

XXth Choralies A Cœur Joie Festival

Vaison la Romaine, France, 2-10 August 2010

Jutta Tagger, former Managing Editor, ICB

« A Festival – A Passion »

The emotion is always intense when one enters the magnificent Roman Theatre of Vaison la Romaine in Provence. As always, the evening starts with Open Singing and then continues with a choral concert, a cappella or with orchestra and soloists, or even creative staging, performed by hundreds of *choralists* or a small vocal group.

This twentieth festival with its up to 6,000 music lovers who came to learn, sing and listen to beautiful choral music of all origins, traditions, styles and epochs, met the highest expectations.



*Schola Cantorum de Caracas
– Photo: Dolf Rabus*

Since its beginnings, in 1953, the festival has been open to the world through its music, participants and conductors. And the Songbook is witness to this multicultural spirit.

The programme included workshops of eight, five or three days' length (the latter, called "discovery workshops" did not culminate in a concert). There were also one-day workshops ("One conductor, one day") and more. There was something on offer for every taste and age.



Public performance of the Atelier 1 "Poésie des musiques baltes et nordiques", conducted by Aarne Saluveer – Photo: Dolf Rabus

In addition to the big special concerts at the Roman Theatre (cf. special box), numerous musical activities and concerts took place every afternoon, in the cathedral, in churches, gyms and tents, presented by the workshops, the A Coeur Joie regions and individual choirs. There were also places where one could meet for a drink or a discussion, e.g. the "Conductors' Forum" or the "Carré Jeunes" (Meeting Point for Young Singers), or listen to conferences, sing, etc. Musical activities also took place in public places; the traditional parade, the theme of which this time was "The Seasons" is also worth mentioning. On one evening the choirs went out of Vaison

to give concerts in the surrounding area.



*Audience in the Roman
Theatre – Photo: Dolf Rabus*

XXth Choralies festival 2010 – Evening Concerts at the Roman Theatre

Opening concert

- **Calliope** women's choir (France, cond. Régine Théodoresco)
 - **Ensemble Sequenza 9.3** (France, cond. Catherine Simonpietri)
- **Schola Juvenil de Venezuela** (cond. Luimar Arismendi & Ana Maria Raga)

Offenbach Follies

- **Solistes de Lyon** (France, cond. Bernard Tétu), and **Percussions Claviers de Lyon** (France, cond. Gérard Lecoïnte, France),

Soirée 20! (20th anniversary concert)

- **Tenebrae** vocal ensemble (K.; cond. Nigel Short)
- **French Youth Choir** (France; cond. Fred Sjöberg, Sweden)
 - **Fusion** youth choir (cond. Mick Wagner)

Rhythm and Songs

- **Percussions Claviers de Lyon** (France)
- **Witloof Bay** vocal quintet (Belgium)
 - **Voces8** vocal group(K.)
- **"Dogora"** by Etienne Perruchon (France)
- Workshop concert (cond. Vincent Coiffet) with the **Orchestre Symphonique des Alpes** (France) and the **Vaison-Ventoux** children's choir (France; cond. Martial Renard, France)

Vocal Jazz

- **The Real Group** (Sweden)

From Earth to Heaven

- **Robert Ray**: Gospel Mass (workshop) and Jazz Trio, cond. by the composer (USA)
 - **Faust** (workshop "Between Heaven and Earth" and the **Orchestre Symphonique des Alpes, France**; René Falquet, Switzerland)

Closing concert

- **Nils Lindberg**: Requiem (workshop and **Usine à Gaz** big band (France), cond. Fred Sjöberg, Sweden)
- **Handel: Saul**, extracts (workshop, cond. **Mark Shapiro**, USA)
 - **Beethoven**: Fantasy for soloists, choir, piano and orchestra op. 80 (soloist: Nathanaël Gouin-Mossé, France, and the **Orchestre Symphonique des Alpes** ; cond. Martial Renard, France)

Open Singing: Néstor Zadoff, Argentina



*“Sequenza 9.3” conducted by
Catherine Simonpietri –
Photo: Dolf Rabus*

A novelty: Open Singing, under the capable and joyful direction of Néstor Zadoff from Argentina, and the breaks between the different parts of a concert were filled with short musical sketches by a very funny vocal trio from the city of Lyons, called *Triplex*. There was no time to get bored between the different parts of an evening.

The Choralies have always presented a first performance of a work written by a French composer for the occasion. This year, the composer was Patrick Burgan; his work, called *Figures*, on a poem by Pierre Caumeil, is a beautiful piece and was performed by a group of singers from the Rhône region under the direction of Christine Morel, with the composer present. Mr. Burgan also participated in a panel discussion “Composing today for Amateur Choir”. Aspects dealt with included writing, distribution and reproduction of the piece, the “specification sheet” for the commission, the importance of the text, et al.

This twentieth Choralies festival also provided an opportunity to present an exhibition about the life of the festival since 1953 in the cathedral cloister, together with a souvenir booklet.

The Choralies festival requires the help of more than 400 volunteers. They had come from France or elsewhere. Without them and the assistance of the technical services of the city,

it would be impossible to organise such an event every three years in a small place like Vaison, without adequate infrastructure (except for the Roman Theatre). Everything has to be reinvented, recreated every time in order to welcome thousands of singers in good conditions (lodging, food, rehearsal and concerts venues, stage control, communications systems ...). All of this is done with a big smile!

Again, the festival in this “European Choral City” was an exceptional event; beautiful and full of human warmth.

Thank you to all who contributed to this success!

E-Mail: jutta.tagger@wanadoo.fr