

Look at Plans for the 13th World Symposium on Choral Music

Giovanni Pasini & Jennifer Taynen, World Symposium on Choral Music, WSCM Qatar 2023



Qatar National Convention Centre Theatre

The IFCM's 2020 General Assembly offered the international choral community its first look at plans for the 13th World Symposium on Choral Music, to be held in Doha, Qatar in 2023.

Giovanni Pasini and Jennifer Taynen, representing the Qatar National Choral Association, offered a short presentation to the virtually assembled IFCM members. As most people are unfamiliar with Qatar, Pasini and Taynen opened with a brief introduction of the country and its young, dynamic choral community before launching into details of the 2023 WSCM.

A tiny peninsula in the Persian Gulf, Qatar is home to approximately 2.7 million people working in a wide range of industries. Al Jazeera News, the Middle East's top medical and research facilities, 17 international universities, LNG projects, and more, draw a diverse range of expertise to the country. As a result, Qatar's population is nearly 90% expatriates, making it an Arab nation with a distinctly global feel and outlook. Qatar's visa free entry to over 80 nationalities (with no nationalities excluded), stunning venues and facilities, state-of-the-art transportation networks, and global connectivity and accessibility, all contribute to its being a logistically ideal WSCM host. But even more exciting are the cultural opportunities that Qatar brings to the WSCM. Qatar is unique in the Gulf region for its substantive and sustained investment in the arts, culture, and education. Immersed in the Arab world and open to the international community, Qatar's 2023 WSCM offers an unprecedented opportunity to bring this previously omitted cultural region into the international choral community, with musical benefits and growth for all.



The Souq in Doha

The Qatari state has very intentionally sought to develop and promote the arts and culture. In particular, the Qatar Foundation has included the arts in its mandate and is responsible for two institutions that have played an important part in promoting and developing music in the country. The first, the Qatar Music Academy, offers high-quality training in Western and Middle Eastern music to young residents and foreign nationals alike. In addition to curriculums in a full range of instruments, music theory, early years music, and voice, the Academy is home to both Western and Arabic choirs. The second, the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, is the region's only professional orchestra and draws top talent from around the world. Performing locally and touring internationally, orchestra members still find time to teach and work on spin off projects that enrich the cultural life of Qatar. Further support for choral music has recently come from the Ministry of Culture and Sport, which is working on plans for a Choral Academy and has already established mandatory music and choral classes in all the nation's schools.

Qatar's choral community has benefited from this arts-rich environment. While 15 years ago you would have been hard pressed to find a choir in Qatar, now community choirs, semi-professional choirs, school choirs, church choirs and more abound. The bid to host the 2023 WSCM has proven a catalyst to the organization of this community, resulting in the establishment of the Qatar National Choral Association in 2019.

The final portion of the presentation was dedicated specifically to plans for the 2023 WSCM. The Symposium's main venue will be the Qatar National Convention Centre, located in the heart of Qatar Foundation's Education City. With multiple theatres, lecture and seminar halls, meeting rooms, exhibition halls, and more, WSCM participants will be comfortably accommodated, whether they number 2,000 or 18,000. Evening

performances can be spread out around Doha, taking advantage of the city's many theatres and performance halls. Examples include the Katara Opera House and Katara Theatre, the National Museum of Qatar Theatre, Msheireb Theatre, the Abdul Aziz Nasser Theatre, Qatar National Library Theatre, the Qatar National Theatre, and many more. In addition, there are stages and performance venues throughout the city that can be used for fringe festivals and pop-up performances. A gala evening performance will use the Katara Amphitheatre, which seats 5,000 spectators under the stars and with a view over the waters of the Persian Gulf. In addition, one evening will see the whole Symposium relocated to the seaside desert for an evening of exploration, traditional Bedouin hospitality, and singing, using the sand dunes as natural choral risers. The city's stadiums, the Qatar Philharmonic, and more are all being integrated into plans for the Symposium.

The 2023 WSCM in Qatar promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for all participants. The organizing committee will keep the ICB readership up-to-date on plans and developments. Qatar's choral community looks forward to welcoming you in 2023!

Edited by Anita Shaperd, USA