

# Reports and Reflections From the 11th China International Chorus Festival and IFCM World Choral Summit

Beijing, July 2012

On 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012, the IFCM World Choral Summit was held in Beijing. Many choral experts from 24 countries and regions came to China to get together and communicate with each other. Among them there were the President, Vice-President, advisors, and Executive Committee of the IFCM, as well as a number of choral conductors from the European Union and the Asia Pacific region. They talked about the present situation of choral music, the relationship between the development of choral music and government, and the social function of choral music. They also discussed positive and successful experiences in organising choirs, and the problems inherent in the art of choral music.

These friends and experts were aware of the current situation regarding choral music in China, and talked to us about various situations in other countries around the world.

The IFCM World Chorus Summit was a great success and is certain to have increasing influence in the field of choral music. This was the first time that the China Chorus Association has cooperated with the IFCM to hold the IFCM World Choral Summit. We already knew that the former organisation plays an important role in promoting the art of choral music throughout the world, and we learned a lot from the World Choral Summit.

We realize that we have a long way to go in order to make our country a powerful choral country. The development of choral music in China needs international support, and we especially need the cooperation of the IFCM. The World Summit immediately became a landmark in the history of the development of Chinese choral music. We believe that we will be good partners in the world choral cause both now and in the future, and we will work to strengthen the connection between the China Chorus Association and the IFCM. We hope the IFCM and its members will focus on China in future and often visit our country.

Welcome to China!

**China Chorus Association**

**Tian Yubin, Chairman**



*The opening ceremony*

Initially intimidated by the sense of occasion, the weight of responsibility in representing the entire continent of Africa, the enormity and newness of the whole experience, and the honour of being invited by the IFCM to participate in such a world-class event, our Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Choir arrived from Port Elizabeth, South Africa, at Beijing's impressive airport with not a little sense of awe and trepidation, but our friendly hosts-cum-guides, Alex and Chen

expertly allayed any concerns we might have had.

From the outset it became clear that everyone was in festival mode – expecting to be entertained, serenaded and surprised. And our Choir certainly pulled out all the stops. But as ‘surprised’ as the Choir was by the ‘ordinariness’ of the Chinese people, marvelling at the sophistication and the sheer scale of their cities, Chinese concert-goers were equally surprised by the richness of the Choir’s ‘rainbow magic’, i.e. the range of different genres – from Western music, to choreographed popular music, to our vibrant traditional songs, our drumming and dancing and ululating. Though sometimes confused by our African concert etiquette (in our Shanghai concert, some South Africans in the audience clapped and ululated during our traditional songs), the Chinese audiences were ultimately swept up by the group’s youthful exuberance, their infectious energy, and their sincere desire to touch the hearts of their audiences. To our great joy, the normally reserved Asian audiences responded by leaping to their feet, clapping and shouting *bravo* as if their inner floodgates had burst.

While the opening ceremony was spectacular and our Beijing concert very satisfying, it was in the choral workshop at the University of Beijing that we, with humility, sensed the power of music and choral singing. We shared (through our lovely translator, Celine) some technical aspects, talked about multi-culturalism and traditional music and gave them the background to commissioned works such as *Horizons* and *Chariots* – and especially focussed on the role of emotion in composition and conducting. We were touched by the number of participants who came to tell us afterwards (with gestures and in broken English) that they cried during our performances. Who needs a formal language to discover that we are all the same, that others are ‘people, just like us’, simply ‘voices in harmony’.

**Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Choir**

**Junita Lamprecht-van Dijk (conductor)**

**Péter Louis van Dijk (composer)**

Being invited by the IFCM to be one of six choirs, each representing its own continent at the IFCM World Choral Summit in Beijing, was truly the honor of a lifetime for me and all 43 members of the Young People's Chorus of New York City who took part.



*The Youth People Chorus  
from New York City*

We were so excited to have the opportunity to perform and meet so many excellent choirs and to experience with our own eyes the awe-inspiring, historic sights of China. Once we arrived, we were astounded to learn that over 10,000 participants were involved in the partnering program of the 11<sup>th</sup> annual China International Choral Festival and that this was the first time that the IFCM was involved in China.

The choral movement is growing in China and the educational and cultural ministers understand the importance of choral

music in the lives of young and old alike. The IFCM choral summit workshops enabled us to hear about the choral goings-on around the world. To witness, learn, and be inspired by such excellent ensembles from around the world, all sharing in the energy and love of singing, reinforces our belief that choral music is probably the one art form that brings more communities together and brings joy to more people than any other.

One of our most treasured experiences was the reactions to our performances by the Guangzhou and Beijing audiences. In Guangzhou we gave two concerts: the first at the beautiful 2500-seat opera house in the center of the city with the accomplished Gondwana Voices from Australia; the next evening YPC performed for the general public a two-hour concert that was practically sold out. As soon as we landed in Beijing the next day, we set off for technical rehearsals at the Olympic-sized MasterCard Center to prepare for the opening ceremony of the World Choral Summit and 11<sup>th</sup> annual choral festival. To learn that over 10,000 singers would be present and that the entire evening would be broadcast on Chinese television was thrilling. Two days later at the Chinese Conservatory of Music, YPC sang a full, 90-minute program to a sold-out house, with many still waiting in line trying to get in. The reaction was completely overwhelming. After our second encore, we were greeted by a mass of audience members wanting to shake hands, request pictures and autographs, and to let us know how much they appreciated our performance.

Sightseeing trips included the Forbidden City, and we relished walking around the Chinese Imperial Palace, once the home of the country's emperors. We loved practicing our bargaining skills at the Silk Market, and our trip to the Great Wall of China, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, was something we will never forget. We were treated so well.

We feel immensely grateful to the IFCM for inviting us to

participate in the first World Choral Summit. It helped acquaint the choral world with YPC – a distinctive American choir made up of the diversity of American society – and allowed us to form an amazing kinship with our new Chinese friends as well as with some outstanding choirs from around the globe.

## **Young People's Chorus of New York City**

**Francisco J. Núñez, Artistic Director/Founder**



*IFCM President Micheal Anderson and CAEG President Yu congratulating winners*

Travelling overseas with Gondwana Voices is a rare pleasure to be cherished. It is wonderful to be able to experience the thrill of travel and performance with young singers. On an international tour one can indulge in their eagerness to discover new places in the world, new food, new culture and most of all new friends.

It is not very often that Gondwana Voices has the opportunity to perform on the world stage, maybe because Australia is such a long way from much of the choral world and also because we

made a decision many years ago to perform for joy rather than competition. But it was indeed a great honour for us to be selected to appear at the World Choral Summit organised by the IFCM in Beijing in July.

We travelled to China with 37 singers aged 12-16, me, and fellow conductor Mark O'Leary, as well as a support team. On this occasion, our entire program was either *a cappella*, or utilized instruments that were played by the singers. It was a short but busy tour which began in hot and steamy Guangzhou. In addition to sharing a concert with the dynamic Young People's Chorus of New York City in the magnificent new Guangzhou Opera House, we were envious when we were shown the facilities of the Guangzhou Children's Palace. We were also lucky to be greeted at a reception given by the Australian Consulate.

We dashed to Beijing just in time to appear at an official dinner celebrating 40 years of trade relations between China and Australia. The next day, after climbing the Great Wall, the activities for the Summit began. The Opening Ceremony Performance Day was a great thrill for our singers. They certainly enjoyed their three minutes on the stage and performed with all their heart; however the greatest joy for them was the time they spent visiting the other choirs, meeting other young singers from around the world, singing for each other. This time together was all too short for the singers

It was a tremendous feeling to have a packed hall for our performance at the China Conservatory and it was great to be able to share this concert with the Asia Pacific Youth Choir. Although of a different age group, this choir has much in common with Gondwana Voices, as the singers come from far and wide and rehearsal time is short and very precious. It was a very warm and receptive audience.

It was somewhat daunting to be asked to present a three-hour

workshop and it was difficult to know what the audience of choral conductors most wanted to hear from our Australian choir. We were concerned that with the added strain of translation it would be difficult to sustain such a long session. However this workshop became quite a highlight for us as the audience was just so enthused and would have happily stayed for several more hours. A lasting memory for me will be the stage full of Australian and Chinese singers and a full auditorium joyfully performing a song and dance from the Torres Strait.

The children will certainly remember meeting the pandas, conquering the Great Wall and seeing the awe-inspiring Forbidden City. Our lasting memories encompass the warm response from audiences and their enthusiasm to embrace the new: Australian music and its performance style. We look forward to the opportunity to visit China once again. I would like to express our thanks and to the IFCM and the China International Choral Competition for hosting this unique event.

## **Gondwana Voices**

**Lyn Williams, Conductor**



*Masterclass with Guy  
Jansen, New Zealand*



I came to Beijing on behalf of Barker College, which joined the IFCM in early 2012. The whole week was a fantastic artistic and cultural experience. The guest choirs provided unforgettable performances, and I will always remember the concert given by the choir of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. I welcomed the chance to mingle with choral leaders from around the globe and I now have many new friends around the world.

I am convinced more than ever that choral music is a unifying force between different cultures and an art that needs passionate advocates. I am thankful too for the chance to visit some of China's most famous cultural sites and I express my thanks to our Chinese hosts for their unfailing courtesy and friendliness. I arrived in China with only a classroom knowledge of its history and I left with a deeper understanding of its culture and a real affection for its people. Coupled with this I feel re-energized as a choral director and inspired to see a much bigger picture. Surely this is a testament to everything that the IFCM stands for? I look forward to many other opportunities to engage with the IFCM, and I cannot imagine it will be my only visit to China.

**Barker College, Sydney, Australia**

**Peter Ellis, Director of Choral Programmes**

Since 1999, we have participated in IFCM Symposiums in Rotterdam, Minnesota, Kyoto, Copenhagen and Beijing. We certainly want to participate in future activities too. In Turkey quite a considerable number of school, youth, children's, and university choirs specialized in polyphonic music have been founded in the past 30 years. In terms of

choral music, we can see that there is huge innovation and progress, and despite financial constraints, Turkish Choirs demonstrate this through their national and international activities.

As members, we follow closely all IFCM activities not only in the international arena but also through membership magazines, benefits and newsletters. By taking part in the symposiums, we always learn the latest concepts and the most recent repertoires and sounds. We enhance our experience and knowledge during workshops and master classes, treating ourselves as well to a feast of choral music activities. So we always return to our homeland joyful and hopeful. We experienced exactly the same thing in Beijing with Chinese hospitality and choral culture. We also strive to promote the continuous development of choral music in every age and stage of humankind in Turkey. We have extraordinary audiences who love and support choral music.

Our wish is 'long live the IFCM and international activities'.

**Istanbul Turkish National Broadcasting Youth Choir**

**Gokcen Koray, Conductor Ankara State Opera and Ballet & Seval Irmak, conductor**

*Edited by Gillian Forlivesi Heywood, Italy*



第十一届  
中国国际合唱节  
暨国际合唱联盟世界合唱峰会  
The 11th China International Chorus Festival  
and IFCM World Choral Summit

## Beijing Declaration

At the Beijing World Choral Summit in July 2012, leaders and experts of the International Federation for Choral Music, choral organizations of different countries, and the Organizing Committee of China International Chorus Festival have reached a consensus, through in-depth discussions and dialogue, on further promoting choral music in China and around the world, as well as fostering cultural diversity through the China International Chorus Festival.

### Choral Art

Enjoying wide popularity around the globe, the choral art brings together professional choral musicians and enthusiasts across the world in singing for harmony, happiness, friendship, and peace with its special charm that transcends races, languages, and cultures. As a best vehicle of public cultural expression, the choral art has a solid foundation for vigorous development around the world. It is a basic cultural right of the public to be guaranteed on the basis of equity, accessibility, and public benefit, and a form of art that is enjoying popularity and expanding demand.

### Strengthening International Exchange and Cooperation

With cultural diversity playing an increasingly significant role in the 21st century, it has become an inevitable trend to strengthen international exchange and cooperation, and establish a sustainable international mechanism for the development of the choral art. IFCM and various choral organizations should, on a voluntary, equal and mutually-beneficial basis, take the initiative to create a good platform for international choral exchange and cooperation, and make international choral resources and knowledge shared and known to the public through a variety of music activities.

### Intensifying Cooperation between IFCM and China

Choral art has enjoyed a great boom as the economy prospers in China. IFCM and the China International Chorus Festival, has forged a strategic partnership since the 11th China International Chorus Festival and IFCM World Choral Summit. As a professional choral organization recognized by the International Music Council of the UNESCO, IFCM, speaks highly of CICF's art and management skills. IFCM, and organizations under IFCM, will expand long-term cooperation with the Chinese via this grand festival. By concrete programs for training, composition, performances, and competitions, the two sides will join hands to work for the development and prosperity of choral art as well as the promotion of exchange and cooperation between Chinese and other choral communities of the world.

Organizing Committee of CICF

International Federation for Choral Music

