

Conductors Without Borders in Argentina in 2022

Mario Figueroa, Vice-President, OFADAC, President of the Choral Association of La Pampa

Persuant to the agreement between the Federal Argentine Choral Conductors Association (OFADAC) and IFCM, the “Conductors without Borders” program was established in Argentina in 2018. In 2019 projects were begun in Huilqui, Menuco (Neuquen) and Miraflores (Chaco), and in 2022 OFADAC added Famatina (La Rioja) and Algarrobo del Águila (La Pampa). Maestros Rubén Videla and Mario Figueroa were tapped to bring the program to fruition.

After a general convocation, a selection committee made up of Marisa Anselmo, Roxana Muñoz, Rubén Videla y Mario Figueroa named the Conductors without Borders (CWB) in each location:

- **Famatina:** Máximo Díaz Ríos (Chile) – Laura Favre (Argentina).
- **Algarrobo de Águila:** Romina Paula Fernández (Argentina) – Cecilia Pinazo (Argentina).

They also designated Liliana Sanchez (Argentina) and Analía Miranda (Argentina) for a future location in Patagonia.

OFADAC had previously organized two projects during the pandemic, led by Marisa Anselmo and Roxana Muñoz, the first two CWB in Argentina, together with Mario Figueroa and Rubén Videla:

- Roundtable-workshop “Directors without Borders – the Argentine Experience” which took place online October 24, 2020, with participation from professionals from across Latin America.
- Introductory workshop (November 20, 2021), tailored for graduates of the second Argentine edition.

Conductors Without Borders in FAMATINA (LA RIOJA) September 9-17, 2022



Maestro Máximo Diaz writes:

“The course took place with children brought together spontaneously, led by local teachers. During the mornings, we traveled to schools, assisting rehearsals. We visited eight schools in Campana, Pituil, Chilecito and San Miguel.

What we experienced provided a broad panorama of the choral reality in these localities, where choral singing is a real need, and where it is urgent to be able to connect and support music teachers in an ongoing way.

We finished with a closing concert with the participation of School 4 in Famatina and the children’s choir “Maestra Olguita of Chilecito”. Three teachers conducted, and we ended with a joint work for the two choirs. The hall was full, with both audience and local authorities moved by the experience, which had never been seen before in Famatina.

CWB was an enriching experience for all who experienced this process. I returned to my country fully conscious of the

choir director's responsibility to make music available to children of all backgrounds, for whom thirst for music may lie hidden in a corner of their hearts."



Maestro Oscar Escalada (observer for OFADAC) relates:

"CWB took place in Famatina, and expanded to four other provincial districts in La Rioja: Chilecito, Pituil, Campanas and San Miguel. In Famatina, we worked with the support of the leadership of School 4, where the teachers who were enrolled in DSF had their afternoon rehearsals. The local teachers traveled far and wide, in some cases up to 150 kilometers round trip from their homes to the teaching site.

In the closing concert, the local Director of Culture announced the formal decision to create the Children's Chorus of Famatina with a dedicated budget, as well as an agreement with the Provincial deputy to move forward a new directive to establish a choir in every school in La Rioja province."



Conductors without Borders in ALGARROBO DEL ÁGUILA (LA PAMPA) September 12-17, 2022

Algarrobo del Águila was proposed to CWB by the Choral Association of La Pampa, a member of OFADAC. The region is inhabited by descendants of indigenous people, who suffer from desertification due to the interruption of the upstream riverbed.

Maestro Mario Figueroa traveled there to draw up a plan of action with Beatriz Branca, Director of local Culture and Oscar Gatica, Municipal Mayor, and arranged with the Ministry of Education of the Province of La Pampa for the teachers in the course be recognized and rewarded with higher teaching rank.



Romina Fernandez writes:

“During our stay we had the opportunity to experience and develop, together with Paula Castrilli, the formation of a children’s choir in a locality disadvantaged by the loss of the river and the man-made climate change that is typical of arid and infertile areas. At the same time, we were blessed by a highly receptive community eager to experience and learn from the formation of the children’s choir.

In each of the classes the teachers were beautifully prepared. The debut concert of the Children’s Choir of Algarrobo del Águila was given to a packed house of parents, friends and neighbors, and ended with families singing together with the choir with great enthusiasm and emotion.

A thousand thanks to the Directors without Borders program, under the auspices of IFCM and OFADAC, for selecting me to bring to fruition this excellent work, and also to the Choral Association of La Pampa and the officials of Algarrobo del

Águila.”



Testimonial of Maestra María Paula Castrilli (observer for OFADAC):

“For me, participating in the Conductors without Borders program was an opportunity to reflect on the professional practice of the choir directors in the region.

Although, at first, it was intended to work only with school-age children, the local beginning level teacher proposed extending the program to early childhood as well.

In a town of approximately 650 inhabitants, the closing concert was given to a full room, in a festive and emotional atmosphere, demonstrating the potential development of the program and the possibility of choral singing in the community.

Participating in CWB allowed me to confirm the fundamental role of collective singing in building community identity, the potential of local/national/international development, and clarified the role of the professional choral director."

In total, we can affirm that the CWB Program was developed with notable success in Argentine venues, maintaining its founding spirit: to provide well qualified professional musicians and instruction in regions where distance, isolation and socio-economic limitations have impeded the development of choral singing.



Mario Figueroa is President of the Asociación Coral de La Pampa (Argentina) and Vice-President of the Organización Federada Argentina de Actividades Corales (OFADAC). He is a member of the National Choral Council of the National Institute of Music (INAMU) and of the Trade Commission of the Association of Choir Directors of the Argentine Republic (ADICORA). As a composer and arranger, he has published works in Argentina and Germany, as well as working as an advisor to the Choirs, Orchestras and Ensembles Programme of the Ministry of Education of La Pampa (Argentina). Email: mariofigueroalp@gmail.com

Translated from Spanish by Joshua Habermann, USA