

A Look at Back at our History

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I have spent most of my life – more than 45 years – in contact with amateur choral activity and taking part in certain events that, to my understanding, have been significant for the development of such activity both in Argentina and internationally.

Back in 1963, a group of senior High School students and I decided to found a choir. It was with that choir that in 1969 we started the "Encuentros Corales de Verano" (Summer Choral Meetings) in what we called the "Choral Camp" in the town of Villa Gesell, Province of Buenos Aires. In October 1974, we founded a not-for-profit organization called Sociedad de los Encuentros Corales, through which we continued to organize these summer choral meetings as well as other events. The summer choral meetings started 44 years ago, and they are still being held every year ...

The enthusiasm of the choirs and our own will encouraged us to organize a program called "Cantatas Bonaerenses" These were week-long workshops where members from different choirs got together to learn songs that would be performed at concerts specially organized for this purpose. In this way, temporary choirs were formed by people coming from different places. These "Cantats" were held in 1985, 1987 and 1989, and they paved the way for the Festival America Cantat I, which was held in the city of Mar del Plata in 1992. The Festival was honored with the presence of Eric Ericson and his Chamber Choir, as well as Alice Parker and other well-known

conductors, under the auspices of the IFCM. This festival was the first one to promote exchange between choirs and choir conductors from Argentina and foreign choirs and conductors on a large scale and in a significant way, thus changing the relationship of Argentine amateur choral music with the world.

In 1996, we organized the Festival America Cantat II in cooperation with the IFCM, the participation of Erki Pohjola as well as the "Estudio Coral de Buenos Aires" and its conductor, Carlos López Puccio. This second time, it was organized by the *Asociación Argentina para la Música Coral "America Cantat"* (AAMCANT), a not-for-profit organization founded in 1993 with the purpose of undertaking the organization of this festival and ensuring its continuity. Since then, the festival has been touring the American continent: in 2000 it was held in Venezuela, Mexico in 2004, Cuba in 2007, Brazil in 2010 and the next one will be in Colombia in 2013. After that, new host countries will be selected, because the festival is already a choral must for the continent and also because its goal is to promote knowledge, exchange, and, above all, development of bonds of friendship among people and fraternity among all.

AAMCANT also organized the Festival of the Americas 2000 for children choirs in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay together with the International Society for Children's Choral and Performing Arts, ISCCPA; the Choral Conducting Masterclasses of the Mercosur run by Florent Stroesser (France); the Festival LA PLATA CANTAT with the theme "Musical Diversity in a Globalized World" jointly organized with the Argentine Music Council and the sponsorship of the International Music Council of UNESCO.

Other events arranged by AAMCANT include the La Plata Choral Festival 2004 named "La Plata's Choral Memory" with the participation of the Yale Alumni Chorus from the USA and eight choirs from the city of La Plata; the course in interpretation of spirituals and gospels by Robert Harris (USA); the Grieg

Festival (2007) in the Piazzolla Hall of the Teatro Argentino of La Plata, featuring choirs and ensembles; and masterclasses on the preparation of choral symphonic works by Michael Hartenberg (Hamburg), during which *The Creation* by Joseph Haydn was studied and performed in the Ginastera Hall of the Teatro Argentino, conducted by M Hartenberg and including well-known soloists, choirs and the Camerata Académica from the Teatro Argentino of La Plata. AAMCANT also undertook the organization of the performances of the Denver Artistic Youth Orchestra (2007), conducted by Adam Flatt, and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra (2009) conducted by Allen Tinkham in the cities of Rosario, La Plata and Buenos Aires, as well as of the performance of the San José Youth Symphony conducted by Yair Samet in Buenos Aires in 2009.

On an on-going basis, AAMCANT organizes the Choral Concerts Series in the cities of La Plata, Buenos Aires, Rosario and Tucumán; the Choral Singing Contest of South American Folk and Popular Music, which has taken place six times; the La Plata Sacred Music Festival; the annual celebration of the IFCM **World Choral Day**, as well as the national selection of nominees to the World Youth Choir. The AAMCANT branch in the City of San Miguel de Tucuman also organizes the festivals "Choral October" and "Tucumán Sings".

Thanks to the proposal made by AAMCANT to the OFADAC (Organización Federada Argentina de Actividades Corales), the Senate of Argentina has established a career award to conductors of amateur choirs who are 65 years old, and the National Career Award to Amateur Choirs with more than 50 years of uninterrupted activity. Both awards are given on a regular basis.

In 2009, AAMCANT invited amateur choirs from all over the country to join in the annual IFCM World Choral Day celebration, and organized events in the cities of La Plata and San Miguel de Tucuman, thus uniting 250 choirs countrywide. During the 2010 season AAMCANT presented the

Kammerchor Stuttgart conducted by Frieder Bernius at the Sheraton Hotel in the city of Mar del Plata and also participated in several of the activities organized by the OFADAC to mark the bicentenary of Argentina's independence.

However, we have not been alone in this "crusade". Other associations and foundations have strengthened amateur choral activity in different parts of our country and projected it abroad. In 1995, representatives from these associations got together for the first time in order to coordinate and support our projects. It was then that we founded the Organización Federada Argentina de Actividades Corales (OFADAC) currently made up of the following associations: Asociación Amigos del Coro Estable de Tandil, Asoc. Arg. para la Música Coral "America Cantat" (AAMCANT), Sociedad de los Encuentros Corales (Buenos Aires), Asoc. Coral Cunka Inti de Venado Tuerto (Santa Fe), Asoc. Coro Ayuntun de Santa Rosa (La Pampa), Fundación CIC (Certamen Internacional de Coros) de Trelew (Chubut) and Fundación Coppla (Cantapueblo) de Mendoza (Mendoza).

These organizations have all contributed to the growth of choral singing in Argentina, combining their efforts, willingness, friendships, hopes and love, such as it is typical for this special and beautiful form of musical art. Today, this is reflected in the work of the Fundación CIC, under Alejandro Garavano's leadership, which has the honor of organizing the IFCM 9th World Symposium on Choral Music in the city of Puerto Madryn, Argentine Patagonia. This is the great and latest event that will bring us together yet again.

For the first time methods of teaching, suggestions, exchanges and music from all over the world will find a new melting pot in our country. Due to its significance, this symposium will undoubtedly shape musical preferences in present and future amateur choral activity, as well as provide continuity to the choral history of our country, the continent and the world.

Amen to that.

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