

Fifth Meeting of Choir Specialists from the Mediterranean Area – Girona, 2012

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Excellent examples of Spanish Gothic architecture, old fortifications, Benedictine churches and monasteries in early Romanesque style near neo-classical buildings with porches... These and many other breathtaking historic features rich in Mediterranean spirit can be found in the amazing city of Girona. Located a hundred kilometres north-west of Barcelona, it is one of the major Catalan cities and was chosen to host the Fifth Meeting of Choir Specialists from the Mediterranean Area , October 12th – 14th , 2012. After four very successful events (from 2007 to 2011), the Fifth Meeting had an even more ambitious goal: to start preparation for the Mediterranean Voices Conference (July 29th – August 2nd 2013).

Having a unique position between three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia (the Middle East the Mediterranean Sea has), since ancient times been a cradle of different civilizations, a meeting point of rich cultures and an important route for merchants and travelers permitting trade and cultural exchanges between the peoples of the region. The history of the Mediterranean region is crucial to understanding the origins and development of many modern societies. “For three quarters of the globe, the Mediterranean Sea is similarly the uniting element and the centre of World History.” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of*

History, p. 87, Dover Publications Inc., 1956)



Left to right: Dolf Rabus, Montserrat Gual, Ariadna de Casacuberta, Roula Abou Baker, Barkev Taslakian, Pier Flippo Rendina, Marina Velázquez, Montserrat Cadevall, Martí Ferrer, Theodora Pavlovich, Fethi Zghonda, Stéphane Grosclaude

Parallel to all its cultural influences, the Mediterranean Sea also connects millions of people through music, and consequently the subjects in the field of music in this geographical area are endless. After four meetings showing a rich palette of scientific, musical and practical matters, the Fifth Meeting of Choir Specialists from the Mediterranean Area focused attention on several important topics:

- 1. Strategies and methods for the quantitative and qualitative study of choral practice in Mediterranean countries.** The topic included mapping choral life in different countries, giving the opportunity to know the real situation of choral practice in the area. This map will be an essential tool to define goals and choral policies in the short, medium and long term. This tool should also serve to know the dimension of choral life and assert the value of choral and vocal tradition in the countries of the region. It was also a good way to know first hand not only the results but also the methods used in each case.
- 2. Drafting a Handbook of diplomacy and code of good practice for the organization of choral activities in the Mediterranean area.** The concept of this topic was based on the fact that the shores of the Mediterranean Sea are rich in traditions, cultures, customs, beliefs, religions and political systems. This rich diversity was a challenge in organising international events with participants (singers, conductors, musicologists...) from various places. Thanks to the presence of choral specialists from different countries and areas it was possible to define a code of good practice and a manual of diplomacy. This tool, which will remain open for future contributions and clarifications, should be the query tool for all those who organize international choral events in multicultural and multi-religious areas all over the world.
- 3. Establishing the Mediterranean Choral FORUM** was a very important part of the meeting. The FORUM's general tasks were sharing ideas for innovative projects, looking for partners for specific projects, and promoting future choral activities in an international auditorium. And of course, to start building the general concept of the Mediterranean Voices Conference was the greatest challenge. From July 29th until August 2nd, 2013 Girona

will be the hotspot, so to speak, for conductors, musicologists, singers, musicians or just lovers of choral music. Seven concerts of star-lights from the Mediterranean Area, twelve conferences, round-table discussions and exhibitions will show the rich diversity of choral and vocal traditions of the region. Partners in organizing this great event are the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat (through its Programme VOICE :Vision On Innovation for Choral music in Europe, supported by the Culture programme of the European Union), Moviment Coral Català – the host organisation – and the International Federation for Choral Music, patron and organizer of Voices Conferences for many years. Dynamic and intensive, the programme of the Conference will be entirely focused on Mediterranean musical heritage and modern trends, including daily Open Singing with performances of unusual and specific songs from the region. The complete programme will soon be published in the International Choral Bulletin as well as on the websites of the three partners.



The excellent organisation (both technical and logistical), the wonderful opportunities for discussion and the high artistic and scientific spirit brought the Fifth Meeting of Choir Specialists from the Mediterranean Area to valuable conclusions and a rich platform for future researches. Working surrounded by masterpieces of Picasso, Matisse, Gauguin, Monet, Rusinol – a part of the fantastic collection exposed in the halls of CaixaForum in Girona – was a great inspiration and an unforgettable experience for all of us, participants in the Fifth Meeting of Choir Specialists from the Mediterranean Area. *Moltíssimes Gràcies*, Moviment Coral Català and the Mediterranean Office for Choral Singing...*Adéu*...

Edited by Gillian Forlivesi Heywood, Italy