

Selecting Presenters for a World Choral Symposium

By Anton Armstrong, Co-Chair of the 2014 WSCM-10 Artistic Committee

When the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was selected as the site for the *2014 World Choral Symposium* one of the first duties of the IFCM Executive Committee was to choose an Artistic Committee, responsible for determining which 24 choirs and 30+ lecturers would be invited to attend. The IFCM Executive Committee decided to have an Artistic Committee of 6 persons – 3 from Korea and 3 international. The makeup of the Committee includes: Sang-Kil Lee (Co-Chair/Korea), Anton Armstrong (Co-Chair/USA), Anita Brevik (Norway), Oscar Escalada (Argentina), Chun Koo (Korea) and Shin-Hwa Park (Korea).

At the first meeting of the Artistic Committee in October 2012, we first had to get acquainted with each other in order to work effectively together. This was not difficult as the 6 of us found each other's company very compatible. We knew the theme that the Korean Choral Federation had chosen and then created a time frame for sending out the information and getting applications from lecturers as well as choirs. For the purposes of listening to choirs applying to perform at WSCM-10, we decided to divide ourselves up into 3 groups to review submissions from throughout the world. One Korean member was paired with a non-Korean member. In order to maintain the highest level of integrity as well as transparency, the non-Korean members were NOT assigned to listen to choral ensembles from their respective continents or regions of the world. Each listening sub-committee was assigned two regions to review choral submissions, recommending their top choices to the full Artistic Committee. During our second round of meetings in March 2013, we reviewed

the recommendations of the sub-committees. In reality, most of the committee had reviewed all of the tapes, but we started our initial review with the sub-committee recommendations. These were discussed thoroughly before arriving at our selection of 25 invited choral ensembles as well as the 10 choirs selected as alternates.

There were many considerations taken into account in selecting the 25 choirs: Foremost were musical aspects such as tonal quality, musical artistry, and imaginative programming. Yet, we also sought an international balance between children's choirs, youth choirs, college choirs, community choirs, men's choirs, women's choirs, professional choirs, etc. Other considerations included having balanced regional representation based on past world Symposium models. As the WSCM-10 will take place in South Korea, there will be a number of choral ensembles from Asia represented at this conference. In addition the Opening, Break-Out Day and the Finale concerts of the WSCM-10, will feature an international array of choral ensembles and as well as other art forms.

One of the main agenda items of our March 2013 meeting was the selection of lectures for the WSCM-10. Choosing lecturers from a large pool of candidates was also a challenge. We wrestled with the issue of which topics would be of general-enough interest to be appealing to the wide range of Symposium attendees? We also examined the lecture submissions in terms of how these explored the wider theme of the symposium that had been established by the Koreans, "Healing and Youth". In the end, the Artistic Committee selected a diverse, international collection of topics with lecturers that we believe will present stimulating, scholarly, yet practical sessions providing you with new information to enhance your music-making. The lecturers represent a wide variety of nationalities, with some familiar seasoned names and as well as new faces to share their research. Some of the topics selected include the following:

1. "Overtone Singing As a Choral Art."
2. "Choral Music: Healing People, Saving Lives"
3. "Jazz Masses for the Concert Hall and Church"
4. "Children's Choir Conductor's Workshop: Music of Arab, Islam, Jewish, Israel, and Christian Traditions."
5. "The Musical Treasures of South America"
6. "Voices of Women Today: Composers of Choral Music from Around the World"
7. "New Sounds in Choral Music of China"
8. "The International Phonetic Alphabet: How to Teach Choral Texts in Any Language"

When all the choirs and lecturers had been chosen we sent invitations to each one and were very pleased with the excitement that our invitations generated. Everyone is anxious to participate – now it is just a question of each one raising the necessary of funds to get to Seoul, knowing that accommodations, food and city transportation will be provided by the Korean hosts.

I want to encourage each of you to attend the 10th World Symposium on Choral Music on August 2014, which will provide you with a week of awe-inspiring concerts, informative seminars, and an Expo with access to music, books, recordings and other materials that will invigorate your teaching and conducting. WSCM-10 provides you an opportunity to meet colleagues from throughout the world who share your love of the choral art and wish to expand their network within the global choral community. *Make your plans now* to join us in Seoul, South Korea for the **10th World Symposium of Choral Music August 6-13, 2014.**