

# THE BOYS' CHOIR SCHOOL

as a potential part of UNESCO's Representative List of the  
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

First meeting on Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>  
Maison du Danemark – Paris



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

# THE PARTICIPANTS

## The meeting was attended by:

**Andrey ANISIMOV**, Head of Development and Information at the Danish Cultural Institute in St. Petersburg (Russia)

**Vladimir BEGLETSOV**, Director at the Glinka Choir College in St. Petersburg, also representing the Svjesnikov Choir College in Moscow (Russia)

**Vivien BERGER**, Deputy Director at Musique Sacrée à Notre-Dame de Paris (France)

**Luciano BIBILONI**, Artistic director at La Maîtrise de Colmar and conductor at the Opéra du Rhin in Strasbourg (France)

**Edward HIGGINBOTTOM**, Emeritus Professor at the New College and University of Oxford, also representing James O'Donnell (Westminster Abbey) and Stephen Cleobury and Daniel Hyde (King's College Chapel in Cambridge) (United Kingdom)

**Svetlana IBATULLINA**, Head of International Relations at the Glinka Choir College in St. Petersburg (Russia)

**Klaus Ib JØRGENSEN**, Cultural Attaché at the Royal Danish Embassy in Paris (France)

**Father Efreem de MONTELLA**, Headmaster at the Escolania de Montserrat (Spain)

**Ebbe MUNK**, Artistic Director and Chief Conductor at the Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir (Denmark)

## Were excused:

**Monsignor Marcos PAVAN**, Magister Puerorum at the Cappella Musicale Pontificia Sistina (the Vatican)

**Dr. Stefan ALTNER** and **Gotthold SCHWARZ**, Der Thomaner Chor in Leipzig (Germany)

**Gerald WIRTH**, President and Artistic Director of the Wiener Sängerknaben (Austria)

**Roederich KREILE**, Dresdner Kreuzchor (Germany)

## **Origins of the project:**

- Discussions between the Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir, New College Choir in Oxford, Choir of St. Thomas Fifth Avenue New York and the Maîtrise de la Cathédrale St. Jean, Lyon
- It will be useful for the tradition of the choir schools of boys and men to be included on UNESCO's representative list for the all-national intangible world heritage. The tradition needs safeguarding in order to improve the knowledge of the unique tradition among audiences and politicians. The tradition is of importance for the performance practice of older music as well as of contemporary music written for boys and men. In the origins of this project also the differences between boys' and girls' vocal characteristics were discussed.
- It has been of importance to involve Notre-Dame and the Vatican because the tradition has existed here for about 1500 years.
- It is important to underline that the efforts to bring this tradition to the Representative list of UNESCO shall include all that are fulfilling the criteria in the Name of the Element below. Examples from each participating country will be included in the final application.

## **The importance of being able to use the logo of UNESCO:**

- This tradition is very special and the logo of UNESCO will visualize the unique tradition
- It doesn't mean that choirs of boys and men are better than other types of choirs, but the use of the logo/emblem will give public evidence of a special ongoing tradition with roots back to the very first times of choir singing providing a unique and special soundscape.
- This is a living practice with great composers writing music for boys and men's voices and with adult singers giving the tradition over to younger singers within the academic frame of a choir school - from around 550 till present day.

## **After discussions on topics such as:**

- a) Performance practice
- b) Historical importance, historical roots of choir music
- c) The differences between girls and boys in choir singing - also in social context / as part of ongoing discussions in the present day society and musical life
- d) The point of vocal education as a main subject in the choir schools
- e) The differences of choral practices and repertoires
- f) The sense in safeguarding a "sound scape"
- g) The ability to create space for new initiatives within the tradition of the choir school

- h) The definition of “intangible heritage”
- i) An explanation of the different parts of the ICH-02 Form for the Representative list
- j) A short historical summary of each of the participating organizations

the assembly agreed on the Name of the Element for use for the application to UNESCO:

## **THE NAME OF THE ELEMENT**



### **THE BOYS' CHOIR SCHOOL**

*The unique sound and character of boys' voices and the ongoing tradition of their choir schools.*

*This tradition aims at blending the singing of boys and men on a high artistic standard and includes an academic curriculum.*

#### **Explanation:**

The brainstorming in Paris led us to a series of ideas and words showing the general concept in the main title, specified and clarified thanks to subtitles.

- We thought it was important to mention the terms “boys” and “men” in the title: after discussions, it appeared that “boys” should definitely be part of the main title while “men” should be mentioned in a subtitle, as an extension of the main idea,
- The concept of “tradition” was important enough to be part of the main title, but it appeared that we were missing the future in the time line. In fact, an important criteria in the UNESCO application lies in the ability of the safeguarded tradition to evolve in the future; that’s why the term “ongoing” has been added,

- The notion of “education” was part of the definition of the Element, but maybe not impacting enough to be part of the main title; so the expression “academic curriculum” has been chosen, being precise enough to define the idea of integrating “classical education and choral education and practice” linked to the choir schools – the difference between a choir school and a school with a choir.

In the same spirit there is an importance of the unique repertoire the choirs due to their unique academic curriculum are able to perform. Even music created especially for boys and men and to be performed in any context – liturgical, secular or other. Service or concert.

Beyond the title, it will be necessary to think about another issue, the concept of “community”, a very important criteria in the UNESCO application, and showing that the singers have a real function in the society, are part of something “real”: part taking in a liturgy, a concert season, state occasions, community celebrations etc...