



World Choir Council

WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL ONLINE GENERAL MEETING

JULY 10, 2020

REPORT



Dear members of the World Choir Council, dear colleagues and friends,

I would like to thank you very much for your numerous participation in the first online General Meeting of the World Choir Council. Almost 70 members from 58 nations came together at this digital meeting. It was very encouraging to see you all, despite the circumstances.

The months have been challenging for mankind and the choral world, but we are facing the future with confidence. In some countries, the choral scene is slowly awakening again, and work is being resumed in small steps, albeit with restrictions. The challenge for all of us now is to adapt to the changing circumstances and find new ways to bring the community back together.

Especially in these currently difficult times, it is of enormous value to have such experienced colleagues like you at our side and to be able to face the challenges of our time in solidarity with an agile international network.

The World Choir Council and all of you, your expertise and your great support are highly valued. We appreciate the exchange with you very much, and it is our ambition to further extend it. This online meeting and the following regional meetings are the first step in this direction and we are looking forward to establishing more regular communication possibilities with you using the technical means of our time.

Even if a digital meeting is no substitute for a personal conversation and direct interaction, it is still an important step for new impulses. I am very much looking forward to welcoming you all personally next year to the regular meeting of the World Choir Council at the World Choir Games in Flanders, Belgium!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Günter Titsch'.

Yours,
Günter Titsch
President INTERKULTUR & World Choir Council



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Afghanistan	Omid Nouri	Hungary	Katalin Kiss
Argentina	Alejandro Daniel Garavano	Indonesia	Aida Simanjuntak Swenson
Armenia	Tigran Hekekyan		Aris Sudibyo
Australia	David Slater	Ireland	Bernie Sherlock
Austria	Karl-Gerhard Straßl	Israel	Aharon Harlap
Belarus	Inessa Bodyako	Jamaica	Gregory Simms
Belgium	Luc Anthonis	Kosovo	Memli Kelmendi
	Jean-Pierre van Avermaet	Lithuania	Vytautas Miškinis
Benin	Felix Nassi	Malaysia	Susanna Saw
Brazil	Helma Haller	Malta	Christopher Muscat
Bulgaria	Theodora Pavlovitch	Mexico	Marco Antonio Ugalde
Canada	Zimfira Poloz	Namibia	Fanie Dorfling
China	Guanghui Chen	Netherlands	Johan Rooze
	Dapeng Meng		Hans van den Brand
	XiaoBao Tian	Nigeria	Emeka Nwokedi
	Lingfen Wu	Philippines	Jonathan Velasco
	Li Yang	Portugal	Myguel Santos e Castro
China/Hongkong SAR	Raymond Fu	Republic of Korea	Shin-Hwa Park
Chinese Taipei	Johnny Ku		Alexander Solovyev
Costa Rica	Beverlyn Mora Ramirez	Russia	Lucien Mendy
Croatia	Branko Stark	Senegal	Vladimir Opacic
Denmark	Steen Lindholm	Serbia	Milan Kolena
Estonia	Aarne Saluveer	Slovakia	Oscar Boada
Finland	Kari Turunen	Spain	Soundarie David
France	Jean Baptiste Bertrand	Sri Lanka	Fred Sjöberg
Germany	Jürgen Budday	Sweden	Anzhela Maslennikova
Gibraltar	Christian Santos	Ukraine	André de Quadros
Great Britain	Joy Hill	USA	T.J. Harper
	Rachel Mason	Venezuela	Maria Guinand
	Mathew Wright	Vietnam	Chau Ahn Dang
Greece	Maria-Emma Meligopoulou		

INTERKULTUR – PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS 2020/2021/2022

The last months have demanded a lot from the world and have had a strong impact not only on our daily lives but also on the way we work. We had to adapt ourselves and our projects to the given circumstances.

11TH WORLD CHOIR GAMES – FLANDERS, BELGIUM

Unfortunately, numerous INTERKULTUR events could not take place this year and had to be postponed. Among them the 11th World Choir Games in Flanders, Belgium. Thanks to the tremendous support of the local partners, this major international event could be postponed to July 2021. A large part of the choirs registered for this year could already be rebooked and the possibility of postponement was accepted with great joy by the entire choral world.



NEW: JULY 2-12, 2021, FLANDERS, BELGIUM



VIRTUAL
CHOIR
GAMES

FLANDERS
2020

VIRTUAL CHOIR GAMES – VIRTUAL CHOIR VIDEO AWARD

In the course of this year we were challenged to find new ways to be together, to communicate and to look for alternative solutions. The postponement of the World Choir Games and other choir festivals to 2021 was one of the first consequences.

But this year we also wanted to bring the choral world together, even if only in digital space. For the period July 5-15 (the original dates of the World Choir Games 2020) we invited the world to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the World Choir Games during the Virtual Choir Games 2020, including the vividness, voices and all the emotions of the WCG atmosphere.

A highlight of the Virtual Choir Games is the announcement of the winners of the first INTERKULTUR Video Award. 128 virtual choir videos from 44 countries and regions were submitted to participate in the category "Choirs with accompaniment" or in the category "Choirs a cappella".

[More information >>>](#)



INTERKULTUR – PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS 2020/2021/2022

12TH WORLD CHOIR GAMES – GANGNEUNG/GANGWON-DO, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The World Choir Games are returning to the Republic of Korea: The city of Gangneung, located in the Province of Gangwon, is the second Korean city after Busan in 2002 to host the world's largest international choir competition. From July 4-14, 2022 Gangwon-do, former venue of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, will welcome thousands of singers from all over the world.

The highly respected conductor and eminent authority on choral music Dr. Hakwoon Yoon has accepted to become Honorary Artistic President of INTERKULTUR. With regard to the preparation of the games in Korea, this is an important and great support especially for the involvement of the local choir scene.

With the exceptional and first-time situation, that we now have to organize two WCGs within two years, we have only limited time for preparation. For this reason and to improve the connection to the local choirs, we will open an organization office on-site with our new Korean colleague, Mr. Kymin Kim.

SAVE THE DATE

12TH WORLD CHOIR GAMES 2022
JULY 4-14, 2022
GANGNEUNG, REPUBLIC OF KOREA



COOPERATION WITH THE SPORTS CONSULTANCY

Since April 2019 INTERKULTUR is cooperating with the London based agency The Sports Consultancy, widely recognized as leaders in host city procurement processes for a range of major sporting and entertainment properties. This interesting and productive cooperation is the result of a feasibility study, initiated by the region of Flanders. At that time, they requested that all major events that could be held in the region be examined in order to promote the destination. As a result, the agency ranked the World Choir Games as the number one event, that could promote the region most efficiently and effectively. This led to the start of the bidding process for the WCG 2020 as well as the start of our cooperation, which has now resulted in the cooperation with Korea for 2022. We will continue our cooperation with TSC and will work with them in the upcoming months on the European Choir Games, Asian Pacific Choir Games as well as a few other events.

NEW EVENTS

INTERKULTUR's work has always been international. This year, for the first time, we will have a national choir competition staging the best choirs of the country: German Choir Championship. The choir community in Germany needs this support in order to be able to compete at the same level, to grow stronger together and to have a better access to international competitions. There are considerations to continue this national competitive approach and to establish it also in other countries and regions.

The region of Southeast Asia is another focus area of INTERKULTUR's projects, such as the international choir competition in Hoi An, Vietnam, or the established choir event in Kobe, Japan and for Bohol, Philippines, a premiere with an international choral event is planned. Together with the WCG 2022 in Korea, we thus have four major events in the Asian region in the near future.

The region of origin of INTERKULTUR's activities, Eastern Europe, is again a central area of interest for international choral work. For the second time in Riga, Latvia, Riga sings will be held and in Kyiv, Ukraine, as well as ST. Petersburg, Russia, there will soon take place international choral events for the first time.



CHOIR AND THE DIGITAL WORLD

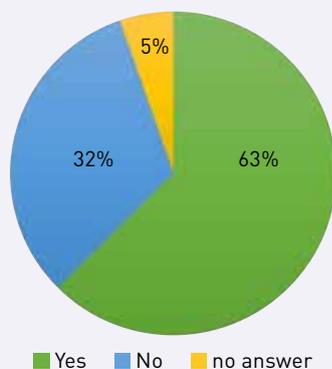
The global outbreak of the Covid-19 virus has influenced the choral world since the beginning of this year. Concerts and rehearsals have been cancelled, travelling got restricted and most conductors have not been able to continue their regular choral work.

During this time, virtual rehearsals and new digital technologies offered a chance to many choir leaders and singers to deal with the current restrictions. Despite the numerous possibilities and new approaches, digital cannot completely replace physical choir work. However, it could give some new impulses that might last beyond this difficult time.

The members of the World Choir Council were asked about their current experiences with digital tools and virtual choral work as well as their expectations for the future of choirs in the digital world.

EXPERIENCES WITH VIRTUAL CHOIRS AND DIGITAL TOOLS FOR CHOIR PRACTICE

Have you been involved in a virtual choir or have you used digital tools for your choir practice in the last months?



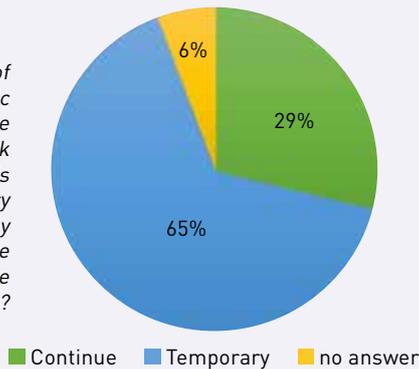
- 1. Teaching:** Individual Coaching
- 2. Choir work:** Rehearsal, Group Practice
- 3. Virtual Choir:** Virtual production, Streamed Performances
- 4. Communication:** Stay in Contact, Motivation

The balance between choral conductors who have been involved with digital technologies in various ways and conductors who prefer face-to-face choral work is quite distinct. More than half of the respondents have stated that they have made experiences with virtual choral work in the last months, while a third were unable or unwilling to gain any experiences.

The most frequently listed practical experiences were (individual) teaching, general choral work and group practices, production of virtual choir videos and performances as well as basic communication. Many conductors tried to rehearse in some way, teach or coach individual singers or conductors, produce a virtual video or distribute scores and audio samples. But digital technologies were and are also a great help to keep in touch with the individual singers and the choir as a whole, and at least to maintain somewhat the sense of community, that is so important for a choir.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Will this way of making music continue after the current outbreak or do you think it is only a temporary solution? Why and how could we continue to make use of it?



Advantages

Communication
Individual Teaching
Promotion
New creative ways of working

Disadvantages

(Group) Rehearsing
Social distance
Resources (Cost, Time, technical equipment and knowledge)
(Musical) Quality, Complexity

The question of the long-term nature of digital solutions has also been addressed quite conclusively. More than half of the respondents assume that these are temporary measures, while nearly a third of them believe that digital tools will continue to be used for choir work in the future.

All in all, everyone agrees that modern technologies are extremely helpful for fast and worldwide communication, but at the same time many consider them too artificial and miss the actual social aspect.

The biggest advantages of digital technologies are in individual training. Recordings can help students and motivate them to accelerate the learning of new music. Singers can take on new responsibilities and rehearse and record independently in their own time with the possibility of direct feedback. The main disadvantage of working with digital tools was said to be the difficulty of online group rehearsals. The delay in transmission (latency) makes joint singing nearly impossible, it is only helpful for basic work and because of the „one-way“ communication, collective inspiration is missing.

The majority considers many aspects of virtual work as temporary, motivated by the wish to be able to return again soon to work with the choirs in person. Even if the technical resources and knowledge are available, virtual choir work in the group is currently not feasible at a high level. For musical quality and complexity, it is important to be able to interact with each other live as a group.

A decisive factor which cannot be completely overcome by virtual choir work is the social distance. The social aspects that we are currently lacking are not only about the quality of singing or the musical work - it is much more about the choir, about the people themselves. The social and emotional components that cannot be digitally replaced range from education and communication to inspiration and the important feeling of community.

Out of necessity to deal with alternative approaches has, however, also resulted in many creative new ways and impulses. For some choral conductors, new, so far unknown possibilities have opened up, which can continue to productively support and accompany their choral work in the future. The possibility to communicate easily and efficiently with one's own choir, but also with colleagues all over the world, to give lectures, to build and maintain international networks - the willingness of digital cooperation has definitely increased in the last weeks and months.

A very important argument, which was mentioned during the consideration of the advantages and disadvantages, concerns in particular the technical and financial resources in the world. Not every country and not everyone has the same prerequisites and opportunities to participate virtually and use the digital space. We must be aware not to exclude or leave anyone behind, while the choral world finds new ways to facilitate and improve the daily work.

ELENA SHARKOVA, USA

“Like every experience in life, this COVID situation must be taken as a lesson. We all hope that choirs will resume its normal routines as soon as it is safe. At the same time, we now have an experience of connecting with people via online platforms and we should take some of the comforts of it into the future. I also hope that the online platforms such as Zoom will improve sound and deal with the delay issues. The world altogether will be a different place once we are out of this extreme situation: the choral world will be changed forever as well.”

LONG-TERM INFLUENCE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

The world around us is changing more and more, becoming more digital and new technologies will develop, become better and more useful – this will also affect the choral world.

Digital tools will continue to improve and support the rehearsal process, performances, recordings and promotion. Many new opportunities are opening up and we can work together faster and better all over the world.

On the other hand, however, it is feared that choirs will become demotivated and eventually decline, especially for youth and amateur choirs. Also, many important social aspects which make up the choir as a community are lost in the digital space.

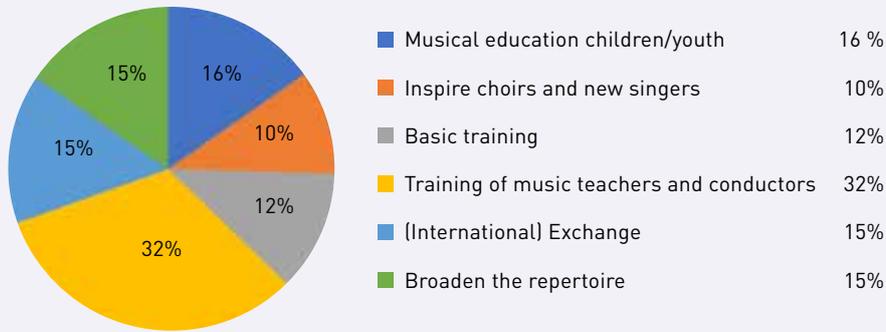
Since online content is often easily accessible and free of charge, it could become difficult to monetize the choral world in the future. Care must be taken to avoid giving the impression that choirs no longer need funding or even an audience, which would lead to the demise of the choral landscape.

Since we are, hopefully only temporarily, forced to work online at the moment, we realized what we are missing. It made us aware how valuable interaction in „life“ is. Maybe this insight will help choirs later when they start again, it can be a new way to grow.

VLADIMIR OPAČIĆ, SERBIA

“In my opinion we should seriously discuss the use of the “virtual choir” term. What does it mean/represent exactly? A very good, edited, mastered video recording of a group of singers and their individual, non-edited, sound files put together and modified? Maybe, but still, that is not a choir! [...] Choir is a group meeting live, learning and improving together, growing as musicians and as human beings, performing, sharing space, stage, being together in one place while music making, feel and understand (tolerate even) those around, ourselves too, through emotions, music, body language, breath...”

What are the specific educational needs in your country or region?



RISING STARS AND EDUCATION

The choral world is changing and growing constantly. Being a leader in the choral world is and has always been a “lifelong” learning: new music, new styles, new techniques, new singers. Education is an important topic in the everyday life, for oneself and for teaching and training young singers.

Especially the training and promotion of new talents, aspiring singers as well as choral leaders in particular, is a decisive element for the future of the choral world. All over the world promising young talents are emerging, who will actively shape and define the future of choral music. To educate and train them is the task of us all.

Each region has its own specific educational needs, and Council members were asked to elaborate on these. Some fundamental gaps and necessities were identified as commonalities.

The most important aspects were related to music education, especially for children and young people, but also for conductors and music teachers. The main focus here was on basic training, such as vocal training, rehearsal tips or conducting techniques, but also on choir management skills.

In many regions a decline in children’s choirs is being noticed and there are difficulties in motivating new talents and young singers for choral music. A particular need for education in this area would therefore be to **promote the joy of singing and the love of music, especially among children**. There is also another gap in many educational systems - many schools do not have professionally trained music teachers and most conductors are self-taught. There is therefore an increased need in many regions of the world for affordable, long-term opportunities to train conductors and music teachers in particular.

Other important aspects of musical education are **international exchange and learning from each other**. The majority suggested educational programs to expand the choir repertoire with different musical styles from all over the world. But not only to get to know the unknown music, but also to meet fellow musicians from all continents and to build international relationships.

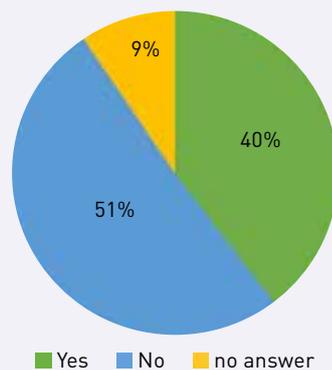
The current time has made it clear that digital technologies can be a great support for this educational work in particular. In virtual space, the world can come together and learn from each other, even if travel might not be possible for financial or political reasons.

CHOIR MUSIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The World Choir Games in Flanders in 2021 will be the most inclusive Games ever. “Choir singing for everyone” – even if it may not seem so easy for certain groups and may require special care and adaptation. During the World Choir Games, this particular topic will be discussed and looked at from different points of view.

In preparation for the Games, this important topic was already part of the Online General Meeting, including a guest contribution by Mr. Zhang Ruxin, Artistic Director Tianjin Dolphin Hearing Disabled Children’s Choir.

Have you ever worked with a choir consisting of persons with physical or mental disabilities, marginalized groups, or similar?



While less than half of the respondents have had direct experience of working with physically or mentally disabled and marginalized groups, almost everyone acknowledged that choral work can and should contribute significantly to social inclusion.

The areas that require the special attention of the choral world are mainly people with physical and mental disabilities and people on the margins of society. These two groups each have their own unique and different challenges and hurdles to overcome. What they have in common, however, with regard to the aim of social inclusion, is that the choir must be a place where they can feel safe and accepted, where they are supported in overcoming their problems and where they can sing together at an adequate artistic level.

FANIE DORFLING, NAMIBIA

“Choirs are one of the places, where people of all kinds should be included. Through music walls and differences disappear. It is the one place, where we can do our bit to include everyone and fight injustice”

WHAT CAN WE AS A CHORAL COMMUNITY DO TO SUPPORT SOCIAL INCLUSION?

As a choir community we have the chance to make an important contribution to the inclusion work in our society.

For one thing, it is necessary to educate and train choral conductors on how to interact with people with special needs or how to lead a choir of socially excluded groups. Specific training programs, educational work and also the exchange with in this area experienced choir conductors are important.

Furthermore, it is important to continue to highlight this side of the choral world and to present the communal experience of a choir and to make it possible for everybody to experience this feeling of belonging. This area of choral work must be given a medial stage, through social media, at events and in everyday life.

BEVERLYN MORA RAMÍREZ, COSTA RICA

“It is necessary to create a social and political awareness in our countries and to demonstrate the impact of choral singing on the integral quality of life in our societies.”



INTERKULTUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Günter Titsch
President INTERKULTUR &
World Choir Council (Germany)



Qin Wang
First Vice President of
INTERKULTUR (China)



Stefan Bohländer
Vice President of
INTERKULTUR (Germany)



Dr. Christoph Wirtz
Secretary General of
INTERKULTUR(Germany)

**SINGING TOGETHER
BRINGS NATIONS
TOGETHER**

INTERKULTUR WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL TEAM



Fred Sjöberg
Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR
and World Choir Council (Sweden)



Johan Rooze
Artistic Director
(Netherlands/Republic of Korea)



Gent Lazri
Director International Choral
Networking (Albania/Germany)



Francesco Leonardi
Project Development (Italy)



Iris Huting Byrd
Project Director INTERKULTUR
China (China/Canada)



Joy Ran Tao
Project Manager
INTERKULTUR China (China)



Franziska Hellwig
Coordinator for Communication &
Development, President's Office (Germany)



**Ruhberg 1
35463 Fernwald (Frankfurt/Main)
Germany
worldchoircouncil@interkultur.com**

interkultur.com