

# Economy of choirs



Synthesis of the survey on  
the economic status of Choirs  
in France conducted by the  
“Missions Voix en région”

**September 2010** |



**PLATE-FORME INTERRÉGIONALE**  
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# Sommaire

Introduction	3
Methodology	3
General presentation of the population	6
• <i>Profile of the choruses</i>	
• <i>Choir director profiles</i>	
Which economy?	9
• <i>Need of choruses</i>	
• <i>Analysis of expenses and receipts</i>	
• <i>Classification by type and oppositions</i>	
Employment source?	19
• <i>Which jobs ? what salary ? which underwriting ?</i>	
• <i>Territorial characteristics</i>	
Conclusion	22
<hr/>	
Focus...	
• <i>Methodological limits (Guillaume Lurton)</i>	5
• <i>Associations for amateur practitioners: the place of the volunteer work (Isabelle Renouf)</i>	10
• <i>Amateur choruses, professional choruses, two separate worlds ? (Sébastien Daucé)</i>	14
• <i>Indicators of the evolution of the activities of the choruses (Yves Menut)</i>	16
• <i>Economic forms choral singing (Guillaume Lurton)</i>	18
• <i>Vocal and instrumental ensembles: points in common (Sylvain Marchal, et Philippe Tormen)</i>	21
Appendix (documents online <a href="http://www.pfi-culture.org">www.pfi-culture.org</a> )	

## Introduction

This investigation falls under the prolongation of a study published in 2006<sup>1</sup> which was presented in two parts:

- The first, statistical, was a fusion of 15 Regional Status Inventories of the choral practices in France carried out between 1999 and 2004.
- The second, having begun in 2005 by Guillaume Lurton, within the framework of a doctoral thesis<sup>2</sup>, proposed a sociological analysis of this "World of Art"<sup>3</sup>, of its mechanisms and its specific operation.

The interregional Platform of exchange and co-operation for cultural development, which had coordinated the work of the "Missions Voix" on this topic, thus decided as of spring 2007, to look further into knowledge relating to the material conditions of the operation of choruses and into the impact of their activity from an economic point of view. The objectives of the investigation thus consisted in collecting budgetary data, states of voluntary contribution in kind (voluntary help, resources placed at the disposal of choruses...), of the sociological elements which make it possible to carry out a more precise "typology" of the choruses to understand the organization of this "milieu" made up of both amateurs and professionals, of independent associative groups or attached to third parties whose profile is defined in this new investigation.

## Methodology

In December 2007, a two-part questionnaire was put on line on a designated site by the Interregional Platform and the Institut Français d'Art Choral (IFAC) for a random sample of 3.000 choruses drawn from a consolidated data base of the Missions Voix tests comprising 7,493 recordings. In return, 681 useable answers of the more than 700 questionnaires received, a rate of return of 23%, made it possible to bring brief responses to a large part the problems identified at the beginning:

- Precision of certain characteristics of the choral society population establishment, the years of creation, number of chorus-singers, repertory and especially, affiliation and legal identity
- A more in depth knowledge of the profile of the chorus leaders (training, diplomas, type of remuneration...)
- The integration of this information with the data on the material needs for the choruses, their budgetary structuring
- Identification of typologies which define a specific economy
- The assumption that this specific economy generates a type of employment to be defined

This sampling takes into account choruses as a whole, whereas the first investigation related to the associative choruses (thus excluding the choruses from general education, liturgical choruses and those with a teaching vocation).

Therefore, this investigation does not offer a possibility of comparison between the first wave of 1999-2004 and that of 2007-2008 since the territories and the populations of this survey evolved/moved. These aspects invalidate certain indicators of evolution of the population (profiles of the choruses, profiles of the chorus leaders).

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1 First study: An approach of the practices choral societies in France, Laurent Babé and members of the Steering committee and second study: The world of the practices choral societies, draft of a topography, Guillaume Lurton, Paris, "Observatoire du Spectacle Vivant" of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, in partnership with the "Institut Français de l'Art Chorale" and the interregional Platform, September 2007. These two studies are downloadable on the site of the interregional Platform: [www.pfi-culture.org](http://www.pfi-culture.org).

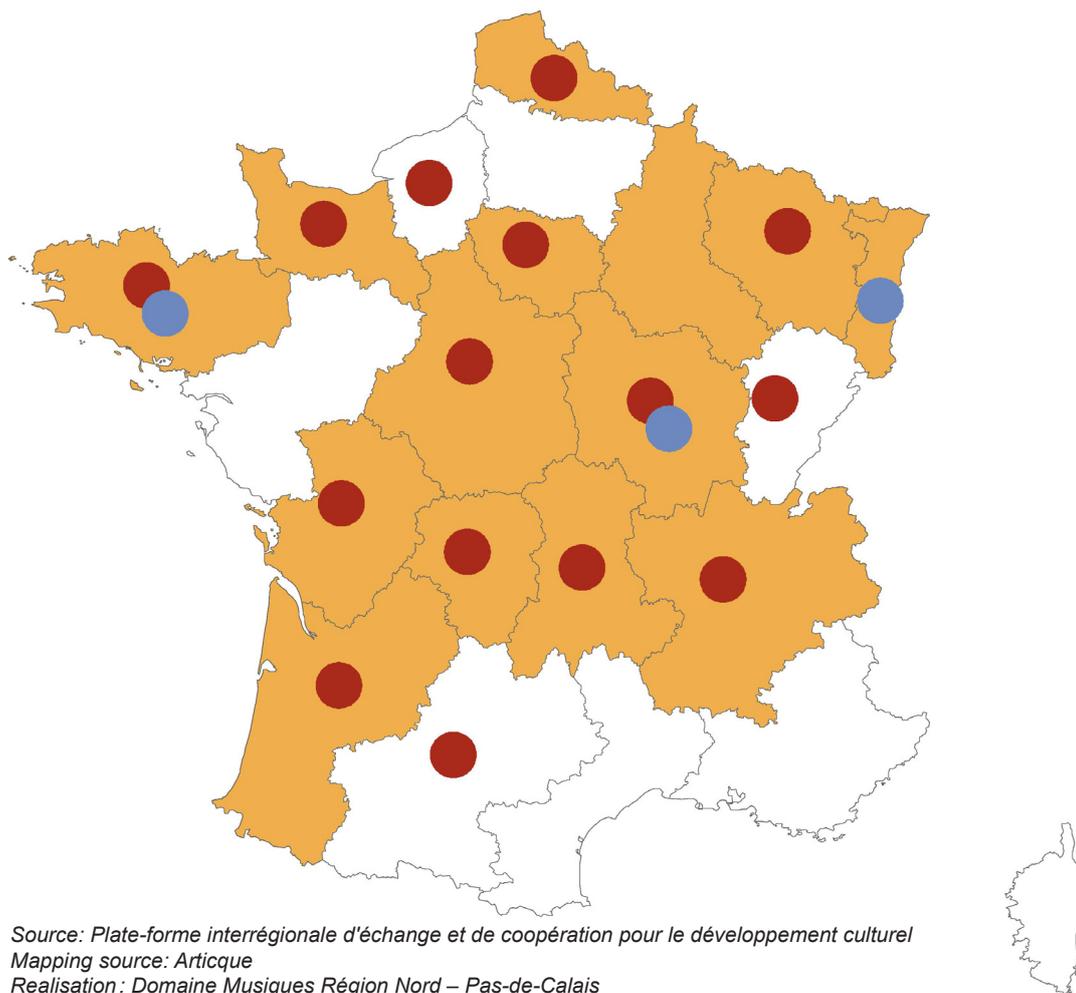
2 1945 - 2005, sixty years of choir singing in France, thesis in course of Guillaume Lurton, "Centre de Sociologie des Organisations" - CNRS, in partnership with the "Institut Français de l'Art Chorale"

3 Term that Guillaume Lurton borrows from the American sociologist Howard S. Becker author of an essay entitled "Les Mondes de l'Art", Paris, Flammarion, 1982, reedited 1988.

In addition, the questions relating to the budgetary data remain sensitive, in spite of guaranteed anonymity, and require some accounting skill from the respondents. This raises the following reserves:

- The choruses without administrative organization surely answered less and are thus under represented
- The choruses having small budgets could be tempted to answer "0" the financial questions (revenues and/or expenditures).

Ultimately, here is the chart representing the population that has been consulted since 1999<sup>4</sup>:



- Regions included in the enquiry on the Economy of Choirs
- Regions having done an audit before 2004
- Regions having been audited since 2004

<sup>4</sup> To understand the chronology of the inquiries, see the chart presented in appendix on the site of the interregional Platform: [www.pfi-culture.org](http://www.pfi-culture.org)

## Methodological limits (Guillaume Lurton, CSO-CNRS)

In order to guarantee a rigorous exploitation of the data collected, the difficulties encountered as well as the methodological limits of the investigation should be stressed.

The first difficulty is linked to the inventory of choral practices. From this point of view, the limits of this investigation are the same as those of the first Regional Status Inventory. The obstacles encountered were detailed in the report completed at the time of the first investigation. The bases are not homogeneous from one area to another: their methods of construction can differ because of the difference in means and in organization between regional structures. Moreover these bases do not relate to the whole of choral practice. More informal practices<sup>1</sup> in particular escape the data collection process because of their low visibility.

The restriction of the perimeter of the investigation adopted at the time of the Status Inventories was abandoned. Two reasons justify this decision. On the one hand, the difficulty of defining in a univocal way the limits of the investigation does not make it possible to guarantee that the selection of the population observed is uniformly carried out from one area to another. In addition, the assumption, validated a posteriori, was put forth that the choruses excluded from the preceding investigation could belong to a particular economic model whose observation would prove to be enlightening. This redefinition of the perimeter of observation calls for the greatest prudence as to the comparison of the results from one investigation to another.

The 23% rate of response is relatively weak. The significant character of certain questions contributed to limit the returns. If the size of the data base is sufficient to obtain the satisfactory tests of significance for simple statistical treatments, it limits the significance of the more complex treatments implying a fine segmentation of the population.

Beyond the tests of significance which depend only on the sample size, this rate of return raises questions about the skews of selection which it reveals. The questionnaire assumed that the groups would have a minimal knowledge and/or control of their economic and budgetary organization. In addition in spite of the guarantee of anonymity, inquiring about practices considered to be sensitive by the respondents (illegal photocopies, moonlighting...) could incite them to not return the questionnaire. These two remarks imply, on the one hand, groups whose operation is little formalized, and on the other hand, that those which tend to deviate from the legal practices are under-represented within the sample. Such skews cannot be rectified and do not show through in the tests of significance. It is thus essential to keep these elements in mind when reading the results and to remain careful in their analysis.

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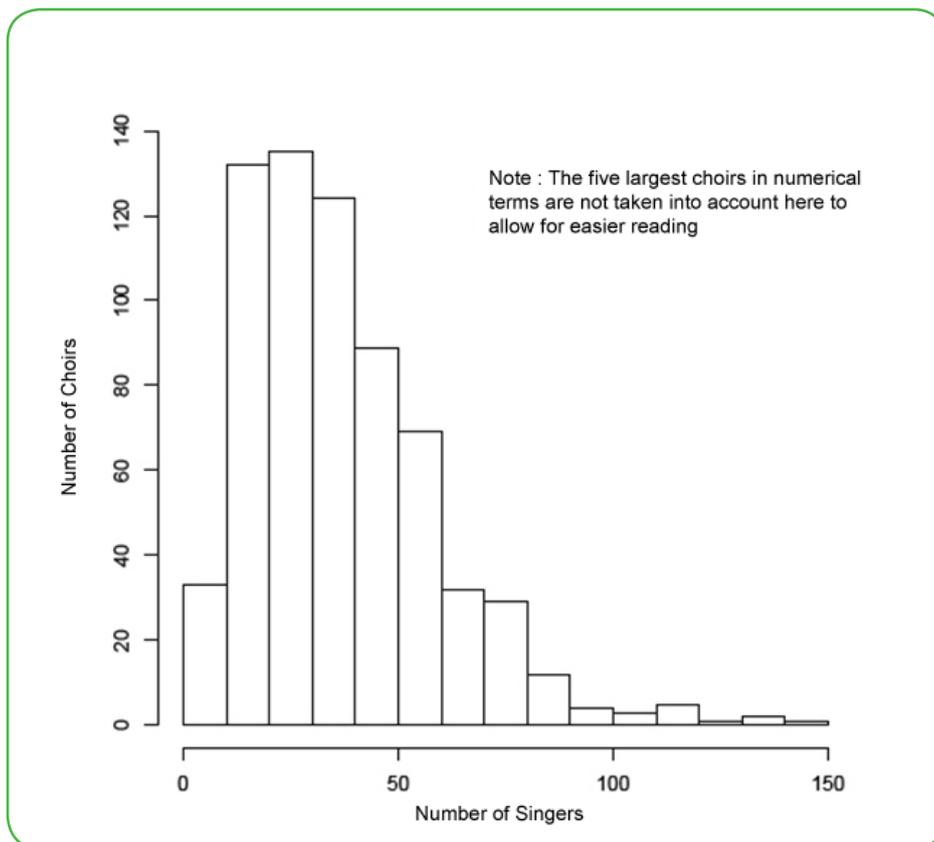
1 We understand by "informal" of the choral societies' activities whose organization is not formalized by a framework

## General presentation of the population

### Profile of the choruses

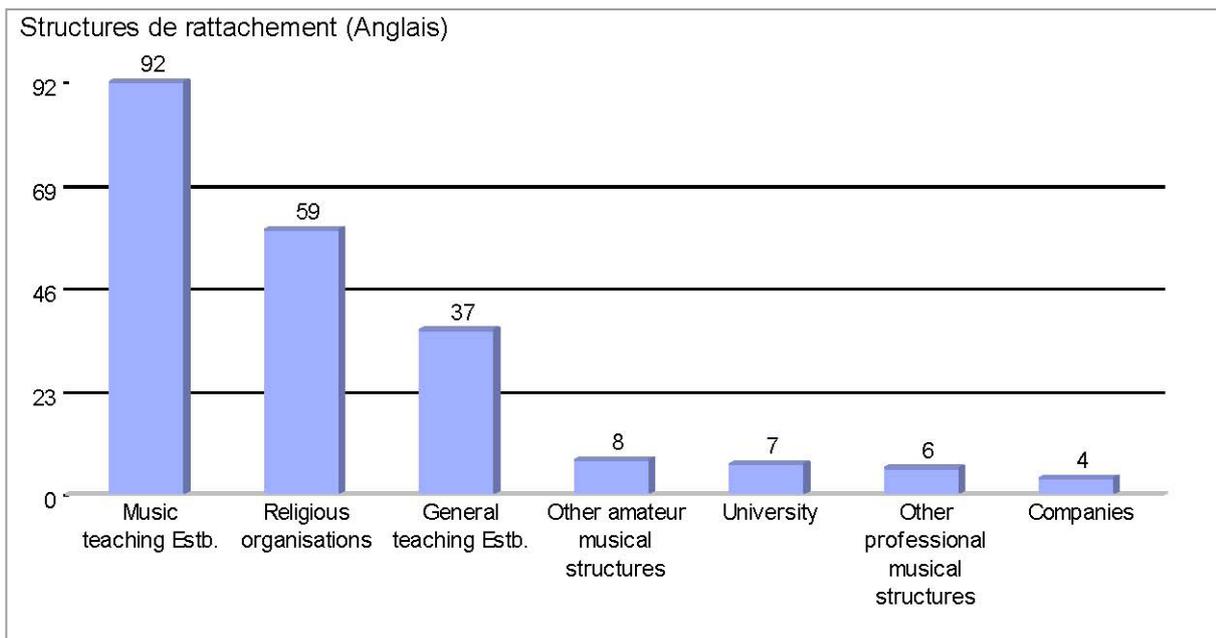
The years in which the choruses were created constitute a relevant indicator, as shown by the number of respondents (up to 91%). The two waves of investigation highlight that after the peak reached in the years 1990, there were fewer choruses created in the years 2000, but the last results of 2007 moderate this "fall of the choral societies activities" and refer to a cycle of life of the choruses of which the average duration starts to be perceptible. This indicator could thus be re-used in the next investigations to determine the duration of this cycle.

The average number of chorus-singers remains identical to the first investigation (40):



The repertoires approached by the choruses can be grouped into three categories: classical (24% of the answers), popular (26%) and the majority which interpret both (50%). By looking further into the question of the repertoires, one notes that this dichotomy classical/popular is not very significant for certain choruses and that the co-education of both becomes a characteristic of the choral world, unlike other amateur and professional musical practices, which tend to be more specialized. The first investigation excluded from its field of investigation the liturgical choruses, those included in music schools courses and academies like those emanating from the educational circle. Nevertheless, 46% of the answers indicated at this time a "relationship" to another structure or institution, but this concept was to be taken in the broad sense: it could characterize a privileged bond between an association managing the activities of a choral society with another organization, but also a pure and simple emanation of an organized structure. The investigation of 2007, by opening its field of investigation, shows that 37% of the choruses do not have a clearly defined legal identity and reveals a percentage (45%) of attached structures which especially depend on the academic, parochial or school establishment.

## Linked structures: (207 respondents).



Several questions make it possible to look further into knowledge of this relation particular to the mode of organization of the choruses. Here are the results:

- In 30% of the cases, a third party organization is used as legal support with the chorus, for all or part of its activities
- In 33% of the cases, the reason for the chorus's existence is related to the objectives and/or missions of a third party organization
- In 35% of the cases, the existence of the chorus is conditioned by that of a third party organization

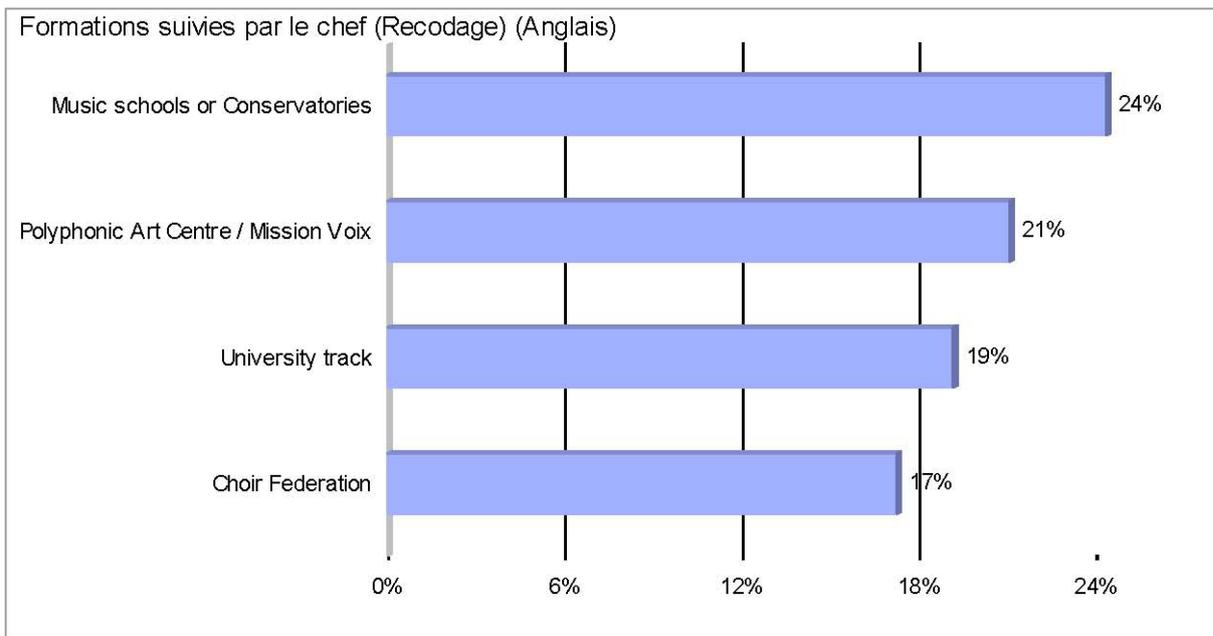
**The relation between the choruses and third party structures** seems complex because of the shift between the bond of need (support legal, condition of existence) and the objectives which can be different for the chorus and the third party organization<sup>5</sup>. To understand the economic operation of the choral world, it is thus interesting to compare choruses without a legal identity to autonomous choruses with legal identity”.

Lastly, the establishment of the choruses was not thorough due to the absence of the definition of a demographic limit between urban zones and rural zones.

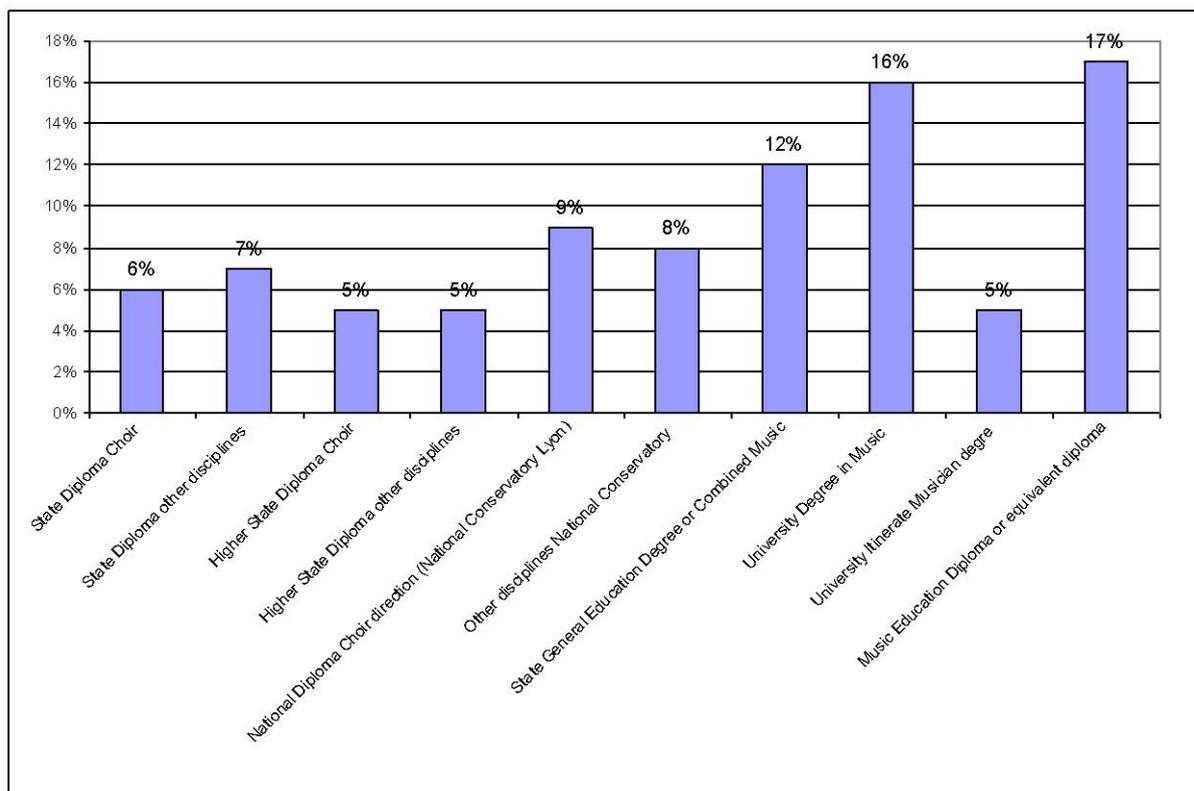
## Choir director profiles

The first wave of investigation isolated a questionnaire especially designed for the director of the chorus. Here, the recipients were the choruses and not the directors specifically. It is thus possible that several groups are consequently directed by the same person, who could be professional. The stable indicators relate to **the education, training and diplomas**. The proportion of choruses directed by graduate directors is higher (62%) than in 1999-2004 (57%) because of the reservations expressed above and the age characteristics already mentioned by the first wave of investigation (more of the 3/4 of the directors under 40 years of age were graduates and this proportion falls appreciably beyond that age). In addition, it is necessary to point out the initial assumption that this investigation was rather indicated by the structured choruses, knowing (or wanting) to answer the financial questions and often profiting from competences of a professional director.

<sup>5</sup> Complementary remark: only 5,4% of the associative independent choruses have recourse to a third party.



**Education and training organizations (402 respondents, 59% of the chorals)**



The percentages included in the two bar charts above are calculated upon the total population (681)..

**Diplomas (334 respondents, 49% of the chorals)**

## Which economy?

Guillaume Lurton already tackled the question of the economy of choral practices<sup>6</sup> in his study starting from the data of 1999-2004. Its research made it possible to define the principles of economic operation of the choral world and gives a framework to the current synthesis. We will be interested here in the material needs of the choruses, with the analysis of their expenditures and receipts with a particular focus on the production of concerts, as well as the characteristics which oppose the choruses and specify their economic profile (typologies). It is in addition interesting to blend certain observations with other studies relating to cultural groups<sup>7</sup> and the ensemble of musical professionals<sup>8</sup>.

### Needs of Choruses

Choruses need space to rehearse, scores to sing, the skills of a director and time for social interaction for various reasons (inside the groups and externally). **The exchanges** which result from it **appear to have a non-monetary character**, be it because the chorus, singers and directors take the expenditure engaged onto themselves (ex: scores, parties...), be it because a third party makes the human and technical means available (ex: directors and rehearsal halls). In these cases, the expenditure is not entered into a budget and we do not note any financial flow. A relative majority of choruses (55%) have monetary resources; for the remaining 45%, it is the members who take on all the expenditure in 38% of the cases, and a third structure which makes the means available in 62% of the cases. The choruses very often rehearse (up to 77%) in a **room** placed at their disposal free of charge, thus relieving them of rental charges and, in fact, municipalities (up to 41%) propose these locations to them.

As to the **scores**, 46% of the choruses have recourse to non-monetary exchanges (purchase by the chorus singers, free downloading on Internet, loan); 52% of the choruses buy the scores. A chorus organizes on the average 5 **events** per annum (excluding concerts), often social events. They do not appear in the budgets and their financing is ensured by the chorus singers in 82% of the cases. This operation does not cost the chorus anything and can have an impact on the local economy (non measurable); in only 11% of the cases do these events generate receipts.

In a large part of the choruses, the **directors**:

- Are not paid (61% of the choruses have a volunteer director)
- Are paid by a third party (24%)
- Are paid directly by the associative structure managing the chorus (15%)

As a reminder, the questionnaire intended especially for the directors in the first wave of investigation revealed a rate of 38.5% directors paid without knowing by which employer. In addition, only 22% of the choruses reimburse their director's expenses.

In order to function, 40% of the choruses call upon **outside contributors**, 79% of which are paid. They are primarily accompanists (21%), singing teachers (16%) and musical training professors (7%). Those who are requested only for the concerts are paid in 42% of the cases. Contrary to the external interventions during the year, this principle remains the volunteer system of help for the concerts.

Lastly, the **chorus singers** are very seldom reimbursed for their expenses (4%), and are almost never paid on these occasions.

6 Cf. *The world of the practices of choral societies, draft of a topography*, ibid, p. 29-49

7 Cf. *Religious organization employers in France*, Bruno Colin, Gaël Bouron, Opal CNAR-Culture, Paris, study financed by the DDAI of the Ministry of Culture, November 2008

8 Cf. *Inquiry into the activities of the members of the FEVIS, Federation of Vocal and Instrumental ensembles*, Cabinet Ithaque, March 2008

## **Associations for amateur practitioners: the place of the volunteer work (Isabelle Renouf, COFAC)**

*Associations for amateur practitioners: the place and the weight of volunteer work in the animation and the organization of these structures. How to evaluate it? What are the current ongoing evolutions?*

The organizations of amateur practitioners are structures where volunteer work occupies an essential place. Whether they take part in the governorship of associations or they oversee the amateurs, the volunteers play an important role in the dynamism of the amateur sector. This is why the COFAC works for a better recognition and valorisation of the volunteers.

Overall, in associations, the weight of volunteers is considerable. According to a study carried out by Viviane Tchernonog<sup>1</sup>, volunteer commitments to associations would represent 18 million people in 2005, or 1399 hours of volunteer help per annum and per association on the average, or 935.400 full time equivalents. The associative cultural sector, still according to this study, which gathers 204.800 associations, would represent approximately 15% of the total volunteer work.

The COFAC is a network of 30,000 cultural and communications associations centred on amateurs and primarily composed of volunteers. Part of the members of our network is solely made up of non employing volunteer associations. The last study carried out within the network in 2006<sup>2</sup> counted 86,500 volunteers, but the network has since increased. This is why the COFAC, in partnership with the CNAR Culture, undertook an investigation in 2010 into human resources - volunteers and paid help, within its network. The volunteer help is not in opposition to employment. Both are complementary in cultural and communications associations and an increase in the number of volunteers in an association does not constitute a barrier to employment.

Voluntary help is evaluated quantitatively, by entering the number of volunteers, the number of hours of volunteer help and the number of full time equivalents which they represent. This quantitative information makes it possible to realize the essential role of volunteers in the cultural development of the territories and the animation of associative cultural life. This evaluation thus reveals the true extent of the activity of the association. Moreover, evaluating volunteer help in a quantitative way makes it possible to show the weight of the personnel contribution that the association provides compared to the ensemble of government assistance.

However, one cannot be satisfied by imposing figures on volunteer help. Volunteer help has a large impact on society which is difficult to quantify. In cultural associations, the volunteers are at the origin of and carry out the association's projects, be they for the association, cultural or political. Volunteers and amateurs take part in the valorisation of a cultural practice for the members of the association as well as their close relations. They take part in the dynamism of a group and the social climate of associations, which make them places where social bonds are developed. Volunteer help demonstrates a commitment and conveys values such as solidarity and good citizenship.

But to make an association survive requires more and more skills. Volunteers run up against a growing complexity of tasks, such as completing the applications and documents to request subsidies. Obtaining volunteers is not easy task, especially for positions with responsibility. Faced with this fact, it seems timely to establish training time for the functions of volunteer management.

Moreover, volunteer and association commitment constitutes more and more an experience and a reference in a course of both training and curriculum vitae. It can then be interesting to develop tools for the valorisation of the experience gained through volunteering. In conclusion it appears essential in a society where volunteering constitutes an indisputable richness and added value, to recognize it, to develop it and to develop tools to accompany it.

1 Tchernonog Viviane, Le paysage associative français, Mesures et évolutions, 2007, 203p.

2 Etude Belokane, L'impact sur la société des associations culturelles et de communication de la COFAC, 2006

## Analysis of expenses and receipts

More than half of the choruses (51,7%, or 352 respondents) declare having monetary resources, but only 302 of them specified their annual amount of expenses and 296 their annual amount of production. The questions that then called for a deeper knowledge of the responsibilities of the positions and of the productions were not always indicated in a coherent way by the respondents. It is thus necessary to propose a deeper study of the expenditures and receipts through a **summary table** which takes into account:

- Total amounts declared and cumulated by position and productions
  - Averages and medians concerning these positions
  - The degree of representation of these figures according to the number of choruses responding
- We differentiate the **general operating costs** and those specifically related to the productions from **concerts**. We saw previously that the general operation of a chorus depended much on the state of the voluntary contributions in kind to develop (volunteers, availability,...) by third parties.

The table above takes into account only real and not adjusted charges. It is useful to point out

Charges	Number of Choirs implicated	Total amounts	Averages	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Performance Space Rentals	51	38 036 €	746 €	32 €	7 200 €	390 €
Purchase of libretti	345	191 897 €	556 €	12 €	7 000 €	338 €
Rental of libretti	4	3 950 €	987 €	250 €	2 400 €	650 €
Federation club dues	125	38 306 €	306 €	8 €	10 000 €	75 €
Life of the community	290	226 402 €	781 €	3 €	8 685 €	300 €
Choir Director's salary as paid by the Choir	75	426 694 €	5 689 €	1 000 €	37 800 €	3 300 €
Third party salary of choir director	21	52 761 €	2 512 €	50 €	5 442 €	2 400 €
Allocation for charges	121	162 694 €	1 345 €	50 €	12 002 €	1 000 €
Services rendered by outside artistic contractors	147	292 100 €	1 987 €	50 €	52 700 €	600 €
<b>Concerts</b>	253	1 209 583 €	4 781 €	20 €	145 000 €	744 €
Performance Space Rentals	160	113 150 €	707 €	25 €	22 000 €	250 €
Communication	249	126 237 €	507 €	10 €	20 000 €	150 €
Technical	72	64 466 €	895 €	20 €	15 000 €	300 €
Payment of core personnel	143	887 698 €	6 208 €	30 €	170 481 €	1 100 €
SACEM	248	50 033 €	202 €	20 €	3 817 €	100 €
Transportation charges	123	184 897 €	1 503 €	30 €	23 276 €	500 €

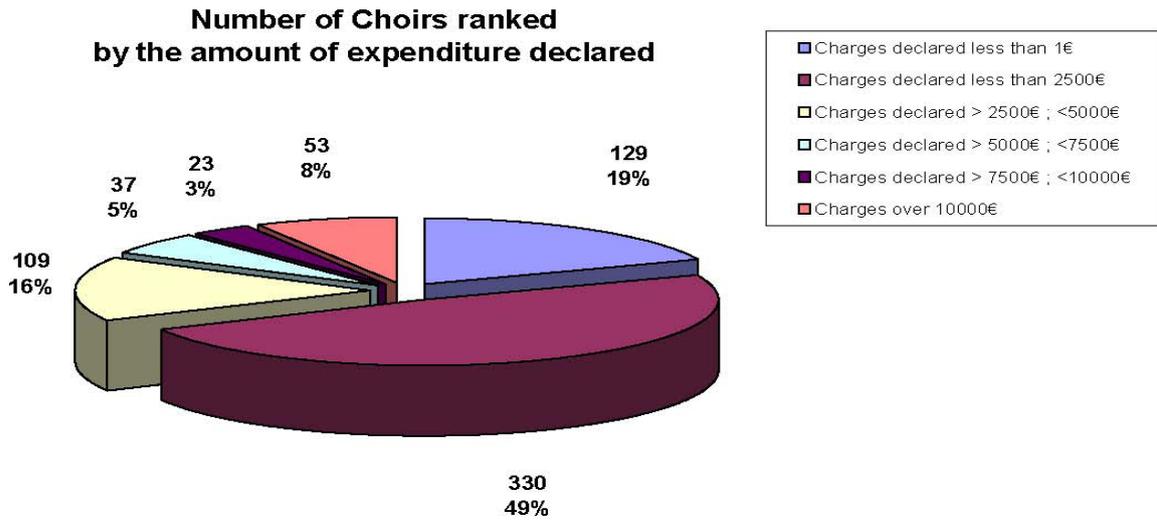
here the significance of a **median**: for example, in the table of charges above, on the line "rental of rooms", the figure 390€ means that half of the choruses responding have a budget for the rental of rooms lower than 390€, the other half has a budget higher than 390€. We also note that certain budgetary matters are better specified than others (purchases of scores, community life, concerts...).

For concerts, the principal expenditure remains employment (choir director, chorus singers, musicians, managers...) and transportation. The majority of the expenditure incurred by the choruses is supposed to be directly injected into the local economy. This is the case in concerts which, 2 out of 3 times, are performed in the geographical area where the choirs<sup>9</sup> are established. We note then that the **economy induced** is specific to the operation of the choral world.

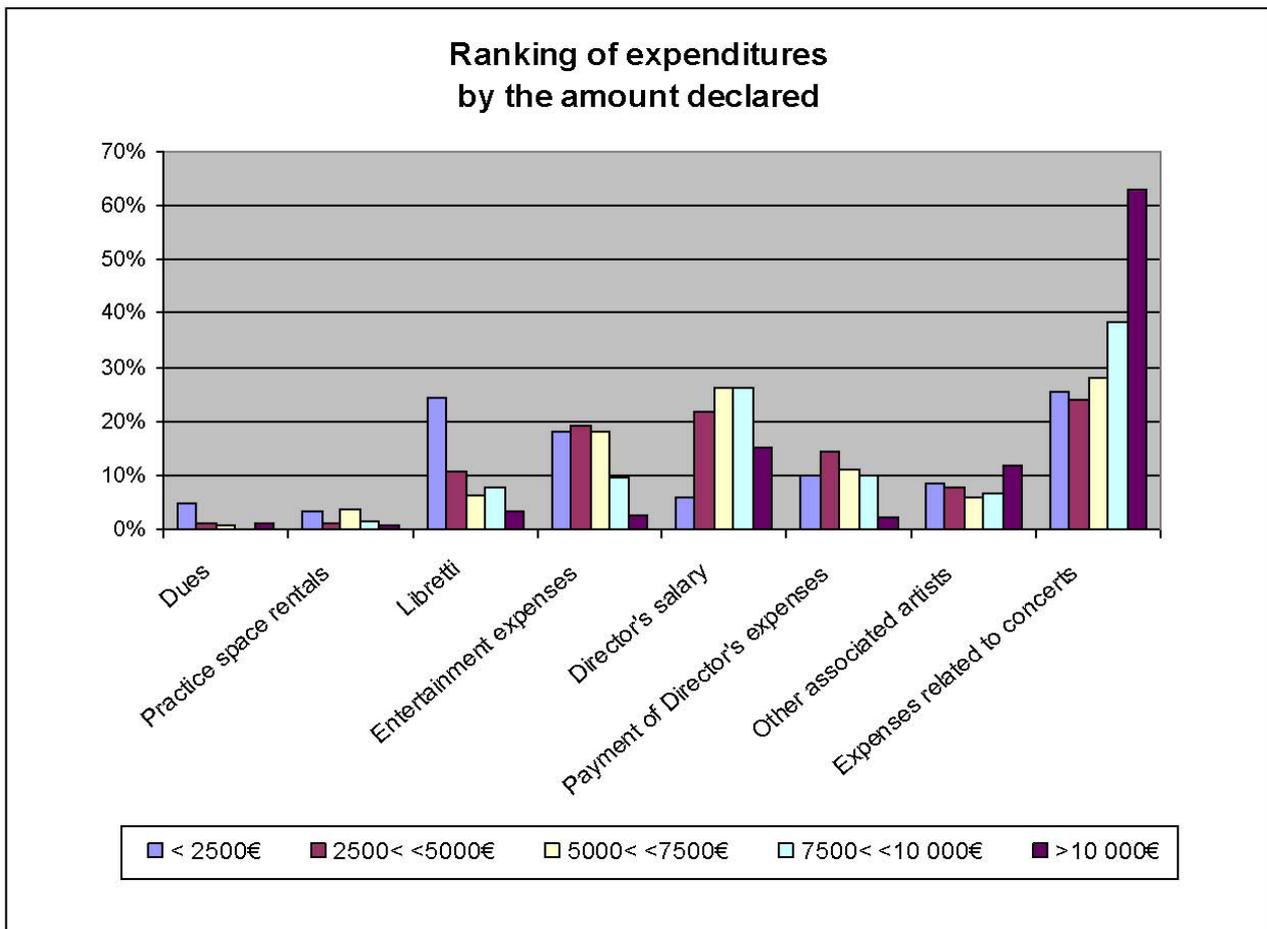
We propose from now on **another synthetic study of the expenses** by classifying them by section for a better understanding of certain economic characteristics (cf. graphs hereafter). The pie chart of the number of choruses per amount of expenses declared reveals clearly that half of the respondents declare less than 2 500€ of annual expense. The histogram which follows shows that the choruses which have a small budget devote means to the purchase of scores, social events and concerts. The remuneration of their director is less recurring than the choruses which declare expenses between 2,500€ and 7,500€. The choruses having a large budget concentrate their means on the concerts (63.1%), which indicates an economic operation based on professional production (wages related to the creation of a repertory...).

9 Cf. Une approche des pratiques chorales en France, ibid p39

## Number of choruses by amount of expenses declared (in €)



## Distribution of expenses by amount of expenses declared



As to **products**, subsidies constitute the second largest financial resource of the chorus, after the direct receipts resulting from the organization of concerts and the contributions of the chorus singers. The table below specifies the origin of the chorus resources as well as subsidies.

Products	Number of Choirs implicated	Total amounts	Averages	Minimum	Maximum	Median
Singers dues	479	998 262 €	2 084 €	10 €	45 500 €	1 295 €
Singers' contributions to training, events, etc.	131	350 542 €	2 676 €	60 €	65 000 €	900 €
Concert organisation carried out by and for the Choir	320	839 391 €	2 623 €	2 €	93 000 €	850 €
Concert organisation carried out for the Choir	113	499 275 €	4 418 €	100 €	95 063 €	804 €
Recording sales	70	95 036 €	1 358 €	7 €	18 766 €	465 €
Other sales	47	46 063 €	980 €	38 €	10 000 €	400 €
<b>Underwritings</b>						
Local	306	444 560 €	1 453 €	50 €	100 000 €	500 €
Agglomeration	26	103 524 €	3 982 €	50 €	85 000 €	400 €
County	129	319 024 €	2 473 €	30 €	75 000 €	500 €
Region	27	476 577 €	17 651 €	137 €	288 000 €	2 000 €
DRAC	15	277 060 €	18 471 €	100 €	63 900 €	12 000 €
Other	51	279 961 €	5 489 €	20 €	100 000 €	400 €
Private financial contributions (grants, etc.)	111	205 811 €	1 854 €	6 €	22 400 €	540 €
Auxiliary structure (budget)	44	133 873 €	3 043 €	100 €	20 000 €	1 100 €
Other financial sources	49	142 193 €	2 902 €	20 €	29 000 €	1 134 €

The resources of the choruses made up of volunteers include large participation fees and contributions, which is less often the case in professional choruses (which benefit from more subsidies...).

It is noted that only 34% of the choruses would not receive subsidies. For those that do, one must differentiate the one-time specific assistance (21%) from those allotted for annual operation (53%) just as their sources as indicated above, with the weight always linked to the number of respondents.

The choruses with small budgets (0 to 10 000 € - 221 respondents) often have as partners Communes, Communities of communes and Departments, the choruses with large budgets (with more than 10 000 €, 82 respondents) Regions and the DRAC.

Here is a table which specifies the assignments of public appropriations:

Proportion of choirs aided by	Average aid	Medians
Communes (Agglomerations): 45%	1 452€	500€
Municipal Departments (counties): 19%	2 473€	500€
Regions: 4%	17 651€	2 000€
DRAC: 1%	18 471€	12 000€

It should be noted that among the respondents, three structures equipped with larger budgets than the others stand out (master schools; professional choruses).

Lastly, the **contributions** of chorus singers to the structure managing the chorus are important and almost impossible to circumvent (70% of the cases). Their amount does not depend on that of the subsidies received (no noted correlation) and is differentiated from the costs of other registrations relating to days of specific training or contributions to exceptional events.

## Amateur choruses, professional choruses, two separate worlds? (Sébastien Daucé, FEVIS)

*How to define the border zone? What bridges? What interactions?*

This study aims to raise elements with which to compare the people in the amateur choruses probed for this study and the professional choruses which are members of the FEVIS. These choruses are of two types:

- Independent professional vocal ensembles (Accentus, Elements, soloists of Lyon-Bernard-Té-tu, etc)
- Choruses founded by a local authority, having the same operation as the previous: independent singers recruited for the production (Arsys Burgundy e.g.).

On the other hand, the following are not considered choruses:

- Vocal ensembles with small manpower (medieval music in particular)
- Amateur choruses created around member professional groups (*Chœur du Concert de l'Hostel-Dieu*, *Chœurs de Lyon*, *Archipels*), nor choruses that gather only occasionally
- Choruses and orchestras: *Pygmalion*, *Les Arts florissants*, concerts of spiritual music, etc.

Purely vocal music accounts for 11% of the concerts given by the 95 groups of the FEVIS. The 12 member choruses post indicators close to the total number of members, although four groups quantify them upwards:

- An average of 35 concerts (32.7 for all)
- A median budget of 361 K€ (342 K€ for all)
- Slightly more structured administratively, on average, they invest nevertheless 69.5% of their budget in productions (against 71% for all). This structuring can be explained by the fact that several adherent professional choruses also manage an amateur chorus.
- Slightly more subsidized, slightly on the average, they nevertheless receive 55% of the direct receipts (60% for all).
- The choruses generate a large volume of artistic employment: 16,000 hours of temporary employment on the average (against 9,970 for all), bound by the nature of the work of their personnel.
- The State, via the DRAC, is the largest financier of the FEVIS groups.

The criteria for the attribution of the aides vary according to the profile of the financers and local policies. The following are nevertheless evaluated in a recurring way: the artistic project, distribution, employment, the management of the structure, and teaching and public awareness activities.

If many professional choruses see the benefit of working with amateur choruses, a benefit often perceived by the communities which finance them, today a clear separation of these two worlds is observed. Indeed, over the last several months, the regulations in force have made collaborations between professional groups and amateurs perilous.

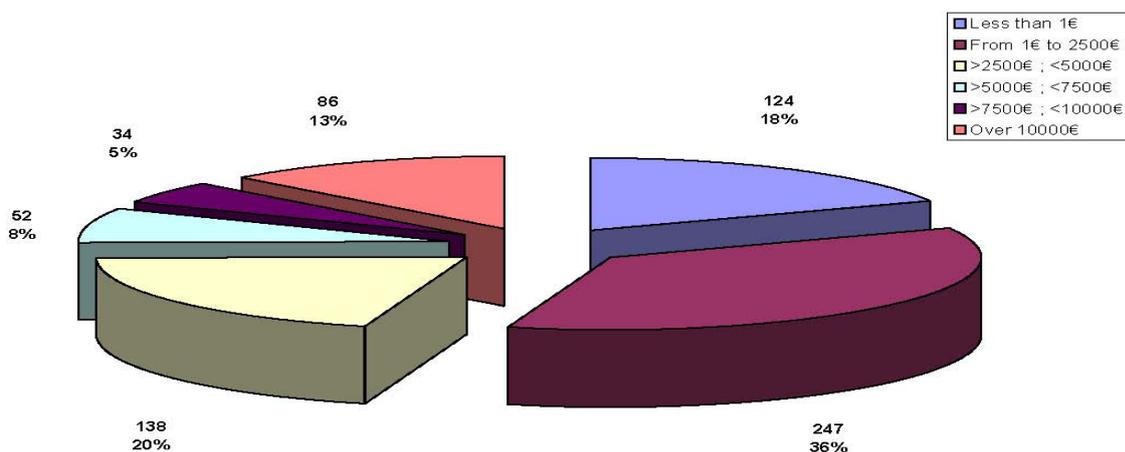
This polarization towards two models is probably due to the detriment of the general artistic quality. Amateur choruses may find it beneficial to approach professional groups to take advantage of their know-how and their demands, whether they are for prospective recruitment, personal or collective work or for the possibility of producing concerts that draw more attention. All these qualities obviously already exist in the majority of the amateur groups, but regular and close interaction or even collaboration with professional structures is a source of dynamism and emulation.

In addition, professional groups are encouraged more and more to adopt a way of working that is standardized in terms of production. One on hand, operating on a basis of regular rehearsals over the long term by the amateur groups can be advantageous: all the more when the repertory is complex, when the leader works in-depth on the sound identity, and that the team is, by nature, mobile. On the other hand, this kind of operation is not economically viable in professional groups.

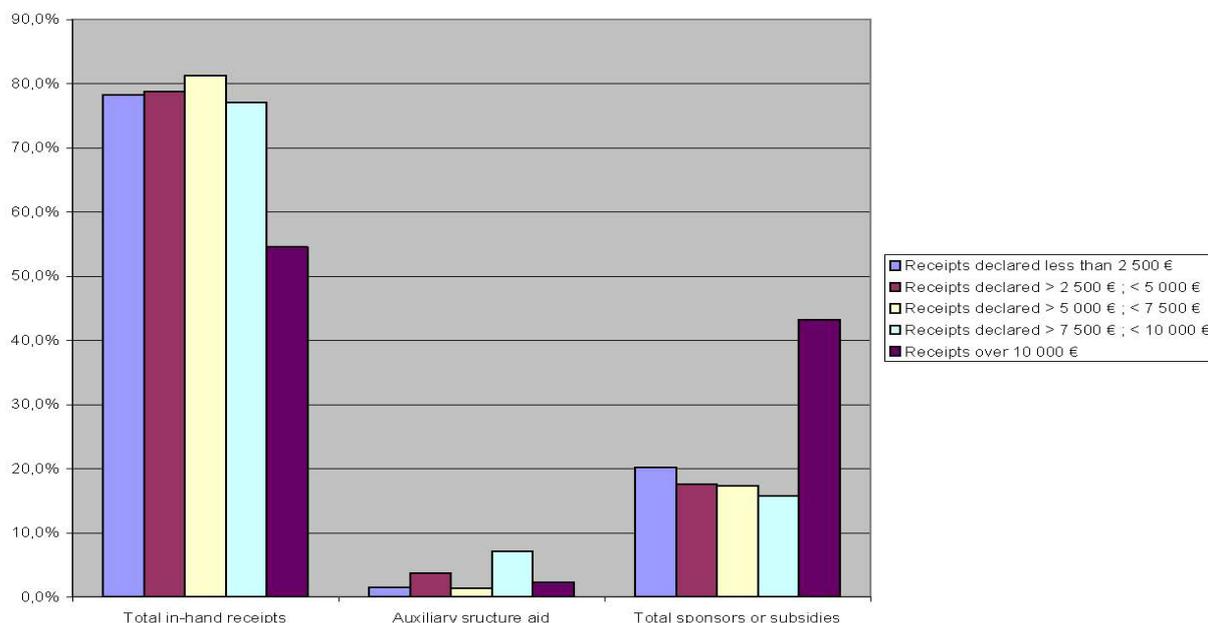
**Other sources of financing** of chorus come from gifts and patronage. This makes it possible to generate new and various resources: ceremonies with the church, lotteries, sales of CDs and calendars, etc. For the receipts resulting from concerts, the question of the category of the entertainment entrepreneur's license would have been relevant to include. It seems that auto-production remains the dominating model.

We use below the same study as the one aforementioned regarding the expenses above.

**Number of choruses per amount of declared receipts (in €)**

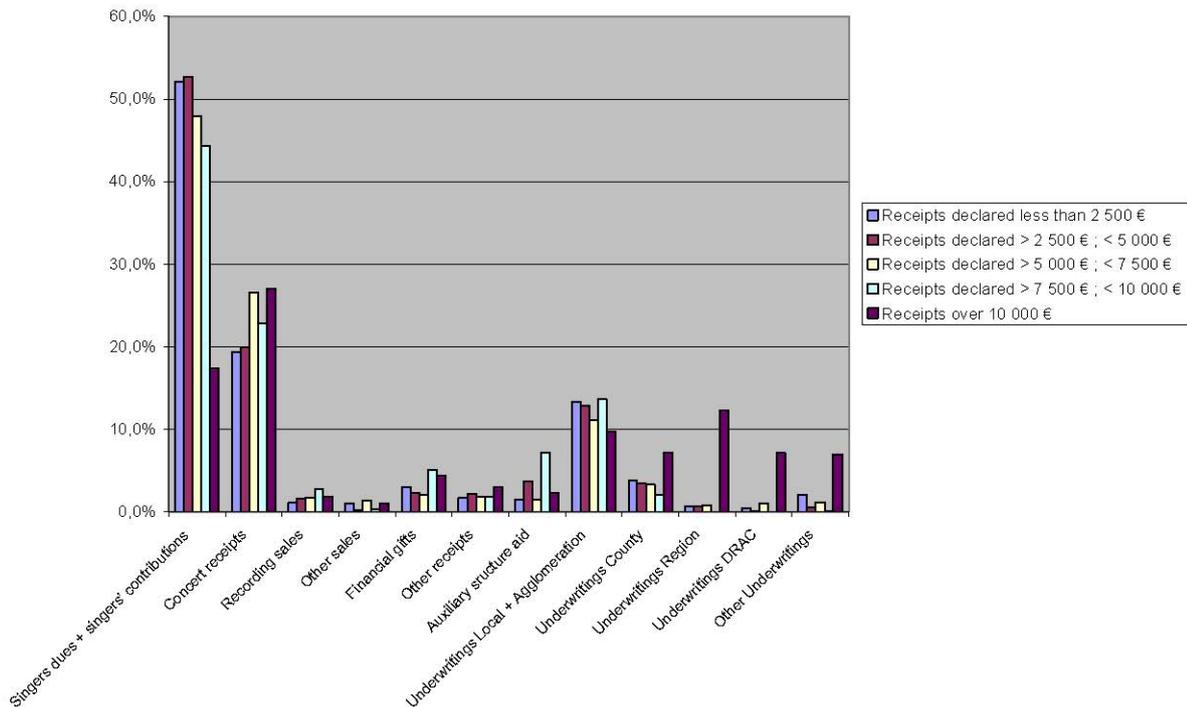


**Distribution of resources based on the total amount of the receipts**



The distribution suggested by the histogram above shows that the subsidies apply more to the choruses which have a large budget. The detail of this distribution shows that the latter profit from public support coming from the Regions and the DRAC and from few contributions, contrary to choruses which have a small budget.

## Distribution of receipts based on the total amount of the receipts



### Indicators of the evolution of the activities of the choruses (Yves Menut, ORACLIM)

*What types of objectives and indicators other than economic ones can interest the people in charge of public policy in group artistic practices?*

Let us take the objectives of , "l'Agenda 21" for culture: "Culture is today at the centre of urban strategies because of its essential vocation aiming at **promoting human rights, shaping the world of knowledge and improving the quality of life for all**, by its contribution to the creation of jobs, urban regeneration or social inclusion<sup>1</sup>".

The creation of cultural indicators has so far failed to yield results and social indicators still remain the reference. "The return of a critical interrogation on the economic growth and its abusive assimilation to the group wellbeing constitutes one of the driving forces of the current revival of the social indicators<sup>2</sup> (...). One of the limitations of the economic representation of this wellbeing comes from the fact that it remains centred on the individual and that it does not take into account the group and systemic aspects of social development, beginning with culture in a broad sense of the term. (...)."

The notion of "social capital"<sup>3</sup> fills a gap in the social theory. Going beyond the point of view of individuals, it takes into account the fact that social richness also lies in the depth and the quality of their relations. (...). Its statutory value largely overflows its economic usefulness. This concept is of interest because it lends itself rather easily to measurement.

A social indicator must have these qualities: unambiguous (no ambiguity on the nature of the phenomenon that it reflects) - representativeness (it can validly summarize by only one figure a

1 *Déclaration finale du congrès fondateur de Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis (CGLU)*. Paris mai 2004 traitant de l'Agenda 21 pour la culture

2 Bernard Perret. *Indicateurs sociaux. État des lieux et perspectives in Les papiers du Clerc*. N° 2002 – 01

3 Social Capital is a reference to the characteristics of a social organisation, such as networks, norms, and poise which ease the coordination and cooperation with a view to mutual benefit.". R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: America's declining Social Capital*, The Journal of Democracy, January 1995.

vast ensemble of phenomena) - clearness (the variations can be given a univocal value) - reliability, regularity (information must be provided regularly, by means of reliable investigations) - comparability over time and/or in space.

Let us show creativity and seek to define which indicators; satisfying these criteria could correspond to objectives of the activities of a chorus (individual objectives put aside) as well as two of the above mentioned objectives of Agenda 21 for culture:

- A chorus could have as an internal objective to develop its members' wellbeing: physical (balance, respiration, posture), intellectual (broadmindedness, artistic pleasure) or moral (social relations, valorisation). This objective could be a part of a public policy seeking to improve the quality of life for all. A comparison between the life expectancy of the chorus singers and people without experience belonging to a chorus could be the indicator, obviously not measurable chorus by chorus, but which could be the object of a national survey of representative samples and with a methodology that would allow the drawing aside of other potential factors of longevity.
- A chorus could have as an external objective to contribute to the cultural animation of the region.

Responding to the same goals of public policy, the improvement of the quality of life for all would be measured through:

- The number of events outside specialized "cultural" venues: schools, retirement homes, public spaces and patrimonial sites
- Quantification of the public reached by concerts
- Agreements set up with cultural facilities to allow access to these places by the members

And the contribution to social inclusion would be measured through:

- Characteristics of the mix of population: social, religious, age...
- Integration of handicapped people, newcomers in the area
- Participation in celebrations for the municipality, solidarity (humanitarians...)
- Exchanges with other cultural groups (diversity)

The potential indicators are easier to point out here, chorus by chorus. Compilations are possible. The objectives are not however specific to the choral society.

## Classification by type and oppositions

The analysis of the expenditures and receipts highlights oppositions between choruses presenting different, even divergent, profiles. We retain here three oppositions to be validated:

- Choruses being given significant resources against those having few resources (criterion: declared budget)
- "Independent" choruses versus the choruses linked to other organisms
- "Older" choruses, created until the end of the 1970s, against the "recent" choruses, created from the 1980s until the end of 2000s.

The first opposition presents the most inequalities because there is an effect of gathering more of the resources (subsidies especially) for the choruses that have a large budget. On the contrary, a great number of choruses that have a small budget profit from little financial income and depend primarily on the nonmonetary exchanges carried out. **In other words 80% of the probed population receives 7% of the totality of the granted subsidies.** This opposition related to the budgets of the choruses remains most relevant and by extension<sup>10</sup>, one notes that the training programs with significant budgets are directed by professional directors, graduates, who take on a repertory reflecting their knowledge or even specialization. On the contrary, the structures that have a limited budget function with volunteer work, without a graduate director, and interpret a more popular repertory.

<sup>10</sup> Guillaume Lurton uses the multiple correspondent analyses which allows for a two dimensional representation, in graphic form, of principal data which structure a population.

Given the various types of links to other organisms (ex: parish and music school), the second opposition is less useful in the analysis. One notes however that the directors paid by a third structure are more often graduates with better diplomas than those that are volunteers in independent associations, except the volunteer teachers of the National Education (CAPES, Agrégation).

Lastly, the third opposition shows us that the volunteer work of the directors gradually leaves its place to, beginning from the year 2000, the remuneration of the directors by a third party, and by the association chorus to a lesser extent. One can note a tendency that progressively modified the status of the director, "professionalized" it.

### **Economic forms of choral singing (Guillaume Lurton, CSO-CNRS)**

#### **A few keys to read the socio-economics**

The operation of the world of artistic amateurs does not rest exclusively on economic mechanisms of monetary and commercial nature. One of the objectives of this investigation was precisely to clarify the forms of non-monetary and non-commercial economy within the choral world.

The economic historian Karl Polanyi proposes a classification of the economic forms organized around three poles: reciprocity, redistribution and commercial exchange. This classification is effective to organize the diversity of the chorus economy.

Reciprocity is an economic form resting on exchanges of gifts. A significant part of the chorus economy uses this type of operation, be it only through the voluntary gift of time which is the base of the amateur commitment. The practice of donations in the chorus economy goes well beyond, however. It is common that the members of a chorus themselves provide the means of making the group function (purchase of scores, of costumes, of scenery...).

If the investigation makes it possible to illustrate this at times, the abstract character of the organizations utilizing reciprocity makes it difficult to determine this form of economy by the means of a study by questionnaire. The logic of the donation is easier to grasp when it is expressed in the form of monetary engagement. It then takes the particular form of the association contribution whose investigation shows the fundamental character of the financing of the choral world.

The notion of redistribution indicates situations in which the economic resources are centralized and redistributed by an institution linked with an authority. The most obvious case here is the distribution of subsidies by public administrations. The investigation makes it possible to precisely document the width and the forms of this phenomenon. But one should not neglect the forms of redistributions in kind. The providing of buildings for rehearsal constitutes the most widespread form of the subsidy in kind. Lastly, choruses linked to other organisms (choruses of academies, colleges...) constitute a particular form of redistribution in which the entire existence of the chorus rests on its material support by a third institution.

The investigation very clearly shows the specificity of this case which constitutes a special model within the choral world.

The raising of commercial economic forms, finally, is obviously present within the amateur choral world. With regard to the question of the commitment of the individuals, the recourse to the market results in the introduction of a remuneration for certain actors. The investigation makes it possible in particular to analyze the conditions of the professionalization of the supervision of amateur choruses.

## Employment sources?

Within the current economical crisis, and in the face of the various political shifts which have an impact, though indirect, upon the development of amateur practice<sup>11</sup>, the question of future employment is a legitimate one, and it offers a different reading of economy vis-à-vis choruses.

### Which jobs? What salary? Which underwriting?

As we have seen above, the **conductors' qualifications** were reinforced and stabilised between 1999-2004 and 2007-2008. Today, the majority of them have been trained, either in music conservatories (24%), Missions Voix (21%), Universities (19%), or other federations (17%). Nevertheless, 41% of the population has not had training as a choir director.

It is training, and its logical extensions, a diploma or some other sort of formal recognition, that permits a conductor or choir director to ask for a certain salary commensurate with her or his experience, especially if the conductor is paid by a third party (5 times greater probability of being paid). The **average** monthly salary of a conductor is 300€; 48% of those choirs who responded (75) declared a yearly gross salary of between 2 000€ and 4 000€, which represents a low pay average compared to other professions. There is, therefore, no connection between the salary of a particular person and her level of qualification, which has increased in later years. Salary has remained low.

Data also indicates that neither the training of a conductor nor her diplomas were factors in the increase of underwritings or subsidies.

**Means of salary payment** are direct payment by the choir (15%) and only 12% of choirs have a conductor with a signed contract (either short term or open-ended). Pay stubs are present only half the time and the possibility of other forms of remuneration are even less, though these are more recent forms<sup>12</sup>. This inquiry into choirs allows us to mention the importance of offering salaried conductors (24%), notably in musical training institutions. When third party payment of a conductor's billing intervenes, the average yearly salary is about 2 700€ when the conductor is trained (and holds a diploma), and falls to 1 716€ if he or she is not. The reimbursement of expenses is greater if this last has not had a specific training (1 612€ annual average salary).

Choirs pay **outside conductors** more easily than their own, either directly or indirectly, when there is a third party payment structure attached (48% of the time in France). Also, 61% of choirs are in collaboration with other professionals, the majority of which are vocal. 20% of these collaborations are with professional ensembles while a further 10% of collaborations are the object of some sort of financial transaction.

Finally, as to **public underwritings**, it seems that one-time demands for financial help are more often associated with outside performers (conductors) while ongoing subsidies necessary for the day to day function of a choir come from counties, municipalities, and regions. These provide, together, the base salary of a salaried choir director or conductor. From this it is not to deduce some fixed rule: 67% of structures having declared monetary resources have at their head a voluntary conductor. Those which have no benefit of underwriting have, logically, a non-paid conductor (this in 57% of cases) or one paid by a third party (36% of cases observed).

Additionally, a choir that is underwritten has a 25% greater chance of collaborating with a professional ensemble. This percentage increases to 75% when it receives case by case financial participation. The DRAC essentially supports those ensembles which pay, directly or indirectly, their choir directors while other institutions do not respect this particular set of criteria.

Countries or communities depend upon third party structures for help as a means of spreading the

11 Cf. Réforme des collectivités locales (question des compétences à répartir), de l'enseignement supérieur et spécialisé (Analysis of necessary competencies and professional insertion)...

12 One must look further into the use tills in the future, as they are a relatively recent development (within the last 10 years)

weight. Financing accorded by Municipal or Regional Counsels (in France), and DRAC, generate collaborations with outside performers or conductors more often. Regions, in particular, facilitate the work of choirs with other ensembles: what comes to mind is the grouping of several choirs for special performances, or the exchange of repertoires and contests....

**Monetary resources**, in general, tend to go toward the payment of conductors' expenses, but don't have an immediate impact anywhere except upon the concert for which the expenses apply. Choir preparation is thus outside of the immediate professional picture since it does not concern the professional outsider. The salary and the reimbursement of expenses which directly concern the choir director or conductor are paid in part by contributors (either punctually or as continuing supporters) however; we have no knowledge of a free-standing, self financing association. What we do know, though, is that individual patronage does not, except in rare case, have an impact on collaborations with professional ensembles. **The receipts from concerts** allow the payment of salaries (and travel) and guest soloists, as well as professional accompanists within the framework of auto-production which remains the most common means of distribution (either by tickets or by passing the hat).

This inquiry demonstrates the weight of non monetary economy upon the functioning of choirs, but does not show in a precise way the impact of voluntary contributions coming from the administrative arms of associations (those in charge of the management of the structure as a whole). This has been well demonstrated by studies, conducted by Opale, in which volunteer work represents 20% of the work volume associated with the whole of cultural associations<sup>13</sup>.

### **Territorial Characteristics<sup>14</sup>**

Taking into account the typologies and oppositions pointed out above, we can deduce that choirs situated in rural areas are more often prepared and directed by volunteer conductors and directors as opposed to their urban counterparts, which benefit from third party financing or conductors' salaries. This can be explained by the importance given to conservatories and music schools which develop musical practice on the amateur level (and this by adults outside of the "common" music curriculum). Rural areas also suffer from the fact that they have greater difficulty in attracting and paying outside performers even as underwriting relatively modest operating budgets is more common and one-on financial intervention is more frequent. A deduction is that choirs are less easily identified in large cities and that the most efficient means for obtaining financial aid is to present specific projects with collaborations with outside performers being given a priority, or even invoking professional ensembles.

Associating choirs with religious institutions is easier and more viable in rural areas (half of these in rural parishes), high school choruses are more frequent in areas where there are from 100 000 to 500 000 inhabitants.

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13 Cf. *Vers une meilleure connaissance des associations culturelles employeurs, Inquiry report*, Bruno Colin, Gaël Bouron, Opale CNARCulture, Paris, study invoked by DDAI of the Minister of Culture, septembre 2008, pp.31-33.

14 Cf. Annexes parsing and cross-referencing data relative to typologies above by Plate-forme interrégionale. [www.pfi-culture.org](http://www.pfi-culture.org) for further reading

## Vocal and Instrumental Ensembles: Points in Common (Sylvain Marchal, FSMA and Philippe Tormen, CMF)

*Economic function of vocal and instrumental music ensembles: points in common, differences. For what reasons?*

The analysis of this study and its perspective given with known data about the amateur music world (as pertains to group instrumental music: orchestras, brass bands, and diverse others) helps us to be precise about a certain number of elements, albeit subjective. Amateur instrumental practice has not been the subject of study similar to that of choirs.

Thus, we would like to highlight a certain number of questions and possible problems which we feel pertinent all the while suggesting further means of deepening understanding and comparison.

Two economic areas have either been omitted or scantily mentioned:

- Investment (personal)
- That part dedicated to the training of conductors/choir directors is not obvious: may one deduce that it is not to be listed or that it is very (too) weakly represented?

It has been equally difficult to put into perspective the products and charges in the absence of overall budgets. In two domains (choirs and orchestras), volunteerism seems to be a very important and essential part of the life of these ensembles. To take a page from the initiative by COFAC (see page 10, the contribution of COFAC), the analysis of the real importance of volunteerism is indispensable. It must be put into perspective with the real possibilities of finding a "paying gig" or one that is full-time. It would be interesting to evaluate help as provided in the form of services: personnel offered by contributors, performance space freely given, etc. As to that which is given to instrumental practice, it seems that the underwriting is lesser.

Questions:

- Is there a sufficient dialogue between and with cultural and social institutions?
- Is it habitual for choirs to put together common projects?
- Is partnering a structured practice?
- Are choirs really well represented on the local level and are they cultural players on the regional level?
- Is communication with the exterior as efficient as it can be?

Two further other fundamental questions come to mind:

- Is the employment question limited to conductors and performance artists?
- What types of training are still necessary (legal, financial, communication...)?

Which leads us to ask questions about other routes to explore in terms of networking, advertising, cooperation: thinking about these in a more global way (all artists, not just musicians) might generate new possibilities within the profession and new vistas as to employment all the while responding to the immediate needs of all. Were we to make a one-to-one comparison, we would find that orchestras have a larger overall budget than vocal ensembles (this because scores, instruments, etc. are more onerous financially speaking, for orchestras); that orchestras have more underwriting, and that there is more participation on a private level (both in monetary terms and in contribution of advertising space, for example). Members contribute financially to the life of the association and use more frequently the services of non musical professionals (communication, restaurant services, diverse rentals, etc).

It is also useful to look into the connection of these ensembles to other establishments. Outside of these obvious questions are those related to the independence of our structures.

This comparison, of course, would need further work in the area of finance and economy and would benefit from some focus on sociological and territorial issues.

### **When Choirs give zing to artistic life**

By Gérard Authelain

It is no small thing that this study of the economy of choirs appears at a time when political (and other) sands are shifting around the future and organisation of cultural practices.

This is about the whole of the territory, its diffusion organisations, its associations, the diverse artists' profession as well as what falls under the banner of users, the public, future practitioners: all recognise that we are in a great period of change where we must show proof of keen discernment.

The base upon which is constructed French cultural life of the last 30 years has become less and less useful as a model: decentralisation and economic crises are not the only culprits. It is best to arm oneself with a lucid point of view when faced with the changes which are not as yet known in their entirety. We must understand, precisely, great artistic and cultural trends which power the choices of a large population whose components are varied and cover several generations.

Choirs are as viable as ever. This is certainly a sign that we accord so much attention to them. The introduction of this work cites two studies already published by Missions Voix and which invite us to go further in our desire to understand how choirs function and the impact of this activity on an economic level.

This present document is one whose pertinence as to amateur practice is clear. It is further clear that musical practice as a whole is a vehicle for the unification and collaboration of amateurs, volunteers, and professionals. Those contributions given in the annex are like open doors to greater reflection and render to this document a sense of a point of beginning toward the various forms of choirs, the diverse places where one finds them (rural or urban or in-between), the repertoires used, what members are seeking, what conductors look for, the connections made with existing, seemingly unrelated organisations.

This document is presented under the heading The Economy of Choirs. The last segment reminds us that this term need not just cover the budgetary aspect, but also that of the social and associative being of a choir. Yves Menut posited, with great pertinence, a question pertaining to the collective well being (this is a notion in which one would find a great number of singers). He reminds us that social richness lies in the density and the quality of relations which unite those members who come, voluntarily, to a cultural event.

Everything is not measurable. Yet, it is also necessary to avoid allowing oneself to delve into those places where there is no objective, no chance, no possibility to gain. History teaches that necessity is the mother of invention. Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this work and who have given us new reference points which will help us to prepare for a tomorrow where choirs might hope to sing even better.

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