

30.10 - 07.11.2021
ANTWERP & GHENT

WORLD CHOIR GAMES 2021

SING TOGETHER
SHARE HAPPINESS

PRESS CONFERENCE SEP 15

PRESS KIT

	1
PRESS KIT	2
An introduction to the World Choir Games	3
Why is Flanders organising the World Choir Games in 2021?	4
Singing promotes growth	4
Singing is caring	4
World Choir Games, let's sing!	5
The Choral Flame brings light to Flanders	5
The Champions Competition and The Open Competition	5
The live competitions: The Champions Competition & The Open Competition	5
Virtual Competition	6
WCG goes innovative: Virtual Village	6
Online Tourist Office	7
Watch together, share a drink!	7
#share	7
Ceremonies, Festival concerts and Workshops	8
Friendship Concerts in Ghent and Antwerp, Friendship Concerts on Tour, and Flanders on Stage	8
Artistic Committee	9
Maarten Van Ingelgem is the local Artistic Director	9
International Artistic Committee	9
Professor Dr. Ralf Eisenbeiß (Germany)	9
Fred Sjöberg (Sweden)	10
Assoc. Professor Romāns Vanags (Latvia)	10
Johan Rooze (Netherlands)	10
Official song: 'Listen'	11
Our partners	11
Jan Jambon	12
Zuhail Demir	13
Bart De Wever	13
Mathias De Clercq	13
Jeroen Keymeulen	13
Koenraad De Meulder	14
Günter Titsch	14
Did you know?	14
Practical information	15
Press accreditation	15
Contact	15



AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD CHOIR GAMES

This year, the world's largest international choir competition will be held in Flanders. From 30 October until 7 November 2021, Antwerp and Ghent will roll out the red carpet for hundreds of choirs, including several thousand Belgian choir singers, who will show off their skills to a home crowd.

The World Choir Games essentially are the equivalent of the Olympics for choirs. The competition is subdivided into two levels. The Champions Competition is for selected choirs only, whereas the second level – The Open Competition – is open to everyone. Both competitions have 14 categories. The categories are based on the profiles of the choir singers and their repertoire. In view of the fact that many choirs were not able to perform in the past year, the competition includes several non-competitive events. Choirs can perform before a jury, singers can receive individual coaching and Friendship Concerts will also be organised.

The World Choir Games were organised for the first time ever in Linz (Austria) in 2000*. This is the 11th time that this biennial event is being organised. After Flanders, the World Choir Games will be heading to Gangneung in South Korea (2022) and Auckland in New Zealand (2024).

Like the Olympic Games in sports, the World Choir Games are founded on the principle that participating is more important than winning. Music is the universal language of mankind, connecting all the participants and creating harmony. Anyone can sing, regardless of their age, gender, culture or religion. By offering a platform for participants from around the world to interact with each other, singers join forces with their voices, sharing a message of peace, positivity and happiness.

*Past editions were organised in:

- Tshwane (South Africa), 2018
- Sochi (Russia), 2016
- Riga (Latvia), 2014
- Cincinnati (USA), 2012
- Shaoxing (China), 2010
- Graz (Austria), 2008
- Xiamen (China), 2006
- Bremen (Germany), 2004
- Busan (Korea), 2002



WHY IS FLANDERS ORGANISING THE WORLD CHOIR GAMES IN 2021?

Our region has a **long choral tradition**. Even today, Koor&Stem has 35,000 members, singing in 1,000 choirs across the region.

Singing promotes growth

These days, singing together is a more varied activity than ever. The tradition started with polyphonic singing, which involved composed polyphony. In the wake of series such as Glee and the Pitch Perfect films, many show and pop choirs have since been founded. Choreography became an indispensable element in their performances. Other choirs ventured into cabaret, pop, jazz, and even gospel. There is a very thin line between amateur and professional arts in the choir world. But this also promotes growth and development. **Flanders wants to strengthen this impact.**

Singing together also makes you happy, because our body produces endorphins which reduce stress. And it also helps you find more balance in daily life. Singing is one of the best hobbies that you can have!

Singing is caring

Choral singing also has an important social function. Singing is a great way to **connect different groups in society**, fostering understanding and cooperation, in an organic way. Singing also has an important psychological impact. It helps with **sleeping problems, burn-out and depression**, among others. But it is also used in rehabilitation, to treat patients with throat cancer for example, and in **care for the elderly to relieve dementia**. Flemish audiences have already seen contact choirs perform during the Warmste Week and Belgium's Got Talent. People suffering from dementia sang together with their carers. In 2012, De Betties, a choir of people with dementia, was the opening act for Muse in a sold-out Sportpaleis, giving the audience an opportunity to experience the power of music. But there are also choirs for the hearing impaired, the homeless, people in prison, refugees, pregnant women, people with a physical disability. Such choirs are also actively involved in the World Choir Games.

This year, the World Choir Games have also chosen to focus on the back-on-stage idea. During the past year, many choirs were unable to sing together. Time for many choir singers to get back their voices and share their love of singing with others again. As such, the World Choir Games are the perfect place to experience the cohesion and closeness of singing as they reunite with their team. Perhaps the World Choir Games will encourage the people of Flanders to stop singing in front of the mirror and join a choir!

WORLD CHOIR GAMES, LET'S SING!

The Choral Flame brings light to Flanders

In 2018, the Olympic Flame of the World Choir Games was handed over to Flanders in Tshwane (South Africa). On **15 September 2021, the Choral Flame will be lit** to mark the **start of the ticket sales**. The Olympic Flame relay will start in Antwerp and wind its way through several Flemish towns and cities over a five-week period to arrive in Ghent. The Choir Flame symbolises the warmth that singing together can spread in society.

The journey is a common challenge as it is the choirs that will be taking the flame on its tour through Flanders. Its journey is all about connecting the many groups that share a passion for singing. And just like in the Olympic Games in sport, 'participating is more important than winning', which is why this relay is so important.

Upon its arrival in Ghent, the flame will join a travelling Choir caravan, which was transformed into mobile studio. Over a five-day period, 'Studio Koorvlam' will bring the Choir Flame to places where singing is very important. In addition to singing, there will be talks with the organisers of and participants in singing projects that focus on vulnerable target groups. These singing projects all aim to eliminate the isolation that vulnerable people may experience by creating a meeting place for those people in our society who have very little space. Studio Koorvlam will visit Onze Rijkdom in Antwerp, a choir for people living in poverty; the Fedasil refugee centre in Broechem; and the contact choirs for people with dementia in two nursing homes in Avelgem.

With the connecting idea behind this project and the special focus on social- inclusive singing projects, the non-profit organisation Koor&Stem vzw wants to make a case for singing as a catalyst for participation and inclusion. The videos that will be made during these visits will be published to the digital platform and social media of the World Choir Games after this event.

The Champions Competition and The Open Competition

The live competitions: The Champions Competition & The Open Competition

To give as many choirs as possible the opportunity to participate in the World Choir Games, the Games have been divided into two competition levels. The Champions Competition is reserved for choirs that were selected based on their results in other competitions or on their selection after performing in front of an international jury. The Open Competition is open to all choirs that wish to participate in it.

Both competitions have 14 categories. There are 28 competition events in all, divided into the two parts of the event. A choir can participate in two events per part. The list of events can be found in the events calendar.

These categories will compete during the first competition part (30/10 - 2/11): categories 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13

These categories will compete during the second competition part (4/11 - 7/11): categories 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 14

General categories

- 1 - Children's Choirs
- 2 - Youth Choirs
- 3 - Mixed Vocal Ensembles & Chamber Choirs
- 4 - Vocal Ensembles & Chamber Choirs of Equal Voices
- 5 - Mixed Adult Choirs
- 6 - Adult Choirs of Equal Voices

Thematic categories

- 7 - Musica Sacra a cappella
- 8 - Musica Sacra with accompaniment
- 9 - Musica Contemporanea (contemporary music)
- 10 - Gospel and Spiritual
- 11 - Jazz & Pop Ensembles
- 12 - Jazz & Pop Choirs
- 13 - Folklore a cappella
- 14 - Folklore with accompaniment

Virtual Competition

The World Choir Games have a very large reach thanks to the online section. Hundreds of choirs will be able to show off their skills in the Virtual Village. There are six categories in all. The Virtual Competition allows choirs from around the world to participate through the digital platform. Those who were unable to travel to the World Choir Games due to the current COVID-19 measures will still be able to participate as a result. Their performances will also be published online afterwards.

Categories

- VP 1 - Children & Youth Choirs
- VP 2 - Adult Choirs
- VP 3 - Pop, Jazz, Gospel & Spiritual
- VP 4 - Folklore


- VC 1 - Video clip a cappella
- VC 2 - Video clip with accompaniment

VC = Video clip

VP = Virtual Performance

WCG goes innovative: Virtual Village





Although this year's World Choir Games will be a lively edition, many foreign choirs will be unable to attend the live event due to the current coronavirus measures. That is why the World Choir Games has decided to organise a 'hybrid' festival this year. In addition to all the live events, choirs will also be able to **participate online through a unique digital platform: the 'Virtual Village'**.

Thanks to the partnership with production company Sylvester, the WCG are able to safeguard the international character of the Choir Games while also providing plenty of networking opportunities. All the participating choirs will have the opportunity to present themselves online and participate in the various ceremonies of the Choir Games. They will be able to watch the lighting of the Choral Flame live, for example. Moreover, the choral competitions will also be recorded and shared in the Virtual Village.

The Virtual Village was also set up for **the supporters of the participating choirs and other enthusiastic visitors**. Anyone can register for free to access the platform, ensuring the inclusiveness that is so important for the WCG is thus guaranteed. The choir competitions will also be shown in Flemish nursing homes, so that they too can safely attend the concerts.

Online Tourist Office

The host cities of Ghent and Antwerp have developed plenty of tourism content for the Virtual Village, highlighting their respective DNAs to the international participants. Singers will be able to watch films that were specially made for the tourist office, which include Nic Balthazar guiding viewers through Ghent or a virtual visit of the renovated Steen Castle in Antwerp.

Watch together, share a drink!

There also are several networking opportunities for the choirs in the Virtual Village. **Watch parties** will be organised, as an alternative to the usual jam sessions, workshops, sing-alongs and other fringe activities. Choirs can invite each other to watch each other's concerts. The **'Twin Choirs'** project also promotes cohesion, linking choirs that are attending the live event with choirs that are participating digitally. The idea is that these choirs can learn from each other and perhaps forge friendships for life. And when everyone's voice needs a rest, the participants can also head to the virtual café to play online games. Online workshops will also be offered.

#share

The World Choir Games aims to build an online community through the Virtual Village. Thanks to a partnership with *Creatief Schrijven* and *Breed Beeld*, two amateur arts associations focussing on spoken word, photography and video, daily blogs and vlogs will be published in the Virtual Village. In addition, the World Choir Games also calls on amateur bloggers and vloggers to share their content to the Village.



Ceremonies, Festival concerts and Workshops

In addition to the competitions, the programme of the World Choir Games has plenty of other activities in store for participants. The **Opening and Closing Ceremonies** are organised in collaboration with production company Studio 100. The choirs will also be in the spotlight during two Award Ceremonies. These two events will take place in Antwerp Expo.

During the World Choir Games, **Festival Concerts** will be organised in Ghent and Antwerp, such as *Visioni ed Estasi* by Wim Henderickx. 'Out of the box' focuses on singing in a health and care context. The choir members, who have all had a laryngectomy (removal of the larynx) are happy to show off their skills. Obviously, the Celebration Concerts are another highlight.

Numerous **workshops** will also be organised during the Games. Something for everyone, in other words! Do you want to sample Belgian beers while singing? Then *Sing like a Trappist* is just the workshop for you. Are you (just starting out as) a beatboxer? If you are looking for a way to relax by singing, then the *Feel every note* workshop may be the workshop you've been looking for. Still worried about your singing skills? No need, you don't even have to be able to carry a tune for the *singing out of the box* workshop. If your taste veers to classical music, then why not try Flemish polyphony for something different!

Friendship Concerts in Ghent and Antwerp, Friendship Concerts on Tour, and Flanders on Stage

Daily **Friendship Concerts** will be organised in St James's Church in Ghent, the Stock Exchange, the Horta Hall and St Paul's Church in Antwerp. A local choir and an international choir will sing for each other and for an audience during these concerts.

Friendship Concerts on Tour will also be organised in 11 towns across Flanders during the Games, during which various choirs from different countries specialising in different genres will give concerts together. The Flemish choir receives the international choir for a joint concert and also introduces them the best of Flanders in their region! Many of these events are open to everyone. Dozens of Friendship Concerts will be organised in Ghent, Antwerp, Brussels and the rest of Flanders.

Flanders on Stage is a collaboration between Koor&Stem and other amateur arts organisations in Flanders. You can attend concerts almost daily in the Stock Exchange/Handelsbeurs during the WCG, in collaboration with Vi.be (pop), Muziekmozaïek (jazz & folk), VLAMO (instrumental) as well as street theatre thanks to Open Doek and artists in collaboration with KunstWerk. Breedbeeld and Creatief Schrijven are the partners for the bloggers and vloggers in the Virtual Village. As a result, almost all the amateur arts organisations in Flanders are involved in the World Choir Games 2021 Flanders!

Artistic Committee

Maarten Van Ingelgem is the local Artistic Director



Maarten Van Ingelgem (b. 1976) studied piano and composition at the conservatoires of Brussels and Antwerp. He shares his passion for all things creative as a composition teacher at the LUCA School of Arts (Lemmens campus) and at the Academy for the Performing Arts in Aalst. He is also the conductor of 'De 2de Adem', a Ghent-based chamber choir for contemporary music, with which he has already performed more than 40 creations since 2001.

His compositional oeuvre ranges from solo work to string quartets as well as a chamber opera and a piano concerto. For the latter work, he received the Prize for New Music from the province of East Flanders. Sabam awarded him the Golden Poppy for choral composition and this year he won the European Award for Choral Composers for the third time. In 2015, his composition "Unfinished Landscape" finished 13th in Klara's Top 100.

"If you are looking for a common thread between all that singing, conducting, composing, teaching, coaching and organising, then it has to be my passion for all things creative. And this time I was allowed to come up with lots of ideas: including the run-up to the actual Choir Games with Koorvuur, the Choral Music from Flanders website with scores, singing city tours and Sing like a Trappist! (combining singing with beer)."

International Artistic Committee

Professor Dr. Ralf Eisenbeiß (Germany)

Honorary Artistic President of INTERKULTUR

- Professor of Choral Conducting at the former Pedagogical College Zwickau
- founder and conductor of its college choir
- Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR choir festival and competitions
- one of the founders and Director of the Artistic Committee of the World Choir Games
- international adjudicator, conductor and guest lecturer



Fred Sjöberg (Sweden)

Senior Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR and Vice-President of the INTERKULTUR World Choir Council

- Music Director of the Swedish International Choral Centre in Örebro (SWICCO), Sweden
- Guest Professor at the Ionian University, Greece
- past Vice President of Europa Cantat and past chair of Europa Cantat Music Commission
- past Vice President of International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM)



Assoc. Professor Romāns Vanags (Latvia)

Artistic Director of INTERKULTUR

- Professor of the choral conducting study programme at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music since 1987
- Chief conductor and Artistic Director of “Jāzeps Mediņš Rīga 1st Music School Boys’ Choir” and principal conductor of the Latvian University female choir named “Minjona” since 1990
- one of the chief conductors of the Latvian Nationwide Song Celebration (in 1993, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018)
- in 2008 received the highest civil decoration in Latvia – “The Order of the Three Stars”
- Member of the INTERKULTUR World Choir Council



Johan Rooze (Netherlands)

Artistic Director at INTERKULTUR

- teacher of Jazz piano and Choir at Yeongnam University, Daegu and Music
- Director of the “Yaenoel Jazz Singers” and quintet “J-Cloud”
- international adjudicator, training, seminar and workshop-leader
- founder and former Director of “Dekoor Jazz Group”, University of Utrecht and former Music Director of the Symphonic Choir and Orchestra of the University of Utrecht
- former Professor for Choral Conducting at the Conservatory of Alkmaar and
- Vocal Jazz at the Conservatory of Rotterdam, Netherlands
- Member of the INTERKULTUR World Choir Council





Official song: 'Listen'

Kurt Bikkembergs composed the song 'Listen' especially for the WCG in Flanders. The song's lyrics are a combination of 'Love's Philosophysis', a poem by Percy B. Shelly and the slogans of the Woniya Waka. The text of the latter refers to the holy spirit as the all-encompassing primal force of nature and comes from the North American Dakota Indians. Choirs will be accompanied by a piano, body percussion and a shaman drum.

The song is available for seven line-ups, so that every kind of choir can find something to their liking. You may even hear this song ring out from the local bell tower, as there is even a version for carillon.

Kurt Bikkembergs was born in 1963 in Hasselt. He is a teacher at the Lemmens Institute and one of our most prominent living composers. Kurt Bikkembergs has already published numerous choral works, a genre he likes a lot.

OUR PARTNERS

The World Choir Games are organised on the initiative of INTERKULTUR and EventFlanders, a partnership of Tourism Flanders, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media, the Foreign Office and Sport Vlaanderen, in collaboration with the City of Antwerp, the City of Ghent and the non-profit organisation Koor&Stem vzw.

EventFlanders

EventFlanders was founded in 2016: this specialised unit elevates Flemish events to a higher level and aims to attract international events to Flanders. EventFlanders works under the auspices of VisitFlanders, with support from the Foreign Office, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media and Sport Vlaanderen.

INTERKULTUR

30 years of success. Since 1988 INTERKULTUR, founded by Günter Titsch, is the world's leading organiser of international choir competitions and festivals. The event series has meanwhile become known throughout the world for its high artistic and organisational standards. INTERKULTUR is a concept for choirs all over the world and their excitement about its competitions and festivals is constantly growing.

Wherever they go, participants experience a peaceful, world-spanning festival of singing and intercultural choral music on a high artistic level. Friendship Concerts and joint singing events complete the great emotional impact of INTERKULTUR's international choral meetings. In more than 230 international choir events almost 450,000 singers and more than 10,000 choirs from all over the world have been celebrating international choral music with INTERKULTUR in popular destinations all over the world.

Participation is the highest honour. INTERKULTUR's biggest success to date was to bring the antique Olympic idea to the choral community. The Choir Olympics 2000 in Linz, Austria marked the beginning of a Choir Olympic movement, which goes around the world as the "World Choir Games" until today: after subsequent events in Korea, Germany, China, USA, Latvia, Russia, and South Africa, the 2021 World Choir Games take place in Flanders, Belgium and further editions in Gangneung, Republic of Korea in 2022 and Auckland in New Zealand in 2024 are already being planned.

Koor&Stem

Koor&Stem vzw is the local contact and platform for choirs and vocal music, with a membership of more than 1,000 Flemish choirs. This year, it is organising the [World Choir Games 2021](#) in addition to promoting singing together in various ways. Conductors, singers and board members of amateur choirs can rely on this organisation for advice, training and stage opportunities. The organisation also has a presence outside the choir world, in education and healthcare. Initiatives such as [Koorklank](#), [Doewap](#), [De Stem van ons Geheugen](#) and [Singing Brussels](#) have been successfully launched and developed in recent years.

Antwerp & Ghent

The host cities of Ghent and Antwerp were both involved in the creation of this event in Flanders, which is why this initiative has the full support of the cities' respective mayors. The cities have also provided support for the WCG with play areas and through their marketing channels.

Jan Jambon

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders and Minister for Culture

"Flanders has a long and rich singing tradition and culture. Singing together fosters a collective sense of positivity and pride. But the World Choir Games also offer the many participating Flemish choirs an opportunity to meet their international colleagues in a creative and inspiring environment."



Zuhal Demir

Flemish Minister for Tourism

"The World Choir Games in Flanders are the first, large-scale choir event since the start of the corona pandemic. With this event, we confidently look forward to the future. We are particularly delighted that Flanders will be the stage where choirs can once again practice their passion and enjoy the unique atmosphere of togetherness and positivity that typifies the event."



Photo: Zuhal Demir lights the choral flame on 24 January

Bart De Wever

Mayor of Antwerp



"Antwerp is proud to be the host city of the 11th World Choir Games. Thousands of participants and visitors will be able to enjoy not only culture but also the good Burgundian life in our city. And we are honored to show hidden medieval streets, parks and squares, churches and important cultural buildings to the world where the participants will give everything they have got to surprise, amaze and move the audience."

Mathias De Clercq

Mayor of Ghent

"Music unites people. And where better to do this than in a vibrant city of culture like Ghent, which is known for its music scene and festivities? As the UNESCO Creative City of Music, Ghent is the perfect host city for the World Choir Games."



Jeroen Keymeulen

Director Koor&Stem

"After almost two years of silence because of the coronavirus, we are looking forward to hearing choirs sing again, seeing singers enjoy their passion and feeling connectedness across many borders. Although this is a small event, the underlying principles remain great."



Koenraad De Meulder

Games Director World Choir Games 2021

"It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you think. Or where you live. It's all about singing together and sharing emotions!"

Günter Titsch

President INTERKULTUR

"For the first time in their 20-year history, the Games will be held in both real and virtual space, as it is important to us to offer the whole world the opportunity to participate in the World Choir Games. Together we will send a message of confidence to the choral world that everybody can come together and celebrate a festival of choral music together even in difficult times."

DID YOU KNOW?

- there are more people in Europe who are members of a choir than there are people who play in a football club?
- when you sing, the sound that comes out of your throat travels at a speed of 120 km/h?
- Flanders has more than 1,000 choirs and 35,000 active choralists?
- you produce feel-good hormones when singing together and that your stress is measurably reduced as a result?
- leading UK psychiatrists have asserted that singing in a choir has a greater and better impact on your well-being than their own therapy?
- singing is a great workout? More than 100 muscles are working together to produce sound with every stanza you sing.
- singing together is an ideal team-building activity?
- your heart starts beating to the same rhythm as that of the people you sing with after just 10 seconds?
- singing for just 10 minutes every day can help reduce sinus problems and snoring?
- the average age of the WCG participants is 27 years?
- there are more than 490 events and that it takes more than 1,500 volunteers to ensure that everything goes smoothly?
- it was former US president Barack Obama who said that "Events like the World Choir Games remind us of choral music's power. It reveals our shared humanity"?



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Press accreditation

Information and applications:

Belgian media www.wcg2021.be/pers

International media outlets www.wcg2021.com

Press Accreditation: <https://form.jotform.com/INTERKULTUR/wcg2021-media-accreditation>

Contact

Ismail Eddegdag

Press officer (Growth Inc.)

+ 32 (0)484 78 10 33

Andy Pieters

Spokesman for Zuhal Demir, Flemish Minister for Tourism

+ 32 (0)499 17 35 84

Olivier Van Raemdonck

Spokesman for Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Flemish Government

+ 32 (0)470 99 91 01

Koenraad De Meulder

Local Organising Committee (Koor&Stem)

+32 (0)476 63 29 19

Henriette Brockmann

INTERKULTUR

+49 6404 6974942

Johan Vermant

Spokesman for Bart De Wever, Mayor of Antwerp

+ 32 (0)491 35 84 87

Thomas Dierckens

Spokesman for Mathias De Clercq

Mayor of Ghent

+ 32 (0)477 38 29 37



MET DANK AAN ONZE PARTNERS

