

# When Music helps to live



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*When you have dedicated your life to choral music, when you direct an international festival sitting in a wheelchair you feel honoured and at the same time very much concerned about the task of having to write the editorial of an edition of the Europa Cantat magazine dedicated to "Music and Handicap" – I thank the editorial team for having thought of me.*

*Nevertheless I shall evade this exercise that is always somewhat artificial and rather write a report which is simpler and perhaps more efficient than an editorial.*

*I was lucky (yes, at the age of 62 I confirm that I was lucky) to be born motor disabled. Hemiplegia and cerebral motor infirmity. After an operation I walked very late and very clumsily, and it was only due to the obstinate will of my parents that I was able to attend a normal school (in the 1950's the integration of disabled children was far from being natural in France).*

*There was the first confrontation with the gaze of the others and the first stage of the competition of life: When you don't run quickly at school, you try to run more quickly than your little fellow pupils with your head. In the background there was an overprotective mother (how is it possible for a mother not to be like that when she has given birth to a disabled child?), who was also more demanding than others (she had realized that she had to be if she wanted to teach her child to cope alone with his handicap).*

*And then, at the age of 13, the world changed: arrival in the big city, in a religious boarding-school. A hard moment: In such a closed environment (apart from the holidays you were allowed to go*

home for only one weekend in three months) to be deformed, crooked and top of the class means very quickly to be given the part of a whipping-boy. It took me one trimester and a lot of hidden tears under the sheets of the dormitory to learn how to defend myself against my dear adolescent comrades.

And what part does music play in all that you may ask? I am coming to it. At the beginning of the 1960's there was a boys' choir at our religious boarding-school in Caen. We sang every morning and at every service – plainsong and polyphony. It was a fantastic sensation. A magic space of vibrations which made the stones sound and filled the vaults. A vibration not only sonorous, but arousing sympathy and empathy, setting your guts swinging and exalting your spirits. And it transformed a horde of adolescents into a group of individuals responsible not only for their voices but also for a common harmony. By learning this pleasurable and at the same time wonderfully paranoid performance you are obliged to split up in order to produce your own vibration while listening to the vibration of those around you, in the fugitive search for the never reached moment of musical beauty produced together.

At a distance of many years I know today that my real life began there. I was no longer the crooked sickly boy; I was just "different". For when the others played football in the courtyard I was allowed to accompany

my bespectacled friend, who started playing the organ, to the gallery, turn the pages or change the registers for him, thus discovering Bach or Messiaen. I was allowed to sing or play the harmonium in rooms for which I alone had the key. I had discovered a source of inexhaustible pleasure and simultaneously I built up a new self-assurance by accepting and affirming my difference. Without any complex, in-harmony. Later, when I joined the university choir and understood that the sweet eyes of a pretty soprano were directed less towards my deformed legs than towards the charms of a young and – of course – beautiful singer I gained even a little more self-confidence and serene acceptance of my handicap.

It has also reinforced my inclination towards putting music at the heart of my life and to have it shared. Today, after 50 years of being a singer, of founding and directing associations that promote choral music, a Centre of Polyphonic Art or various festivals, I can tell you this: Music – and especially choral singing – helps you to live with your handicap!

And quite well, make it known! If ever you pass by Normandy, come for a drink, we will talk about it again...

**Jacques Vanherle**  
President and Artistic Director of Polyfolia

# The inclusion of disabled students in French Arts Education Institutions

A pilot project at the Caen Conservatoire (Normandy, France)

The notion of public services appeared in French public law at the end of the nineteenth century and indicates to us that the principle of equality should underpin public service. 11 February 2005, the French Parliament passed the Law n°2005-102 for the equality of rights and opportunities, the participation and full citizenship of disabled persons. This law reaffirms the principle of accessibility for all, regardless of their handicap, in services provided to the public. But despite significant advances, the application of these provisions remains difficult.

In reality, how many times does a disabled person hear the reply «We are not specialised» or «our building is not equipped». For fear of the handicap and for lack of trained staff, institutes of artistic education are often induced not to consider

requests for enrolment. We also have the example of certain families who sometimes «hide» the child's handicap in the hope of obtaining access to artistic education. For fear of a refusal or dreading a poorly adapted education project, the disabled person does not dare cross the threshold of our institutes. The Minister of Culture, via the Board of Music, Theatre and Dance (Direction de la Musique du Théâtre et de la Danse), has taken up this topic and has organized a national seminar and authorized an enquiry on the subject. It seems clear that a certain number of very interesting endeavours exist but that they are often linked with private associations or with the initiative of a particular teacher or institute.

The law of 2005 reaffirms the principle of accessibility for all but does not mention the right of access to the disciplines taught inside the building. Even if «equality of opportunity» seems to indicate to us that :

- The person with a handicap has the right to participate in a structured activity which provides him or her with development in a social context (e.g.: School of Music and Dance).
- The person with a

handicap has the right to have a teacher coming from the field of the arts (here we are talking about artistic instruction and not assigning someone to «therapy»).

- A family with a disabled child should be able to access cultural services in the same way as any other family.

Having directed an important music school for more than ten years (in Ouistreham, Calvados), and having myself developed a model project in the field of inclusion of disabled people, I am aware that in the absence of teachers trained and qualified in this particular area, it is not easy for a community to propose suitable practices. In our artistic field we find specialists to teach all the disciplines but no specialist trained for the teaching of disabled persons and yet this is a real profession which requires real competences.

Without specific means, we can nevertheless :

- Open our concerts and auditions to specialised institutions catering disabled people (simply by providing information).
- Propose adaptive educational structures when setting up our curricula.
- Organise accessible space when our building does not yet meet accessibility requirements (the teacher moves to this place and thus we can help the disabled person to get in) However there are types of handicap where good will and common sense

alone are not sufficient but nevertheless these persons have the right to find appropriate responses in our conservatories. That is why, in response to this problem the Conservatoire de Caen, backed by the « Communauté d'Agglomérations de Caen la Mer » (gathering one third of the inhabitants of the Calvados area) decided to endow a «Centre de Ressources Régional Handicap musique & danse» [regional resource centre for handicap, music & dance]. This resource centre has now the double task of integrating the consideration of handicap into the global policy of the Conservatoire and of the Orchestre de Caen as well as organizing a network of associated structures on the regional level. A coordinator will accompany the person with handicap along his or her artistic and cultural path and will propose the following :

- An individual plan for education
- Tuition in the context of an adapted course (group or individual)
- Appropriate pedagogical tools
- Musical and choreographic creations bringing together disabled persons and fellow students.
- Accessible events

An exciting new project is being launched, accessible on a wider geographical scale, in order to improve access to music for disabled audiences in the region...

**Laurent Lebouteiller**  
Coordinator of the Centre de Ressources Régional Handicap Musique & Danse  
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# The *Mozaïque* Choir

## of the Conservatoire de Saint Brieuc, Brittany (France)

The *Mozaïque* department, established in 1999 by Murielle Védrine, offers lessons in musical expression for disabled children and teenagers. The choir forms part of the department and was founded in 2003.

The choir comprises 20 members, with or without a handicap. We are two choir leaders: Manuelle Hérault, pianist, and myself, Sophie Veillard, singer. The choir members are adolescents or young adults from several specialist institutions. They come in small groups, accompanied by their educators who also sing. There are also a few individual members. The basis of our practice is not participants' handicaps or a therapeutic exercise but rather the music itself. Above all it's a matter of singing as accurately as possible, respecting the

group in which the leader addresses the ensemble and not individuals. The choir has a weekly rehearsal which lasts one hour. The repertoire is essentially pieces sung in unison but also includes a few canons and songs for two voice parts. Since the young people are aged from fifteen to twenty, it is necessary to choose a repertoire that is simple, but not childish. Moreover, their vocal range is fairly small.

The sessions are held in a circle, with everyone sitting down, because

in the year they have to introduce their neighbour; then even later they will introduce the person opposite them. By the end of the year, not everyone knows all the first names, whereas some know all the names by the end of the first session! After a physical and vocal warm-up, there is a short interlude of expression in Sound Painting, a sign language which allows composition in real time, permitting a moment of more individualised expression. The fact that we have the advantage of being accompanied on the piano is a trump card when it comes to performing songs but it also allows the singers to have immediate

discover a different world and to associate with musicians. So they become very attached to the choir and some of them want to continue coming after they have left their establishments. Florencia was the first one to go down this path: first of all she participated in the choir as part of a group; when she left to go and live alone in an apartment, she made the step to return to the choir by enrolling individually and using public transport for people with limited mobility. Now there are five people in this situation. At the request of establishments who cater for adults, a year ago we set up a second choir which is open to adults. With them, the concentration span is shorter and so it takes longer to learn the pieces. The rehearsal is less intensive and we take more time out to talk about things. The challenge with these adults is the same as for any other adults, with whom learning methods and objectives are different from those for children or adolescents. For us as teachers, working with people whose aptitudes and handicaps are very diverse encourages us to search ceaselessly for new forms of musical expression – which our other students will benefit from too. But above all this experience deeply renews our engagement with music.

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*Mozaïque* choir and choir of Le Braz High School, June 2008  
Conducted by Emmanuelle Ameline and Sophie Veillard

nuances, the articulation, the silences... without losing sight of the pleasure of singing together! That means having to stay vigilant with regard to singers getting tired from the mental and physical effort required of them. Each person acts according to their ability; we expect, however, that the singers are able to stay seated for one hour and fit in with a

there are seven people in wheelchairs. In concerts, we open the circle slightly to face the audience whilst making sure that every singer still has direct visual contact with the choir leader. Every session begins with a ritual: accompanied rhythmically on a djembe, each singer presents himself or herself to the group: 'My name is ...'. Later

contact with a musician who plays 'live' music for them. They really appreciate the moments when the piano plays on its own. For these young people who are constantly surrounded by social, medical or educational personnel, it is very stimulating to sing with a pianist and a choir leader; they are very happy to

# Robots in Hearts-in-Harmony

When you first look at them you may think that they are a modern art installation, but Dasty, Jack, Jasche, Vinny, Magnus, Rosy, Dusty II, JoyBot, Kreig, Bangkok, John, Air Drum, Sparky, Silver, Harp Devil, Bernie Bot, Gold, Stu, Dink, Wangster, Helen and Alfredomente are all members of P.A.M., orchestra of Partially Artificial Musicians.

P.A.M. are nothing like one might imagine them to be; they are nothing like our perception of robots from SF movies, nothing like R2D2 or Data. As their creator states, the P.A.M. Band is the newest member of automata family.

"The P.A.M. Band uses new technology to bring the automata into today's world. My robotic orchestra combines kinetic sculpture, original musical composition, theatre and technology. The band consists of mechanized violins, guitars, and percussion instruments, as well as prototypical instruments, such as "Sparky". Each robotic musician has a "mind" of its own – a unique personality, sound, tuning and mechanical design," says Coble, pointing out

that the band performs without the use of synthesizers, digital sampling or MIDI. These robots are invented and created by violinist

and composer Kurt Coble, who established himself with credits like being solo violinist for Sunset Blvd. and solo violinist for The Lion King, Titanic, Beauty and the Beast, and Once Upon a Mattress, all on Broadway. Coble has performed in Carnegie Hall with the Tchaikovsky Chamber Orchestra, Philip Glass, Ray Davies and other renowned musicians; he has recorded with Barbara Streisand, Enya and Stevie Wonder. The inventor of P.A.M. has shared the stage with Luciano Pavarotti, Björk, and Frank Sinatra, and recorded for many renowned film companies including Disney, and he has been a guest lecturer at Yale, New York University and Drexel University.

Coble didn't start his robotic music experiments thinking it could actually help people. He admits his original objective was to scare his fellow human musicians, motivated by a macabre humour, as musicians helplessly watched their profession being threatened by technology.

"In February 2007, I received a phone call from a producer at News 12 CT asking me if I was interested in working with a 10 year old male quadriplegic. The boy could not speak, and despite his overwhelming



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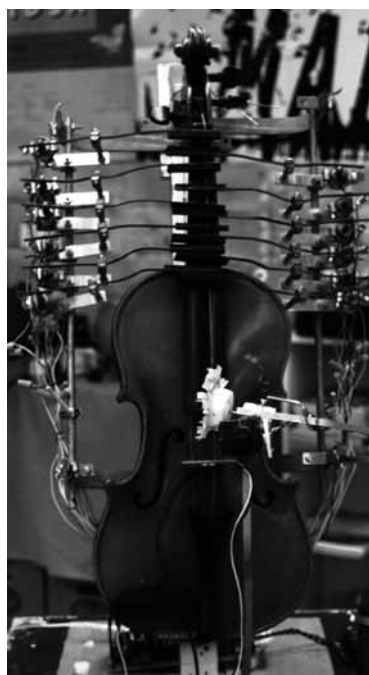
limitation he had a burning desire to play drums. His options at that time were unsatisfactory. I had been thinking for some time that I wanted to do something for people with musical instincts who lacked a format to be expressive. Some of my mechanical solution seemed to lend itself to such an application," explained Coble of the beginnings of his work with, as he says his "so-called disabled friends and acquaintances".

Recent innovations at the University of Bridgeport Robotic Music Lab have included the use of sensors; as the P.A.M. creator says, current experiments use motion sensors to trigger the robotic devices. "Motion sensors do not require any physical contact, so the technique developed is based upon a personal approach to motion. Again we see the emergence of

personality and unique approaches to produce expressive results. Another family of instruments is controlled by the use of optical sensors that trigger the mechanical parts with lights. Typical interface includes a flashlight clipped to the visor of a baseball cap, allowing the user to 'hit' sensors with a light beam and triggering the device to either strike a drum, fret a string, or pull a bow or pick across strings. Again the techniques employed are individualized, resulting in a unique performance opportunity. In all three cases, the music being created is a meaningful expression."

Larisa Inic  
Cantat Novi Sad PR Manager

P.A.M. Website:  
[www.pamand.com](http://www.pamand.com)



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Cantat Novi Sad in cooperation with Kurt Coble and P.A.M. will organise Hearts in Harmony in Novi Sad, Serbia, in Spring 2011. This project with the support of Europa Cantat has the main goal to provide equal opportunities to all physically disabled persons allowing them to form a choir with assistance of robots and performing with other disabled people who are able to sing.



# The Academician Petko Staynov Choir

## a Mixed Professional Choir of the Blind in Sofia, Bulgaria

The mixed professional choir of the blind "Academician Petko Staynov" was founded in 1935 and was named after Petko Staynov, one of the greatest Bulgarian composers. In this ensemble, unique in the world practice, work visually challenged men and women, for whom music is one of the most important things in life and the only way for supporting themselves and having a worthy place in society.

The choir's repertoire includes works by Bulgarian and foreign composers – Pre-classical, Classical, Romantic, Modern, and Orthodox music, re-arrangements of Bulgarian folk songs as well as vocal-symphonic works. I have worked with this choir since 1992, first as a pianist and since 1997 as its conductor. I graduated from the Sofia State Academy of Music in 1987 with the speciality "choir conducting" I also work with various choirs and smaller singing groups: children's, males', mixed, folkloric, with which I've been giving concerts in Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Spain and Turkey. I have numerous records and four published CDs. At the beginning I thought that working with visually challenged people would be very difficult. But with time I understood that they are like all of us and we should treat them without prejudice. That's why I treat them like all other professional musicians – I don't allow compromises towards music because they are impaired. And they try to give the best of themselves. The professional work with the visually challenged singers itself is not hard, the manual technique is the same, only the process is a little more specific. The musical works are written in the Braille system, and notes and words are separate. That's why we must first learn the melody

and then add the text. I play the piano and sing all the time with them, I'm counting loudly, I beat time, I explain. I prefer to work with the entire choir present, and not separately with every part, because this way the singers are listening and memorising what's happening around them. When we assemble the musical composition I specify the links and then indicate supporting points because the visually challenged don't have the entire score. Then we begin the artistic shaping of the song. Gradually I diminish the explanations and the signals as the singers



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– the singers hear my breathing and feel my arm movements. Up to August 1999 the choir was supported by the Union of the Blind in Bulgaria, but the financing was stopped and the blind singers are now unemployed. That's why in the same year we established the foundation "Choir of the Blind Academician Petko Staynov". Its main purpose is not to allow the perishing of this exceptional cultural achievement. During the last ten years, regardless of the huge difficulties, we continue to look for forms

the social assistance. Its goals are: to assist visually impaired musicians; to find and to train gifted blind children and to help their professional forming; the rehabilitation and the integration into society of visually impaired musicians; to use their artistic potential to the best advantage and to provide for possibilities for their realisation through the spreading and the popularization of the Bulgarian musical culture. It's exceptionally important these people get out of the closed world they are living in. The aid for them should not be passive like gifts, materials, excursions etc. Blind singers should work and be paid for it to feel that they are not consumers but are



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already know the piece of music almost by heart. Here mutual feeling between singer and conductor is very important. During concerts I'm very close to the musicians – my arms are almost over the first row and I move all the time between the different parts. This way the contact between us is very clear

and ways to realise and express the creative skills of the visually challenged singers. With the aid of sponsors and through won projects in different programmes, we are going on doing concerts and records.

The foundation works in the sphere of the culture and

able too to give something to society. And the Choir of the Blind "Academician Petko Staynov" gives them this chance.

**Petar Matev**  
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[http://sofiaecho.com/2001/05/17/628118\\_blind-choir-looks-to-future](http://sofiaecho.com/2001/05/17/628118_blind-choir-looks-to-future)

# An Interview with... Elias

Elias is 29 years old and studies maths at the University Bonn. He is blind, and as a child he sung in several school choirs, since 2005 he has been a member of the university choir. Elias tells us how he learns the pieces, what the choir means to him... and what conductors should know!

*Isabelle Métrope (IM): How do you learn the choral pieces? Do you have scores in Braille?*

Elias Oltmanns (EO): It really isn't that difficult to learn the pieces. During the first rehearsals I hold back a bit, until I have memorized the music more or less. I learn the pieces by listening to them, in the past I have held scores in Braille in my hands, but I don't use them. Firstly, not all of the works are available and secondly, I have learned quite late to read them which is why I am not patient enough to use them regularly - it's quicker just listening to them! The texts can be downloaded from the internet, my PC can convert them to Braille and then I can learn them by heart. Three to four weeks before a concert I often get a CD to practice my own voice. Before that time I don't know the pieces well enough to be able to "recognise" my voice out of the overall sound. The CD enables me to gain an impression of the complete work, because during the rehearsals we rehearse excerpts in disorder, which is why I do never quite know which part will follow next! It also helps me with memorizing the cues. Although generally my neighbours are a good orientation for me: I hear them breathe in, I feel their movement, so I can start singing at the same time. The only difficult bit is the beginning of each work, the cue when there has been no music previously and no other voice has sung or other instrument has played.

*IM: What do you gain from the choir rehearsals, what do you especially like in a choir?*

EO: I enjoy singing; it brings a certain relaxation into my week. Of course I have also found friends in the choir. Some of them also study maths, but most of them come from other degree courses. That is good; it enables me to also get to know other people. Furthermore the members of a choir are by definition people with which you share something, i.e. the interest for choral singing. At a university with roughly 28 000 students it is nice to have a group of 80 people who share projects, interests and sometimes short choir trips.

*IM: Last June the university choir performed the Poverty Requiem<sup>2</sup> by Peter Maissan together with other choirs from Bonn and the surrounding area. How did you experience the Poverty Requiem?*

EO: The most fascinating part for me was when all participating choirs came together for the general rehearsal. Before that, everyone had only listened to parts of it and suddenly it sounded like a complete

work. Not least because the conductor joined us and conducted. He was very infectious and he passed his enthusiasm on to us!

Learning this piece was difficult for me, because several parts sounded somewhat alike which can be confusing. Nevertheless it did work and I enjoyed the experience!

*IM: Do you sometimes go to choral concerts - how do you find out about them?*

EO: Not very often, I have to admit that much. But that is not down to a lack of information. I get my information from the internet or the choir, there's always talk about one event or another. However I do find concerts always slightly long... I prefer singing myself!

*IM: Have you ever participated in a choral festival or a similar event?*

EO: With the university choir I have twice attended the CANTABonn Festival in Bonn, once in 2006 and then this year. In addition to that we sang at the German Choir Competition in May 2010. That was a nice experience, also to walk through the city and to hear how other choir singers sang something

short here and there. It was easy to spot who had come to Dortmund for the same reason!

*IM: What could a choir association like Europa Cantat do to help blind singers to find access to choral music?*

EO: I think the most important thing would be to let the conductors know that a blind singer can actually sing in a choir, even without scores, and also without the choir itself having to adapt in any special way. Furthermore it should be communicated that this is also possible for lay singers and not only for famous soloists. I just presented myself to the university choir, had an audition and then joined the choir. But I can imagine that some conductors and maybe also interested blind singers have inhibitions to give it a try. Yet the chances are good that it will work!

<sup>1</sup> See article on page 11 about Braille scores

<sup>2</sup> See News EC Magazine 2/2010



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Poverty Requiem performance in Bonn on 20th June 2010 in the frame of CANTABonn, organised in cooperation with Europa Cantat (see ECmagazine 02/2010)

# Music Noted with Six Dots

When the first schools for the blind were founded in Europe 200 years ago, many people saw music as a means of earning a living that would be particularly well suited to blind people in the future. It is true that up to then, most blind people who had managed to emerge from an anonymous existence had in fact become musicians.

After the appearance of notation systems for music, and above all after it became possible to print multiple copies of music, starting in the 15th century, probably many a blind person had had recourse to aids to representing music. The oldest known system devised for blind people to use in noting down music dates from 1732. It was invented and used by a blind organist in Arnheim in Holland.

When he was 14 years old, Louis Braille (1809-1852) began to develop a script made up of dots and to be read by touch, the same famous braille script that all blind people still use today for reading and writing. In addition to this invention, which allowed letters and figures to be represented with the aid of different combinations (cells) of dots, in 1828 he developed his alphabet further until he had a system that made it possible for the first time in history for musical works to be recorded in a form that blind people could manage to use for writing down music and also for reading it. In braille music, the notes are written inline with each other, whether they are to be played/sung separately or together in chords, as are all other musical symbols. Braille thought up the octave mark and those for other intervals, and also further marks needed to represent the different musical symbols in his point system. All these signs appear in a predetermined order immediately before the braille cells for the notes they belong with. If necessary, for example, a note can be preceded by an octave sign, an interval

sign and an accidental, and also by the sign for the beginning or end of a slur or a tie sign. For these reasons, braille music is more difficult to write and to read than the letters and figures used in literary braille. Braille introduced an order of notation that is still current today for the transcription of print music (music that can be read by sighted persons) into his system for music notation. His first printed work appeared in 1829 under the title:

"Method of Writing Words, Music and Plainchant with the Aid of Dots, for Use by and Arranged for Blind Persons."

The braille system of music notation has been accepted in Germany since 1888. In contrast to the many literary systems in use for blind people, the same system of musical notation is used throughout the world, which means unlimited possibilities for the exchange of music among the different persons engaged in the various aspects of music. There is still no other way than through learning the braille music system for a blind person to learn music and to write music down independently. Many blind musicians have to learn the music they use by heart, since they are not in a position to look back at it to check later. Singers, pianists and organists have the option of reading the music as they perform it, as they often have at least one hand free and can use it to read the braille music. The braille system of recording music makes it possible for blind musicians to read the music set down. Compared with the eye, the finger used to feel the dots can recognise only a very small section of the overall picture of the music owing to its restricted area of perception. All the information: intervals, time signature, tempo and movement, is noted in a linear format. The same text processors and printers can

be used for braille music as for literary braille, which means that blind musicians can not only read the music, but also write music themselves.

The German Central Library for the Blind (Deutsche Zentralbücherei für Blinde, DZB) in Leipzig has been in existence since 1894 and is the oldest public library for blind persons in Germany. In addition to currently 5500 pieces of published music, its current holdings include 12000 volumes of literature, which are available for loan to interested persons throughout the world. The DZB is the only place in Germany that can be approached for braille music. It offers a special service of transcribing print music to braille music with the aid of computer software. The production of braille music is traditional in Leipzig. Up to 1986 music was transcribed from the regular print music into the braille system by a small specialised staff team. Braille music has not been produced in Germany since 1995. Not just because there are so few standard works available for blind musicians, but also to improve the career chances for blind musicians and promote wider use of the braille system, the production of music for blind musicians' use has been digitalised. The newly developed programme HODDER is sound and effective in the production of computer-assisted transcriptions of conventional print music scores.

Blind musicians have a great need of music, which they cannot, however, acquire in conventional music shops. The music is first processed to prepare it for transcription into the braille notation, and this is followed by its translation by HODDER and then proofreading. All pieces are proofread three times, by both blind and

sighted persons. This transcription service makes it possible to offer musicians professional transcriptions of music of all types, including their own arrangements and compositions, even at short notice. Courses in the braille system of music notation are also still available. Since



© DZB Leipzig

2005, it has also been possible to have music originally prepared for use by blind persons transcribed for use by sighted persons. The aim is to establish Leipzig as an efficient centre for conversion of music from and into braille form. It is intended that schools and other institutes of learning will be particularly well supported by the service. Braille music from Leipzig is meanwhile in use in several schools for the blind in German-speaking countries. The staff of the DZB are anxious to make the developments in house available to all institutions that would like to use them, in Germany and elsewhere, to help blind musicians.

Juliane Bally

German Main Library for  
Blinds, Leipzig  
<http://www.dzb.de>



# Conducting a Blind Choir

## An Experience from Argentina

I find it difficult to talk about conducting without making reference to my own experience as a musician and human being. In reality, those two are the same since the first is the capability of expressing oneself and connection is the second.

So I am going to start talking to you from this unity: In 1990 I had the opportunity to listen for the first time to the National Polyphonic Choir of Blind People "Carlos Roberto Larrimbe". My inner engagement was such that I felt I could only compare it to the first time that I had heard the sound of a choir rehearsing, which back then determined in a comprehensive and inevitable manner the

direction of my musical training towards choral singing and then further on conducting. From that point onwards I had the responsibility of conducting this choir. I went down a new path which was both fascinating and intriguing because each step presented me with stimulating obstacles and new questions. Firstly, how would I conduct the choir? I couldn't use gestures, I had no previous experience and moreover I

had to hold on to past and established codes. This was completely new to me; I could never remember if the cut came first (with a sound guideline) and then the tempo or the other way round. Or if the strike or the *ritenuto*... Oh my God!!

This problem made me look for new ways of communicating and to consolidate my own approach which in turn offered new alternatives worth exploring. Singing together I found out that I could suggest or invite with my respiration, without having to rely so much on words (which, when they are excessive, bore and divert). This brought a magic moment, sublime and spiritual, of

togetherness and unity. Something which later on, would also help me in my work with other choirs. I can indicate a *pp* or a cut or a certain enthusiasm in a phrase depending on the mood during a certain performance. Sound guidelines are indispensable, but need to be small and hardly audible. Strong enough for the choir to hear the code and quiet enough to not be heard by the first row in the audience, so that they don't invade the music. My own movements do always tend to communicate. I admit that I couldn't keep still, but I try to be restrained. That air that you move is energy that transfers into activity and which is captured with attention and often a very high and exquisite sensitivity.

Today the possibilities to communicate an idea or a suggestion are infinite. Thinking and looking are powerful tools which can also impact an attentive recipient.

The search continues and the process goes on. It's about not abandoning a path, thinking that there's nothing more to obtain and about not relying solely on one technique or model, because in that case we would not only be freezing a process and close it to new possibilities, but

also close it to a dynamic development, freedom and love.

My experience is made up of many anecdotes, many satisfactions, some grey hairs and a few certainties. The most important thing is to know that those who need to experiment will and maybe that is something that needs to be woken up within ourselves. However, maybe it is something which we need to explore within ourselves or an aspect of our character which we need to continue or develop to get to know more, to establish better relationships and finally to be better instruments in order to express an artistic reality.

Dear colleagues, we all have a common denominator which unifies us and makes us equal and it is precisely that never ending search to communicate, recognize each other, feed each other and enrich each other with the precious experience that is choral music.

Don't you agree?

**Oswaldo César Manzanelli**  
*Conductor*

[http://www.corosargentinos.com.ar/coro\\_polifonico\\_de\\_ciegos\\_carlos\\_roberto\\_larrimbe.htm](http://www.corosargentinos.com.ar/coro_polifonico_de_ciegos_carlos_roberto_larrimbe.htm)



© Coro Nacional de Ciegos

In 1942 Carlos Roberto Larrimbe joined the School for Blind Adults "General San Martín" as teacher and immediately proceeded to found a choir in this institution, the Polyphonic Choir of Blind People, which today carries his name. From the beginning he had the invaluable support of the teacher Ladislao Scotti. Since 1991 the choir is headed by the conductor Oswaldo César Manzanelli. The admission of singers and copyists is done by audition. The applicants need to have musical knowledge and have to be perfect at reading Braille. The copyists transcribe the scores to Braille which are then being learnt and included in the repertoire of the choir which can be huge. The ensemble is able to perform everything from madrigals with a reduced number of singers to the big vocal mass of a symphony choir while also being able to tackle the music of other musical periods with ductility and sensitivity, which also includes Argentinean and Latin-American folk music. After 63 years the National Polyphonic Choir of Blind People is a beautiful reality and something to be proud of for the country, because it is the first choir ensemble in the world which is made up exclusively of blind people and people with visual impairment who dedicate themselves in a professional manner to continuously work towards perfection on their path to musical excellence.

# When Music Organisations Pitch in!

As part of the Art of the Dark project of the social-cultural movement 'View on culture', one learns to experience how the blind and visually-impaired look at art. The project is run by a team of voluntary blind or visually impaired people. This should later lead to initiatives to help to render the Flemish and Brussels-area museums accessible to them.

In the Kleefkruid project, twelve young dancers very convincingly conquer the stage. Some are wheelchair users, others are perfectly able-bodied. The groups are flanked by musicians from the HERMES ensemble – then suddenly it seems as though the musicians are dancing too, and the dancers begin to make music.

Recently, Hartverwarmend [Heart-warming], a composition by Hanne Deneire for choirs without limitations, was first performed by the Cantatille Chamber choir, the Caljente mixed choir and the Bloemetjeskoor, a choir for people with limitations. An unforgettable group-effort between 'singers with' and 'singers without' limitations. The artistic world is clearly moving forward and it seems that the cultural sector really wants to put into practice the notion of 'inclusion', for which much has been said and written in theoretical terms. The Flemish Van Dale dictionary defines the word 'inclusion' as the opposite of 'exclusion'. In care services for people with disabilities, the word is used as a generic term for everything relating to enhancing the participation of people with disabilities in society: general education as opposed to special education, living in a flat instead of an institution, working in an everyday work-place as opposed to a sheltered environment. For the choir world, this freely translates into: disabled people singing in a choir! Although it may not seem simple at first, practice has proven it to be possible and has promoted inclusion above all. For more information contact Koor & Stem – [www.koorenstem.be](http://www.koorenstem.be), [info@koorenstem.be](mailto:info@koorenstem.be)

## Koor&Stem



Hearts-in-Harmony 2008, Trondheim (NO) © Kristin Daehlie

### Join our Band!

Live Music Now aims to make high quality live music as widely accessible as possible, while simultaneously supporting the professional development of young musicians at the outset of their careers. Following a recent recruitment drive for rock/pop/jazz musicians to join its classical and traditional ensembles, LMN Scotland is delighted that four-piece rock band Miniature Dinosaurs is now active in its delivery programme.

In an innovative project working with 11 – 13 year old pupils at Donaldson's, Scotland's national school for children who are deaf or have severe language difficulties, Miniature Dinosaurs will present a series of workshops based around song-writing, singing and signing, composition and playing instruments. The project, followed by final performance for local children, parents and guests, commences on 8 November.

[www.livemusicnow.org.uk/lmn\\_scotland.htm](http://www.livemusicnow.org.uk/lmn_scotland.htm)



### JOIN OUR BAND!

MON 8TH NOV

TUE 9TH NOV

WED 10TH NOV

THU 11TH NOV



## Live Music Now

The project "Hearts in Harmony," which recently came to life in the Paris region (see previous editions of the EC Magazine) has produced extremely diverse requests for a greater integration of disabled and able-bodied choral singers.

For example, a choir composed of mentally disabled individuals chose to participate in a regional festival. The organisers of the festival were astounded, and are now making their own pilot project out of this initiative.

An institution of severely disabled children wants to create a regular choral workshop working towards a concert together with choirs of able-bodied children and young instrumentalists.

Adult choirs that integrate able-bodied and disabled singers are being established, and there have been individual requests to join the choirs.

Real activities are underway with blind artists: meetings are being planned to better understand their method of learning music, to discover ways to produce scores in Braille, and to organise a musical database, even on a European level. And also, for the longer term, a workshop for cinematic writing (surprising for the blind!) is being planned to translate into images the experience of these multi-directional musical practices. The recent Choralies of Vaison-la-Romaine also provided the opportunity to present these initiatives, enabling them to be spread further throughout France. For more information contact Michel Gauvry: [acj.gauvry@orange.fr](mailto:acj.gauvry@orange.fr) – tel: +33 (0) 160 46 36 33

## A Cœur Joie

# Hearts-in-Harmony 2010 in Budapest and Barcelona

The 2010 edition of Hearts-in-Harmony in Hungary focused on blind and visually impaired children and youth but adult choirs also participated at this unique event in Budapest. During the weekend there were rehearsals, concerts, demonstration lessons, workshops, video and live presentations on the programme as well as round table discussions on the pedagogy of working with visually impaired children and young people, with the participation of internationally renowned and experienced therapists and music pedagogues specialising in blindness and music.

The inspiration for this organisation was the existence of the School for the Blind in Budapest, which had a children's and an adult choir. They were specialized in events with blind and visually impaired people's participation and kindly offered the school as the venue of this meeting. We used both the network of Europa Cantat and the international contacts of the school to find other choirs having visually impaired singers. In the end there were 2 adult choirs (from Austria and Slovenia) and 2 children's choirs (Poland and Bulgaria) interested in the event. As a great challenge we had to learn that the society of visually impaired people differs greatly from country to country, especially between the Western and Eastern part of Europe. In the Western part of Europe in most cases integration is the aim (as was the case with the choirs from Austria and Slovenia), whilst the group from Poland came from a special inclusion school and the vocal ensemble of the Bulgarian girls consisted exclusively of totally blind singers...

Unfortunately our event did not function as a powerful contribution to a sustainable improvement of the inclusion of disabled singers in other choirs as - due to several reasons - there were no other choirs present from the non-blind choral society of Hungary. All of the choirs performed their own repertoire for each other but had also joint rehearsals and workshops which ended up in a joint closing concert on the final day which was a nice achievement anyway.

There were a lot of very important experiences that we shall have to consider next time when organising such an event. The programme has to be much more relaxed; the quality is much more important in this case than quantity. One has to calculate always for including a large number of helpers who come along with the groups and this was really needed wherever the groups appeared. Any time when the programme was about cultural exchange, senses did not mean any barrier, and the choirs were very happy to learn other cultures' music; even folk dancing was possible with the participation of sometimes completely blind singers.

Guest teachers and experts could exchange their experiences, which meant a great deal to many of them. A guest from Novi Sad, Serbia decided as a result to organise something similar in his city in future. Perhaps it will happen in 2011, in the framework of the "Cantat Novi Sad" International Europa Cantat Singing Week, organised by the Inclusion Choir and School "ISON".

One could also see very clearly after our event and experiencing the joy of common singing with blind and visually impaired people: the future is the inclusion choir.

Gábor Móczár

More information on the event and the participating choirs at : [http://www.europacantat.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Dateien\\_Europa\\_Cantat/Hearts-in-Harmony/programme\\_book-let\\_HiH\\_Bp\\_2010.pdf](http://www.europacantat.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Dateien_Europa_Cantat/Hearts-in-Harmony/programme_book-let_HiH_Bp_2010.pdf)  
Contact address: [ecceec@europacantat.org](mailto:ecceec@europacantat.org)



© Hearts-in-Harmony Budapest, Hungary

Conference participants and lecturers in Budapest

During 2010, a new project was developed in Catalonia by SCIC under the name of Cors amb Cor, in cooperation with Europa Cantat's Mediterranean Office for Choral Singing. In this case the priority was to involve as many choirs as possible so that something changed in the minds of SCIC's conductors and singers. Many disabled and non-disabled people are able to sing well; they can improve the sound of the choirs while turning them into places where the "difference" can be enjoyed.

The project had four steps:

- Contacts with organisations and associations for disabled people. ONCE (Spanish Organisation for Blind People) expressed their support and wish to cooperate.

- Opening more widely the doors of SCIC choirs. During the October 2009 General Assembly, with some 120 choir conductors, the project was explained. A discussion followed, after which the reluctance of some turned into collective hope.

- In February, the week-end training seminar "Working with... inclusiveness" was organized to furnish conductors with resources and advice. Over 60 conductors, music teachers and pedagogues attended.

- To make the project known to the public, in May 2010 the concert "Un pont de cançons, el SCIC a L'Auditori" was held with various SCIC choirs plus guest choirs Kor Laene from Trondheim (which includes children with hearing difficulties) and Cor Allegro-Once from Valencia (singers with and without visual difficulties).

But the concert is not the end. The taken efforts will only make sense if a network of inclusive choirs continues. Hearts-in-Harmony has to be the seed of a new mentality in choirs and conductors. We already have some encouraging news from participating choirs that have developed their own projects.

The future is complicated, but the result will make us richer. I do hope that our project, focused on children's choirs, may encourage the young and adult choirs in our country and everywhere.

*Adaptation of Martí Ferrer's speech during the Hearts-in-Harmony event last March in Budapest, Hungary.*

## Hearts-in-Harmony



Europa Cantat Central Eastern  
European Centre  
& KÓTA, Hungary

Children's Choir Association  
of Catalonia (SCIC)



# Hearts-and-Harmony to come

The series of Hearts-in-Harmony events will be continued in 2011 with conferences, workshops and concerts in different European countries. Future events will include a Hearts-in-Harmony weekend in Örebro, Sweden, May 27 - 29 2011, bringing together singers with hearing disabilities and other young singers in a common workshop and concert and offering seminars and lectures for teachers and conductors on working with and integrating disabled singers. Also, a Hearts-in-Harmony event is planned to take place in Novi Sad, Serbia (see pages 8 and 14), and further activities around the inclusion of disabled singers shall happen in Flanders, Belgium (see text below).



Since its start in France, several European countries have developed Hearts-in-Harmony projects. Next country in line is Belgium. The Flemish umbrella organisation for choral music Koor&Stem will set up a new "Hearts-in-Harmony" project, called "Social Singing". It will be integrated into the MUST project (MUSIC and Societal Tasks), for which the European Music Council requested subsidies from the European Community.

With this project, Koor&Stem seeks to stimulate the interaction between disabled people and non-disabled people, to mobilise people around the specific musical needs of disabled people, and show what can be done and organised to fulfil those needs. Within an international context the organisation will reflect upon the question of whether or not singing in a choir can contribute to a higher level of participation of disabled people in our society and to more diversity in our communities.

After a first international capacity-building workshop in the autumn of 2011, Koor&Stem will begin several artistic projects with choirs that integrate disabled and non-disabled singers, focusing on different handicaps. The result of these projects will be four vocal performances that will demonstrate the possibilities of inclusive membership in choral ensembles. These productions will be presented during the "Social Singing" project in the autumn of 2013. For this conference, Koor&Stem would like to invite choirs who already have a lot of experience with participation of disabled people to showcase the positive effects of singing on people.

Koor&Stem hopes that this project will inspire the Belgian and international choral community to develop more projects that include disabled people as active singers and active listeners.

For more information: [info@koorenstem.be](mailto:info@koorenstem.be) / [www.koorenstem.be](http://www.koorenstem.be)

## Social Singing

## Europa Cantat magazine





## Pécs Cantat 15-22.08.2010

After twenty-two years, Europa Cantat returned to Pécs! The seven workshops attracted about 1,300 singers from Hungary and abroad, and focused mostly on Hungarian repertoire, with a hint of international flavour. The abundant offerings for all types of choirs, together with the rich programme-milieu of Pécs – the European Capital of Culture in 2010 – resulted in an ever-increasing interest among the participants as well as in the audience – or rather public participants, as the residents and tourists were highly involved. The Open Singing was literally open. It was held in the Dom Square, the heart of the city, and welcomed everyone who wished to join in. So, every evening thousands of “civilians” came to sing Kodály and Liszt, folksongs and jazz, with local guest-performers of different genres. Music was brought to the people, instead of waiting for the “just listening” audience. This was perhaps the greatest originality of PÉCS CANTAT! For a week, choral music was again the focus of interest in Pécs, which will be remembered as the First Singing Cultural Capital of Europe.

## IMC and EMC join forces for the next World Forum on Music in Tallinn, Estonia

The International Music Council (IMC) and the European Music Council (EMC) have decided to combine efforts to organise the next IMC World Forum on Music to be held in Tallinn, Estonia, from September 26th to October 2nd 2011 in cooperation with the Estonian Music Council. The Boards of the two associations have decided to join forces and make this the 4th IMC World Forum on Music; a truly inclusive event on which the IMC and its regional group for Europe, the EMC, will collaborate. Within this highly attractive programme of the Forum, the EMC will also hold its Annual Meeting for its members. The European Music Council will take charge of the first day of the Forum, dedicated to the topic “Music as a Tool for Social Change” which will culminate in the presentation of the 2nd IMC Musical Rights Awards. More on [www.emc-imc.org](http://www.emc-imc.org) and [www.imc-cim.org](http://www.imc-cim.org)

## First IFCM International Competition for Choral Composition “A Choral Work for Peace”



### NOTIFICATION AND REGULATIONS

1. The International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM), in cooperation with Europa Cantat and Jeunesses Musicales International, announces the First International Competition for Choral Composition “A Choral Work for Peace” with the aim of promoting the creation and the wide distribution of a new choral repertoire and, above all, of promoting peace among the people of this world with the help of music. The Competition will be held every two years in conjunction with an important event organized by one of the three partners.
2. Participation is open to composers from any country, and any nationality, who are under 35 years old on 31 December 2010.
3. The Competition calls for “a cappella” choral compositions (SATB or divided into as many as eight parts, SSAATTBB) with a maximum duration of 6 minutes. The text of the composition, sacred or secular, in any language (English translation is required), written for the occasion or pre-existing, must treat the theme of the peace. If the texts are not in the public domain, written permission to use them must be obtained from the author or copyright holder of the texts and shall be enclosed with the entry form.
4. A maximum of two works per composer may be submitted. Entries shall arrive by e-mail no later than 31 December, 2010.
5. There is no entry fee for participating in the Competition.
6. Entries must be submitted in the form of scores (either typeset in pdf format or as scans of neat handwritten music scores). In addition, relevant MIDI files may be submitted but are not essential. Do not submit tapes or CDs. The composer's name should not appear anywhere on the scores. The IFCM Competition Office will receive the entries and forward them to the members of the jury. The composer's identity will be released by the IFCM only after judging has taken place. All participants must include a document (.doc or .rtf) with their full address, contact details and the title of the composition. This document shall also contain a statement by the composer declaring that each and every score submitted is unpublished, so far unperformed and has never been awarded a prize in any previous contest. Entries should be sent by e-mail to: [competition@ifcm.net](mailto:competition@ifcm.net)
7. The competition will be judged by a five-member jury consisting of international choral conductors and composers. The judges' decision is final.
8. Strong consideration will be given to a work's potential for performance and repeated performance by the majority of choirs possessing the appropriate voicing requirements. The winning work will demonstrate excellence of writing, “sing-ability” (given reasonable rehearsal time) and choral (idiomatic) effectiveness.
9. The winning work will be premièred by the World Youth Choir in its first concert after the announcement of the result. The three organisations who support this competition, IFCM, Europa Cantat and Jeunesses Musicales International, may award further prizes to the winning work.
10. The winning work will be published by a prestigious publishing house (the name of which will be announced later). Meanwhile the “Composers' Corner” column of the April 2011 issue of the International Choral Bulletin (ICB) will publish an interview with the winning composer and some excerpts of the winning score as a measure to promote the composer and his works. Europa Cantat and Jeunesses Musicales International will also promote the winning composer and his work through their publications.
11. Participation in the competition implies full knowledge and acceptance of these regulations.

## “We are more” campaign we are more to mobilise everyone who cares about culture in Europe

On October 7th 2010 Culture Action Europe – the umbrella advocacy organisation for the arts and culture in Europe – launched the large-scale campaign “we are more”. As well as mobilising Culture Action Europe's membership, the campaign will seek to mobilise everyone who cares about culture in Europe. More on [www.wearemore.eu](http://www.wearemore.eu) and [www.cultureactioneurope.org](http://www.cultureactioneurope.org)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Andrea Angelini, ICB Managing Editor, IFCM • Tel.: +39 347 2573878 e-mail: [aangelini@ifcm.net](mailto:aangelini@ifcm.net)

## VOICE – Vision On Innovation for Choral Music in Europe

In September 2010 Europa Cantat submitted an application for a multiannual cooperation project under the European Union programme “Culture 2007 – 2013” for the project VOICE. “VOICE – Vision On Innovation for Choral music in Europe” is a project, coordinated by Europa Cantat (from 2011 – European Choral Association – Europa Cantat, Germany), in cooperation with Chorverband Österreich (Austria), Expertisecentrum Stem (Belgium), KoorftStem (Belgium), Epilogi (Cyprus), UCPS (Czech Republic), Estonian Choral Association (Estonia), Moviment Coral Català – Mediterranean Office for Choral Singing (Spain), KÓTA and Europa Cantat Central-Eastern European Centre (Hungary), Federazione Cori del Trentino (Italy), FENIARCO (Italy), EUROPA CANTAT Utrecht (The Netherlands) and Länsmusiken with the Swedish International Choral Centre Örebro (Sweden) as well as the Austrian Voice Institute (Austria), TENSO (the Netherlands) and many other associate partners.

VOICE aims at promoting the mobility of (young) musicians, the promotion of European choral repertoire, intercultural dialogue and singing at all ages, the developing of innovative singing events, the creation of innovative choral music and the promotion of joint singing in music education. It wants to encourage research on the voice and data-collection in the field of the choral music as well as cooperation between the choral world and research institutes and to ensure a sustainable development of the choral world in Europe. Activities from 2011 to 2014 through which these aims shall be reached include the EUROPA CANTAT festival in Italy, EUROPA CANTAT *junior 6* in Estonia and an urban youth choir festival in Sweden, a singing week in the Netherlands, singing as a tool for reconciliation in Cyprus, two sessions of the EuroChoir for young singers in Italy and Czech Republic, a competition, conference and study tour in Hungary, training courses and seminars for conductors and managers in Austria, Italy and Sweden, a conference on Mediterranean Music in Spain, a vocal training programme for teachers and conductors and a cooperation programme with the world of education in Belgium, research programmes on the growth of young people in relation to their singing voice and on vocal health of amateur singers, done from Austria and Belgium and databases on choral life, voice-training and conductors’ training in Europe.

Also see [www.EuropaCantat.org/voice](http://www.EuropaCantat.org/voice) – more information will be published in 2011.

## MuST – Music as Societal Task

Also, Europa Cantat together with the Hellenic Choirs Association (Greece) and the Moviment Coral Català (Spain) is a cooperation partner in the project MuST – Music as Societal Task, a project coordinated by the European Music Council. For further information see [www.emc-imc.org/projects/must](http://www.emc-imc.org/projects/must)

## World Choral Day 2010

Thousands of choirs have joined in the celebration of World Choral Day on or around the 2nd Sunday in December in the past twenty years. Millions of singers across the globe have been involved in World Choral Day events. Join this worldwide event by registering your concert, your festival ... The theme of this year is „The rapprochement of cultures“. Read more on page 48!

More as well on [www.ifcm.net](http://www.ifcm.net) and by writing to [WorldChoralDay@ifcm.net](mailto:WorldChoralDay@ifcm.net)



## Europa Cantat Summer and Autumn 2010

A lot of activities took place all over Europe in summer and autumn 2010, starting with a workshop with Lone Larsen, a concert with Voces Nordicae, the Poverty Requiem and the festival Youth Choirs in Movement in Bonn, through Pécs Cantat, the International Singing Weeks in Usedom, Vic and Lignano, the World Youth Choir, the Seminar for Composers in Aosta, the Academies for conductors and singers in Pomáz and Örebro, the Study Tours for managers in Vaison-la-Romaine and St Lô, the Meeting of Choral Experts from the Mediterranean region in Barcelona and Access! in Turin up to the General Assembly with workshops in Namur at the end of November. You will find more details, reports and pictures on [www.EuropaCantat.org](http://www.EuropaCantat.org) in the news section.

## World Symposium on Choral Music and World Youth Choir in Argentina

Applications are now open for the 9th World Symposium on Choral Music in Puerto Madryn, Argentina ([www.wscm9.com](http://www.wscm9.com)). You can check out the Symposium programme on the symposium website and download a complete schedule of activities in PDF format. All registrations include access to the Opening and Gala Concerts throughout the Symposium, access to the Choral Expo, Open Singing and other general activities with no limited audience capacity. The programme includes Masterclasses for which conductors interested in participating as active students have to apply before March 31st 2011. Associations, festivals and competitions, publishing houses etc. can also exhibit, advertise or sell merchandise at the 9th World Symposium on Choral Music. For more information, write to [expo@wscm9.com](mailto:expo@wscm9.com)

The World Youth Choir 2011 summer session will also take place in Argentina with a rehearsal camp in Mar del Plata and La Plata City, Argentina and a concert tour to different cities of Argentina and Uruguay, including the Opening Concert of the 9th World Symposium on Choral Music. Conductors of the 2011 session will be Maris Sirmas (Latvia) and Ricardo Portillo (Argentina). Recruitment procedure in the different countries and directly via [www.worldyouthchoir.org](http://www.worldyouthchoir.org) has started now. More information on [www.worldyouthchoir.org](http://www.worldyouthchoir.org), [www.EuropaCantat.org](http://www.EuropaCantat.org), [www.ifcm.net](http://www.ifcm.net) and [www.jmi.net](http://www.jmi.net)



[www.ectorino2012.it](http://www.ectorino2012.it)

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