

# The European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel: 2000 young singers at the heart of Europe

*Iva Radulovic, IFCM Secretary General*

The European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel is a celebrated event that brings together talented young singers from across Europe and beyond. Held biennially in the picturesque city of Basel, Switzerland, this festival has become a vibrant platform for showcasing the extraordinary abilities of youth choirs and promoting cultural exchange.

With a rich history and a commitment to artistic excellence, the festival has evolved into a renowned gathering that not only provides remarkable performances, but also offers workshops, masterclasses, and a range of cultural and social activities. In this article, we will delve into the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the European Youth Choir Festival Basel that was held between 17-21 May 2023, exploring its significance, highlighting notable performances and participating choirs, discussing the programme and schedule, and examining the impact it has on youth choirs and their members.

The European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel was first established in 1992, born out of a desire to promote harmony and unity through music. It was the brainchild of a group of music enthusiasts who recognised the transformative power of choral singing. Since its inception, the festival has grown in popularity and has become a highly anticipated event in the European choral calendar.

The 13<sup>th</sup> European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel promised to

showcase a stellar lineup of choral groups from Belgium, Finland, France, Georgia, Ireland, Israel, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine and, of course, Switzerland. Among the participating choirs were internationally acclaimed ensembles as well as promising young voices on the brink of artistic breakthroughs. This diverse collection of choirs brought a diverse range of musical styles and repertoire, ensuring a captivating and memorable experience for all festival attendees.

## **Concerts**

The festival kicked off with a grand opening ceremony and concert, setting the stage for an unforgettable musical journey. The ceremony was a vibrant celebration of music, culture, and unity, featuring captivating performances and inspiring speeches, with all choirs sharing the “stage”.

Throughout the festival, participants and audiences could immerse themselves in a series of daily concerts and performances. These events took place in various venues across Basel, showcasing the immense talent and creativity of the participating choirs. From intimate chamber recitals to large-scale choral spectacles, the festival lineup promised something for every musical taste.

The grand finale of the festival was a spectacular closing ceremony that brought all participants together for a final showcase of choral excellence. It was a joyful celebration of the friendships forged, the music shared, and the memories created.

## **Workshops and Masterclasses for Choirs and Conductors**

At the 13<sup>th</sup> European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel,

participants had the incredible opportunity to take part in a variety of engaging workshops and masterclasses. Whether you were a member of a choir or a conductor, there was something for everyone.

Workshop topics and themes covered a wide range of musical and performance aspects. From vocal technique and repertoire exploration to conducting skills and stage presence, the workshops catered to different levels of experience and interests. Participants could delve into the intricacies of choral harmony, hone their expressive singing abilities, or even learn new conducting techniques to take back to their own choirs.

Distinguished conductors with extensive experience in leading youth choirs led workshops, providing valuable mentorship and inspiration. Their infectious passion for choral music and dedication to nurturing young talent were truly awe-inspiring. One of the highlights of the festival was The Choir Boat where singing enthusiasts of all generations met on a musical level, calmly sailing on the river. The day concluded with musical and culinary delights.

## **Cultural and Social Activities for Participants**

Beyond the musical realm, the festival also offered participants a chance to immerse themselves in Basel's rich cultural heritage. The festival recognised the importance of social connections and networking opportunities for participants. From casual meet-ups and dinners to lively parties and musical jam sessions, there was a vibrant atmosphere of camaraderie and celebration. These social interactions not only added to the overall festival experience but also created a sense of community and support among participants.

## Impact and Benefits of the European Youth Choir Festival

One of the most significant impacts of the 13<sup>th</sup> European Festival of Youth Choirs Basel was the opportunity for youth choirs from different countries to come together and collaborate.

By sharing their musical traditions and learning from one another, young singers gained a broader perspective and a deeper appreciation for the power of music as a universal language. These collaborations not only enriched their musical abilities, but also nurtured a sense of global citizenship and understanding.

For youth choirs, the festival served as a platform for professional development and skill enhancement. The festival acted as a catalyst for growth, pushing participants to expand their horizons, explore new musical territories, and embrace artistic challenges.

Lastly, the festival played a vital role in building lifelong connections and friendships among participants. The shared experiences, both on and off the stage, forged bonds that extend beyond the duration of the event.

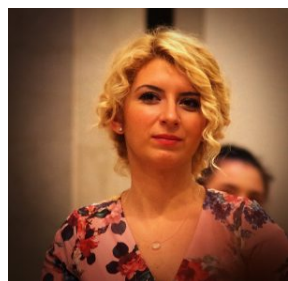
Participants from different countries and backgrounds came together, united by their love for music and choral singing. The festival created a supportive and nurturing environment where lifelong friendships were formed, creating a network of like-minded individuals from around the world.

The 13<sup>th</sup> European Youth Choir Festival Basel was an unforgettable experience that left an indelible mark on all

who participated. Beyond the captivating performances and musical growth, the festival provided a space for cultural exchange, personal development, and lifelong connections.



Body Percussion © Ueli Renggli



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*Edited by Charlotte Sullivan, UK*