

Logo, Theme, and Philosophy bring WSCM 2023/24 Planning into Focus

WSCM 2023/24 Team

2021 has been a very busy time for the WSCM 2023/24 organizers. COVID's disruption of scheduled events across the world has resulted in unavoidable delays in plan rollouts. The New Zealand-to-Qatar handover of the WSCM, which was scheduled for July 2020 in New Zealand, was unfortunately canceled along with the attending Auckland event. The IFCM Board elections, including WSCM 2023/24 Organizing Committee appointments, were also postponed until December 2020. Nevertheless, the team has been operating in high gear since the start of 2021 to make up for lost time, and 2023/24 planning is back on schedule.

In this issue of the ICB, we would like to take the opportunity to properly present the inspiration behind planning and design for the 2023/24 WSCM: the logo, the theme, and the philosophical pillars.



W S C M
2023-24
World Symposium on Choral Music
QATAR 30 DEC 2023
05 JAN 2024

In a country characterized by arid desert, areas of greenery create a powerful draw that cannot be fully appreciated without firsthand experience... and that experience fully

engages the senses. The temperature drop, the smell of earth and growing plants, the moisture in the air, all signal one's arrival in irrigated land. But a further clue indicating a crossing from desert to fertile ground is in the songs of birds. The desert is a place of subtle sounds. In contrast, the birdsongs of an oasis are a welcome explosion of music.

A wide variety of songbirds contributes to the natural soundscape of Qatar. Among this group, the myna bird is ubiquitous. Originally from South Asia, the myna bird is now a part of regions across the globe. And while myna birds are deemed invasive in some parts of the world, in Qatar, the myna bird enjoys a long local history and lives comfortably side by side with other bird species. Like so many who live in Qatar, it is simply another resident with strong global ties.

The myna bird is a virtuoso vocalist. It has an immense range of sounds and songs with which to communicate. There are many cases of hand-raised mynas who have learned to perfectly imitate human speech. And as if to echo the choral community (or perhaps it is the choral community echoing them), myna birds demonstrate the particularly notable habit of gathering in large flocks at dusk for collective singing. In Qatar, one can witness this gala performance by walking among the trees and pathways of Katara Cultural Village or Al Bidda Park at sunset. Qatar's mynas are already rehearsing for 2023/24!

The image selected as the logo for the WSCM 2023/24 is the creation of Egyptian graphic artist, Mahmoud Tammam. A master of Arabic calligraphy, Tammam has used the letters of the WSCM Arabic acronym to create his whimsical depiction of a myna bird with outspread wings. The signature yellow beak and black body are accented by a dash of burgundy wings. The wings' color reflects that of Qatar's flag while the design gives a nod to a bird that is simultaneously a global citizen and local singing sensation.

Theme: Changing Horizons

The theme “Changing Horizons” speaks on a number of levels to the mission of the WSCM 2023/24 and to the global choral community.

It encourages a new and broader understanding of choral music that embraces styles, regions, and ensemble-singing traditions previously excluded from the conventional definition of choral music. There is creative wealth inherent in these parallel artistic experiences. It holds the potential to enrich the evolution of collective singing. To change the horizon is to extend the boundaries of our art form. The horizon limits our own vision. But horizons need not be stagnant; beyond every horizon, there will always be more to discover.

“Changing Horizons” also speaks to a world recently changed. COVID has impacted choral singing in ways that could never have been anticipated. It has brought great hardship but also incredible innovation and growth. Singers, conductors, and composers everywhere have worked to find new ways to blend and transmit the human voice and, in so doing, have redefined the experience of choral singing. The result is realized in the rehearsals and performances made possible by technology. It has led to changing understandings of what it means to be an audience member or an ensemble singer. It has prompted composers to create works of art shaped by restrictions that build on these new realities. And it represents a deepened appreciation in all of us that we will never again take for granted what it means to sing together. COVID will end, but our choral world will emerge more resilient and interconnected as a result of these shared experiences.

Finally, “Changing Horizons” speaks to the literal horizon of desert and ocean that so defines the experience of life in Qatar. Wind, sculpting the sand and the sea, creates a

physical world whose boundaries are forever shifting and adapting. The edges of the horizon are ephemeral, fleeting and beautiful, like the experience of music itself.

Beyond the Theme and Logo, an Underlying Philosophy

The Organizing Committee has identified three philosophical pillars that inform all elements of design and planning for the WSCM 2023/24 and which constitute the foundations of the event. These are Diversity, Inclusivity, and Equity.

Diversity means a commitment to bringing together the very best in collective singing from the widest possible range of styles, regions, traditions, and cultures. The World Symposium on Choral Music is intended to be global, not just in the audience but also on the stage and at the podium. Collective singing takes on many forms, and the Organizing Committee for the WSCM 2023/24 looks to curate a program that displays our art form at its highest level and in all its unique and beautiful manifestations.

Inclusivity means a commitment to the conscious pursuit of top-quality choirs, composers, and speakers who may not have been featured before. Choral singing is too often understood as a Western art form which, despite its exportation around the world, is practiced within prescribed artistic boundaries. The result of this limited definition of choral music has been the underrepresentation of groups that fall outside traditional perimeters. While “diversity” strives to achieve a broad range of representation in the WSCM 2023/24 program, “inclusivity” speaks to a conscious inclusion of those groups that may have been previously overlooked. We learn to appreciate music through exposure, and the result can be a bias in all of us towards the familiar. The WSCM offers the perfect occasion to challenge these biases and expand our

personal and collective repertoires. By seeking to be inclusive, the WSCM 2023/24 aims to create exciting new musical opportunities for practitioners and audiences alike. There is always more to discover beyond the horizon.

Equity entails the accessibility of the WSCM 2023/24 to high-quality performers, presenters, and participants regardless of their circumstances. The goal of the organizers is to allow caliber alone to dictate the selection of performers and speakers. They also seek to provide support for logistical, financial, and diplomatic requirements and to meet additional needs that might otherwise challenge potential participants. Equity is clearly not limited to the immediate needs of participation in a single event, but is also complicated by long-term factors and challenges faced by individuals over the course of a lifetime. However, the WSCM 2023/24 is committed to improving accessibility wherever it is able to do so. The WSCM is only a true “World Symposium” if the world is able to take part.



In keeping these pillars at the forefront of the planning and design process, the WSCM 2023/24 aims to provide two outcomes for the choral world. First, the WSCM 2023/24 promises an irresistible program of performances and presentations that removes barriers and represents the very best the world has to offer. Second, by

tying these philosophical pillars to the tangibles of planning, such as program and budget, the WSCM 2023/24 aims to translate the ideas of Diversity, Inclusivity, and Equity into real-world action.

The 2023/24, WSCM will bring together the very best the choral world has to offer in terms of choirs, singers, speakers,

presenters, conductors, composers, and more. In this new era of changing horizons, there is an ongoing opportunity for all of us to share, learn, and appreciate. We look forward to welcoming the choral world to Qatar in 2023/24.

<https://www.wscm2023.com>

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