

# Choral Life in Morocco

*Samir Bahajin, choir director and president of the Moroccan Association for Musical Education*

The official dialogue on choirs and choral music began with a school teacher—Marcel Corneloup, appointed to his first teaching job in Morocco in 1948, co-founder and member of the board of directors of the “A Cœur Joie”(ACJ) movement since its official creation on November 7, 1948. At that time, choral music was performed only in churches, a situation that continued until the 1990s, when Morocco introduced music education into the school system. Through a partnership between the national Ministry of Education and the ACJ, under M. Corneloup’s direction, a series of courses for teachers of music education was developed and held at the Rabat regional learning center. Those selected to attend went on to establish choirs in the institutions where they worked. I was one of the lucky individuals who had the opportunity to benefit from those training sessions.



Alhan Chorale

### **The Chorale Assalam**

I founded the Chorale Assalam in 1998. This vocal and instrumental ensemble brings together around 20 music education faculty and choral music students, who together strive to bring joy, understanding and happiness to their audiences through various events. The vocal section includes four parts (soprano, alto, tenor and bass). The Chorale Assalam is developing a varied and diversified repertoire from both Western and Eastern traditions, classic and contemporary, including world music in four languages (Arabic, French, Spanish and English).

In recent years, the Chorale Assalam has been immersed in a new experience: working on a repertoire of traditional songs from the Moroccan heritage viewed in a new perspective through the use of polyphony. Thanks to the work of Professor Said Senhaji, who arranged and updated these historically monodic songs, we are meeting the expectations of our current generation of listeners. We have recorded our project on an album, broadcast it on both national and international

television channels, and presented it at festivals, representing Morocco in countries including Spain, Germany and China.



Alhan Chorale

### **The Moroccan Association for Musical Education and its contribution to choral music**

The Moroccan Association for Musical Education, which includes student teachers, teachers, and inspectors from the National Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Morocco, has campaigned for choral music in Morocco since its creation, promoting it through choir sponsorships as well as by the establishment of a space for exchange and sharing that allows choirs to flourish in their art and share it with a wider Moroccan and international audience. To that end, we organized in 2015 the FIRST INTERNATIONAL GATHERING ON MUSICAL EDUCATION IN MOROCCO, giving the major players in music education in Morocco a chance to speak with the two relevant ministries (Education and Culture) and hear from experts

brought in from Hungary and France, two countries recognized for their teaching in the arts. The meeting's objectives were to create a framework for Moroccan and foreign choirs to meet and exchange experiences and to give the Moroccan public the opportunity to discover a distinguished, accessible and popular art.



Chorale Chabab

## **International Partners**

We actually have an agreement between our Moroccan Association for Musical Education (AMEM), A Cœur joie International (ACJI) and Neemrana France (NF), the purpose of which is to unite the efforts of those three groups in developing partnerships and exchanges in the field of choral music.

The partnership has agreed upon these priority objectives:

- To contribute to the training of Moroccan teachers, student teachers and individuals in charge of music education in Morocco through targeted programs.
- To contribute to the training of French choir directors (who belong to the A Cœur Joie network) in the domains of Moroccan, Arabic and Middle Eastern music and song.

We also have longer-term objectives:

- To train school choir directors in all aspects of classroom music education: musical, pedagogical, technical and personal.
- To develop capacities for listening, composition, musical analysis and creation, as well as experience with rhythm games and instruments.
- To foster the practice of singing in classrooms in France and Morocco, and assist in setting up pedagogical projects.
- To develop competencies for organizing concerts: staging and stage direction, choir concert management, and audio and video recording.
- To promote the creation of music aides, scores and automated transcriptions, and the production of training manuals, work CDs and training materials.



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is the composer of famous songs: "Peace" (winner of the 2000 Best Song for Peace prize in Morocco), the operetta "Abtal Athadi" (National Initiative for Human Development [INDH] 2012), operetta "Living Together" (produced by UNESCO), children's songs on Al Jazeera Children's TV 2008/2011, and music for Moroccan National Company of Radio and Television (SNRT) program credits. He holds a diploma from the Training Center for Education Inspectors 2010-2011 and received his degree in journalism and communication from the Institute of Higher Studies in Journalism and Communications in 2006. Email: [Samir.bahajin@gmail.com](mailto:Samir.bahajin@gmail.com)

*Translated from French by Anita Shaperd, USA*