

# Training tomorrow's choir managers

*Isabelle Métrope, managing editor*

When I was 21, I completed an internship that would change my life (sorry for the slightly esoteric article start). It was roughly 15 years ago, I was studying modern languages, but I didn't want to go and work in an international company, exporting products such as tyres and pipes or financial products. So, when I had to look for an internship, while my classmates were dreaming of working for big global companies, I applied at... an international choral festival. It turned out to be Europa Cantat, which was taking place this very year in Mainz, Germany. I was an absolute beginner, and during those 4 months, I made many mistakes – and many friends. And I discovered that, unlike I had been told before, it was indeed possible to work as a manager in the music world.

Without knowing it yet, I had directly discovered the best way of learning how to do the job: being thrown into the deep end with a bunch of adorable swimming teachers making sure I wouldn't drown. But more about this later. First of all: what are the training possibilities for someone wanting to be a choir or concert manager?

## Formal training

Depending on which country you live in, the offers are multifaceted. A lot of universities offer a “cultural management” curriculum. Others call it “cultural mediation” or “arts management”, or this field can be part of a pedagogy curriculum with a management addendum. To begin searching for a curriculum of this type in your region of the world, a good place to start could be the website of the Arts Management

Network, or – even more directly – to ask professionals of the field in your city about their own education. When checking out universities, don't forget to have a look at the language programmes; an arts management programme will sometimes be "hidden" in an international training with an intercultural profile. Conferences organised by the *International Association of Arts and Cultural Management* can also be a good resource.

## Internships

Internships are required by a number of curricula, although it is also possible to apply even if you are not currently a registered student. Many professional choirs and festivals look for interns – some even have projects that rely on having such an apprentice in their office. Internships can last from a couple of days (though not as useful) to several months, and are often the first opportunity to experience truly what life as a professional can be. The organisations and concert houses are becoming more and more accustomed to this type of placement. If the company of your choice has never trained an intern, don't hesitate to ask them if it is something they are open to considering. An internship is definitely a win-win situation for all.

## Management Programmes in the Choral World

I've kept the best for last: the choral world already started to think about how to train future managers a long time ago. In addition to internships, short and intense programmes were created. One of the first of these events was the International Forum Voice Arts Management in Caen, France, back in 2008. This 4-day event was organised by IFCM and Polyfolia International, and gathered 60 young people from all over the world. Many friendships made there still exist and a different cooperation was born. I remember our Norwegian colleague Kjetil Aamann calling this event "historical" at the final session, and I never forgot this, because it was indeed a boost for several amazing programmes that followed. In 2009,

the European Choral Association launched its first Young Event Management Programme under the framework of the Europa Cantat Festival in Utrecht. Since then, a YEMP has been training around 30 young managers and students at each Festival, which take place every 3 years in a different city and country. The YEMP consists of a long weekend of classes and workshops prepared by professionals, a short week of training on the job before the festival starts, and a complete job placement during the festival. The participants are coached by two professionals from the choral world, usually one person from the festival country and the other from an international organisation. The work fields are as diverse as the festival departments: production, music office, ticketing, festival office, info points, atelier organisation, logistics, etc. For most of the participants, it is one of their first professional experiences, and even though I had the chance to take part in the first YEMP back in 2009, I will let you decide for yourself by reading the testimonials in the boxes.

The Working Group Youth of the European Music Council, a working group consisting of young music professionals or students under the age of 30, organised Access!, a project that included a European Youth Forum on Music and the Manifesto for Youth and Music in Europe. The European and International Music Council keep placing youth involvement in the international music discourse.

The next management programme will be YOUNG and will enable 10 young managers to learn and work at the IFCM World Choral EXPO 2022 in Lisbon. Are you looking for your next opportunity? Subscribe to the IFCM eNews so you don't miss out!



Amy Desrosiers, Choir Manager, Capital Chamber Choir, Ottawa, Canada  
YEMP 4 – Tallinn, Estonia 2018

*Participating in YEMP4 rejuvenated my appreciation and love for choral music and arts administration. The connections and friendships I formed will never be forgotten!*



Iva Radulovic, IFCM Secretary General  
YEMP 2 – Torino, Italy 2012

*So much more than a programme: great time, great opportunity,  
GIORNI FELICI!*



Kristel Pedak, chief specialist at  
Tallinn City Government's Culture and  
Sports Department

YEMP 1 – Utrecht, The Netherlands 2009

*YEMP in 2009 was a great start to my professional career as a cultural manager. Learning and working together with young people from different countries taught me many important lessons about the job and about myself.*



Irvinne Redor, Communication Manager of  
IFCM and Secretary General of the  
Philippines Choir Directors Association  
YEMP 1 – Utrecht, The Netherlands 2009

*Joining YEMP in 2009 changed the way I deal with people. It helped me be more confident in voicing my opinions and being more comfortable interacting with new acquaintances.*



Shekela Wanyama, music educator and conductor, studying choral conducting at the University of Minnesota with Kathy Saltzman Romey, Minneapolis, USA

*The gathering in Caen was life changing. Although we were all from different parts of the world, we found similar challenges and exchanged ideas and solutions. We made life-long friendships too!*

## Useful links

- Arts Management Network: [www.artsmanagement.net](http://www.artsmanagement.net)
- European Music Council: [www.emc-imc.org](http://www.emc-imc.org)
- International Music Council: <https://www.imc-cim.org/>



- ECA: [www.europeanchoralassociation.org](http://www.europeanchoralassociation.org)
- YOUNG: [bit.ly/IFCMyoung](http://bit.ly/IFCMyoung)
- IFCM: [www.ifcm.net](http://www.ifcm.net)

*Edited by Charlotte Sullivan, UK*