

The Choral Festival in Catalonia

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Catalonia is a country of festivals. Every year, over 360 music festivals are celebrated in the region. While some festivals do include choral singing, very few are dedicated solely to choral music. Here are the four most important choral music festivals:

Barcelona International Festival of Choral Singing (*Festival Internacional de Canto Coral de Barcelona*)

<http://fcec.cat/>

The 2016 event marked the 51st year of this annual festival.

The history of the festival originates in 1964 with the celebration of the “International Day of Choral Singing.” During the first event, 16 choirs from Catalonia, along with choirs from l’Ile sur Tet, Zamora, Madrid and Pamplona attended.

The Festival has presented important international works, cultural pieces, and Catalan music from both traditional and composed repertoires alongside new commissions:

- Psalmus brevis (Manuel Oltra)
- Versos d’Amor i de Comiat (Zdenek Lukas)
- L’home que llaura (Vicenc Acuña)
- La Música (Gerhard Deutschmann)
- Don Quijote de la Mancha (Pierre-Philippe Bauzin)

- Psame 19 (Jacques J.C. Wijnen)
- La doncella (Albert Grau)
- De la terra, del mar (Rafael Ferrer)
- La Birondó (Manuel Oltra)
- Foc d'aucell (Joan Guinjoan)
- Cant per un vell poble (Salvador Brotons)
- Cant a la terra nativa (Matilde Salvador)
- Càntic dels Càntics (Josep Lluís Guzman)
- La Lumière du nord (Bernat Vivancos)
- Canticel (Feliu Gasull)
- Sud (Albert Carbonell)
- Emily Sparks (Albert Guinovart)

Throughout the past 50 years, the festival has hosted 80 musical directors of international prestige, 400 choirs from 55 countries, 160 Catalan choirs, more than 40,000 individual participants and over 250,000 audience members.

The festival has undergone many changes throughout the years, including the following:

- The festival was known as the “International Day of Choral Singing” until 1979, when it was renamed the “International Workshops in Choral Singing,” and finally in 2011 became known as the “Barcelona International Festival of Choral Singing.”
- Until 1992, the Sarrià-Sant Gervasi District of Barcelona organised the festival with the help of figures in the choral world. Since 2003, the Catalonian Choral Federation (FCEC in Spanish) has taken over the administration of the festival.
- While the festival used to be celebrated in September, it was moved to the first week of July in 1996.
- In 1980, the festival was expanded from a weekend into an entire week.
- Although only one workshop was initially offered, now the festival holds three.

The Festival consists of daily rehearsals (Monday-Friday), nightly concerts given by choirs from Barcelona and the nearby towns, a final concert on Saturday at the Palau de la Música Catalana. While the participants have the mornings off, they are offered the opportunity to attend a reception given by the local government and a visit to the Sagrada Família.

Between 300 and 500 people participate in the festival each year.



Logo of the Federació
Catalana d'Entitats Corals

Catalonia Centre Festival

Started in 1980, this festival was born from the Barcelona International Day of Choral Singing. Francesc Vila and Ramon Noguera, the choir directors for Castellbell I el Vilar and Puig-reig, two small towns in the Catalonia region, who had worked together to organise the aforementioned festival, invited the choirs participating in the Barcelona festival to give concerts in the towns. Today, the festival, still organised by the choirs of the two towns (the Capella de Música Burés de Castellbell and Vilar I la Polifònica de Puig-reig), operates independently with the support of the local governments and the FCEC.

The festival consists of individual concerts from the visiting choirs, and two final concerts presented as a collaboration between each town's choir and the visiting choirs. The

concerts begin with a piece from each choir, after which a joint piece with the visiting choirs is presented as the product of the festival.



Catalonia Centre Festival

Cantonigròs International Festival

www.fimc.es

The International Music Festival of Cantigròs Association began in 1983, and continues as an annual competition. In 1996, the Catalanian government awarded the festival with the Creu de Sant Jordi, in 2000 it was given the Award of Honor by the Fundació Jaume I de Barcelona, and in 2003 the festival received the National Culture Prize from the Generalitat de Catalunya. The festival is supported by public institutions and individual donations.

Many well-renowned local and international experts have served on the festival's jury throughout the years, creating a reputation based on experience and global prestige for the festival. The festival is a member of the European Festivals Association.

For four days in the middle of July, the festival hosts the competition, which includes mixed-gender, all-female and youth choirs, as well as popular dance groups. Five years ago, the festival was moved from a special tent, with all participants housed by local families, to the town of Vic in the La Atlàntida auditorium.

International choirs and dance troupes participate in the five competitions that make up the festival. Following the competition, selected groups perform in daily concerts.



Cantonigròs International
Festival

Setmana Cantant de Tarragona

www.setmanacantat.org

Since 1997, The Choral Association of the City of Tarragona has organised the internationally-recognised *Setmana Cantant* every three years.

In 2002, the Setmana Cantant merged with festivals organised by the FCEC and the European Choral Association- Europa Cantat. The festivals organised in 2005, 2008, 2011 and 2014 have solidified that festival, and the eighth festival is set for 2017.

The festival offers three or four workshops and a final concert directed by internationally-renowned music directors. In addition, the participants perform their final programme surrounded by the Roman walls of the Campo de Marte amphitheatre, located 100 kilometres south of Barcelona.



Setmana Cantat de Tarragona

Translated by Nina Chausow, USA