



Diversity of singing practices in Europe

How do we sing in Europe? How do we teach singing? What do we sing? Taking as a starting point the idea that the exchanges, the confrontations of viewpoints, techniques and repertoires make people and practices evolve, 8 partners from 5 countries have joined together in the cooperation project *LEO sings!*

More than an artistic practice, the voice is a social and cultural indicator that displays the development of societies.

Assessments and prospects

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Film of the project:

<https://vimeo.com/132122042>



Contact: Stéphane Grosclaude

+33 6 73 73 84 53

contact@afi-culture.org



DG Éducation et culture

Programme pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie

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Introduction

The project was ambitious, but this first attempt of identification and understanding the diversity of singing practices led at European level was a great success, as confirmed unanimously by participants:

Exciting, inspiring, incredible, wonderful, ... are among the terms they use to express their satisfaction, specifying for example that they could "go to market", having "widely brought back something to eat and drink" ... Very positive words, emphasizing a good balance while making music. The "musical Minutes" (collective creation as a vocal assessment and synthesis of the 4th session) were a significant example of an innovative way of learning by doing.

Four working sessions made of 4 to 6 days gave the opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues: courses and pathways, the place of singing in society, repertoires, innovation, styles and genres, ... All the topics could not be treated in depth, but the concrete results are there and collaborative work, cooperative spirit have created a trading community that will continue well beyond the framework established for this partnership.

Particular attention focused on A cappella pop/rock/jazz music which is logical regarding to the people involved, mainly from this area. However, there was a good inter-connexion, a good balance between classical (mostly practiced) and contemporary music in all the sessions and every body/partner has moved from the beginning. The topic of diversity is relevant because it allows us to make bridges and connexion between people and organisations.

Figures of the partnership

This project received a total financial support from the European Union of € 138,500, which funded more than 230 "mobilities" (travel of a person in one of the partner's countries). In total, more than 380 people could participate and benefit from the activities during the 5 sessions. Plate-forme interrégionale supported the coordination of the project, which represent a half-time job over the two years of the partnership, in addition with the time dedicated to the application and the implementation of the project, and a significant investment from all the members of the Voice group (people in charge of 7 regional "Voice mission" in France), who imagined the project, assumed the artistic and pedagogical management of the partnership and the content of the sessions, as well as individual contributions, through practical workshops (discovering repertoires by Géraldine Toutain, contemporary arrangements of traditional songs by Jean-Louis Comoretto and Perrine Malgouyres, training of the choir and improvisation by Denis Haberkorn and Catherine Fender, ...), written contributions and presentations (vocal language by Gérard Authelain, prevented people by Isabelle Humbert and Meriam Khaldi, ...) and during discussions.

Partner's feedback and evaluation

For **Plate-forme interrégionale** (PFI), the main objective was to bring together a variety of organisation in the field of voice, all specialists in their field (teaching singing, choral conducting, music/singing education, ...), but who are cooperating together, or at least not enough, which was a success for the eight partners and more broadly, through links and cooperation that could be established with other European networks such as European Music Council, Association Européenne des Conservatoires (AEC), the European Music schools Union (EMU), the European Association for Music in school (EAS), European choral Association - Europa Cantat, and locally with many ensembles and organizations in host countries.

It was also obvious and important for PFI to involve a large number of organizations for the session in Tours and Saint-Lo. Thus several joint events have been scheduled:

- A national meeting on voice pathways in conservatoires, in cooperation with the association Conservatoires de France and French federation of music schools (FFEM),
- The annual education days of AFPC-EVTA France, french association of singing teachers,
- A training session with the National Youth Choir Choir À Chœur Joie,
- Concerts with the chamber choir Mikrokosmos and with the National Youth Choir,
- Expo of European publishers throughout the week,
- Participation in the professional show case day of Polyfolia festival

A major issue for PFI was to work with various French music/voice training centres (Pôles d'enseignement supérieur, Studio des Variétés, Conseil des CFMI...) and national federations of pop music (Collectif RPM FNEIJMA ...) at the session in Aalborg to allow them to discover the unique diploma course in Europe in choral conducting pop/rock/jazz vocal music, based on the method "Intelligent choir", imagined by Jim Daus Hjernøe.

Five representatives of these networks were able to attend the session in which a workgroup session focused on considering opportunities for cooperation all around the territory and each of them could experience educational tools during the session to integrate in his/her own professional practice. This meeting allowed also to discuss how this course can inspire existing diploma courses on our territory, and how/if it can appropriate to imagine further training and how to consider cooperation at European level, including exchange / invitations of trainers, training for trainers, development of long distance education...

A cooperative dynamic is now launched in France and the Voice Group of PFI has initiated a reflection and consultation process on the role of the voice in pop music for the years 2015 and 2016 that will be the subject of several national and regional meetings and productions.

Exchanges of practices on education have been very concrete and successful in Barcelona and Tours, pointing out the difference from one country to another, the language barrier and the particularities of social practices, such as singing in prison or hospital that have revealed some difficulties to discuss. Extensive work with researchers is still needed to draw up a map of degree and training courses in Europe, support devices for vocal practice, analyse and enhance specific skills depending on the context, the place of voice in cultural public policies...

At this point, we strongly regret that there is no equivalent of the "Regional Voice Mission" existing in France in other European countries, and expecting that the cooperation initiated in the framework of this project can develop.



European Voice Teachers Association was a late partner to the project having been initially turned down. As a result we were not able to broadcast the information to our member countries (and they in turn to disseminate to their members). This meant that for the first 2 sessions most of the interest has come from the board members of EVTA. We have however used all the mobilities (12).

The feedback from participants was very positive. While some felt the project was too broad in its expectations others felt that at least we were trying to do something about understanding the diversity of singing in Europe. While it was clear we were not going to be able to achieve all we wanted in what was basically 4 sessions the feeling from participants was that some concrete outcomes had been achieved.

Moviment Coral Català had a difficult position to host the first session, as people didn't know very well each other and it was a big challenge. There were two meetings before, but we would have changed many things if we knew what would happen.

All the partners who hosted a session share this comment.

The enquiry about singing in education was rather made for researchers and perhaps didn't get the goal, but it gave the opportunity to people to ask themselves questions and try to answer from their own position/job.

Hosting a session for **CEPRAVOI** was a good opportunity to meet several national and European organisations (AFPC, EVTA, Conservatoires de France, ...). The fact of joining forces in common events is relevant. It is a good way to think in any project.

It was also relevant for students to be able to be part of the session in Aalborg, in order to discover more concretely and meet teachers of the method they could experiment during a previous training course in Tours.

CEPRAVOI took part largely in communication of the project: finding a name, creating a logo, which was a lack in the evaluation of the application. This was relevant and gave another dimension to *LEO Sings!*, and to the sessions, with lots of dissemination of press release and flyers.

For **Royal Academy of Music Aarhus-Aalborg** it was a while to understand what the project was about and no staff to manage it.

The main objective was to share about conducting and the different technics and methodology, with a view that our is at the same level of any other methodology, classical or other.

It is relevant to sit and show what we have in the country, who are the internal partners. It is a kind of firmware in choir singing.

It is very good to host a session: many students could come, train, especially exploring distant learning with Adobe connect. We received lots of comments during the training and feedback before and after training sessions in France.

At the beginning, the project seemed unrealistic to **European Voices Association**, needing many papers and work for European level project. Joining the project was a good opportunity for meeting singing teachers and networks and for the process of exchanging ideas.

It is difficult to make not profit things in a professional way, but very relevant and inspiring. Something started, but is not completely available yet: the network is existing and can continue to share, and perhaps make some new projects. It is important to create "something", to make it possible.

Participants from **INECC Luxembourg** are all very satisfied of the sessions. It was a long way from Barcelona to Freiburg. LEO Sings is actually an image and has to confirm it in production.

Observation of the work in progress:

Overview of Interarts contribution to help us evaluate *LEO Sings!*

LEO Sings! has identified the common challenges across Europe and the fundamental role of European exchanges in vocal practices.

How do we operate in the broader European environment with collective singing practices?

The challenges...

- **Community:** *recognising the intrinsic value of singing with its impact on welfare, educational attainment, community cohesion and economic opportunities*
- **Media:** *are singers recipients or participators - creators or performers?*
- **Policy:** *do countries offer universal or limited opportunities for singing?*

Do community singing policies and practices **evolve**?

Diversity

This was well reflected in the Barcelona, Aalborg, Tours and Freiburg sessions. Each had a different focus, and a different group of people, but *LEO Sings!* recognised areas for development:

- Adapting our music education to embrace different styles of music and social changes
- Encouraging accessibility for singing for all, in terms of location, price, ...
- Improving choral training of directors and facilitators, especially in public and music education,
- Complexity of career paths after training are inevitable but we can share some common certification of choral and vocal practice,
- Transferring across Europe good practice, good quality and healthy singing, sharing expertise with participating partners, as experienced in the sessions,
- Interaction of regional and international networks needs to continue, sessions are most productive when all participants are proactive and there is a balance between technical exchanges and skill development, and networking opportunities,
- Policy recommendations may be beyond the framework of *LEO Sings!* and subsequent projects but by adopting a bottom-up approach we can spread the value of singing for social and personal development in communities and influence policy,
- Social impact of vocal practices need to be examined further, singing in hospitals, prisons, refugee camps etc.
- More European countries involvement should be encouraged through follow up projects.

Possible outcomes as seen by Interarts

These are some of the suggestions made by Interarts for continuing the project. They are just suggestions as seen by an observing partner.

1. Mapping diverse career paths from professional singers
2. Collecting existing research and individual testimonials on link between singing and personal welfare
3. Explore the external and internal obstacles for choral participation
4. How can a clear understanding of quality in singing help new monitoring and assessing frameworks?
5. Combine research based arguments on values of collective singing with personal narratives
6. Link with UNESCO 2005 Diversity of Cultural Expressions, explore further meaning of diversity
7. Develop training programmes
8. Exchange of good practice in singing across Europe
9. Interaction between vocal networks and other social agents to explore increased diversity in European society and social impact of singing.
10. Mapping of music education, which may be beyond the scope of Le *LEO Sings!*



LEO Sings! today :

The value of LEO Sings! network:

LEO Sings! permitted to open several doors and the discovery of a treasure we collectively found/shared/built together with more than 400 people in this partnership.

EU funding helped to meet, and partners want actually to continue connecting and exchange, joining different professional and amateurs with different profiles, like a “singing jungle” in an innovative process not existing before, and imagine new project,

Partners recognise themselves in the values pointed out in the first partnership:

- The public value of collective singing,
- Accessibility of singing,
- Being diverse and reflecting cultures,
- Improve quality of singing (make it more recognised, changes in the society),
- The fundamental role of European exchanges (cross borders),
- Recognition within society and policies.

The DNA of LEO Sings!

- ⇒ Innovative - fresh creative perspectives on vocal training programmes dealing with changes in the society, through distance learning and workshops for choirs and singers and ensembles e.g intelligent choir,
- ⇒ Diverse - cross-cultural and broad skill based team can contribute a range of skills across Europe with roadshow presentations,
- ⇒ Experiential - emphasis on living through music, helping, improving, through interaction and personal experience,
- ⇒ Open Source – building bridges - freely available and open to all, interactive and participative e.g. Common database or YouTube tool box e.g. Sound painting 'giving and receiving',
- ⇒ Practical - useful gifts for developing vocal expertise, very user friendly.

Partners:

- European Voice Teachers Association, Germany,
- European Voices Association - Germany,
- INECC choral institute - Luxembourg,
- Moviment Coral Català – Spain.
- Plate-forme interrégionale - France,
- Royal Academy of Music Aarhus/Aalborg - Denmark,

LEO Sings! tomorrow: “Singing roadshow”, mobile vocal academy

Introduction

LEO Sings! was born in 2013 through a European cooperation project, joining 8 partners to enhance the diversity of vocal practices in Europe.

LEO Sings! allowed to build relationships and to consider new cooperation and prospective in terms of vocal identity.

What ? Singing Roadshow is an opportunity to share ideas through a toolbox experimentation within two to four days in an informal meeting joining singers, conductors and choirs, (music/singing) teachers, trainers, ...

The innovation is mainly in the proposition to groups who don't know/practice the repertoires or the methods that are proposed in the programme, thus building bridges in a territory (City, region, schools, communities, ...), mixing classical and pop music, singers and instrumentalists, ...

This event shall be seen as a kick off for future support concerning continuing education and qualification in the daily work of a choir or ensemble or group.

Where? Singing Roadshow is a “mobile vocal academy” that can happen in parallel with different kind of events and in many places: concert venue, music school, University, festival, but also unconventional places like public square/place, woods, ...

How? The event will consist of two main parts :

- a pre-performance by the choir formed for the occasion which may consist of students, amateurs, professionals, formed choir or any other local choir/group,
- a performance of professional vocal groups who will reflect *status quo* and diversity of vocal genre across Europe (optional in this pilot edition).

The added value of this event is an opportunity for students, ensembles, choirs and singers that are interested in the music to receive direct coaching from renowned professionals.

The singing roadshow programme is composed with:

- Vocal skills to learn how the voice works and oral skills with repertoires,
- Experimentation of methods like Intelligent choir, rhythm exercises, movement (body, room, relationship with the audience...)
- Arrangement with musical material from different countries
- At the end: performance to show “musical minutes”

Issues and questions underlined through this project:

- Language and vocabulary,
- Training for trainers,
- Diploma course and professionalization of singers, conductors and other trainers,
- Repertoire and arrangement from traditional music to pop and contemporary music,
- Why do we sing : personal story of meeting, event, memory, emotion, which was determining factor in making music “What happened that made you love music/singing?”
This question can be asked at any participant in a *LEO Sings* event, building a data of research,
- Sharing resources (Training centres in Europe ...),
- Ambassadors of LEO Sings

A pilot edition of Singing roadshow will be **28 / 30 January 2016 Ettelbruck - Luxembourg**