

# The 13th China International Chorus Festival and IFCM Choral Education Conference

Over 11,000 choral enthusiasts from around the world gathered in Beijing

*Emily Kuo, musician and IFCM Vice-President*

Since its establishment in 1992, the China International Chorus Festival is still the only state-level international choral festival in China. So far it has held 12 uninterrupted sessions, every two years, promoting friendship and choral development through the participation of domestic and international organisations and individuals. This festival has become an important cultural channel for choral conductors, universal choral education, emphasizing the importance of strengthening aesthetic work and using choral music to promote and disseminate not only Chinese choral culture, but also Chinese culture.

In 2014, in a joint effort with the International Federation for Choral Music and the organising committee of the 12<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival, the CICF invited over 188 choirs from China, the United States, Mexico, the Philippines, Lithuania, Egypt, Romania, Portugal, Hungary, Ukraine, South Africa, Slovenia, and many more to gather in Beijing and celebrate the art of choral music.

The 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival and International Federation for Choral Music Choral Education Conference kicked off in Beijing on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, the successful festival concluded in Beijing's Tianqiao Performing Arts Centre.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival, over 11,000 choral enthusiasts from around the world gathered in Beijing, China. A total of 25 domestic and international choral experts guided, provided feedback and privately coached participating choirs. This new trend of experts privately coaching choirs has replaced traditional competition and scoring. Individual, planned and impromptu concerts from choirs filled every corner of Beijing with song and music. Concurrently, Shanghai's cooperation yielded fruit in the form of a choral summer camp. Not only did they put on a successful concert, they also performed on the North Sea, the Great Wall of China, and other famous landmarks in the form of "flash-performances" which were highly praised by audiences. "In Beijing, Listen to Choral Music from Around the World," is the vision for the CICF organising committee.



Children's Choir  
Performance

On the July 27, dozens of experts from the international choral community suggested that China should place more emphasis on the role in Aesthetic Education at the 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival and International Federation for Choral Music Education Conference. Experts believe that the art of choral music is collectively harmonious and teaches singers lessons that are not easily learned in a traditional environment. Leaders of this movement should be the youth, there should be a strengthening of choral education and acknowledgement of their artistic accomplishments. Improving

the world's knowledge of choral music will not only improve the standard of choral music, but also improve the physical health, mental health and social standards of young people.

An important event of the 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival was the first ever Education Conference, attended by the Ministry of Education and choral leaders. This conference joined education departments from more than 20 provinces discussing the importance and future of choral education.

On the morning of July 31<sup>st</sup>, the 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival IFCM Education Conference organised an awards ceremony, attended by over 200 domestic and international choirs at the Hot Spring Leisure City Convention Centre. During the ceremony the results of the choir festival were revealed. However, unlike previous award rankings, the marks came from the 25 international experts, which were based on the overall performance of the choir measured against all participating choirs. Choirs were then divided into four levels, A/B/C/D, so that all choirs were able to hear the remarks from the experts in person. Through this new ranking and marking system choirs can improve, thus raising the overall choral standard in China.



Vox Disposa Choir (DRC)

The 13<sup>th</sup> China International Chorus Festival could not have been able to bring over 238 choirs from 44 countries together, hold 20 concerts and over 200 splendid impromptu performances in 7 days without the support and cooperation from the

Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, the Beijing Municipal Committee of Education, the Xicheng District People's Government of Beijing Municipality, the International Federation for Choral Music, the China Arts and Entertainment Group, the China Chorus Association, Piao Wu Tong, Meet in Beijing, Guangzhou Opera House, and Banlam Grand Theatre.

Large-scale festivals like the 13<sup>th</sup> China International Choral Festival would not be possible without the amazing volunteers who helped coordinate and schedule performances, arrivals, departures, meals, accommodation, seminars, workshops and exhibitions, from extremely important tasks to even the most trivial jobs. A large thank you to all those unsung heroes who dedicated their time and energy to make sure everything went without a hitch!

It becomes more evident through events like these that choral festivals around the world are the best way to bring together people from around the world. The connection between singers and participants transcends language, politics, and culture, and it resonates in the hearts and souls of everyone.

*Edited by Christopher Lutton, UK*



Group Photo of Top 10 Choirs with Michael J Anderson, IFCM President

From our reporter Inessa Bodyako...

The International Chorus Festival in Beijing was very varied

in its contents and packed full of memorable moments: the opening and closing ceremonies were absolutely astonishing both for their dimensions and their organisation. Almost a whole week of performances in the Beijing Concert Hall, all with perfect acoustics, very interesting concert programmes, masterclasses by very high level musicians about all the choral art flavours and, of course, the IFCM Choral Education Conference.

Here are my impressions about the competition.

Choirs from all over the world competed in 12 categories – children's choirs, mixed voices, male and female choirs, ensembles, jazz, pop and so on.

For all 238 participating choirs the only limitation was the 15 minutes allocated to each exhibition. Each conductor was thus free to present a programme of their choice.

The competition jury was made up of choral art experts and high level musicians from all over the world: South Africa, America, Finland, Denmark, UK, Serbia, Norway, Venezuela, Ukraine, Belarus and Estonia.



Judges, lecturers and some volunteers

The Organising Committee divided the jury into 5 groups, each of which included Chinese musicians together with experts from abroad. For the performance evaluation, each juror assigned a vote out of 30 taking into account basic skills and vocal and artistic techniques. The evaluation was presented immediately after the exhibition, which is quite unusual for a choral

competition.

Each choir then received a Certificate of Conformity according to its score, from Grade A (steady high level – Golden Diploma) down to Grade D.

Each group of five experts chose two ensembles among all the choirs evaluated to participate in the final concert that took place in the Tiangiao Performing Arts Centre early in the morning of August 1<sup>st</sup>.

All 25 jurors then selected the best of the best choirs with a majority of votes.

The first three awards were assigned to Sheng Kung Hui Nam Woo Memorial Secondary School (Hong Kong), the Peiyang Chorus (China) and the Vox Diposa Choir of DRC (Congo).

The growth in “quality and quantity” of Chinese choral art in the last decade is absolutely amazing. According to the President of the Chinese Choral Association, Lee Paige (Lee Peizhi): “When it was founded 30 years ago, in 1986, the Association had 100 members, and now it has more than 60,000, including both individuals and organisations (<http://www.ccal35.com/>). Our mission is to sustain and develop choral music.”

The basic principle that was followed in organising the International Festival was that of making the best expression of choral music accessible both as a competition and for fostering exchanges between cultures and choral forms from five continents.

“Come listen to World Voices in Beijing” – 12,000 participants in 13 QCIC have absolutely made the Festival’s motto a reality!

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