

# CHANGING HORIZONS: WSCM 2023 in Istanbul, Turkey

*Ferhan Baran, Choral Culture Association Volunteer*

As the only transcontinental passage in the world, Istanbul is a city of voices. Straddling the magnificent and bustling Bosphorus strait, the songs of the seagulls cut through the steamboat whistles in this beautiful land. This major Turkish city embraces the Anatolian and European soil enriched by a variety of musical backgrounds of multiple cultures, which also shape the collective singing of the country.



Bridge © Hulki Okan Tabak

Having served as the capital of three empires (Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman), Istanbul is a museum city, and its

rich history of multiculturalism is old and unique. With its multilingual and multi-religious identity, for most historians Istanbul is the center of global civilization. In an atmosphere where Byzantine Kyries sound together with Muslim prayers, Istanbul is in the unique position of offering a brotherhood of different cultures. Thus, viewpoints that are seemingly different can coalesce and be interconnected in one place, much like the way so many different cultures have found a home in the city to coexist and flourish side by side.



Colorful © Abdullah al Mallah

The choral tradition of Turkey dates back to the first years of the Republic. Furthermore, since 2010 Turkey has been blessed with numerous choral festivals, various choral organizations, internationally renowned choirs and a sharp rise in educational activities in choral conducting. As we look to the past, it is apparent that western polyphony and

eastern microtonal culture are uniting in this land of cultural bridges.

This connects figuratively with the current crucial conversation about the recognition and inclusion of different folklore and traditions of all musicians around the globe. There is a paradigm shift in our field, as well as in many other fields of the humanities, that is compelling us to shift our horizons toward finding respectful ways to achieve integration and inclusion. Hosting the World Symposium on Choral Music in a city like Istanbul provides the perfect platform to explore this important ideal. In the WSCM23, the central idea is the full representation from and within all regions of the world, with the inclusion of as many styles and traditions of ensemble singing as possible, to honor and celebrate the human practice of singing together. Turkish traditional and polyphonic music echoing together in this marvelous piece of land is the best guide to achieve our ideal.



Atatürk Cultural Center © Emre Dorter

Additionally, the symposium will be a platform for engaging in conversations on our current themes such as the use of technology in rehearsals and performances, race and social justice, various practices of collective singing and the western choral canon as it relates to the repertoire of singing traditions, equality and accessibility, monophonic collective singing, the meaning and philosophies of singing together, topics that explore not only the current state of the field but the vision and projection of what singing together could be like in the near and far future. Istanbul with its rich historic musicality would be one of the best places to sing together and discuss the ways to reach our goals.



The Maiden's Tower © Ibrahim Uzun

CHANGING HORIZONS which is the theme of this chain of activities, speaks both to this specific IFCM flagship event and the global choral community on a number of levels. It suggests a new and broader understanding of choral music that includes styles, regions and traditions of ensemble singing that have not been incorporated directly in the conventional definition of choral music. There is enormous creative wealth in these parallel artistic expressions that can be the catalyst for the choral community to genuinely embrace and celebrate all collective singing traditions, vocalities, and practices. To change the horizon is to take our art form and extend its boundaries. The horizon limits our own vision, but horizons need not be stagnant; beyond them, there will always be more to discover. The edges of the horizon are ephemeral, fleeting and beautiful, like the experience of music itself.

WSCM 2023 will bring together the very best the choral world has to offer in terms of choirs, singers, speakers, presenters, conductors, composers, and more. In this new era

of changing horizons, there is an ongoing opportunity for all of us to share, learn and appreciate. We look forward to welcoming the choral world to the magnificent city of Istanbul in 2023.

<https://www.wscmistanbul2023.com>



**Ferhan Baran.** Born in Istanbul, he is a film critic and a choir singer. He completed his high school education at the Lycée Saint Joseph. He received his bachelor and master's degrees in Business Administration at Boğaziçi University. He started his music studies during his primary school years at the Istanbul Conservatory. From 2004 to 2012, he served as the chairman of the administrative board of the Istanbul European Choir. Starting in 2016, he joined *Rezonans*, the internationally award-winning choir. He is still one of the bass chorists of this choir. Starting in the 1990's, his movie reviews have been published in leading newspapers and journals in Turkey. From 2013 to 2016 he taught the cinema industry class in the Faculty of Communication Arts at Istanbul University.

*Edited by Mirella Biagi, UK/Italy*