

- My reflections -

As trainees who attended three years (2021–2024) of training given by Mr. Thierry Thiébaut (President of A Cœur Joie International) as part of the Conductors Beyond Borders Programme, we found the theoretical and practical lessons we received particularly transformative. This covered harmony, interpretation, conducting, vocal techniques, choir organisation, rehearsal preparation and management, and more. At the end of each session, a concert was held to showcase songs selected based on the concepts learned.

Following this training course, which initially had almost a hundred participants, of whom around thirty completed the entire cycle, the French Institute in Douala presented a performance of Rossini's *La Petite Messe Solennelle*, which I co-directed with fellow trainee Christelle Kemayou Fokou and trainer Thierry Thiébaut. This was an excellent practical exercise for us, summarising the lessons we had learned, particularly regarding the challenging sight-reading, chromatic melodies, managing the soloists (solos, duets, trios and quartets) and the two major fugues for the choir. This greatly improved our technical skills, and I recognise that this retraining over the last three years was essential. In fact, we will need more of it in the years to come.

This training led to the creation of the *Ensemble À Cœur Joie de Douala*, composed mainly of trainees who wanted to stay together to continue singing and sharing.

Of course, we are keen to learn more to improve ourselves and be better equipped for ourselves and for the transmission of knowledge to our cadets. I would like to thank the IFCM (International Federation for Choral Music), À Cœur Joie International, and all its partners for this high-quality musical education. Finally, I would like to thank the instructor, Mr. Thierry Thiébaut, who spared no effort to be available whenever he was needed.

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