

IFCM Latin American Regional Office and the Latin American Choral Development Committee 2017–2020

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The Latin American Choral Development Committee was created in 2017 upon my appointment as IFCM Vice-President for Latin America. Its overall purpose and mission are to identify chorally-weak areas of Latin America and provide support in their development. The goals are centered on contributing to the creation and development of educational structures and associations for both conductors and teachers, promoting the creation of ensembles for singers, and fostering the creation and development of professional membership associations. Naturally, these goals will take time to achieve, and in order to promote maximum results, the committee's work has been systematically organized in phases.

The first phase was centered on the creation of a working structure for the entire area of Latin America. Five regions were configured, and each region was assigned a coordinating leader. The regions are as follows:



Norte y Centroamérica (North and Central America)

Countries: Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama.

Coordinator: Ana Patricia Carbajal (Mexico)

El Caribe (The Caribbean)

Countries: Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Bahamas, and all the Lesser Antilles

Coordinator: Maibel Troia (Venezuela/USA)

Brazil

Country: Brazil

Coordinator: Eduardo Nóbrega (Brazil)

Norte de Los Andes (Northern Andes)

Countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guyana, Surinam, and French Guiana

Coordinator: María Fernanda Pereda (Venezuela)

Cono Sur (Southern Cone)

Countries: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay

Coordinator: Oscar Escalada (Argentina)

Phase two, which is still ongoing, is centered on identifying programs and associations that are currently working efficiently in each country and that could serve as starting points and models for other countries. The committee was interested in identifying professional member associations, universities, conservatories and music schools with conducting programs, non-profit organizations that regularly organize workshops for conductors, and choral organizations and ensembles (all ages and voices). Parallel to this, phase three would identify locations in need of development in each of the five regions and initiate coordinated efforts to create a self-sustainable expansion platform, perhaps based on some of the models found in phase two.

In the *Norte y Centroamérica* region we identified notable activity in four countries. In Costa Rica, Angela María Cordero leads her ensemble Coro de Cámara Sura and David Ramírez conducts El Café Chorale; and the country has a professional membership organization called ADICOR. Costa Rica is also establishing the first international chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. Guatemala's most important choral project is CORODEMIA, led by Fernando Archila and Julio Edgar Julián, with a number of choirs and annual projects throughout the country. In Mexico, the Voce In Tempore organization is one of the leaders promoting conducting masterclasses and workshops, choral festivals, national and international collaborations, and an active schedule of concerts. Voce In Tempore also produces a weekly radio program and a choral bulletin. Its leader is Ana Patricia Carbajal, who was recently elected to the IFCM board of directors. Finally, Panamá has the Asociación Música Viva, which serves as the country's professional association, and two of the leading ensembles are Coro Polifónico de Panamá conducted by Electra Castillo and Música Viva

conducted by Jorge Ledezma Bradley. In terms of educational programs, Costa Rica is the only country that currently has a choral conducting program at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica.

The *El Caribe* region is tremendously active, especially in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Both countries have an impressive number of choirs, some with an extremely high artistic level. Among the Cuban leaders we can mention Digna Guerra, María Felicia Pérez, and Alina Orraca. Cuba is also one of the few countries with a professional membership association called Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Coral (National Choral Development Program), led by Digna Guerra. In Puerto Rico there are a great many choirs associated with universities, conservatories, and music schools. Alejandro Tapia Santiago, Guarionex Morales Matos, Carmen Acevedo Lucio, and Joamel González Soto are among the leading figures. In both of these countries there are a number of choral conducting programs. Jamaica, The Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic are also important nations. Jamaica's choirs are largely associated with religious institutions, whereas the choirs in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic are largely community ensembles. Finally, Haiti has a small number of church choirs and has developed a national system of orchestras and choirs under the patronage of the National Institute of Music of Haiti (INAMUH). We found programs for choral conducting in Jamaica, The Bahamas, and Haiti.

Brazil is such a large country that we decided to adopt the regional division established by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics).

Regions of Brazil



1. **Center-West Region:** states of Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso del Sur, and District Capital
2. **Northeastern Region:** states of Piauí, Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia
3. **Northern Region:** states of Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, and Tocantins
4. **Southeastern Region:** states of Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Ríó de Janeiro, and São Paulo
5. **Southern Region:** states of Paraná, Ríó Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina

The Northeastern region reports a large number of choral ensembles in the area; further investigation is required to identify the choral makeup of the other regions. There are festivals reported in the Northeastern, Southeastern, and Southern regions. Perhaps the largest festival is the Festival Paraibano de Coros (FEPAC) coordinated by Eduardo Nóbrega in João Pessoa, which I visited in November 2019. Other important leaders in the country are Izak Lucena, Giselle Cruz, Sergio Sansão, Roberto Fabri, Eduardo Lakschevitz, and David Junker. Brazil also has the recently re-established Nova Associação Brasileira de Regentes de Coros – ABRACO (New Brazilian Association of Choral Conductors) led by Vladimir Silva. In terms of educational programs, it seems that there are no choral conducting degrees. Some of the Music Education programs contain units or classes specific to

choral conducting.

The *Norte de Los Andes* region is very active in terms of choral music. Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela have large numbers of choral ensembles. Peru and Suriname also have some leading ensembles. Just to name a few, some of the leading figures in this region are María Teresa Guillén, Sandra Rodríguez, María Beatriz Girado and Felipe Martínez in Colombia; Wilfredo Tarazona and César Araujo in Perú; Patricio Aizaga in Ecuador; José Lanza Salazar in Bolivia; and María Guinand, Alberto Grau, Ana María Raga, María Fernanda Pereda, Lourdes Sánchez, and Cesar Alejandro Carrillo in Venezuela. Colombia's National Association of Choirs is the only one known in this region. However, Venezuela has the enthusiastic Federación de Coros del Táchira, which is a regional association in the western part of the country; El Sistema, with its national network of choirs and orchestras; Fundación Aequalis; and Fundación Schola Cantorum de Venezuela which has been a leader in the country for many decades. In terms of educational programs, there are undergraduate programs in Bolivia, Colombia, and Suriname, and multiple programs in Venezuela. In addition, Venezuela is the only country offering a Masters program in the region. Finally, there are numerous festivals reported in this region, with Colombia and Venezuela holding the greatest numbers of events.

Finally, in the *Cono Sur* region, Argentina continues to be the most active country with a sizable number of ensembles throughout the nation. Ensembles like Estudio Coral de Buenos Aires conducted by Carlos López Puccio, Grupo de Canto Coral conducted by Néstor Andrenacci, Estudio Coral Meridies conducted by Virginia Bono, and Coro de la Universidad del Cuyo conducted by Silvana Vallesi are among the leading ensembles in the country. The OFADAC, Organización Federada Argentina de Actividades Corales, led by Alejandro Scarpetta, is the largest umbrella organization which brings together other professional organizations in the country and has just organized the third Argentinean Choral Congress in the city of Tandil. In addition,

ADICORA, Asociación de Directores de Coro de la República Argentina, led by Maximiliano Mancuso is the national professional organization of choral conductors. The Asociación Arturo Beruti in the province of San Juan, led by María Elina Mayorga, organizes one of the largest festivals in the country, San Juan Canta; and Oscar Escalada continues to head the America Cantat Association with festivals throughout the continent. In Uruguay, Raúl Montero leads the Asociación Coral del Uruguay, ACORDELUR. Finally, Chile has a number of choral ensembles and associations including the Coros de Chile Association, Crecer Cantando, led by Victor Alarcón, and the Patagonia Festival.

The information presented above is a summary of the extensive and ongoing report for the region, which is now in the hands of María Guinand, incoming IFCM Vice-President for Latin America, and Ana Patricia Carbajal, who leads IFCM's regional office for Latin America. This report is available to all IFCM members. Much more research is required if we wish to understand the choral makeup of our region and design effective strategies of development based on IFCM's platforms such as the program Conductors Without Borders. If you are interested in being a part of this undertaking, you are welcome to contact the current leaders for the region. It is my hope that, together, we can continue to develop choral structures in Latin America, especially in the underdeveloped regions of the continent.

Edited by Gillian Forlivesi Heywood, Italy/UK