



PRESS RELEASE

OPENING OF THE WORLD CHOIR GAMES

Flanders celebrates the opening of the World Choir Games

October 30, 2021 | Antwerp & Ghent

On Saturday, 30 October the largest international choir competition in the world opens in Flanders. Antwerp and Ghent are the host cities, and for a week they will form the backdrop for the 11th World Choir Games. This choral festival is held once every two years, and brings together hundreds of choirs from every corner of the world. For the first time this year, the World Choir Games will be a hybrid event. More than 300 choirs throughout the world will have an opportunity to take part, despite the Covid restrictions that are still in place. The Virtual Village will allow choirs from other countries to participate in a large number of Competitions, Ceremonies, Celebration Concerts and even Workshops. The choral festival will be formally opened tomorrow in Ghent City Hall, in the presence of Flemish Minister of Culture Jan Jambon, Mayor Mathias De Clercq, Games Director Koenraad De Meulder and Günter Titsch, President of INTERKULTUR.

Since 2000 INTERKULTUR has been organising the largest international choir competition in the world once every two years. In recent years Bremen, Cincinnati and Tshwane have all been proud host cities for the so-called 'Olympic Games for choirs'. This year the honour of hosting the Games has come to Flanders. In both Antwerp and Ghent from 30 October to 7 November there will be opportunities to attend a wide range of Choir Competitions, Friendship Concerts, Ceremonies, Celebration Concerts and Workshops. Choral music organisation Koor&Stem vzw, in partnership with INTERKULTUR, is the driving force behind this international choral event.

The World Choir Games will be formally opened in Ghent on Saturday, 30 October by Flemish Minister of Culture Jan Jambon, the Mayor of Ghent, Mathias De Clercq, Games Director Koenraad De Meulder, and INTERKULTUR president Günter Tisch. Later the same evening the grand Opening Ceremony will take place at Antwerp Expo. In a similar manner to the Olympic Flame, the Choral Flame will reach its final destination during the Ceremony, after a five-week tour throughout Flanders.

SINGING + INNOVATION = WCG 2021

The World Choir Games have never been as innovative as they are this year. The organisation has opted to make this a completely hybrid event. ***“Due to the Covid restrictions that are still in place, we are using our online platform to ensure that international choirs can still enjoy and participate in the World Choir Games. The***

platform that has been developed to make this possible is called 'The Virtual Village'", says Sophie Detremmerie, COO of World Choir Games 2021 Flanders.

"We are so proud to be able to present this alongside Sylvester Productions. The Virtual Village is much more than a virtual space allowing choirs to participate in the 'Virtual Competition' and follow livestreams of the Official Opening Ceremony and other events. We are also offering a wide range of content that will add an extra dimension to the experience for both participants and visitors. The host cities have developed 2D and 3D tourist content for the international singers in the digital Tourist Office, blogs and vlogs will be published on a daily basis and singers will be able to meet up in a virtual café. Through the Twin Choir Project we are even able to connect choirs in Flanders and those outside Flanders for private sessions online. This creates opportunities for meetings and -who knows- perhaps sister choirs may come into being for the future..."

That is not the end of the story. Even after the World Choir Games it will not always be easy for singers and choirs to sing together. That's why the World Choir Games have developed the Music Box. They have entered into a unique partnership with Imec to do this. The Music Box allows choirs throughout the world to sing together with no time delays and the best possible sound quality. The various types of video conferencing software currently available are not able to achieve this.

INCLUSIVENESS FIRST

Inclusiveness and solidarity are in the very DNA of the World Choir Games. We will be taking this one step further this year. The aim is to organise the most inclusive Games since the World Choir Games came into being. In the past five weeks the Choral Flame has travelled to 31 choirs all over Flanders, and special efforts have been made to include underprivileged groups in these events. The 'Studio Koorvlam' (Choral Flame Studio) caravan has been brought to people with dementia, people with physical disabilities and people in poverty and also to an interfaith singing group.

The power of The Virtual Village has been unleashed to allow the Games to reach an even higher level of inclusiveness. Through the digital Music Hall, the concerts can be viewed in Flemish residential and nursing homes, day centres, hospitals and even prisons. This will create opportunities for groups in the population who are less mobile to enjoy the unique atmosphere of this event.

Feel the magic

The various World Choir Games events will be taking place across the two host cities of Antwerp and Ghent. Alongside the competitive elements, which are known as competition concerts, our visitors and participants can also attend Individual Coachings and Evaluation Performances, Workshops, Celebration Concerts, Official Ceremonies and many other events. If you are not sure what the World Choir

Games can offer you, come and feel the magic at one of the thirty free Friendship Concerts.

Minister-President and Minister for Culture Jan Jambon: *"The World Choir Games are creative, inclusive, international and innovative. These are all characteristics for which Flanders is well known. That is why it is such an honour to be able to host the Games. We have had to wait for one extra year, but our patience will be rewarded with an unforgettable, fantastic festival of song."*

WORLD CHOIR COUNCIL GATHERS IN FLANDERS

Alongside the many concerts and virtual meetings, the General Conference of the World Choir Council is also an important part of the World Choir Games. *"It is so symbolic for Flanders to be able to host the General Meeting of this global organisation, both live and virtually. More than 120 representatives from 93 different countries and regions have been invited to gather for discussions about the latest developments in the choral world internationally and to share their practical experiences. They will act as ambassadors to give new confidence to choirs in their home countries and build their motivation so that soon even more wonderful music will be delighting audiences all over the world"*, says Günter Titsch, President of INTERKULTUR, the World Choir Games & World Choir Council.

Tickets for the Competitions, Workshops, Ceremonies and Celebration Concerts are available for sale via the World Choir Games website at www.wcg2021.be.
The Virtual Village can be accessed free of charge at www.virtualvillage.be.

The World Choir Games are an international choral event from INTERKULTUR. The WCG 2021 are being held in Flanders as an initiative of EventFlanders - a joint venture between Tourism Flanders, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media and the Department of Foreign Affairs - the cities of Antwerp and Ghent and Koor&Stem vzw. www.wcg2021.be



Press accreditation

Tickets, press accreditation and further information can be requested at www.wcg2021.be/pers.

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