



FINAL PRESS RELEASE

Europa Cantat XVIII Torino 2012: a success for the participants, a success for Torino and Piemonte

Europa Cantat, the foremost European choral festival, held in Torino from July 27 to August 5, has come to its conclusion. The closing balance of the event is such a success, that it surprises even the organisers. The thousands of people crammed in Piazza San Carlo during the closing ceremony can describe the festival's success more than any figure. It was an exciting experience for everyone: for the participants who experienced ten intense days of music, tourism, meetings and fun, but also for Torino and Piemonte, which proved, as always, to be welcoming and able to respond with great enthusiasm to diverse cultural proposals.

A few numbers

When "the curtain drops" the emerging numbers are staggering. In these **10 days**, Torino and Piemonte welcomed over **4,000 participants** (singers, conductors and composers), from **42 countries** in **4 continents**. And not only: we have to add to this already impressive number **871 guest artists**, including vocal groups, instrumentalists and dancers. In addition, **131 teachers** participated, plus **322 volunteers** (an incredibly precious resource), **150 international staff organisers**, **24 young aspiring artistic managers**, about **15** stage and audio recording **professional technicians**. In short, we are speaking of a "small mobile city" that has joyfully invaded the region. The **111** scheduled **concerts** were received with great enthusiasm, as shown by the on-line bookings and long queues at ticket offices. 7,000 seats were booked on the web only by the participants. The evening concerts obtained a particular success. **Every night**, in fact, many festival's venues (and especially the Chiesa di San Filippo) were **sold out**. Not to mention the crowds in Piazza San Carlo, where **every evening between 2,500 and 3,000 people** were gathered.

Even the training programme presents impressive numbers: **41 ateliers** of varying length, **47 Discovery Ateliers** of one/two days, that were attended with great enthusiasm by the participants. The Music Expo Project, dedicated to music publishing, involved **25** national and international **publishers**. About **50 journalists** from around the world were officially accredited, but many more people, for various reasons, dealt with the event.

This giant music festival gathered **125 choirs**, **25 guest groups**, **10 national or regional youth choirs**, a countless number of individual participants and amateurs and curious people of every nation and every age in Piemonte.

International Choral World gathering in Torino

150 guests from all over the world visited the festival and met in smaller and larger groups for informal talks and meetings. Thus new projects were born, cooperations developed and choirs and



conductors discovered by organisers of choral events planning their programme for the coming years. Especially for the project **VOICE** (**V**ision **O**n **I**nnovation for **C**horal Music in **E**urope), coordinated by the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat and supported by the European Union Culture Programme, representatives of 14 organisations, festivals, cultural centres and universities came together to get to know the biggest event within the project and to plan the further cooperation until 2015. Several organisations used the presence of many representatives of the choral world as well as many conductors and presented themselves and their activities in the frame of a receptions. Markus Schuck, initiator of the Bonner Schumannfest which has been cooperating for many years with the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat, drew the connection from Bonn to Turin with a reception in honour of the death anniversary of Robert Schumann on July 29th, thus strengthening the cooperation which had started with the invitation of the Torino Vocal Ensemble to the Bonner Schumannfest 2011 which was dedicated to Italy.

Comments

“Here we are at the end of this extraordinary 10 days’ journey. We were joyful and active protagonists in this beautiful city that welcomed us so generously and offered us its artistic beauty and the best sites, where we could listen to and perform our songs and music”- **Sante Fornasier**, the President of the European Choral Association-Europa Cantat and Feniarco (Italian National Federation of Regional Choral Associations) said – “Also we were welcomed by the entire Region of Piemonte, where we organised 25 appointments that were ideally embracing all the provinces. We celebrated this festival by nourishing soul and spirit. We will bring that enthusiasm back to our own countries and keep it in our hearts to nurture this noble, genuine and extraordinary passion”. Carlo Pavese, Artistic Manager of the Torino’s edition of Europa Cantat, is also very satisfied. “Europa Cantat is an unequalled festival, which has given this city the present of 5.000 voices singing together with passion and musical quality, thus leaving an indelible memory. I also believe that, on the other hand, the city has reserved to this event a special and lasting welcome. Places, edifices and, above all, dwellers of Torino feel part of that great choir which, every night, has transformed piazza San Carlo in a symbol of harmony and beauty”.

Open singing: a lasting symbol

Many flashes can capture the nature and spirit of Europa Cantat. The Open Singing sessions surely will be kept in the participant’s and Torino’s citizens’ hearts, remembered as magical moments in which a thousand cultures merged into a single choir. Every night in Piazza San Carlo, thousands of people met to sing different songs from the classical to the traditional repertoires of the many different countries attending the festival. This precious musical material was collected in a book, the Songbook, given to participants as a singing guide and souvenir. The Coro Accademia Feniarco led the Open Singing sessions, carefully conducted by the Swiss Maestro Michael Gohl.

The choir? Love at first sight

For the first few minutes the impression was that of a gymnastics class rather than a choir singing atelier. But no wonder: in singing, the body, starting from breathing, plays a fundamental role. For beginners it’s necessary a little practice before finding the correct position. The class begins by rehearsing with their mouths closed. After this technique (and not without a touch of amazement) the singers feel the satisfaction of hearing their own voices sound in new ways. The ateliers for aspiring singers without previous experience, entitled *Chorus love at first sight*, were faithful to their promises. The reference to love in the title is significant: love for music, of course, but sometimes



even for a dear person (this atelier was in fact popular among wives, husbands or parents of choir members, eager to discover what could be at the roots of the desire to sing). Led by Maestro Pietro Mussino, the participants (a little "class" of about 15 people, an ideal number for a proposal of this kind) studied some basic aspects of vocality: rhythm, intonation, some tips on reading music. Then a *tour* to find other accessible *discovery ateliers*.

Our old masters: what a success!

Every evening, around h. 21, in front of the church of San Filippo you could verify the situation: small groups of people of all ages crowded at the front door hoping to get inside (even if all the seats were booked). And here are the names of the "stars": Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Bach and Händel. The experience of Europa Cantat demonstrated (or rather reminded us) despite appearances how much classical music can draw the public's attention. This happens especially when there are outstanding ensembles performing, and who are conducted by great Maestri such as David De Lucia (who directed the ensemble Orologio), Federico Maria Sardelli (a Vivaldi expert), Eric Van Nevel, Filippo Maria Bressan and many others. Even the Early Music ateliers, including the one dedicated to Gregorian chants, were very popular among the participants.

Vocal Pop: is it a special key for young people?

Here is a surprising proposal. Usually it is natural to associate the idea of a choir to a classical repertoire (that is preferably sacred) or at most a *digression* in the folk tradition. Europa Cantat has shown that choirs and today's pop music can go hand in hand. Experiments of this kind are very popular among young people. "The youth choirs are always looking for new repertoires, they devour everything, they want to be fashionable, right with the flow - said Alessandro Cadario, conductor of the Coro Accademia Feniarco and lecturer in various ateliers of the festival - I find that this overwhelming curiosity can be fully satisfied in vocal pop." We can understand, then, the arrangements of the new generation, some of which are very elaborate, and deal with the choir as a real orchestra of voices. There are some arrangements that emphasize the word (almost in a "madrigal" style) and others in which more complex rhythmic figures overlap and are very useful from a didactic point of view. The "new voice tools" like *beat boxing*, a technique that simulates the sound of drums, are also very interesting. But all this, of course, is not incompatible with the study of wonderful early music repertoires. "The choral world - Cadario reminded us - must also be a cultural movement in which the musical treasures of the past, that we should learn, study and promote, are being preserved " .

Singing the music "of the people"

The term "folk music", that is rather generic, can refer both to the music written for and created for the people (the so-called *popular* or *pop music*), and to the music that comes from the people (*folk*). Both genres were well represented during the festival. We have already mentioned pop. As for folk, we must consider its unique variety: from the United States to the Baltic, from Spain to Finland, without neglecting of course the hybrid musical experiences (like the transplanted African rhythms in Latin America). Particular attention was paid to Mediterranean folk, presented through its many facets (Occitan, Southern Italy, Majorca, Dalmatia, Tunisia, North Africa). Some participant, then, wanted to take a musical journey and not stop at only one place. This is the case, for example, of the atelier *Let's travel*, led by the M^o Basilio Astulez, who, not surprisingly, participated in the closing ceremony.



And what about electronics?

The festival was not lacking in experimentation, including the fusion between choral singing and electronics. These trials were not conducted just for their own sake, but were necessary. "We don't usually think about it, but often electronics is the basis of our many daily musical gestures: when we listen to a CD, an mp3, an lp, when we use a digital keyboard, but also in several other situations, such as the use of amplification in an open space", Stefano Bassanese, professor of electronic music at the Conservatory in Torino, said. And not only that: "We could modify the sound of a voice in real time, and this happens so fast that we do not realise that this is not a real choir but a single voice that has become a choir." Electronics is changing the very way music is conceived: how it is listened to, performed and composed. And the choral movement can not ignore it.

Unusual guests: Turkey

What is a choir in a Muslim country? Turkey is also among the State guests of the Festival. It is a very interesting land for its vocal traditions, and one of the latest entries in Europa Cantat. "Obviously, not having been systematically fed by the Church as in Europe, the Turkish choral scene has no connection with religion" - Burak Onur Erdem (Choral Culture Association, Istanbul) explained – "There is no institution to support and fundraise the choral movement. However, the level of interest in singing seems to be very high, considering the size of choral life since the establishment of the Republic in 1923. We should not be misled by the small number of Western-style choirs: there is a large number of vocal groups dealing with traditional music. "

Composers: a lesson from the great masters

Torino's edition of the Festival has distinguished itself for the large space dedicated to composers and contemporary music. During Europa Cantat's days **seven premieres** were performed, which were commissioned by the Festival to many composers, both Italian and international. Their names are: Carlo Boccadoro (Italy), David Del Puerto (Spain), Lorenzo Ferrero (Italy), Leo Hurley (USA), François Narboni (France), Luis Tinoco (Portugal), Fabio Vacchi (Italy). Furthermore, the composers participated in an interesting series of roundtables, coordinated by M° Nicola Campogrande, and which focused on different aspects of artistic creation. There were memorable encounters, such as the one with **Veljo Tormis**, one of the greatest composers of choral music of our time, accompanied by the Estonian National Male Choir Estonian. As special guest of the Festival (he was celebrated by a concert in his honour), M° Tormis gave a *Lectio Magistralis* during which he clarified some principles of his art of composition, an art that would be unimaginable without the contact with nature and the tradition of the land from which it was born: Estonia.

Music Expo: space for publishers

In many situations Europa Cantat has highlighted improvisational music and hosted groups capable of performing entire concerts by heart. Yet the fundamental principle of choral repertoire is, as always, written music: it is only after the accurate study of a score that a conductor can penetrate into the complexity and profound sense of the piece. This is why the festival dedicated particular attention to musical publications. **25 publishers**, from all over the world (mainly from Europe but also from South Africa and America) were present and considered the protagonists of the Music expo area of the Torino Incontra convention centre. Visitors to the Music Expo could find cds, musical curiosities and gadgets as well as publications.



More than 300 volunteers for voice “Olympics”

Torino has been accustomed to the precious presence of volunteers for years. In 2006 a pacific “army” gave its contribution to the organisation of the winter Olympics. Since then, in various occasions of different kinds, volunteers have been constantly called to work. Europa Cantat has also had the benefit of their help. 322 people of all ages, coordinated by Michele Calleri, have covered widely different jobs, from working in the cafeteria (meals were available to participants thanks to a catering service in the Giardini Reali) to ushering crowds at concerts. The experiences they narrate are decidedly positive. A few of the volunteers can be considered “veterans” who are particularly fond of their role: some were present in the 2006 Olympics.

24 international young people at event management school

Youth from all over the world arrived to try out their skills on field at the festival. 24 young people from Yemp (Young Event Management Programme), a course for aspiring cultural managers, which was organized within the festival, helped to make the event. After a step by step training programme (during which various aspects of management , from fund raising to the promotion of grand events), the “Yempers” as they are called, arrived in Torino to work behind the scene for Europa Cantat.

Their many and diverse tasks were carried out under the guidance of two coordinators, Jeroen Latour (Netherlands) and Samuel Saint Martin (France).

“ It was a unique experience” commented the young “yempers”, “ We believe the value of this proposal lies in the amount of responsibility given to each participant. Here we have not been just simple observers or helpers, but we have been working to all effects in the organising staff, which has led to our development and will be a precious resource for our curriculum vitae”.



Passing the torch

The eighteenth edition of the festival concludes a fundamental step along the path begun 51 years ago. Torino and Piemonte will conserve the memory of the event for the future, it certainly will have effect on the already very stimulating cultural life of the city and region. In the meanwhile the experience passes over to **Pécs**, the Hungarian city host to the 2015 Europa Cantat festival. This is why a Hungarian delegation, led by the mayor of Pécs, arrived in Torino for the concluding concert.

After being received by Piero Fassino, mayor of Torino, the delegation took part in the final concert. Thanks to the presence of vocal ensembles, traditional music and dance groups on stage, it was possible to appreciate the rich cultural and popular traditions of Hungary, which gave colour to the concluding moments of the festival.

The Festival Europa Cantat XVIII Torino 2012 was organised by the European Choral Association **Europa Cantat** and **Feniarco** (*Federazione Nazionale Italiana Associazioni Regionali Corali*) with the collaboration of **ACP** (*Associazione Cori Piemontesi*), with the support and under the patronage of the **Region of Piemonte, Province of Torino, City of Torino**, the support of the **European Union Culture Programme** and the collaboration of **Compagnia di San Paolo and Torino's Chamber of Commerce**. The festival has been included in the proposals of **Torino Young City**, a project of the city of Torino with the aim of creating a system of events that can gratify work done for youth in recent years and in the project **VOICE – Vision On Innovation for Choral Music in Europe**.

Information - www.ectorino2012.it

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