

World Choral Day 2019 – Insight and Project Review

By Samuel Koszegi, IFCM Communication Officer

The World Choral Day project improved significantly in 2018 when its new website and registration system were launched along with a more consistent and intense communication system. Building on the previous year's success, in 2019 nearly 350 events and concerts were organised in the celebration of World Choral Day, with a record number of countries represented in the history of the project. In this short article, we give more insight into the latest edition of this celebration and highlight four events on which World Choral Day had a significant impact in 2019.

World Choral Day (WCD) was created in 1990 by Alberto Grau, the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) Vice-President for Latin America. He proposed the celebration and it was approved by the General Assembly of IFCM held in Helsinki in August 1990, within the framework of the Second World Symposium on Choral Music. Since 1990, thousands of choirs have joined in the celebration of World Choral Day on or around the second Sunday of December. Millions of singers across the globe have joined forces together and have been involved in different World Choral Day concerts, festivals, sing-alongs, choral seminars, friendship days and other events. In 2020, the project is going to celebrate its magical 30th anniversary, which will ensure a greater possibility to communicate its essence and importance worldwide and to reach out to even more choristers across the globe encouraging them to join the celebration.

It will be an international choral event to extol the values of solidarity, peace and understanding!

In 2019, we celebrated World Choral Day on the second Sunday of December but hosted choral events throughout the entire month and hence made the presence of the project stronger and more visible globally. The previous year (2018) was the first time in which the original dates of the celebration were extended, not excluding those choirs and concert organisers who planned their events a few days before or after the official date. This was one of the best improvements and experiences we continued for World Choral Day 2019. We also definitely intend to keep this one-month period in the future, which also allows those countries who might have their holidays during WCD to join and thus organise their concerts a little later or earlier.

Altogether, 344 events took place in 67 countries in 2019 – there were also concerts in new countries who had never celebrated World Choral Day before (i.e. Jordan, Lebanon and Vietnam). Seeing new countries joining in every year is one of the best pieces of feedback we could receive, which will help us build new ideas to improve this wonderful project. As always, in 2019, we again had a really wide range of choral events such as traditional Christmas concerts in little village churches, flash mobs in supermarkets, and big festivals where more than 1000 singers performed on stage. It is also important to highlight that in this year four new languages were added to the official proclamation document read and announced at every event. For the first time in the existence of World Choral Day, Alberto Grau, the initiator of the project, specially composed the hymn “Cantando”, which could be heard worldwide at numerous events and sung by the participating choirs. We also had the opportunity to enjoy some of the concerts from several countries live through social media such as Switzerland, Portugal, Madagascar, Syria, Venezuela and Finland, along with an IFCM event, which was organised in the beautiful Palacete dos Condes de Monte Real, the new IFCM Headquarters in Lisbon.



Photo from the concert of Brussels International Singers from Belgium

World Choral Day Worldwide Through the Eyes of the Organisers

A World Choral Day Concert in Turkey

Parallel with the growing number of choirs in Turkey, the celebrations for World Choral Day on 8th December 2019 took place in different places and in many concepts. The special concert titled Vox Luminis by Rezonans Choir, conducted by Burak Onur Erdem, brought these celebrations to the historic heart of the Old City in Istanbul.

One of the most extraordinary historic venues in Istanbul, the Şerefiye Sarnici, also known as the Theodosius Cistern, was built by the Emperor Theodosius II, to store water for the Byzantine Capital, approximately 1600 years ago. Hidden underneath newer buildings for many centuries, the cistern has been meticulously restored and brought back to its former

glory by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Reopened to the public in 2018, the Şerefiye Sarnici, is now home to acoustic concerts held by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Department of Culture.

Rezonans Choir brought the joy of music into the magical atmosphere of the Şerefiye Sarnici at this special World Choral Day concert with words of hope, peace and compassion from the giants of classical music, J.S. Bach and W.A. Mozart, and present-day composers, such as Arvo Pärt and Eric Whitacre,

Burak Onur Erdem – conductor of Rezonans, IFCM Board member



Choir Rezonans, Turkey

World Choral Day in Jordan

12 concerts, 20 days, seven Choirs, one city. This was what was accomplished on World Choral Day for the very first time in Jordan.

As a Jordanian volunteer with the Arab Choral Network whose duty is to connect world events to the Arab nation, it was so special for me to see all these mosaic pieces gathered and

glued together for WCD in one beautiful colourful picture. Being part of an international event made choirs and singers enthusiastic about being recognised and interacting and sharing these special days with other choirs from all over the world. The audience was happy to hear WCD's peaceful message, which was read out loud in both English and Arabic, and enjoyed the various diverse concerts. Feedback for the concerts and WCD event were great and both the singers and the audience are excited to take part in World Choral Day 2020. This year, we hope the Arab world and language will be more present during WCD by having choirs from each Arabian country, as well as the Diaspora, participate in events.

Choral singing is an international language, and we are happy to deliver it from the Arab world.

Anwar Qais Al Nimri – Arab Choral Network Committee Volunteer



World Choral Day in Jordan

World Choral Day in Armenia

Choral art is impossible to imagine without Komitas.

World Choral Day has taken place in Armenia since 1994, the

year the Armenian Little Singers International Association was created. Years later, Armenian superior choirs performed for public school students of at Aram Khachaturyan Great Concert Hall. Since 2018, the Armenian Little Singers International Association has held this event together with the Armenian Choral Conductors Association in assistance with Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University. The format has changed after amateur choirs from Yerevan and different cities and choirs from abroad began to participate in this event.

On 17 December 2019, 14 choirs from Ijevan, Echmiadzin and Yerevan participated in our World Choral Day concert. Choirs from Tatev, Sisian, Kapan, Charentsavan and Munich (Germany) performed online. The celebration was dedicated to the 150th anniversary of Komitas, and the choirs exclusively performed Komitas's songs. The President of the Armenian Little Singers International Association, Tigran Hekekyan, greeted the audience.

At the end of the concert, all choirs performed Komitas's song "Armenia" directed by Gayane Sahakyan.

Gohar Sndoyan – Coordinator of International Communication at Little Singers of Armenia



World Choral Day in Armenia

World Choral Day in Madagascar

ICanto Vocal Ensemble was really proud and happy to participate in World Choral Day 2019 by organizing the first-ever concert in Madagascar, which joined the celebrations in the history of the project. I have been looking for ways to connect our choir, and ultimately our country, to international networks and came across the IFCM Facebook page where it all started. To be a part of this initiative was a huge morale boost and extra-motivation for ICanto after a 2-year break.

We were all excited to represent the country and to be part of a global choral network. Despite expecting a serious rainstorm, more than 150 people came to our concert, which was sold-out a week earlier. The audience was also very receptive and happy about WCD and after enjoying our diversified repertoire, the warm applause didn't stop – we even gave two encores and received a standing ovation from the audience at the end. We already feel the positive outcomes of our concert and of joining a global choral celebration. This is because we received an invitation to one of the most prestigious classical music events in Poland after our video was shared on social media. In addition, Madagascar Mozarteum, an institution that promotes Classical Music through concerts and workshops, invited us to re-perform the “Caritas et Amor” concert later in May. We are really looking forward to joining World Choral Day in 2020 and hope to have more choirs participating in the celebration from our country.

My dream is to create a Choral Federation in Madagascar and I strongly believe that joining such valuable international projects can be important milestones in achieving this goal.

Fitah Rasendrahasina, Artistic Director & Choirmaster of ICanto Vocal Ensemble



World Choral Day in Madagascar

Full list of participating countries in 2019: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Syria, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela, Vietnam, Wallis and Futuna, Zambia

Most events registered per country (top 5): Italy (45), Spain (33), Hungary (25), United States (21), Canada (14)



World Choral Day in Patras, Greece, an amazing celebration for this small city with the participation of more than 400 volunteers, singers, choristers, musicians, soloists and ballet dancers!

Thanks to the kind contribution of the concert organisers, we received an incredible number of photos and videos that have been shared on our social media platforms, which we can use to promote WCD throughout the coming months. IFCM has already started to prepare for World Choral Day 2020, the celebration's 30th anniversary, with dates confirmed for the full month of December.

Stories like ICanto Vocal Ensemble's from Madagascar written above and the great amount of positive feedback always confirm the importance of this project and give us the motivation to keep continuing in the future.

Edited by Shanae Ennis-Melhado, UK