

Africa Cantat Festival 2020 in Nairobi, Kenya – short project description

The Africa Cantat festival planned in Nairobi, Kenya, at the end of August 2020 is a one-week festival bringing together choirs and singers from Kenya, from other parts of Africa and from the rest of the world. They gather for a week of learning and sharing through singing. The singers attend workshops called „Ateliers“ („Warsha“ in Kiswahili), with 3 to 5 hours of rehearsals each day, where they learn music new to them, with a conductor they usually don't work with. In addition, the choirs can present their own repertoire in concerts and there would be opportunities to showcase the rich Kenyan choral life. Once a day singers have the option to join an „Open Singing“ with which they build a common repertoire. Parallel to the programme for singers, the festival offers a programme for conductors as well as a training programme for young managers and there would be a „fringe programme“ with singing activities in social institutions such as prisons, hospitals, community centres etc.)

The Africa Cantat festival is inspired by the EUROPA CANTAT Festival which has been organised in different European countries every three years since 1961. The idea for the festival was born when French and German Youth Choir conductors who had been soldiers in World War 2 met during the 1950ies. They thought that a festival that would bring young people together for 10 days, where they would not only sing for each other, but also sing together, learn new music together, and stay in the same accommodation, share meals and spend free time together, would make friends for life and would mean that the young people would not wish to go to war anymore. A second aim was to promote and share music from different parts of Europe.

The EUROPA CANTAT Festival itself was inspired by the French festival Choralies in Vaison-la-Romaine which has been taking place regularly since the nineteen-fifties. In turn the EUROPA CANTAT Festival inspired the creation of other „Cantat festivals“ in Latin-America, Asia and Israel.

It has been the dream of a group of people for many years, to also start the tradition of an Africa Cantat festival that would take place in different African countries every three years. The newly formed African Confederation of Choral Music (ACCM) started concrete planning and looked into different possibilities, finally choosing Nairobi, Kenya as an option for the first ever Africa Cantat festival, Kenya being a popular destination for Africans and non-Africans alike, being considered a safe country and having a rich choral life as well as a recently created Kenya Choral Directors' Trust.

The President of ACCM Yveline Damas, the Secretary Lucien Mendy and the recently elected Kenyan Vice-President Ken Wakia are part of the core team looking into the feasibility of this project with the advisory support of the European Choral Association – Europa Cantat (represented by its Secretary General Sonja Greiner), A Coeur Joie International (represented by its President Thierry Thiébaud) and the International Federation for Choral Music – IFCM (in which three members of the International Committee have a function: Thierry Thiébaud is Vice-President, Yveline Damas is Board member and Sonja Greiner is legal advisor of IFCM).

Some basic facts:

- **Planned dates and length of festival:** last week of August 2020, arrival on a Saturday August 22nd, final concert on Friday, August 28th in the evening / Optional extension: trip to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy Centre with a concert there on Saturday, August 29th in the afternoon and the possibility to do a game drive on Sunday before flying back home or visiting other parts of Kenya.
Thus 6 full days (7 nights for the foreign participants) plus 1 extra night in Ol Pejeta and the possibility to extend the stay further or arrive earlier for tourism
- **Planned size:** Around 500 to 800 participants (complete choirs, individual singers, conductors and managers) including Kenyans, people from other parts of Africa and from the rest of the world, basing the budget on a small number but aiming at an infrastructure that would also allow to accept 1.000 or 1.500 participants if the interest is big
- **Programme:** Workshops/Ateliers for singers, training programmes for conductors and managers, daily Open Singing for all those who want to sing together one hour for fun, and create a common repertoire, concerts of different kinds (Opening Concert for the participating choirs, presenting

the Kenyan choral world / thematic concerts with invited choirs such as a French-German friendship concert, a concert with the African Youth Choir and concerts with other invited choirs and ensembles / Final concerts with the results of the work in the Workshops/Ateliers)

- **Fringe programme / social activities:** singing in prisons, hospital etc., cooperating with social projects that work with the slums and other disadvantaged communities, with the idea of building sustainable projects and programmes that could be continued after the festival. Public singing in big public spaces such as shopping malls (e.g. Village Market) to encourage people who are not singing in choirs yet, to sing along and discover the joy of collective singing. This could start before the festival and be continued afterwards if the public responds well.
- **Infrastructure needed:** low-budget accommodation for foreign participants (about 400 to 600 people), lunch and dinner for participants (all foreigners and some locals) for affordable prices, about 10 to 12 major rehearsal halls that can fit 60 to 120 singers, some smaller halls for the workshops for conductors etc., hotel accommodation for atelier conductors, the international committee and some guests (around 15 to 20?), a major hall for Open Singing and maybe some concerts ideally near the accommodation, meals and rehearsal rooms, several concert venues -> ideally everything except the concert venues should be near to each other (for example a university campus that could provide this on campus and nearby).

Benefits for Kenya

- Promote Kenya as a leading tourist destination
- Showcase Kenyan and African choral music
- Social engagement through choral music (slums, prisons, hospitals)
- Invite some teachers/conductors of social projects offering scholarships for participation to the conductors' training programme, at least for some days
- Engagement for nature conservancy with the help of collective singing/choral music
- Use the festival to strengthen the network of choral music and choral musicians in Kenya
- Offer different levels of participation for Kenyan choirs, singers and conductors
 - o Fully join the festival
 - o Join a shared concert with foreign choirs
 - o The conductor joining the conductors' training programme
 - o Participating in a social activity (this could also be the start of an ongoing sustainable project)

Support needed

- In-kind support from different companies for goods and services the festival would need
- Pro bono help in kind for legal advice and organisational issues as well as PR and communication
- Offer of free concert venues or reduced prices in the frame of a sponsoring agreement
- The offering of free office space for the „secretariat“ / office of the festival
- Possibly offer of free accommodation for a foreign young manager coming to support the management team for approximately 12 months
- Supporting an application for a work permit for this person
- Financial support especially for the costs that will incur in the preparation period (for communication and organisation / management)
- Offering reduced rates on tourist offers / tourist packages for participants

What we can offer

In return the festival can offer visibility / the placement of logos and adverts of funders and sponsors on all communication material of the festival in relation to the level of support, starting January 2019 with communication on the Website and on first flyers produced for activities in the US and Europe in spring and summer 2019.