

The chorus creates dreams, music fosters lives. 14th China International Chorus Festival and IFCM World Choral Conference

By Andrea Angelini, conductor, composer, ICB Managing Editor

Big China, big numbers! The 14th China International Chorus Festival and the IFCM World Choral Education Conference, which took place in Beijing from July 19th to 25th 2018, was attended by leaders and experts of choral organizations from 59 countries and districts, and more than 15,000 people from 308 choirs. The Festival included choral education conferences, masterclasses and workshops, evaluation performances, high-level choir concerts, new choral works concerts and concerts for welfare.

The city has a fast trend: Beijing is a dynamic, changing city. There is a mix of old and new all around. There are few places on earth that can match the extraordinary historical panorama: there are six 'UNESCO World Heritage Sites' in this city. At its heart is the magnificent Forbidden City, but there are also many sublime temples that aspire to cosmological perfection, while the city centre is criss-crossed by enchanting *hútòng*: ancient alleyways that teem with life today, as they did hundreds of years ago.



The “Flying Over the Rainbow” multi-ethnic choir singing Lahu songs © CICF

Returning to the Festival, let’s take a look at the rich calendar of events! On July 19th, the Opening Ceremony took place at the Cadillac Arena, immersed in a great show of music, voices and choreography. On July 20th at the Zhichen Lecture Hall of the No. 35 High School the following lectures were held:

- Multigenerational infusion in the choral setting – *Sandra Chandler* (USA)
- Arts can nourish and enlighten life – *Zhu Jianmin* (China)
- Primary school teachers as a multiplier for music and choir singing – *Rainer Held* (Switzerland)
- How to start children’s choir training with resources from comprehensive theatre – *Jiang Tao* (China)
- Inspiring creativity together: the crucial importance of choral education for the young – *Alan Bennet* (Singapore)
- An example of primary basic education and choral

education projects in Spain – *Daniel Mestre* (Spain)

- Choral singing belongs to the students of Jinglun High School: developing the path of the Beijing Chenjinglun High School Golden Sail Choir.



China Wenzhou Huawen Art School Girls Choir, Wenzhou Youth Art School, one of the winners of the final competition © CICF

The following day included many other interesting topics:

- Chorus revelation: the education concept and system construction of choirs participating in international choral festivals – *Chen Guanghui* (China)
- FENIARCO, a national project for developing the choral culture in Italy – *Andrea Angelini* (Italy)
- How Music Participation Benefits You – *Allen Henderson* (USA)
- The significance of chorus in the musical education of primary and high school children – *Wang Jun* (China)
- The responsibility of different roles in the ensemble, leadership and achieving a sense of community – *Pawasut*

Piriyapongrat (Thailand)

- The benefit of choral music in building a successful community, developing personal qualities and combining them for a better team result – *Donka Miteva* (Germany/Bulgaria)
- The role of the children's choir: the importance of providing true music for one's early childhood – *Saeko Hasegawa* (Japan)
- Choral education enters rural primary and high schools with the example of happy chorus – *Li Kemei* (China)
- How singing in a Choir makes you healthier – *Carole Blankenship* (USA)
- Choral arts competition: not to be a slave of competition, but an ambassador of arts! – *Gan Li* (China)



Under the leadership of Prof. Batu Chaolu, nine public welfare choirs sang “Tomorrow will be better” at the opening ceremony
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In the following days great space was given to listening to the numerous (308) choirs that flew in the event. The choral

evaluation of the participating choirs took place in the beautiful Lyric Theater of Beijing's Tianqiao Performing Arts Centre. The evaluation was divided into categories, organized by three groups of juries that were able to appreciate the remarkable preparation, the rich vocality and variety of repertoires offered, under the guidance of young directors involved in making their presentations interesting and attractive.



Choral education enters rural primary and high schools with the example of happy chorus – Li Kemei (China)

At the same time the following choirs performed concerts at the Concert Hall of the National Library Arts Centre and at the Beijing Concert Hall: The Missouri State University Chorale; Russian Choir Radost; Spain Voces Para La Convivencia; Thailand's Wattana Girls' Chorus; Kazakhstan State Choir Named After B. Baykadamov; The United States Ball in the House; Canada Cadence; Hungary Voisingers; World Youth

Choir; Israel Moran Singers Ensemble; Argentine Arturo Beruti Choir; Hungary Pannon Choir; Schola Cantorum of Oxford; Hungary University Choir of Pécs; Boys' Choir of the Moscow Sveshnikov Choral College; Chinese Canadian Children Choir; Gabonese Vocal Group Le Chant sur la Lowe; Russian Sarafan Singing Group; The University of Utah Chamber Choir; New Zealand Viva Voce Chamber Choir; Latvian Choir Knipas un Knauki and China's New Choral Works Concert.



The Award Ceremony, on the first rows: Ensemble Vocal Sénior de la Salle (Canada) and Choir Knipas un Knauki (Latvia) © CICF

Some masterclasses on topics such as conducting techniques, the principle and approach to building the voice of a children's choir, chorus warm up, training the ear and rhythm training were led by Patricia Kaiser, Antonio Llaca, Yan Wang, Anthony Trecek-King, Fumiyo Tozaki, Aleksei Petrov, Li Gong, Cameron F. LaBarr, Cristian Grases and Dapeng Meng.



CICF Officials, IFCM President Emily Kuo Vong and the two winners of the final competition © CICF

The closing ceremony of the Festival, which was held at the Grand Theatre of Beijing, Tianqiao performing Arts Centre, was very engaging; the choirs were really able to excite the audience. In short, we could say: *'The chorus creates dreams, music fosters lives'*.

Edited by Charlotte Sullivan, UK

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