y Arte, the organization that sponsors the Casa de los Tres Mundos Foundation (where I currently work). Thanks to them and the scholarship from the university, I was able to complete my studies in record time and with honors in 2011 under the guidance of Master David Ramirez Alpizar.

Music in the Neighborhoods, the place in my home country that taught me to love teaching, is still one of my projects and my heart. While studying in Costa Rica, I used every vacation time to teach the teachers there and organize concerts, even from afar.

Currently I direct the two schools of the C3M Foundation, Música en los Barrios which formed the person I am and the Casa de los Tres Mundos music school which was the new challenge upon my return to Nicaragua.

I am a musical educator at heart, very curious and I believe strongly in open, inclusive, quality education. I am fully confident that if we invest our time and resources in social programs, they will give us the best gift, better human beings."

**WELCOME**

## *Michael Barrett (South Africa)*

"It is a privilege for me to be invited to serve on the World Choir Council with such esteemed and passionate colleagues and friends from across the globe. I know the world is a better place because of choral music - and it is truly an honour to be able to serve on this Council to add to the magic that is our profession.

My name is Michael Barrett and I am the conductor of the University of Pretoria Camerata - popularly known as "Tuks Camerata" from sunny South Africa. I am also a lecturer in choral music education and I write and arrange a great deal of music, mainly traditional South African songs, which are published by both Waltons and Santa Barbara Music Publishers. I love to travel and have been blessed with many opportunities to present workshops/lectures, embark on concert tours with my choirs and adjudicate in some of the most beautiful places across the continents. I am a huge fan of Bach - and must admit that I love Disney music too much ;-). I love nature, enjoy playing golf and scuba diving, have two beautiful french bulldogs and a Siamese cat, and my favourite drink is good wine. Although this has been the most challenging year for many of us, it also marked the start of a new journey in our lives, as my husband and I became fathers in October for the first time. I thought weekend rehearsals were tiring...but turns out parenting is a lot tougher!

I am excited to share my knowledge about choral music education, especially from a South African context, which I believe is as unique as any other country and culture. We have such a vibrant choral landscape here, and finding ways, with the support and advice of the Council, to provide opportunities for choirs that are less fortunate, is a great dream of mine. In South Africa, experiencing international choral music, by means of a tour; travelling for a conference/ symposium/festival/competitions; hosting visiting choirs; or even streaming youtube videos is largely a luxury, one which the majority can not afford. It would be my ultimate wish to find ways in which choral music can reach further, making more of a difference, in the lives of people we could argue might need it even more than we do. There are ways, I am certain of it, and having a place here on the Council gives me hope of a collective effort to achieve this, not only in South Africa, but in all our respective countries.

I am also truly excited to continue learning from my fellow Council members and look forward to hopefully making a positive difference."



## Maria Vanesa Utz (Paraguay)

"I am a teacher of Music Education, specialized in choral conducting with a degree in Clinical Psychology, postgraduate in higher education, management and didactics.

Coming from a family of musicians and educators, I have received the impulse of my musical teaching career and my choral experience at an early age. This allowed me to develop socio-communitarian proposals for the government, generating public and free artistic spaces for children and young people of limited resources, with choral proposals, fusing theatricalization, scenic management, plastic arts, corporal expression and movement.

At the age of 12 as a chorus girl, I was part of one of the most ambitious choral projects that Paraguay had, traveling to Europe with a choir at a competitive level and obtaining the first gold medal for the country, even years later participating again in the

World Choir Games in Bremen 2004 obtaining two silver medals in different categories. A story that has marked my life and that of many young people by having the opportunity to get to know other cultures, relating to other languages and customs, working as a team, developing independence and autonomy, working hard for a dream with discipline, commitment and responsibility, involving entire families in the same project. Being part of a musical achievement so significant for our nation, has meant an experience of great impact that I dreamed of replicating as an educator years later. While training in choral conducting I followed the aim of generating musical community spaces based on dynamic, playful and attractive concepts to transform the lives of children and young people with a sense of group belonging and the possibility of seeing the world with different eyes regardless of socioeconomic and cultural level. I discovered that these experiences generate opportunities of equality, that behind the same repertoire, performance and attire the public looks at us as a team and being small we can achieve great things coming out of our individuality.

My interest in children and youth has led me to develop an interesting conception of children's choral work that uses playful strategies, of objects and movement, from active and systemic pedagogy to combine music and group dynamics as the transversal axis of my choral work and my approach to therapeutic groups.

I have been invited as a teacher to many international festivals, for the work of ludic dynamics with music teachers and first level, from an active pedagogical approach to children, conducting practical workshops and lectures on the artistic management of several cultural projects. I have coordinated several research centers and have been a collaborator and cultural manager of the government in several international cultural projects for children associated with UNICEF, UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Culture of my country.

Today I am the founder and coordinator of EducArtenAcción, an intercultural center for children's learning, for early musical stimulation, research and teacher training in Latin American music education as well as director of the community choral groups, Coro Infanto Municipal de Encarnación (Municipality of Encarnación) Da Capo Coro Gubernamental de Itapúa (Government of Itapúa) and the Coro de Jóvenes CORUNI (National University of Itapúa.)"



WELCOME

# IMPRINT

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The World Choir Council is the highest and voluntary international advisory committee of INTERKULTUR. The members support and promote the exchange, progress and development of choral art and culture worldwide.