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## News

Europa Cantat celebrates 50 years of change!



Posted: 10 May 10

Posted by: [JMI](#)

Tags: [World Youth Choir](#), [Choral](#)

Those who visited the impressive opening ceremony or the colourful atelier concerts of the EUROPA CANTAT festival in Utrecht in July 2009 could meet singers of all generations - those of the generation of the founders, who are now over 80; choirs of all kinds and age groups; children and young people from Benin and Hong Kong who shared the stage with their peers from all over Europe; and even a 5 year old soloist who brought the audience to tears. It is difficult to imagine that the Europa Cantat federation, which organised such an innovative, colourful, young and multicultural festival, was founded half a century ago. However, the aims of the founding fathers are still valid today.

On May 15th 1960, a group of conductors mostly from countries which had participated in World War 2 (Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Yugoslavia), came together in Geneva and decided to found a European Federation of Young Choirs. The founding fathers (yes, it was really only "fathers" at the time) had the war in mind and were looking for ways to increase understanding among peoples through their young choirs. The driving forces were two conductors from France and Germany, César Geoffroy and Gottfried Wolters, as well as the choral organisations "A Coeur Joie" (France) and "Arbeitskreis Musik in der Jugend" (Germany). A series of international youth meetings at the Lorelei in the 1950s had prepared the path to this idea: What better way to promote understanding for each other than a 10-day-event, during which the young people would not only sing for each other, but mostly with each other, sharing accommodation and mealtimes so that they are spending virtually their whole time together.

In 1961 the first EUROPA CANTAT festival took place in Passau with 69 choirs from 12 different European countries. The list included a choir from what was Yugoslavia at the time, as well as a choir from Leipzig whose singers experienced this special atmosphere of an international meeting a few days before the building of the wall - an experience most of them would not be able to repeat for many years. During the festival Gottfried Wolters went on stage together with a French colleague, Roger Motz, who had been blinded during the war. They told the young people how they had discovered that they had been fighting on the same day on the two sides of the Rhine. Therefore, one might have been responsible for blinding the other, and they now wanted to avoid with the EUROPA CANTAT festival, that something like that could have to happen again.

For more information visit the [Europa Cantat Website](#)

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