The Very First International Choral Music Festival in the Ivory Coast

By Koua Pascal, specialist in African hymns, professor of choral conducting and vocal music, President of A Cœur Joie Ivory Coast, and President of the Ivory Coast Choral Music Federation

The young choral federation A Cœur Joie Ivory Coast, founded in 2009, is the organizer of the first International Choral Music Festival of Abidjan (FESTICCA in French) from August 8th through 12th, 2012. The Ivory Coast, following the example of Togo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, joins the ranks of French-speaking African countries in which training sessions in choral conducting have been organized as part of the Conductors Without Borders project initiated by the IFCM and implemented by the choral music organization A Coeur Joie International. Pascal Koua Angoua, its president, answered questions from us.

Pascal Koua Angoua

IFCM Many choral music festivals have been organized in West Africa, for example, Cal'U (Choeurs à l'Unisson) in Senegal and FICCFLO in Togo. What are the specific goals of your event?

Mr. KOUA PASCAL I would like to thank you for the chance you have given us to share our thoughts in your magazine.

Through this festival in the Ivory Coast, we wish to show the different facets of choral singing, which should be open to all through the creation of independent choral societies in schools, towns, and even businesses. You need to know that, at present, the development of choral societies is taking place almost exclusively in parishes. This festival should also make it possible for choral societies from the Ivory Coast to undergo evaluation through concerts and contests.

IFCM This festival has many parts to it – choral music contests, workshops, lectures. How is all this being organized?

Mr. KOUA PASCAL All festival attendees will participate in the different workshops, according to the goals of each participant. Repertoire and training workshops are being coordinated by top-notch contributors. We have divided the concerts into two sections, classical music and traditional music. Choral societies wishing to participate in the contests have to choose the category in which they wish to participate.

Photos: Thierry Thiébaut

IFCM How many choral groups are you expecting to attend? Is this festival open to individual choral group members? How about choral conductors?

Mr. KOUA PASCAL We are expecting twenty foreign choral groups and societies and fifteen from the Ivory Coast. The festival is open to individual choral group members and to choral conductors wishing to hone their skills.

IFCM The Ivory Coast went through some hard times at the beginning of this year. It must have been difficult to organize an event like this one.

Mr. KOUA PASCAL The Ivory Coast is really making a major comeback. We believe that one of the roles of choral music is to bridge differences and bring men and women together. In organizing a festival like this one, we wish to show the essential role that the Ivory Coast must play in spreading its cultural traditions abroad, as well as in receiving and sharing in those traditions that originate from abroad. The Ivory Coast needs to regain its historic pivotal place among the nations of Africa. Organizing a festival is not easy, but we are counting on support from government institutions in our country, as well as from the businesses, partners, and

sponsors with whom we have made contact.

IFCM What foreseeable prospects do you have regarding the choral conductor training that began in 2009?

Mr. KOUA PASCAL A Cœur Joie International has played a decisive role in structuring a course for training choral conductors. In 2010 its President, Thierry Thiébaut, who is very familiar with the Ivory Coast, played a part in a first session for evaluating choral conductors from the Abidjan region and did additional choral music session work on various repertoires. Fervor has been generated, and a core group of young conductors-in-training has been set up. In the context of the Conductors Without Borders project, we will follow all this up with support, in particular from the Cultural Services cooperating with the French Embassy. Ultimately, we hope to create a Choral Academy like the one currently being formed in Togo, involving voice work, choral conducting classes, *solfège*, harmony, and repertoire variation.

Photos: Thierry Thiébaut

IFCM Well…do you feel ready for tomorrow?

Mr. KOUA PASCAL I would like to thank all those who are

joining us in this exciting adventure. They are the ones who make this chance worth taking. Join us next summer in Abidjan and find out what our beautiful country is like. The Ivory Coast’s tradition of according a warm welcome, hospitality, and generosity to others is unmatched. What better way to celebrate this tradition than to bring our voices together!

To attend FESTICCA on August 8th through 12th, 2012 go to www.acoeurjoie-ci.com