

EUROPA CANTAT XX festival in Tallinn: the festival is over

Press release by the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat

The major EUROPA CANTAT XX choral festival in Tallinn, Estonia, has come to an end. More than 5,000 choral singers and music fans between the ages of 5 and 85 attended the festival from 50 countries, and almost a thousand people, including conductors, choral singers, musicians, invited choirs and volunteers, were involved in its organisation.



“The huge interest in the festival took us by surprise – we expected about half the number of participants that eventually registered,” said Kaie Tanner, General Manager of the festival team. “We are, however, thrilled that so many music fans wanted to come to Tallinn. The level of participating choirs was extremely high, the concerts were

very well received, and our experiments, for example the public sing-alongs in Town Hall Square and the Promenade concert at the Culture Cauldron, were a big success. I have never seen so many concert halls packed to the absolute limit – for some concerts at the House of the Blackheads the queue stretched for more than a hundred metres!”



Anniversary Concert Happy Birthday, Estonia! © Liis Reiman

The EUROPA CANTAT programme included 20 atelier concerts, 14 regional concerts outside Tallinn, 37 open-air concerts, 38 concerts by participating choirs, 26 special concerts with invited choirs, 38 performances at the Choirs' Night and 19 at the Promenade concert. A total of 25,000 tickets were printed for participants and 2,500 tickets were sold to the general public.

The Music Expo featured 25 businesses and organisations, including music publishers, music event organisers and other music industry professionals.

The highest number of participants came from Germany (500), Israel (444) and Switzerland (426). There were 170 volunteers from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, France, Hungary, Slovenia, South Africa, Ireland, Finland and many other countries. Participants ate 30,430 festival meals during the week.



Anniversary Concert Happy Birthday, Estonia! © Liis Reiman

The programme included concerts and appearances by The Swingles (UK), jazz choir Vocal Line (Denmark), the Inner Mongolia Youth Choir and many others. Concerts were also given by the cream of Estonian groups – the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, the Estonian National Male Choir, Vox Clamantis, Estonian Voices and others.

Festival highlights included the opening concert at Liberty Square, the 'Happy Birthday, Estonia!' concert at Tallinn's Song Festival Grounds, Arvo Pärt's 'Te Deum' performed by a nearly 300-strong choir and the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Grammy Award-winning conductor Tõnu

Kaljuste in the presence of the composer, and the Choirs' Night in the courtyards of Tallinn's Old Town.



Anniversary Concert Happy Birthday, Estonia! © Liis Reiman

“Positive feedback from the participants, both in the street and in the concert halls, was what I treasured most. It was wonderful to hear compliments for a superb festival where everything was going smoothly. The work that our small office has done is beyond imagination. Despite that, everyone still has the energy to smile, even today, and I think that the energy has come from our guests,” said Raul Talmar, President of the Estonian Choral Association. “We were delighted that we managed to find space in Tallinn for the thousands of people that came here. It was also heart-warming to see how well the overseas singers, with no knowledge of Estonian, managed to understand and deliver the message of the Estonian songs that are so important to us at the Song Festival Grounds. I think that the energy and the atmosphere of the venue helped.”

The festival programme included ateliers for singers, a conductors' and composers' programme, seminars, workshops and round tables, a training course for young event managers, showcases, concerts and public sing-alongs. There was also the Music Expo, where publishers, music event organisers, organisations and other music industry professionals showcased the products and services that they offer and work that they do.

The EUROPA CANTAT festival was initiated by the European Choral Association. It takes place every three years and is one of the key events in the global choral calendar. The first festival was held in Passau, Germany, in 1961, and the previous festival took place in Pécs, Hungary, three years ago. The next EUROPA CANTAT festival will be held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 2021.

Edited by Christopher Lutton, UK