

The First Choral Composition Competition

Sponsored by IFCM

By Michael J. Anderson, Interim President

This past summer, at a meeting of the IFCM Board of Directors, board member Steven Leek from Australia, spoke of the importance of “living composers” to the choral world. He went on to say that keeping the imaginative strength of choral composers ever-present in the core of IFCM’s worldwide projects could help remind people of the immediacy of choral music’s positive influence on world cultures.

Simultaneously, Andrea Angelini, Managing Editor of the *International Choral Bulletin (ICB)*, was already developing the organization for IFCM’s First Composition Competition, employing the theme: *Peace*. The competition would be sponsored by IFCM, coordinated through the ICB, engage the World Youth Choir (WYC) as the premiere performers, and the winning composition would be published by Earthsongs Publications as part of the IFCM’s *Cantemus Series*.

Before the competition was announced, Andrea worked with our WYC partners the European Choral Association–Europa Cantat (ECA), and Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI), to form an elite committee who would adjudicate the entries. The committee was made up of: Graham Lack, Committee President (United Kingdom), Stephen Leek (Australia), Reijo Kekkonen (Finland), and Jonathan Rathbone (United Kingdom). They carefully screened 65 compositions from five (5) continents. The substantial geographic representation of the applications

would imply an enormous stylistic variety.

It is interesting to note that the composers themselves all were under the age of 35, which underscores the vast quantity of creative work being composed by “the next generation.” We are optimistic that the addition of an international composer’s competition will add greater credibility to the significance of the work that these young composers are doing now, and encourage even more writing for choirs.

The winning piece was written by Matt Van Brink from New York, and is titled *White, Those That Stayed Still*, based on a text by Eduardo Galeano. It will be performed by the 2011 World Youth Choir at the opening concert of the 9th World Choral Symposium on August 3, 2011, in Puerto Madryn, Argentina; a great way to start a symposium!

IFCM wishes to thank the 65 composers for their distinctive creative efforts and hope that they will enter the competition again next year. Our thanks are also extended to Andrea Angelini for his brilliant initiative, the composition committee for their rigorous and exacting work, Sonja Greiner of the European Choral Association, Blasko Smilevski of Jeunesses Musicales International, Ron Jeffers of Earthsongs Publications, and to Daniel Garavano, Executive Director of the 9th World Symposium on Choral Music.

For 29 years, IFCM’s mission has been to exchange cultures through choral music. People who participate in IFCM know that innovation and creative work stand at the heart of our many worldwide projects. What better way to continue that work than with the inventive labors of active composers?

Stephen Leek was right when he advocated for the importance of composers in the life of choral artists. IFCM remains convinced that the realization of their creative spirit will serve to increase the amount of choral repertoire being written, but also that the “message of peace” will inspire

people everywhere to embrace each other's cultures and find common ground—Peace!

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