

Multicultural interferences choral international

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Abstract: *Choir singing is one of the most straightforward and accessible methods of human and social communication, due to its three-folded message significance: musical, poetic and performance vibration – it is the collective voice which best expresses the affections of the collectivity. The cultural dialogue and human relations between choir singers contribute to the promotion of ethnical, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. Direct and indirect beneficiaries of the cultural projects are the choir singers that take part in the concerts and choir masterclasses, the viewers and the cultural and artistic education institutions, the cultural and humanitarian association and foundations, mass-media, as well as the composers, conductors, musicologists, music critiques and individuals in political, administrative and cultural positions.*

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1. Introduction – Interculturality, creative capitalization of the ancestral heritage

Choral associations, national and international represent the widest framework of manifestation of the choir formations of all types, which provide simultaneously the optimum conditions for partnering and cooperation among affiliated choir formations.

The knowledge of the fundamental values underlying the culture of ethnic communities, leads to a deeper understanding of their way of thinking and expression, favouring better communication and social integration of citizens. (Rîpă et al. 2007, 8-26)

In the cultural manifestation forms of every national community in Romania there are individual elements that impress with the semantic communication force and artistic expression of its genetic archetype. The cultural manifestation interference with Hungarian, German, Greek, Aromanian, Jewish, Gypsy, Turkish, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Armenian, Lippovan, Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, Italian, Czech or Slovak represents a dynamic factor both in social communication as well as in the mutual spiritual and enrichment. Is interesting both the

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complementary expressive fusion as well as the archetype conservation phenomenon specific to each culture.

The collaborative projects between artistic creators of the diverse communities can give birth to a transversality phenomenon in the heritage cultural economy and urban development, with a stimulative positive effect on the personal and professional life. (Zecheru 2002, 38-43)

I have experimented multicultural collaboration both in institutional sphere as well as in the choral cultural community where diverse nationality and religious confession individuals can be countered. There is certitude in this sense: divergences never existed and it has always been a mutual spiritual enrichment.

Moreover, the consistent participation of people of all ages to cultural activities for their entire life comes from an interior need of personal expression, as an essential requirement for progress and versatility to the changes of social life.

The chorus communities that have continuity and a consistent cultural life are cultural and active, positive social life melts pots. In its 30 years of continuous choral activity as a member of Romanian Association for Chorus Song (Oarcea 2010, 89-91), of the International Chorus of *A Coeur Joie* (Oarcea 2010, 61-69) and the Balkanik Cultural Forum, (Oarcea 2010, 77) has participated to prestigious artistic manifestations (festivals, Competitions) and had partnerships and concerts in collaboration with chorus formations from England, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Hungary, USA, Venezuela and Romania.

Making reference only to the collaboration partnerships, The Astra Choir has organised and sustained cultural projects in collaboration with 46 foreign choir formations and 26 from Romania.

Here are the partner choirs for the multicultural projects developed in collaboration with foreign assemblies. The short list contains the name of the choir, the town and the name of the conductor.

UNITED KING: *Men's* Choir, from Tenby – Conductor: Graham Stubbs; St. Edmundsbury Cathedral Choir, from Bury St. Edmunds – James Thomas; *Northern English Singers*, from London – Howard Layfield; *Imperial College Sinfonietta*, from London – Daniel Capps; BELGIUM: *Le Madrigal du Brabant*, from Bruxelles – Noel Minet and Françoise Robert; *Sammartini* Choir, from Bruxelles – Marian Mitea; BULGARIA: *Sancta Sofia* Choir, from Sofia – Valentin Bobevschi; CANADA: Choir of the Basilica of Notre-Dame, from Montreal – Jean-Pierre Guindon; *Coup d'Coeur* Choir, from Québec – François Provencher; *Neil Michaud* Choir, from Moncton – Neil Michaud; DENMARK: *NIPS Holstebro Musikskole*, from Holstebro – Angela Marinescu; SWITZERLAND: Société de chant *Espérance* from Mézières – André Denys; *Kammerchor*, from Schaffhausen – Guido Helbling; *Le Madrigal du Jorat*, from Lausanne – André Denys; *Saint Michel* Choir, from Fribourg – André Ducret; FRANCE: *Le chœur ACJ*, from Laval – Catherine Renou; *Le chœur ACJ*, from Niort – Michelle Bacle; *Le chœur ACJ*,

from Tarbes – Christine Saura; *A Cappella* Choir, from Lyon – Marcel Corneloup; *Amista* Choir, from Sorgues – Marceau Apap; *Jean-Philippe Rameau* Choir, from Bohain & *A Travers Chant* Choir, from Busigny – Mary-Jane Varès; *Cantares* Choir, from Strasbourg – Christiane Issler; *Cantrell* Choir, from Lyon – Régine Theodoresco; *Cesar Geoffray* Choir, from Lyon – Marie-Thé Mathieu; *Crea' Danse* Choir, from Tarare – Claire Gattet; *Croqu' Notes* Choir, from Nancy – Madeleine Griffaton; *Fa, La, La*, Choir, from Cambrai – Marc Desbonnets; *La chorale Franco-Allemande*, from Paris – Bernard Lallement; *Cardeline* Choir, from Cavaillon – Sylvie Dumont; Ensemble chorale *Musaique*, from Cavaillon – Gaël Florens; *Vilanelle* Choir, from Bourg en Bresse – Elisabeth Gouttard; *Men's* Choir, from Hombourg Haut – Norbert Ott; *Opus 57* Choir, from Freyming Merlebach – Norbert Ott; *Renaissance* Choir, from Tarare – Jo Gattet & Jean Dervieux; Ensemble chorale, from St. Leger sous Beuvray – Marcel Corneloup; *Salanganes* Choir, from Tours – Brigitte Cousin; GERMANY: *Stadtische Musikschule*, from Neckarsulm – Jochen Hennings; GREECE: *Harmony* Choir, from Kastoria – Ioana Avramidoy; ITALY: *ANA LATINA* Choir, from Latina – Giancarla Ardetti; JAPAN: *Osaka Symphoniker* Chorus, from Osaka – Yoshinari Tanaka; NETHERLANDS: *The Spiritual Singers* Choir, from Renkum – Jan Wilschut & Theo van Lagen; SERBIA: *Liceum* Choir, from Kragujevac – Miloje Nikolić; SPAIN: *Alminares* Choir, from Malaga – Jose Eugenio Vicente Tellez; Jesus Guridi Conservatory Orchestra, from Bilbao – Radu Hamzea; HUNGARY: *Bardos Lajos* Choir, from Budapesta – Kempelen Tünde; USA: *SANS* Choir, from Boston University – Jonathan Singleton. (Oarcea 2010, 104-106)

An impressive multicultural activity, especially as a socio-human expression. Statistically, the chorus has participated to 108 festivals, competitions, symposiums and chorus meetings (international and national) has collaborated with 33 conductors, 86 soloists and 14 pianists, in a-cappella and vocal -symphonic concerts.

The realization with success of a multicultural project involves the elaboration of a well fundamentated strategy and the use of the most efficient implementation, promotion and visibility method.

In a synthetic presentation we will present the multicultural project of the tour of concerts realised by Astra Choir in the summer of 2014, in collaboration with chorus formations from France.

2. Choral partnerships – International cultural interferences of heritage values of the Romanian culture with those of the French culture specific to various regional communities: Alsatian, Normand, Breton, Bask, Provencal

There is an erroneous statement, saying that concert tours of some chorus formations are perceived as “choral tourism”. With the exception of relaxation travel, all touristic programs of visiting certain objectives of historical or natural heritage are

cultural projects that meet the needs for knowledge and spiritual enrichment of the participants. If the activity of visiting certain touristic objectives is entwined with concerts held in partnership with other similar formations, the cultural project itself assumes artistic valences. From my own experience, in each chorus tour – national or international – I was able to feel the desire for knowledge and culture of the choir singers who, outside the concert program and masterclasses have tried to visit as many objectives as possible. It is impressive to witness the transformations brought about in the structure of the human personality by the assimilated heritage. (Alexander &, 2001:40-47) If participation at a chorus festival limits the possibility of manifestation to a limited framework, the chorus tours, organized in partnership with other similar formations are beneficial due to the abundance of cultural information and social-human values assimilated by the individual personality.

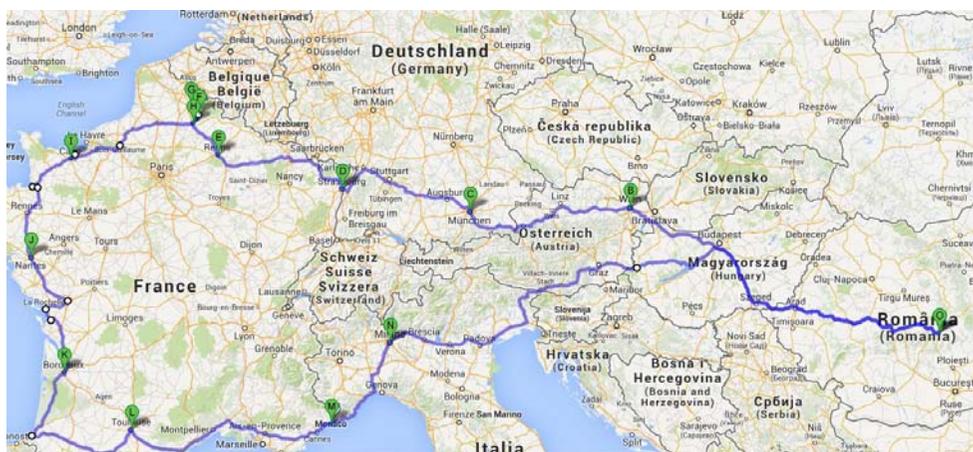


Fig. 1. *Route concert tour in 2014*

The concert tour held by the Astra choir in France from the 7th to the 24th of August 2014 is integrated part of certain previous cultural projects, held in Brasov, in cooperation with: *Men's Choir* from Hombourg-Haut, *Opus 57* choir from Freyging-Merlebach, *A Travers Chants* choir from Busigny, *Jean-Philippe Rameau* choir from Bohain, *Fa, La, La* choir from Cambrai and *La Cardeline* choir from Cavaillon (Oarcea, 2010:105). The project comprised the launching of new cooperation relations with the choirs in Laval, Niort, Tarbes the *Muzaique* choir from Cavaillon. The project is the consequence of the mutual interest manifested by participating choirs, both for chorus creation and performance, and for knowledge of the social-human life and of the cultural and touristic heritage. (Zecheru 2002, 207-229)

The first chorus partnership in the tour took place in Hombourg-Haut and Freyging-Merlebach, two neighboring localities in northern Alsace, on the border with Germany, where the *Astra choir* was hosted by three choirs in the area: *Choeur*

d'Hommes, *Choeur d'Or* and *Choeur Opus 57*. All three choirs have held concerts in Romania, and their conductor, composer Norbert Ott is a connoisseur of Romanian choir music and a faithful friend of Romania, where he held several masterclasses and concerts.

Alsace is a special geographical region, due to the interference of the French and German culture, which manifest similarities with the Brasov area. The choral concert, held in *L'église Collégiale, Hombourg-Haut* (1254), comprised three distinct performance moments: the men's choir, the united choirs and the Astra choir. The atmosphere was stirring, with a competent audience that filled up the cathedral. The first audition performance of the chorus piece *Au nom de ta grande miséricorde* composed by Norbert Ott and dedicated as homage to the Romanian composer Gheorghe Cucu, was impressive.

Meeting Jean Sturm, the executive director of the international program *MUSICA*, who came especially from Strasbourg, has evidenced the appreciation and interest he has for the Romanian musical creation and culture. The Faculty of Music, through the research Center of the University, shall represent the Romanian music in the international mega-program *Musica*.

Meeting Sylvian Teutsch, president of the Théodore Gouvy Institute, has provided us with two novel pieces of information: the first refers to the composer Théodore Gouvy, a name unknown to the Romanian musicology, but whose creation is appreciated to be at the same level of his contemporaries Beethoven and Mendelssohn-Bartholdy; and the second piece referring to the fact that he is related to be Brasovean painter Hans Mattis Teutsch.

The second choral partnership took place in other two localities in northern France: Bussigny and Bohain. At first sight, I was under the impression that the geographical area is insignificant, but shortly after, I realized that from a historical point of view, the region witnessed great battles, from an economic point of view it was the supplier of the most renowned fashion houses from Paris, and from a cultural point of view, it is the home invaluable heritage values, in the Matisse museum and media library in Cambrai (significant documents of the French-flamand Renaissance).

The official reception was impressive, by the presence of the mayors of the two localities, who were present at all the manifestations.

The concert performed in cooperation with the two choirs has had the same mark of novelty. At the concert was present André Blin, the president of ACJ North Pas de Calais, who came especially from Lille, and whose message of appreciation for the Romanian culture was impressive.

Two moments with a powerful social-human impact were represented by the visits and concerts held in Maison de la Retraité (House of Retiree) and the Home for orphans (SOS). The material conditions in which the two institutions perform their activity are at the highest levels of exigency and the attitude of the personnel is marked by elegance and impeccable professionalism.

Another great moment was the visit of the Media library in Cambrai, where we could see and take photos of unique manuscripts from the French-flamand Renaissance.

The social-human interference with the visited families has evidenced the greatness of great discretion coupled with respect and admiration for the Romanian culture and choir singers. The route to the next stage of the tour comprised the visit of the Mont St. Michel cathedral.

The third stage of the tour took place in Laval. If in the first two stages, the choirs we met were partners of our choir, the organization of this stage of the tour was assured by the French Choral Association ACJ, represented by Catherine Renou, choir conductor.

What impressed us from the very first moment was the musical and human trust offered to the Romanian choir singers, given the fact that at the moment, there is a certain negative position and reluctance towards Romanian immigrants, wrongly associated with roma people. The two musical choral interventions, held in *La basilique Notre Dame d'Avesnières* enjoyed a warm and perceptive audience. Stirring were also the affects of the choir singers during the liturgy, marked by the spiritual atmosphere in the church and the priest's sermon. En route to the next stage of the tour, we visited the cathedral in Rennes.

The fourth stage of the tour was represented by the concert in Niort. The organization of the project was performed by the family of professors Michelle and Jean Bacle, as well as by choir singers, many of them having taken part in the masterclasses held in France, at Lavandou, Pornichet or La Rochelle. The concert hall of the Saint Germain de Magné church was overflowing and the reaction of the audience was impressive.

Although the time spent in Niort was the shortest, the second day we went on a touristic visit of the city, having professor Claude Bareau as a guide, who in a very learned manner, presented the geography and history of the region and of the city. Thus, we found out that Niort is the fourth financial power of France after Paris, Lyon and Marseille!! The visited historical objectives are impressive, as usual in France; an architectural mix of old and new, past and present. The city is situated approximately 40 km from the ocean, but 600 years ago, the entire area from Niort to the ocean was an immense swamp, which was drained and improved with the contribution of Dutch monks. Today the area benefits from a network of waterways with a beneficial effect for economy and tourism.

The fifth stage of the tour was the one in Tarbes. As in the previous stages of our tour, in Tarbes our social-human and musical program was of maximum density: visiting the city – with monuments that mark its historical past – of its dendrological park, the Italian theatre.

The climax was the reception hosted by the mayor of the city, Gérard Trémège, a personality of the political and economic life, general director of the Chamber of Commerce of France. The attention bestowed on the Romanian guests, by the presence of the directors of the administrative departments and the appreciation of our country was of the highest degree.



Fig. 2. *Gérard Trémège, Mayor of the Tarbes city*

The concert took place at Lourdes, distinguished pilgrimage place of believers everywhere. It is a space that impresses both through the ever-present Christian manifestation and through the large numbers of pilgrims and tourist presents everywhere.

Our visit in Provence, the geographical are in south-eastern France with a distinct culture and personality, commenced at Avignon, a city with Christian echoes (used to be the city of popes between 1309 and 1417) and an international cultural centre. Visiting the touristic objectives was, as all throughout the tour a great opportunity to enrich our personal culture. Besides Avignon, the south of France fascinates the traveler through a multitude of historical and natural objectives, of which I can mention the natural reservation *Camargue* or the Ron Delta. Also in Provence we appreciated the manner in which, through private and European funds, castles, monasteries and churches with hundreds of years of history were restored. Integrated in the touristic circuit, with an impressive documentation and advertising basis, all these heritage objectives also constitute a basis of education for the young generation.

The musical and social-human relations with the choir in Cavailon commenced in 1996. It is interesting that just as it happened with every previous choral exchange, the musical and human relations remained alive both as far as the formations and the individual relations were concerned. We feel closer to the choir singers we have met through the international projects than to those in the Romanian choirs and we have more mutual programs with choral formations abroad than with the Romanian choirs, except for the choirs in Satu Mare, Bacau, Focsani or Alba Iulia. This finding is very interesting as it confirms the fact that musical relation bring about with them social-human relations and these enjoy continuity when they are based on mutual and genuine cultural and human experiences.

3. Evaluation of the Cultural Project: results and impact, continuity and sustainability

In a synthetic evaluation we can assess that from the organizational and musical performance of the project was impeccable, pursuant to the program, without any outstanding events and at a very special level from an artistic point of view. The quality of the performance is evidenced by the audio and video recordings, by the media coverage and the professional position of artistic personalities present at the manifestations. From a statistic point of view, the concert halls were overflowing, and the meetings and cooperation with the project partners were excellent. The video recordings and photos taken are viable witnesses with great impact which express the status quo of each meeting. The musical and social-human experience acquired constitute a new basis for the support of new projects, and the musical and performance acquisitions will contribute towards the development of the professional profile of future musicians, performers and educators.

On the level of social-human relations, each meeting between the partnering choir singers, Romanian and French, has represented a moment of special spiritual experience, of mutual acquaintance and enrichment. Many families visited did not have a correct image of the history of our country, of the cultural or social life in Romania.

4. Conclusions

Cooperation with the visited choirs will continue, through inviting them to take part to similar manifestation organizes in the country. The social-human and cultural exchanges achieved directly between partnering choir singers are verified certainties after previous projects, that have led to the increase of the interest of foreigners for the Romanian culture, education and tourism.

The impact of the cultural project was very powerful and aims to devise and accomplish other forms of cultural and educational dialogue.

The positive artistic and social impressions have contributed to the increase of the interest of other choir singers for the choral activity.

The individual relations between partnering choir singers is a reality which evidences that through cultural partnerships new relations of human communication can be achieved.

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