

# Istanbul Welcomes WSCM 2023 in Spring

*Nevin Şahin, Choral Culture Association volunteer, Türkiye*

Located in the fortunate geographical zone where all four seasons are experienced, Istanbul enjoys one of the most colorful springs in the world. Although some heavy afternoon showers can turn the city grey, they are almost always followed by rainbows, stretching high up above the Bosphorus Strait, building a colorful bridge between East and West. When the rainbows fade away, the sun heads below the horizon, painting the skies with beautiful pink and purple hues.

Having celebrated the equinox in March, the Istanbulite skyline witnesses longer days in April, hence more time to get immersed in the exquisite colors of sunset. With the waxing crescent in the night sky, the lights of the stars meet the city lights, spreading a shimmery blanket of reflections over The Sea of Marmara.



These are not the only things above the horizon which offer Istanbul one of the most colorful springs ever to be found in the world. The city is famous for its Judas-trees which blossom during the spring. Similar to the Japanese Sakura blooms appreciated by millions if not billions every other spring, the Judas-trees stretch an imperial purple stripe across the Bosphorus in April. A color so significant, the trees were even claimed to be the inspiration behind the royal Byzantine clothing. After the Byzantine Empire faded from the historic scene, the Ottoman Empire became associated with another gorgeous flower, the tulip. Claimed to have spread to Western Europe through Istanbul back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the tulips still rejoice in festive springs all around the city's parks with all possible colors of the palette, from the whitest to jet black. The efflorescing trees and pullulating flowers

influenced the blossoming of poetry and music as well, an idyllic example being the song in the Makam Nihâvend mode by 20<sup>th</sup> century composer Arif Sami Toker on the Tulip Era poet Nedîm's "Erişti nev-bahar eyyâmı, açıldı gül-i gülşen" (So arrived the spring days, blossomed the roses in roseries).



Fluffy cats of Istanbul napping, eating and napping again © Ki Adams

It is impossible to imagine a colorful Istanbul covered with spring flowers without fluffy cats purring and snuggling around the flowers. The symbol of hospitality and love for animals and the icon of contemporary urban culture in Istanbul, cats of every color and size can appear everywhere in the city, even having glorious stage appearances in important international meetings and stellar concerts of world renown ensembles. The feline experience in the city makes it easier to understand how those soft paws kept inspiring composers from Scarlatti to Stravinsky, and how challenging it is to be



performing on the stage in black clothes which easily get colorfully covered in cat fur. They might well be one reason behind choirs shifting gradually from all black dress code to a more vivid, polychromatic staging.



People flowing like a river through Istiklal st Taksim (close to the WSCM venue) © Serhat Erdoğan



The kaleidoscopic views of Istanbul in spring make it perfect timing for WSCM2023. The mission of inclusion refers to all the different colors of musical traditions around the globe, and Istanbul is excited about hosting choirs of many different traditions and choral leaders from various backgrounds during this colorful time of the year. Being the cultural hub of many different states and empires throughout history, Istanbul has always witnessed the coexistence of different musical cultures.

Mosques being next to Orthodox churches mingled different religious musicalities into each other. Monophonic and microtonal singing of traditional music shared the same stage with Western polyphony, composers inspired by the Eastern Mediterranean microtones and Western European tonality brought to life unforgettable musical phrases, city dwellers took pride in the woodwind festival dedicated to clarinet only a few years apart from the kanun festival celebrating the Middle Eastern musical heritage.



Last but not the least, the city became a center for appreciation of choral music, where choirs of different musical styles and backgrounds perform in harmony, ranging from Turkish folk music to Armenian sharagans, jazz to early music, from all-male Byzantine choirs to women's choirs, with all levels of professionalism and all age groups, the choral music scene of Istanbul is as colorful as its springs.



The walls along Galip Dede Caddesi are covered with colourful

street art, a perfect backdrop for street musicians. Cangöz Müzik is one of the officially approved musical instrument suppliers of the Republic of Turkey © Ki Adams



With the WSCM ideal of integration and inclusion, Istanbul offers the best setting for conversation, cultural appreciation, and collaboration, where choirs and choral music enthusiasts from all around the world can come together and not only enjoy the music scene but also broaden their horizons by sharing their own colors with one another. Now the time for acknowledging the beauty of choral singing is approaching, right on time with the fanfare of Istanbulite spring colors.



Aerial night view of Istanbulite mosques © Aydın Kiraz



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