

FIPC News & Events

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Elisabeth Lehmann-Dronke President Pueri Cantores Germany - A profile

A short background of yourself – your family... some glimpses of the place you grew up in – Erfurt... your educational journey... the first choir that you were a part of...

I was born and grew up in Erfurt. Until 1998, Erfurt was in the former "GDR", the part of Germany that was a socialist dictatorship. I made a lot of music. I sang a lot in church services in the choir and played instruments. My main subject was originally the flute, not singing. I wanted to study the flute so that I could later play professionally in an orchestra. However, there was a lot of anti-church repression in the GDR. Because I didn't take part in the so-called "Jugendweihe" (a secular pseudo-ritual for young people, combined with an oath of allegiance to socialism), I had to leave school and was not allowed to do my Abitur. My big dream of studying music seemed to be denied to me, but it became reality in a roundabout way. First, I began a program in Leipzig organised by the church to become an educator. After a short time, however, the music teacher there was convinced that I absolutely had to study my subject, the flute, and made it her mission to open doors for me. So, I took lessons in Leipzig with a flautist from the Gewandhaus Orchestra, who was also a professor at the university. In the meantime, the Wall fell and socialism ended. After a year, I was able to continue my schooling at the Belvedere Music College in Weimar and to study the flute at the conservatory there after graduating from high school.

Can you give us a glimpse of your early years as a young singer? What or who encouraged you to take to Sacred Choral Music (Church Music)?

It was only during my studies that choral music, especially with children and young people, became my great passion. The initiating impulse came from an enquiry I received: to form a project children's choir to produce the music for the radio play version of a Christian children's book. It was only then that I realized that I might have something of a charisma for musical work with young people. This project was followed by work with the Erfurt Cathedral Choir, a youth choir at Erfurt Cathedral and choir projects for children and youth organised by the church in Erfurt, Bad Langensalza and Gotha. After



taking time out for my family and my own children, I founded a children's choir at Erfurt Cathedral in 2003. Today, the "Children's and Youth Choir at Erfurt Cathedral" is one of the largest church choirs in eastern Germany.

How long has your association with PC Germany been?

In 2015, I took part in a Pueri Cantores choir gathering with my choir for the first time, at the National Choir Festival in Trier. A colleague from the parish in neighbouring Jena had encouraged me to do so. At the time, the choir from Jena was one of the very few choirs from the former GDR that was a member of PC. He told me, "You have to do it, when the thousands of children and young people sing together, it's always a bit like heaven."

As a church musician what is it that you would like to see emerge in the field of church music and how do you think we can go about expanding this area of music namely church music.

I hope that church music and musical work with children and young people in the church is seen and valued even more than before; and that even more bishops, pastors and those responsible understand that every investment in this work is not a luxury, but an investment in the future of the church and the future of the children.

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Do you get enough support from church authorities? Are they encouraging enough?

That is difficult to answer without criticizing. I know that the church here in the East German diaspora does not have the financial resources it has in the west or south of the country. But I'm not sure whether the limits of what is possible have really been exhausted... The greatest encouragement for me is the success of the work with the children and grateful response from the parents.

After the youth festival in Münster you said, "you would like Pueri Cantores to continue like a ladder to heaven, on which children and young people can grow in faith through church music." Do you see a decline in young people's participation in Church Music? Can you share some ideas how FIPC can encourage young people to get more engaged in Church Music.

I don't see a decline. Even after the pandemic - thank God - almost everyone has come back. Our huge advantage is that parents today have a great need for their children to receive an early and varied education. They are so grateful for every good offer. The challenge is to motivate the children to continue later as teenagers. And to create an awareness over time that it makes a difference whether we sing in a concert hall or in church. If they feel that they can open the heavens for others, their own interest in this dimension will grow as well. And if we notice that young people have the desire to learn and live more of the faith, then we must not withhold it from them.

You also said, "Singing qualified music together can foster in young people an attitude of openness to others, to the new and the tried and true, the foreign and the familiar". Can you elaborate on what you meant by qualified music? And how can we go about this?

We need to offer young people old and new music that they feel is worth working on and investing time and effort in. That there is substance to be discovered. That it makes a difference whether a piece of music gets by with 3 or 4 harmonies or has an interesting complexity and structure. Then young people can experience in their encounter with music that something that initially seems difficult, strange or unfamiliar and new opens up and gives pleasure through intensive study. And I trust that they will transfer this positive experience to their encounters with other people, cultures, spiritualities, etc.

How do you see your new term as the President of the German Federation? Any new initiatives that you would like to introduce?

A year ago, we launched the project "Future Workshop Pueri & Faith". It began with a small survey of singers under the heading "Do you believe what you sing?". We should not imply that you have to believe what you sing. But we can encourage people to think about our relationship to what we sing about. It is very important to me that we remain within the breadth of society and have an even greater impact on it. But at the same time, it is important to keep and strengthen a core in which our commitment is rooted and from which it lives. Perhaps the "Pueri & Glaube Zukunftswerkstatt" project will help to raise awareness in this area and also to provide working aids and suggestions.

Where do you see PC Germany in the next 5 years?

The church in Europe is shrinking very quickly. So, 5 years is already a relevant period of time. There is less money, staff are being cut, church services are being attended less and so on. We must not rest on our laurels, but must be creative in order to discover new resources, to stay relevant and, last but not least, to finance the work. We can certainly learn a lot in this process from FIPC national associations on other continents. In two years, we will be hosting the International Choir Festival in Munich. I am sure that it will have an impact and highlight the importance of the work of the FIPC and PC Germany in church and society.

A few words of advice to young members of the International Pueri Cantores who can be leaders of the future in FIPC.

The work for PC cannot be done as a "church officer" at a desk as part of the schedule. You have to be passionate about the cause and appreciate the added value that comes from the connection with the other choirs in the association, the encounters and the common work. And we ourselves benefit from the trusting, benevolent and enriching interaction between colleagues; at the same time, I have experienced that it is a testimony to the children and young people how we live this solidarity with each other.



'Give Peace' - Youth choir festival in Muenster with 1,600 singers

From 15 - 17 September 2023, 55 choirs came together for a Pueri Cantores youth choir festival. Everything was just right in Muenster - the city is celebrating 375 years of Westphalian peace this year - so the Pueri Cantores and the festival, which had the motto "Give Peace", came just in time! For three days, the city was filled with the sound of the young singers' voices. The desire for peace resounded in the churches and squares of the city, while late summer temperatures created a very special atmosphere among the young people. In many places, the joy was transmitted to the curious spectators.

Highlights of the three-day festival were the opening ceremony in the cathedral, the open singing with Matthias Balzer and Juliane Kathary, a choir party on Saturday evening and the closing service with Bishop Felix Genn. The bishop was also available on Saturday for a dialogue with the young people under the title "Ask the bishop".

Watch the Opening ceremony, Open Singing with Matthias Balzer and Closing Mass on our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@dt.charverbandpuericantore2449>

Beste Grüße

Anna-Kathrin Dietrich
Geschäftsführerin



Mission visit to Hungary and Veszprém Congress

28 September to 1 October 2023

Presence of FIPC President Jean Henric and Austrian Federation President Josef Doeller. Veszprém is a beautiful town with a population of around 60,000, located around 100km from Budapest. A very Catholic area, it is dominated by a castle citadel and a remarkable architectural ensemble. In this year 2023, the city is the European Capital of Culture.

Hungary has two Pueri Cantores choirs in Veszprém. They are a correspondent country in the FIPC. By organising a music festival as part of a major Catholic festival organised by the archbishopric, choirmasters Erika and Cecilia wanted to lay the foundations for a Hungarian federation that would include 11 other existing choirs, mainly attached to Catholic schools. The festival brought together 13 Hungarian choirs and two guest choirs from Krakow and Salzburg, making a total of 600 participants. The festival, remarkably well organised by Erika and Cecilia and Laszlo Major, was a kind of congress with

- a gala opening concert accompanied by the city's symphony orchestra.
- A ceremony for peace, with songs, prayers and the official laying of a wreath in the
- presence of the town's mayor, and a march through the town accompanied by the local brass band.
- Star concerts in and around Veszprém
- Meetings between choir conductors
- A closing mass presided over by the archbishop, in the presence of the town's mayor
- A motto (In terra pax) and a beautiful congress hymn (command to a Hungarian composer)

A musicbook was produced, which included an interesting repertoire. All the singers received a rucksack with the congress T-Shirt. The meetings with the choirmasters, the meeting with the archbishop and the meeting with the national head of sacred music of the Hungarian bishops' conference gave a real boost to the creation of a Hungarian federation of Pueri Cantores.

Everything is now ready for a creation of this federation in the near future. All the choirs work in the spirit of the Pueri Cantores and wish this creation. The choir conductors are competent and committed. The musical results are interesting. Laszlo and Erika, the main people in charge, as well as Cecilia, have our full confidence in moving the project forward.

JEAN HENRIC, President FIPC

Visite mission en Hongrie et congrès de Veszprém

28 septembre au 1er octobre 2023

En présence du président FIPC Jean Henric et du président de la fédération autrichienne Josef Doeller. Veszprém est une très belle ville d'environ 60 000 habitants située à une centaine de km de Budapest. Territoire très catholique, elle est dominée par une citadelle château et un ensemble architectural remarquable. En cette année 2023, la ville est capitale européenne de la culture.

La Hongrie possède deux choeurs Pueri Cantores situés à Veszprém. C'est un pays correspondant dans la FIPC. En organisant un festival de musique intégré à une importante fête catholique organisée par l'archevêché, les chefs de choeur Erika et Cecilia ont souhaité jeter les bases d'une fédération hongroise qui intégrerait 11 autres choeurs existants, essentiellement rattachés à des écoles catholiques. Ce festival rassemblait donc 13 choeurs hongrois et deux choeurs invités venant de Krakow et de Salzburg, soit 600 participants. Ce festival, remarquablement organisé par Erika et Cecilia ainsi que Laszlo Major, était une sorte de congrès avec

- Un concert de gala en ouverture accompagné par l'orchestre symphonique de la ville.
- Une cérémonie pour la paix, avec chants, prière, dépôt de gerbe officiel en
- présence du Maire de la ville, et une marche dans la ville accompagnée par la fanfare locale.
- Des concerts étoiles à Veszprém et sa périphérie
- Des rencontres entre chefs de choeurs
- Une messe de clôture présidée par l'archevêque, en présence du maire de la ville
- Un motto (In terra pax) et un très bel hymne du congrès commandé à un compositeur hongrois.

Un livret musical a été réalisé, et il comprenait un répertoire intéressant. Tous les chanteurs ont reçu un sac à dos avec le T-Shirt du congrès. Les réunions avec les chefs de choeurs, l'entrevue avec l'archevêque ainsi que la réunion avec le responsable national de musique sacrée auprès de la conférence des évêques de Hongrie, ont permis de donner un véritable coup d'accélérateur en vue de la création d'une fédération hongroise des Pueri Cantores.

Tout permet aujourd'hui à cette fédération d'être prochainement créée. Tous les choeurs travaillent dans l'esprit des Pueri Cantores et souhaitent cette création. Les chefs de choeurs sont compétents et engagés. Le résultat musical entendu est intéressant. Laszlo et Erika, les principaux responsables, ainsi que Cecilia, ont toute notre confiance pour faire avancer le projet.

JEAN HENRIC, President FIPC



A successful event for the Brazilian Pueri Cantores: The XVI Regional Congress

From last 18 to 23 July took place in Sete Lagoas (Seven Lakes) – a city famous for its waters in the State of Minas Gerais – the XVI Regional Brazilian Pueri Cantores Congress, with 400 children singing and celebrating together. They gathered there for a special reason. It was the 60th anniversary of “D. Silvério boys choir”, and at the same time to commemorate Maestro João Lucas Rodrigues birthday, who turned 95, and in 1963 brought to life the choir. Maestro João Lucas is also one of the founders of the Brazilian Pueri Cantores Federation.

The audience could enjoy two Gala Concerts. The choirs were hosted by several parishes across the city. To show their gratitude they animated their Sunday Mass. To close the great event D. Francisco Cota, Bishop of Sete Lagoas, celebrated the Eucharistic at the big Santa Luzia’s church resounding the chords of Jakob de Haan 4 voices Mass accompanied by Organ and a String Quartet. The ambiance was incredibly joyful, and afterwards they took their way back home in huge Brazil, one of the choirs spending 32 hours on bus to get there.



Hi, here is the translation of her saying. I would like to add to my text this: Nowadays the D. Silverio boys choir is conducted by the talented pianis and director Cleber de Castro.



Hi, I am Kaique Antonio, I am 12 years old and I am from Sete Lagoas, Minas Gerais. I was honored to participate at the Regional Pueri Cantores Congress with D. Silverio boys choir. It was wonderful for me, I felt totally free, light-hearted. I sang the Chiquilin solo. I must confess I was a bit nervous but then it was so nice I could sing it well to the pleasure of the audience. It was a magnificent feeling for me, so much fun and self-confidence. Thank you all.

Profile of João Lucas Rodrigues:

Conductor and pianist João Lucas Rodrigues was born in Barra Longa, MG, in 1929. At 20 he started his Piano lessons in the capital, Belo Horizonte,



at the Conservatory run by the Federal University of Minas Gerais. In 1951 he moved to Sete Lagoas to teach piano lessons at “Colégio D. Silvério” where he founded the “D. Silvério boys’ choir” in 1963. In 1067 they participate at the very first Brazilian Pueri Cantores Congress. The national Federation was founded that same year by Father Leto Bienias, a Franciscan from Petrópolis, RJ, and Father José Maria Viniesky (SVD), from Juiz de Fora, MG. Therefore, Maestro João Lucas is considered one of the founders of Pueri Cantores in Brazil. Last July the Regional Pueri Cantores Congress was held in Sete Lagoas to the honor of D. Silvério Boys’ choir 60th anniversary, and the 95th birthday of the great musician who has worked so hard along this large period, keeping high the standards of sacred music as well as the joy of Brazilian folk songs.



We all look forward to our next Congresses, a Regional again in 2024 in Campo Largo, and our National Congress in Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul, in July 2025. All Federations choirs are invited!

Hello, I am Larissa de Almeida Faria, I am 9 years old and it was my first participation to a congress. I did 2 solos, in “Acalanto” and “Hostia Santa”, I loved it to sing there among so many voices together. Thank you very much for this opportunity. Kisses.





**Stay tuned for the special issue on
the 44th International Congress of Pueri Cantores
held in Rome in December 2023**



ET IN TERRA PAX



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