

Amwaj

Established in 2015 in Bethlehem and Hebron, Amwaj (Arabic for “waves”) Choir engages children and youth in an independent educational program that leans on cultural centers of the two Palestinian towns. Led by a mixed team of French and Palestinian educators, Amwaj allows children and youth to access high-quality music tuition through an intensive pedagogical program based on collective singing. Today, Amwaj counts 60 girls and boys aged 8 to 18 years from the Bethlehem region (towns, refugee camps, rural areas) and Hebron (old city and new city). In October 2019, Amwaj’s pedagogical team began to work also twice a week with 30 children and youth of the SOS Children’s Village – Bethlehem.

Thanks to Amwaj’s inclusive social vision (gender equality, non-affiliation to any specific social, religious, or political context) and focus on cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue, the choir members have access to a vast music repertoire and extensive artistic partnerships. Central to the development and success of Amwaj’s young singers is an ongoing exchange and dialogue with other artists and pedagogues from within Palestine and abroad.

Between 2018 and 2020, the choir toured three times in France to perform with major youth ensembles, such as DEMOS orchestra, and prestigious

children’s and youth choirs, such as the Choeur de Jeunes de l’Orchestre de Paris and Les Petits Chanteurs de Lyon. This led to concerts in Paris (Philharmonie de Paris, Conservatoire National, Notre-Dame de Paris, UNESCO, Institut du Monde Arabe) and various other French cities (Lille, Saint-Omer, Lyon, Saint-Étienne, Arcueil, Aubervilliers).

The choir performs a wide repertoire, from medieval music to contemporary music premieres, world music, and traditional Arabic songs. It has commissioned and premiered compositions by Naji Hakim, Patrick Lama, Dina Shilleh, and Moneim Adwan in France and Palestine.

The COVID-19 emergency has led to the postponement of projects planned for 2020 and 2021, now rescheduled for 2021 and 2022, including tours in Palestine and Europe to premiere the opera *Amal – Over the Wall* by Camille van Lunen, based on the award-winning children’s novel *The Oil’s Secret Tale* by Walid Daqqa (Amwaj commission, 2020), and joint residencies in Palestine with Les Petits Chanteurs de Lyon and Choeur de Jeunes de l’Orchestre de Paris. Video documentation of these projects will be carried out in collaboration with the sound engineering department of the Paris Conservatoire.

For more information, please visit Amwaj’s Facebook page or Youtube channel. Access the following links for selected performances:

First residency of the Petits Chanteurs de Lyon in Palestine (July 2017) – <https://youtu.be/9KyUuUctHbl>.

Concert at the Philharmonie de Paris with DEMOS (June 24, 2018) – <https://youtu.be/PJc1GJMZYs>.

Excerpts from the UNESCO concert in Paris (November 29, 2018) – <https://youtu.be/YQlPdZFu1Y>.

A live concert (with strict adherence to social-distancing measures) is planned for December 18, 2020, 3 pm, at Bethlehem Convention Palace.

To support Amwaj, please visit <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/soutien-amwaj/adhesions/adhesion-membership-soutien-amwaj-2020> or contact Michele Cantoni via email at mic.cantoni@gmail.com or by phone at + 33 6 76 28 59 84.

Amwaj is a member of the MEDINEA network <https://medinea-community.com/>.

