



**The Nogat Singers perform for a European Day of Action for disability rights,  
Rathaus Tiergarten, Berlin, 9 May 2014**

*„...wie meine Familie“ :*  
Community Choral Singing in Germany

*Australian German Association / Goethe-Institut Fellowship Report*  
**Benjamin Leske**

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## 1. Dedication

I dedicate this report to two gentlemen: Herr Joseph (Sepp) Veith, a man who, over many years, quietly pursued his love of choral singing through his local church choir in Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany; and my uncle, Dr Andrew Skinner, an enthusiastic musician and music-lover who gathered a band of eager young cousins together from an early age to play music.

## 2. Acknowledgements

I was blessed to grow up in a household surrounded by music in the Barossa Valley – a region with strong historical and cultural ties to Germany. I am so grateful to my parents for inspiring my musical (and linguistic) journeys.

I would like to thank the host of people who agreed to be interviewed and who provided information in support of this project. They are listed at [Section 15](#). I thank the choirs that welcomed me into their rehearsals and performances – invaluable professional development for a young choral conductor. I particularly want to thank Germany's academic leaders in choral music history and pedagogy (Betzner-Brandt, Brusniak, Keden, Kerz-Welzel), researchers at the *Chormuseum Feuchtwangen* and staff from several peak regional and national choral organisations who gave so freely of their time. Philip Mayers, a delightful and highly skilled expatriate Australian pianist, provided a wealth of ideas, contacts and new leads in our regular coffee meetings in Berlin – thanks, Philip!

I thank the scholarship selection committee led by the Australian German Association (AGA) and *Goethe-Institut* for its support of my project. Particular thanks to Mr Richard Middelmann for his tireless support and encouragement as I planned my fellowship. This trip was truly the opportunity of a lifetime! I thank too *Goethe-Institut* staff in Melbourne, Sydney and Berlin for facilitating such superb German language training.

Finally, to my partner Khang I say *Vielen Dank* for allowing me to pursue my twin passions of German and music at the same time and for an extended period.

### 3. About the AGA-Goethe-Institut fellowship



*"While the AGA's main focus is business, it also has an interest in cultural and educational matters. One feature is the annual Fellowship which supports a young Australian to visit Germany to study the language and pursue special interests."*



Over a three-month period from May-July 2014, my AGA fellowship supported daily language study at the *Goethe-Institut* in Berlin followed by a one-month study trip around Germany to pursue my interest in choral music, choral singing and the management and development of community choirs. I gained an understanding of Germany's choral movement, its history and characteristics. I was able to explore in particular choirs that seek to address social exclusion through community singing. While an understanding of the "whole picture" of German choral singing - from small village choirs to large professional radio choirs - was important, these elements were secondary to a focus on what in Australia are typically described as "community choirs."

This paper reports my findings and observations. Between May-July 2014 and using purposeful sampling, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with choral singers (both individually and in small groups), with conductors and choir leaders, with individual academics, researchers and choral music professionals with links to the community. Interviews were conducted in the German language. I also received written responses by email from singers and leaders. These contributions were supported by my own desktop research using academic texts, historical and contemporary public resources, and my observations and notes about rehearsal and performance experiences.

## 4. My background and experience

*This research project will explore choral singing in Germany and Australia, and its role in building communities. As a community choral conductor and music director, this Fellowship offers me a unique opportunity to explore choral music, to gain insights into best practice in Germany and to share tips and tools from Australia.*

Excerpt from my AGA project overview

As a relatively new choir conductor and community choir facilitator based in Melbourne, the AGA fellowship provides a unique opportunity to use my past German language and cultural skills both for personal development. I bring to this project over 20 years' experience in exploring and seeking a deeper understanding of Germany, its language, history and culture. This interest was first awakened as a secondary school student when I spent two months preparing for my high school certificate (or *Abitur*) in North Germany's siren-city, Hamburg. My passion for all things German (even its challenging grammar!) continued to develop through an extended stay and university exchange, an honours study of German literature and European politics and numerous short term visits for business and pleasure. In all these activities, Germany's music provided a ubiquitous soundtrack: singing Vivaldi's *Gloria* in Hamburg with an orchestra, my secondary school German teacher Chris Hall's introduction to 1980's choral/pop icons *Die Prinzen*, through to 1990's hip hop stars *Die Fantastischen Vier* and *Fettes Brot*.

I bring to this study knowledge gained as a PhD candidate in the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne exploring the role of community singing in addressing social exclusion through a qualitative study of two youth choirs in Melbourne, Australia. I also have six years' experience working with a range of youth and adult community choirs.

As one commentator mentioned during his interview, a choir epitomises both the best in democracy and autocracy. At its ideal it is a level playing field and supportive environment for those who sing within it: a place of healing, restoration, celebration, grief, achievement and very often exhilaration. Yet it is also a site in need of careful leadership. In a community choir setting, in my experience, musical knowledge and technical ability plays only part of the role of the community choir leader – a range of other non-musical skills and experiences can 'make or break' the community choir experience.

## 5. Why Germany?

Germany's music scene is prized both as a business success and a prized public good. Germany's music industry is big business: the fourth largest internationally, with a turnover in 2008 of EUR 6.2 billion and employing over 26,000 persons (see Table 1). Singing is a significant source of satisfaction, enjoyment and income within this mix.

### Germany's music industry (2008)

Turnover (2008)	EUR 6.2 billion
Companies involved	ca. 11,400
Persons employed	ca. 26,400

SOURCE: (German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. 260;263)



Cover of 2011 Berlin street magazine entitled "Sing yourself happy! The astounding boom of Berlin's choirs."

Choral singing brings to life and into the everyday lives of many Germans the historical and contemporary masterpieces of Germany's choral repertoire. In 2004, it was estimated that about 60 million people attend some 300,000 choral concerts annually in Germany (Reimers, 2012, p. 1). There are nearly 59,100 choral associations (choirs) in Germany,<sup>1</sup> including about 29,900 secular and 37,200 religious organisations. These organisations engage nearly 2.3 million singers regularly (Reimers, 2012, p.2). Alongside a multitude of established and *ad hoc* choral groups, public singing at large gatherings (p. 5) is a regular feature of German life (football matches come to mind!).

Germany's self-perception as a nation of deep cultural heritage is matched by some of the highest public funding of the performing arts worldwide. A 2005 study noted that the federal government allocates 12 per cent of funds to the arts and culture (EUR948 million in 2004), with a total of EUR8.3 billion spent across all levels of government. (McCaughey, 2005, Table 3).

Amateur music making, and particularly singing in the community, is an important component to German life. As one commentator noted, there were three historic features of village life in Germany: a Shooting Club (*Schützenverein*) for defence; a Fire brigade (*Feuerwehr*); and a choir or brass band (*Kapelle*)!

<sup>1</sup> 59,080 singers in 2012 according to Reimers (2012, p.2). A note that I use Australian punctuation in this report (EUR1,000 = one thousand Euros; EUR1.00 = one Euro).

In 2011, singers made up the largest cohort of amateur music-makers (Table 2).

#### Amateur Music Making in Germany by Group

<i>Group</i>	<i>Total (persons)</i>
<b>Singers</b>	<b>2.3 million</b>
Instrumentalists	1.8 million
Students in university schools of music	950,000
Students receiving private music tuition	380,000
Active in popular music	500,000
School students involved in choral or instrumental groups at school	800,000
Participants in other educational programs	88,000
<b>Amateur musicians total</b>	<b>7 million</b>

SOURCE: German Music Information Centre (2011), drawing upon Reimers (2012).

In 2014, Germany's choral music culture is in transition. The growth communities for choral singing in Germany are in children's and youth choruses, while the traditional choral organisations are in decline. There has been a gradual decline in the number of active male choirs (the stereotypical choir type in the minds of Germans until very recently) since the 1960s, while mixed choirs have grown in popularity, and now outnumber male choirs. Children and women's choirs have increased gradually since the 1950s though they are smaller in number (Arit, 2014b). Jazz and pop genre choirs in particular are booming. This mobility and diversification is fundamentally changing Germany's choral community and makes an ideal subject of study at this time.

Through a broad exploration of choral singing in Germany, a land with a long and rich choral music tradition, I have explored these qualities further, including small anecdotes about my visits to just a few of its choirs and choral organisations. I showcase choirs that target and celebrate diversity and who set out to deliberately support individuals who may experience social exclusion. My aim is to provide a spotlight and a microphone for their great work. For these reasons, Germany provides a compelling case study for Australian choral music practitioners.

## 6. Germany's musical life

*Kultur ist kein Ornament. Sie ist das Fundament, auf dem unsere Gesellschaft steht und auf das sie baut. Es ist Aufgabe der Politik, dieses zu sichern und zu stärken.<sup>2</sup>*  
(Preface to German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag), 2007)

*Deutschland hat ein reiches musikalisches Erbe  
- und eine starke zeitgenössische Musikszene.<sup>3</sup>*

(Bundesregierung Deutschland, 2014)

*Germany's musical life is noted for its diversity, high quality and geographic density - keywords that continue as ever to define Germany's special reputation as a land of music. With 133 publicly funded symphony and chamber orchestras, 83 music theatres, nearly 500 music festivals held on a regular basis, thousands of amateur and semi-professional choruses, orchestras and ensembles and a tightknit web of institutions for musical education and training, Germany can boast of a rich musical heritage and a vibrant music scene in which various genres, styles and contrasting cultures emerge and unfold.*

(German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. ix)

As an Australian with an understanding of German language and culture I remain both inspired and intrigued by choral singing in Germany. Germany offers some useful lessons in terms of its history, its impact on the music industry of today and particularly the structures and institutions that support a choral music culture. Germany's rich musical heritage fosters both its reputation as a centre of music and its support for music in the community. The following section briefly explores the history of choral singing, identifies key characteristics of a community choir and considers issues when seeking an appropriate German language definition.

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<sup>2</sup> Author's translation: Culture is not simply ornamental; it is the foundation of our society and the platform upon which it grows. The role of politics is to safeguard and strengthen culture (German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag), 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Author's translation: Germany has a rich musical heritage - and a strong contemporary music scene.



## 6.1. A brief history

Germany's historical experiences with music – both negative and positive – have shaped its contemporary community singing culture. The period of National Socialist (Nazi, hereafter N-S) government in Germany and the atrocities committed by Germans during this time continue to influence attitudes and practices and serve to determine the limits of acceptable community music-making in Germany. The manipulation of music for destructive ends in Germany's recent history has shaped its singing culture.<sup>4</sup> As Germany once again recognises and celebrates the role of singing within its communities and the benefits and efficacy of singing for community cohesion, it takes a step out from the shadow of its past.

I wish to highlight several pivotal experiences from different centuries that I believe set the scene for Germany's musical life today.

In 1871, a collection of 38 German-speaking territories (the 34 monarchies and four free cities of the 1814 Congress of Vienna) united under Prussian rule as the confederation of states we now know as Germany.<sup>5</sup> This collection of smaller states brought together a host of opera houses, concert halls, musical ensembles of the royal courts that continue to enrich Germany's musical landscape today. Germany's churches played a crucial role in supporting musical development and creating and preserving church choral music. Church musicians often taught in schools and led community-based musical groups and choirs alongside their primary duties (Arit, 2014a; Loewe, 2013).

This aspect of Germany's cultural history is evident in the sheer number of opera companies, orchestras, professional choirs and music ensembles. These ensembles play a cultural diplomacy role for their state and federal territories, and are supported by both state (and sometimes, as in the case of the *Rundfunkchor Berlin*, federal) funding and infrastructure.

Yet the growth of music in community was open to manipulation for utilitarian ends. During the period of N-S government in Germany (1933-1945), music and singing were used for the purposes of control, propaganda and the vilification and exclusion of members of the population, with devastating consequences. Helmke Jan Keden (2003)

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<sup>4</sup> Research continues into uncovering the history of Germany's choir movement, led by Friedhelm Brusniak at the University of Würzburg along with colleagues at various other institutions in Germany. See for instance Brusniak, 2003; Keden, 2003; Kertz-Welzel, 2005, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> For a short, chronological history of Germany in English, I recommend Mary Fulbrook's work (Fulbrook, 2004). Alternatively, Peter Watson provides offers a fascinating alternative history of Germany according to the intellectual, cultural and technological changes that shaped it (Watson, 2010).

offers a detailed study of male choirs during the N-S period, for instance. The limits to community singing are acutely felt and debated and the influence of this period remains very important (Kertz-Welzel, 2005).

In the period following the Second World War, West German scholar Theodore Adorno had a profound influence over the course of Germany's approach to music education. Adorno eschewed idealist and humanist approaches to music (music as a way to transform humankind), advocating instead that music making within a community should not lead to the 'liquidation of the individual' and should be of aesthetic and not simply pedagogical value (Adorno, 1970; Kertz-Welzel, 2005, 2013).

The use of music in the post-war German Democratic Republic (GDR) has been the subject of studies by a number of scholars (see for instance Goll & Leuerer, 2004). Community singing was common in the GDR and this legacy is celebrated and defended by many of its citizens. Singing was used extensively to foster a sense of cohesion, yet there were also deliberate utilitarian goals relating to the state's socialist ideology that underpinned the movement. It is a complex and developing area of study that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Today, choral music and Germany's vast and diverse tapestry of choirs are an essential and integrated part of modern Germany's public and private musical life (Brusniak, 2003, p. 69). Yet only a few English language publications exist on the topic, among them a 2011 overview commissioned by the German Music Council (German Music Information Centre, 2011), and a 2013 documentary film, *Sound of Heimat*, exploring folk music in Germany (Birkenstock & Tengeler, 2013).

I note several further caveats that define the boundaries of my study. This report will focus on choral singing within community choirs in particular. There are over one million people involved in singing within the Christian churches but, given the size of this research area, church choirs will be



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considered only as they relate to the wider choral scene. I was nevertheless grateful for the chance to meet a representative of the Choral Association of the Catholic Church and learn more about its history and activities. I recognise a number of excellent publications and academics engaged with Germany's church choir landscape (Claussen, 2014; Hochstein & Schneider, 2013).

This study excludes many other fine artistic enterprises where vocal music is key to both Germany's cultural heritage and contemporary music scene. For instance, there are more than 150 publically owned theatre companies in Germany funded by the *Länder*, including a large number of opera companies (McCaughey, 2005; Towse, 2011, pp. 314-315). Germany would provide an interesting comparison to the United Kingdom and other countries where private philanthropy forms the bulk of opera company funding.

I sought deeper experiences of individual choirs rather than wider understandings and trends of Germany's choirs. It is problematic to collect and measure with quantitative data in an area that best lends itself to qualitative assessment (German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. xii). The sheer number of different cultural and artistic organisations collecting data and using differing measurements and categories makes this task trickier still. This is an issue not limited to Germany. It is evident in data collection issues inherent in a recent review of Australian community choirs, for instance (Masso, 2013).

## 7. Choral singing in Germany

In 2002, choral associations and academics gathered in Essen for the fiftieth anniversary of a peak choral music body, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Chorverbände*, to consider the future of choral singing in Germany. Ten theses on the topic of Choral singing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century resulted. Thesis two, argues that music may be aesthetically enriching and may have agency within a society. Furthermore, choral singing contributes to social integration, education and the development of personalities [...] <sup>6</sup> (Brusniak, 2003, p. 11). In this thesis the panel recognised the transformative potential of music both for individuals and for society.

### 7.1. What makes a community choir?

A 1995 publication about Germany's choral scene commissioned by the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Chorverbände* (the predecessor to the *BDC*), defines a wider, extra-musical role of choirs (Allen, 1995). The notion of *Chorwesen* or 'choir entity' (an inadequate translation) describes everything associated with choirs (Allen, 1995, pp. 33-35). It incorporates a host of elements and actors involved, from choir members, leaders and musicians, to those composing and publishing, to event producers, recording studios, promoters and those financing choral music. While the publication is now somewhat dated, it provides an excellent summary still relevant today.

#### Important elements of a community choir



<sup>6</sup> *Musik bereichert das Dasein ästhetisch. Sie hat konstruktive, Gesellschaft und Kultur teils überhöhende, teils neu in Bewegung setzende Kraft. [NP] Chorsingen trägt in besonderer Weise zu Gemeinschaftsbildung, sozialer Integration und Persönlichkeitsentfaltung bei. Es schult das Hin-Hören und das Zu-Hören, die Selbst- und die Fremdwahrnehmung. Darüber hinaus besitzen Stimmbildung und Atemerziehung positive Auswirkungen auf Gesundheit und sprachliche Kommunikation.*

## 7.2. Terminology dilemmas

While an understanding of the key elements of the community choir and its activities is useful, it obscures some of the difficulties and debates around terminology. What do we call choral singing in community settings in Germany, a country with a legacy where it was used for propaganda and indoctrination? This question has been taken up in several key publications in recent years, and it is clear that a suitable term for this type of music is problematic (Allen, 1995, pp. 33-35; Kertz-Welzel, 2008, 2013). Once again, the influence of history influences the choice of words for this movement.

Kertz-Welzel describes the difficulties in a direct translation of community music (*Gemeinschaftsmusik*) or 'music for all' (*pädagogische Musik*). These terms were first used in the Youth Music Movement of the early twentieth century, where music was used to overcome social exclusion. Yet this movement formed the basis for the music education concept in the N-S period. The terms *Musische Erziehung* and *Gemeinschaftsmusik* were used, terms that are now linked closely to the manipulation of the German people through music by Adolf Hitler (Kertz-Welzel, 2013, p. 267).

Community music in Germany may alternatively find its place in a number of related areas and may incorporate *Musikvermittlung* (Music Education), *Musikpädagogik* (Music Pedagogy), *Soziale Arbeit* (Social Work), *informelles Lernen* (Informal Learning), *außerschulisches Musizieren* (Extracurricular Music Learning), *Projektunterricht* (Project Learning) or *Konzertpädagogik* (Concert Education) (Kertz-Welzel, 2013, p. 268). Yet again, none captures the concept entirely.

Drawing the line between professional and non-professional music serves as an important point of distinction to career musicians (Reimers, 2012, p. 1) and goes some way toward a definition. This study is one of amateur rather than professional music making. I take Astrid Reimers' broad definition of amateur musicianship (*Laienmusizieren*) (Reimers, 2012) as including a non-professional and active engagement with music. Such music, according to Reimers, should be active in the sense that it is acquired and reproduced.

In the German language the word "*Laien*" signals a clear distinction from professional musicians. *Laien-* or *Amateurchöre* (Amateur choirs) do not account for the professional standards and outlook of some choirs while still volunteer led. Amateur choirs may include trained singers and perform to a very high standard even if choir members volunteer their time. Others refer to *Freizeitchore* (Hobby choirs) yet again this does not capture the

importance of choirs for members, nor the commitment required of its members to regularly attend and perform. Given this ambiguity I will use the English terminology of "community choir" and "community music".

### 7.3. Music in schools

The interplay between social inclusion – a key community music principle (Higgins 2012) and community music will be important in future years. As Kertz-Welzel sets out (2014, p. 12), in German music pedagogy the concept of community music is missing. The principles and methods of such an approach, including a focus on inclusion, social justice and cultural participation are not part of the discourse. Community music offers a multifaceted approach that cuts across social class and musical ability, allowing access to music for all.

According to Kertz-Welzel, Germany's music education system has not before considered issues of social inclusion, participation and musical justice within its curriculum (cited in Lichtinger, 2013). The idea of social responsibility and a focus on social inclusion in Germany is reflected in wider changes to the educational landscape, the inclusion of people with disabilities within mainstream schools (a very recent phenomenon) across all states, and a wider public discussion on social inclusion.

Similarly, the recent shift from part day to full day primary and secondary schooling in the *Länder*, and the implications of this change both for after hours music programs and for community singing as adults, are important to consider. This topic is worthy of a project in its own right but is unfortunately beyond the scope of this study.

### 7.4. Government support

*While absolutism and dictatorship continue to leave an imprint, Germany's sociopolitical evolution has been influenced by such factors as demographic change, working conditions, transcultural communication and digitisation. Germany's system of federalism is a dominant structural and conceptual feature not only of its socio-political policies, but also of its cultural life. As a social structure, not only does federalism undergird Germany's administrative decisions, it ensures above all a kaleidoscopic cultural diversity.*  
(German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. 15)

Decision-making across Germany's different cultural levels is complex. Its 16 states maintain 'sovereignty' in both educational and cultural activities and

recent federalism reforms prohibit co-funding arrangements between states and the federal government.

Germany's choral music scene is supported and overseen by a multilayered network of organisations and funded by various layers of government. This funding supports individual choirs and the volunteer committees who manage them, and provides career options for musical staff.

Germany's Basic Law (constitution) determines that the promotion of culture is a matter for the *Länder* (federal states) and municipalities. States and regions support a vast network of performing arts organisations (including over 150 financed and permanently staffed public theatres). At the same time, about 12% of federal government funds are allocated to the arts and culture (McCaughey, 2005).

In all, some 173,000 ensembles in Germany receive public or private funding of some kind. (German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. 17). Yet as the table below sets out, Governments form only part of the funding providers for cultural activities in Germany, with significant private funding and a large contribution from the Christian churches (about 20 per cent of church proceeds - received by both major churches through Germany's church tax system and their own receipting).

#### Financing of Germany's cultural activities

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Government - Federal	EUR 1.1 billion
Government - States	EUR 3.4 billion
Government - Municipalities	EUR 3.5 billion
<b>Subtotal (Government Funding)</b> or 1.66% of total public expenditure	<b>EUR 8 billion</b>
Private funding (donations, membership dues, foundations, sponsors)	EUR 800 million
Christian churches (Catholic; Evangelical)	EUR 4.4 billion
<b>Total</b>	<b>EUR 13.2 billion</b>

SOURCE: GMIC, 2011 description, drawing upon German Parliamentary Report, 2007 (Culture in Germany).

The federal government (or *Bund*) recognises and supports choral music in Germany as an important aspect to the country's *ehrenamtlich* or volunteer activities. Recognising that a pastime such as choral singing can be just as meaningful as paid employment (Reimers, 2012), the government provides both direct support to projects of national significance and structures that support and enable volunteer led associations such as choirs. This is one key to the success of Germany's community choral scene.

### 7.4.1. Federal (*Bund*)

The German Music Council, a sub-council of the German Cultural Council (*Deutscher Kulturrat*), is responsible for documenting Germany's musical life in all its facets and for ensuring its accessibility to all (German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. ix). It provides a central point of reference across all musical genres and to peak bodies and organisations in the choir movement, orchestra movement and music industry. It also publishes detailed research about particular aspects of Germany's musical life. In an effort to raise awareness of community music across Germany, for instance, the German Music Council in 2009 established an annual, national event, *Tag der Musik* (day of music).



Federal Government cultural  
education portal :  
<http://www.kultur-bildet.de/>

The Federal Government in turn funds particular projects and supports cultural enterprises through the legal frameworks it sets in place (copyright, social security, associations laws, foundations, labour law).

Initiatives include the preservation of Germany's cultural and musical heritage (supporting the Beethoven museum in Bonn and providing initial project funds for the Bayreuth Festival, among other things), and supporting the oldest "New Music" Festival worldwide – *die Donaueschinger Musiktage* (Bundesregierung Deutschland, 2014). It further supports cultural festivals throughout Germany, and peak organisations that represent German music internationally (and that perhaps come first to mind internationally as cultural ambassadors), such as *Deutschlandradio* (a Berlin-based radio station) and *Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre GmbH Berlin* (Berlin's radio choir and orchestra).

The federal government supports genres such as Rock, Pop and Jazz, sponsors projects that promote wider social goals within Germany such as integration, and musical training. It provides financial support for music competitions for musicians of all levels of ability, and has established a musical instrument fund to provide access to young musicians.

### 7.4.2. State (*Länder*)

Germany's 16 *Bundesländer* provide significant funds for choral singing. The cultural ministry of the State of Berlin will provide a total of EUR936,000 for the support of amateur choral music each year from 2013-2015 (Razlag, 2014). This is distributed as a combination of block funding and competitive grants. According to the Cultural ministry, there are 1,200 choirs in Berlin with about 40,000 singers, of which 240 choirs and 10,000 singers (roughly



one quarter) are members of the Berlin Choral Association (*Chorverband Berlin e.V.*). Berlin's two professional choirs (*RIAS Kammerchor* and *Rundfunkchor Berlin*) and opera choruses are funded elsewhere.

#### Budget allocation for choral activities by State of Berlin, 2013

<b>Basic Funding</b> ( <i>Breitenförderung, 50%</i> )	<b>Extra Funding</b> ( <i>Spitzenförderung, 50%</i> )
Development of choral organisations through <i>Chorverband Berlin e.V.</i> . Ongoing (non-competitive) funding of projects and music programs. <i>Total: EUR470,000</i>	Annual competitive funding round, administered by cultural ministry of Berlin. Funding for institutional development, ongoing rehearsal costs, and individual projects. <i>Total: EUR470,000</i>

Source: Razlag, 2014

The table below provides a Summary of the choral groups awarded funding in 2013 in the state of Berlin.

<b>Choir</b>	<b>Amount (EUR)</b>
Berliner Bach Akademie	25.000
Berliner Cappella	18.000
Berliner Figuralchor	17.000
Berliner Konzert-Chor	15.000
Berliner Singakademie	90.000
Camerata Vocale	16.000
Cantus Domus	36.000
Hugo-Distler-Chor	24.000
Junges Ensemble	23.800
Karl-Forster-Chor Berlin	17.000
Philharmonischer Chor	117.500
Studio-Chor Berlin	29.000
<i>Chorverband Berlin e.V.</i>	<i>470.400</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>898.700,00</b>

Funding breakdown for *Chorverband Berlin e.V.*, 2013 - SOURCE: Razlag, 2014

## 8. Industry representation: choral associations

As the introduction to *Musical Life in Germany* notes, "Germany's musical life is noteworthy in equal measure for its rich history and its wide array of contemporary currents. It has never been concentrated in a few towns, regions or institutions" (German Music Information Centre, 2011, p. VII). Plurality (or *Vielfältigkeit* as it is perhaps better represented in German language) forms an important building block of Germany's community choral movement, and explains many of its traits that at first sight, to my mind at least, appeared to contradict and undermine its ability to advocate and progress a common agenda of singing. In retrospect, and having listened to many choral singers and leaders, this is a strength of the movement.

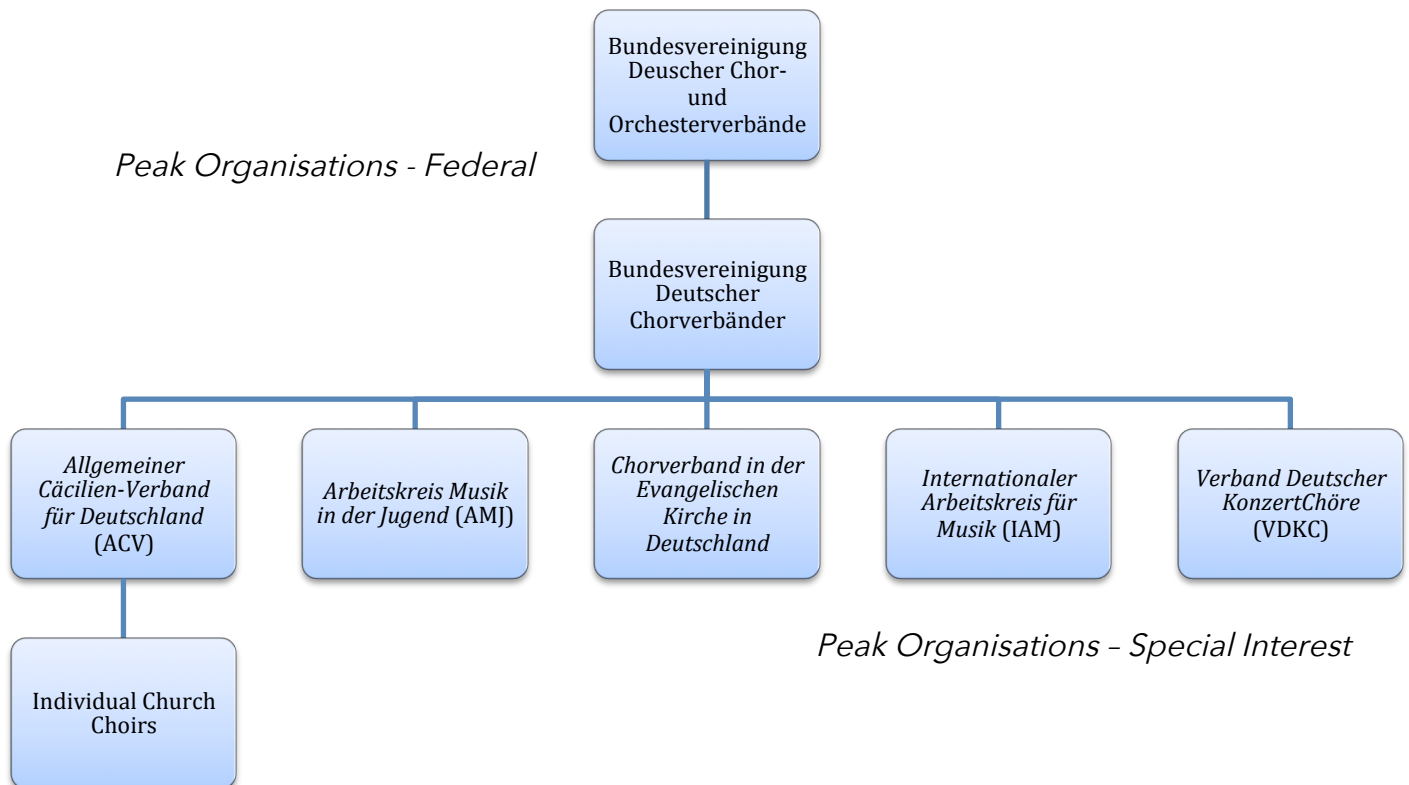
As a result, Germany's choirs speak through several representatives or actors. This plurality is in keeping with Germany's wider approach to bureaucracy and structure. The choral associations include many (but by no means all) choirs in Germany, and funding is not always contingent upon membership of a choral association (though strongly encouraged). This has created a flourishing, multifaceted and diverse network of choirs - some associated bodies, some not, some members of choral associations, some not. Choir committees are typically volunteer-led and those experts in the role of choir music leader may lead several musical projects concurrently.

A dense network of associations across Germany's choral scene support choirs in their work, providing the structures, training opportunities and continuity. The *Dachverbände* or umbrella associations typically provide such support to choirs.

### 8.1. National choral associations

In 2005, peak associations for the various choral and orchestral music groups in Germany created an organisation to represent them in political circles, and provide a single entry point to the multitude of organisations. The *Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Chor- und Orchesterverbände e.V.* (BDCO) brings together peak organisations from both the choral and orchestral worlds.

These peak choral associations (*Dachverbände*) represent, in a similar way to the federal system of government, state, regional and special interest choral associations.



### 8.1.1. Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Chorverbände e.V. (BDC)

The *Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Chorverbände e.V.* (BDC) has traditionally provided overarching representation for Germany's choral music movement, including both major Christian churches. The BDC offers a range of services for its members including logistical management, legal and taxation advice and insurance services. It runs choral music festivals, competitions, and distributes several prestigious awards for choral music: *Die Pro-Musica Plakatten* and *Die Zelterplakatten*. The latter, awarded by Germany's federal president, recognises choirs that have celebrated at least 100 years of singing. To date, a staggering 11,300 choirs have been honoured with this award (Reimers, 2012, p. 9).



The BDC includes among its member associations:

- *Allgemeiner Cäcilien-Verband für Deutschland (ACV)*, representing choral music in the Catholic Church
- *Arbeitskreis Musik in der Jugend (AMJ)*

- *Chorverband in der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland*, representing choral music in the evangelical (protestant) churches
- *Internationaler Arbeitskreis für Musik* (IAM)
- *Verband Deutscher KonzertChöre* (VDKC) (Association of German Concert Choirs)

In 2005, the BDC member association with the largest singing membership (Reimers, 2012), the *Deutscher Chorverband e.V.*, went its own way. It now functions as a second key speaker for German choral music.

### 8.1.2. Deutscher Chorverband e.V.

Germany's largest peak body for secular community choirs, the *Deutscher Chorverband* (DCV), was formed in 2005 through a merger of the *Deutscher Sängerbund* and *Deutscher Allgemeiner Sängerbund*. It represents more than 1 million singers in Germany and some



20,000 choirs, organised into regional and special interest choral associations.<sup>7</sup> The DCV relies on competitive project funding from governments and membership dues from its member choral associations. It represents the interests of its members, enhances and adds scale to Germany's choral scene, encouraging innovation and the development of new choirs. Six initiatives of the DCV stand out as best-practice examples of its approach:

1. Through a deal brokered with Germany's music licensing body (GEMA), DCV offers its member-choirs a flat fee that covers annual arrangement licenses and rights to perform choral music. Under this arrangement members need only submit of a single annual form for a flat fee rather than individual forms per concert.
2. DCV established a biennial conference specifically for choral conductors in 2011, *Chor.com*, which provides professional development experience and seminars directly relevant to community choral music leadership.
3. DCV has taken a leadership role in advocating for a standardised accreditation for choral conductors across Germany. Currently, the training and accreditation of choral conductors varies between

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.deutscher-chorverband.de/ueber-uns/>

Germany's *Länder* and between religious and non-religious choral organisations.<sup>8</sup>

4. DCV administers the *SINGEN.Bündnisse* initiative for young people. It distributes EUR10 million funding on behalf of the federal government for projects (short, medium and long-term) that engage young people in singing. The project targets young people who may otherwise not have access to singing and opportunities to sing.
5. DCV runs the successful *Carusos* accreditation discussed shortly.
6. DCV publishes a monthly national magazine, *Chorzeit*, that it uses to promote new initiatives and attract members. This magazine is available in newsagents across Germany.

*Chorzeit* I believe most symbolises the growing popularity of choral music. Available for purchase in newsagents and bookstores as well as by subscription, the magazine explores all things choir related, including:

- regular interviews with choirs, leaders and members, including best practice examples from professional choirs in Germany and internationally;
- tips for marketing and promotion of choirs;
- publicity and professional development opportunities;
- competitions;
- legal and administrative developments; and
- a host of practical information for readers.

The magazine reflects a well-organised and well-funded organisation and project office that has in turn helped to boost the profile, funding and scale of opportunities for its member choirs across Germany (such as competitions with recording contracts as prizes).

Many affiliate state/regional choral associations publish their own periodical magazines, and Germany's choral museum houses a large archive of these

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<sup>8</sup> In an article for the April 2014 *Chorzeit* magazine, DCV highlighted the limits of the current system and cleverly advocated for the need to standardise conducting qualifications across the country. A standardised approach would make it easier for member choirs to compare applicants for leadership roles. It highlights a number of best-practice examples within individual states (such as the SCV that includes a representative from the church choral society for its accreditation exams making applications for church roles easier in future). "Jazz-Pop" choral leadership is discussed as a specialised area for choral conductors.

from across Germany and beyond (into German expatriate choirs in the United States, for example).

## 8.2. Regional choral associations

State or regional choral associations are central to the success of Germany's community choral scene. They offer logistical, administrative, legal and licensing support, small touring or performance grants, performance opportunities for member choirs, minimise duplication of tasks, and provide networking and professional development opportunities for singers and leaders. With a caveat that the size and range of activities offered by regional organisations varies greatly across Germany, I profile two prolific associations briefly below.

Choral associations do not reflect all choirs in Germany, with many choirs choosing to remain independent in spite of an often long-standing local profile and popularity. I spoke with several organisations who did not feel the need to join an association. This view reflected tensions between the benefits of membership (e.g. security for choral organisations) and the perceived costs (e.g. loss of freedom to operate unhindered). This was particularly the case among those choirs who were not registered as incorporated bodies (in Germany, classified as an *eingetragene Verein* or e.V.). In my view the existence of long-established choirs that are not and do not foresee formal incorporation under the law reflects the complex interrelationship between Germany's history, its celebration of plurality and aversion to a single leader/organisation/centre of authority that is common to many of Germany's cultural institutions and government agencies.

### 8.2.1. Chorverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V.

The *Chorverband Nordrhein-Westfalen* (CVNW) e.V. offers an excellent example of innovations that benefit both member-choirs and individuals within the community. It maintains a database of choral repertoire across its member choirs that facilitates sharing of resources between them. CVNW offers a choral singing program for senior citizens (over 60 years of age) entitled "*sing mit, bleib fit*" with funding



from the state government. This program recognises the important role of singing for all ages.

CVNW runs an annual "Sing & Swing" festival dedicated to Jazz, pop and barbershop styles open to choirs from across Germany and internationally. It runs a similar festival for a cappella (unaccompanied) choral music.

### 8.2.2. Schwäbische Chorverband e.V.



Website: <http://www.s-chorverband.de/>

Established in 1849 as an amalgamation of 27 singing organisations within the south western region of Germany (Baden-Württemberg), the Schwäbische Chorverband (SCV, formerly Schwäbische Sängerbund) is the oldest and second largest association in Germany. In 2014, the association includes around 1,700 organisations of 3,000 choirs and 72,000 active singers. The SCV supports a museum for Friedrich Silcher (1789-1860), a notable composer and folk song collector born in the region.

The SCV organises a large range of events and promotion for its members. Typical activities include:

- A region-wide music festival that offers specialist workshops and a meeting and performance place for choirs
- Singing technique workshops
- Training opportunities to choral leaders working with children (the SCV works across all ages), including training specifically for teachers of the "Die Carusos" program running in Kindergartens across Germany
- Structured professional development opportunities for choral leaders and choral singers
- Training in particular choral genres (gospel, jazz and blues) and modes (a cappella)
- Intensive and regular seminars.

### 8.3. Reflections

Germany's individual choirs, regional and national choral associations share common challenges in 2014: to attract and retain members and to stay relevant and responsive to the needs of members. Choral singing in Germany is clearly experiencing a period of great change and renewal. With the growth in community choirs, singers have more choice in the genre and styles of music they can seek out. They are more mobile than ever before, and the idea of a "catchment area" for choral singers can no longer be taken for granted. Increasing flexibility and regular review of the roles of regional and national choral associations that administer and seek to represent these communities is needed.

## 9. Choral singing experiences

Choirs are for many an extension of their family. "...wie meine Familie" was a frequent comment by many of those interviewed. There is much to this statement and to the social inclusion potential of community singing.

Studies have identified the benefits of community singing for mental health and community wellbeing (Clift & Hancox, 2010; Gridley, Astbury, Sharples, & Aguirre, 2011). Community singing lessens feelings of social isolation and, in the view of the author, builds confidence and resilience. For those communities that may experience social exclusion (whether in the past, present or future) the impact of choral singing can indirectly contribute to successes and milestones in other areas such as stable housing, employment, family and personal reconciliation. As Germany's education system moves toward inclusion - adapting all education institutions to integrate and support students with special needs rather than continuing systems that set these people apart - I believe music will play a key role.

While my intention of a study of these groups in particular was not feasible given the scale and complexity of Germany's community choral singing movement, I was nonetheless welcomed into the rehearsals of some wonderful and inspiring groups working in this area. Below I provide examples of six choral organisations and initiatives. Some choirs target singers in particular stages of life, while others work to support Germany's social inclusion goals (whether explicitly or implicitly). These choirs in most cases lack the profile they deserve within Germany's large and elite-focussed choral scene. I am proud to highlight their good work here.



Given a particular interest through my work with the Melbourne Gay Lesbian Youth Chorus since 2009, at Section 11 I explore in greater detail the role of choral singing for Germany's Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender (LGBT) communities.

## 9.1. Die Carusos

Website: <http://www.die-carusos.de/>

Die Carusos (formerly known as the "FELIX-Initiative" is a certification awarded to organisations (primarily day care centres and kindergartens) that work with children between one and six years old. To qualify, organisations must demonstrate that children in their care sing daily, sing repertoire that is appropriate to their age and undertake vocal development. Each centre's approach must also meet the principles of music pedagogy that underpin the project.



A network of *Carusos* advisors – typically representatives of regional choral associations – can assist those seeking accreditation. Accredited organisations receive a certificate and poster and are listed and promoted centrally by the *Deutscher Chorverband*. This is a good example of a national initiative that brings singing to children from an early age, and complements several other choral and instrumental initiatives run in some states. *Die Carusos* is a project of the *Deutscher Chorverband* and now includes a network of more than 4,000 kindergartens and day care centres.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://die-carusos.de/die-carusos/aktuelles/>

## 9.2. Hard Chor-ELLA



Website: <http://www.hardchor-ella.de/>

*"...Wenn ehemalige ELLAs heiraten, wenn gute Freunde wichtige Geburtstage haben, wenn uns ein gesellschaftliches Ereignis am Herzen liegt: gern sind wir mit Gesang dabei."*

In May and June 2014, I observed in rehearsal and performance the work of a school-based community choir, Hard Chor-ELLA (hereafter, ELLA).

Based in Pankow, Berlin, this unique group may provide a great model for Australian community choirs. There are three choirs in ELLA – a high school choir, a youth and adult community choir and a more advanced chamber choir. All three rehearse the same day and regularly perform joint repertoire in concert. Based in a local school, the choir benefits from its logistical support. ELLA provides a great example of school-community partnership, retaining many alumni as singers within its ranks, and performing regularly to the local community of Pankow. Community members of all ages can join the choir and a mentoring arrangement between younger and older members supports their integration.

The music director (MD) mentioned ELLA's occasional workshops with *RIAS Kammerchor*, one of two professional choirs in Berlin, as an inspiration for , singers (describing relationship between the choirs as one of a "godparent"). Members have sung alongside *RIAS Kammerchor* singers and in the *Berliner Philharmonie* in the past.

What sets this choir apart is not only its effective structure (though I note it relies heavily on the role of its MD who also teaches at the school). In a concert I attended in May (aptly named "stracciatELLA"), the choir moved its audience by recalling songs of the former East Germany (GDR). Singing was a common feature of a regular school day in the GDR and the tunes were very familiar to audience members. The MD later commented it was important for her that the music of the GDR not be forgotten and that

younger singers in her care had the opportunity to hear music of this time - the music of their parents' generation. The performance of the "Weltjugendlied" 1947 - a well-known song from the GDR's youth organisation provoked an unconventional, mid-program burst of applause from the audience!

For some this represents a form of *Ostalgie*, a term used in both a positive and negative sense to describe nostalgia for the former GDR. While music in the GDR was undoubtedly used for political, manipulative and sometimes negative ends, as Brusniak and others have documented (Brusniak, 2004), the choir nevertheless sang with its audience in mind. I left the performance reflecting in some respects ELLA's goal was to ensure the musical legacy of older audience members was not forgotten by younger members. It could even be argued ELLA sought to address experiences of social exclusion among former East German Berliners, whose music has been largely subsumed within a reunified, Germany. By connecting closely to the community it serves, ELLA has played a role in preserving a period of Germany's musical history through song.

### 9.3. High Fossility Rock-Pop-Chor 60+

Website: <http://www.highfossility.de/>

*"We, the generation of over sixties, made rock and pop music popular."*<sup>10</sup>

*High Fossility Rock-Pop-Chor 60+* is a choir set up for singers over 60 years of age that specialises in rock and pop repertoire. Choir leader Michael Betzner-Brandt and his neighbour Birgit established the choir in the Berlin suburb of *Neukölln* in 2010 to provide an avenue for singing to older community members who may have sung in a rock band in their younger years.

The choir has developed as a successful model for teaching choral singing to the "60s generation", with a book by Nadja Klinger threading the story of the choir's establishment with portraits of individual members.



<sup>10</sup> *Wir, die Generation der über Sechzigjährigen, haben Rock- und Popmusik populär gemacht.* Opening statement from the website profile of High Fossility: <http://www.highfossility.de/chorprofil.html>



**The Fabulous Fridays in Performance  
(Neue Chorzeit, February 2011)**

Alongside a teaching career at the Berlin University of the Arts, Betzner-Brandt also leads several other choirs. The **Fabulous Fridays** is an acclaimed a cappella choir in the rock-pop style with membership drawn from members of the university study body. Betzner-Brandt also leads a choir designed to teach the basics of singing to self-proclaimed non-believers: the **Ich kann nicht singen Chor** (I can't

sing choir).

Betzner-Brandt's work with such choirs has been recognised in both academic studies and publications on the choir's work. He provides an excellent model here for engaging the community in choral singing that targets and reflects the life experiences of a particular generation of German residents and their musical needs.

## 9.4. The Nogat Singers

*The inclusive neighbourhood choir of Lebenshilfe Berlin in Körnerkiez*

The Nogat Singers provides a warm and engaging outlet for members of the community of Berlin (Neukölln). Founded by disability support organisation *Lebenshilfe Berlin* and rehearsing in a shared supported accommodation facility in the area, the Nogat Singers sing for the sheer joy of it! Many members live with intellectual disabilities and



**Nogat Singers in action, 2014**

the choir performs at a range of public events advocating for the rights of people living with disabilities. The Nogat-Singers is partly funded by a social inclusion project grant of the European Union for the Neukölln neighbourhood – an excellent example of a community singing organisation that promotes social inclusion within a neighbourhood setting.



An inclusive project choir facilitated by the Faculty of Rehabilitation Sciences at the Technical University in Dortmund provides an example of German trials of social inclusion in a community setting (Merkt, 2012).

A shift toward more inclusive educational institutions may well shift post-war (and post-Adorno) Germany's aversion to the use of music as a vehicle for social inclusion and the pursuit of music. Schools are crucial sites for the promotion of choral singing for those experiencing social exclusion, and here Germany and the *Länder* still have some way to go. Germany adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009. Where some states have a long-standing, integrated education system, for others this has been very recent and a significant cultural shift (German Commission for UNESCO, 2014; Goethe Institut, 2014).

## 9.5. Der Strassenchor

Website: <http://www.derstrassenchor.com/>

*Der Stra enchor* is a dynamic community choir including members who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness rehearses weekly in Berlin (Sch neberg).

*Der Stra enchor* explicitly uses community singing to foster social inclusion among some of the city's most vulnerable and marginalised. It reflects a singing movement that has taken root in big cities worldwide, and is one of several such choirs in Berlin. *Der Stra enchor* attracts a range of philanthropic support and a high media profile, appearing in *Neue Chorzeit* in 2009 (Reul, 2009).



**Profile of *Der Stra enchor* on cover of *Neue Chorzeit* magazine, December 2009**

## 9.6. Afro-Gospel Bona Deus

Website: <http://www.afrogospel-bonadeus.de/>

Established in 2010 with the amalgamation of two choirs, Bona Deus is a warm and inviting 24-member Christian gospel choir that brings together singers from a broad range of nationalities and backgrounds. Many Bona Deus members are recent migrants from a range of countries in Africa. Their repertoire – primarily a *cappella* – includes spiritual and church music in several European and African languages. Choir members consider singing to be part of their Christian mission, and use their voices to support other members. Members sing regularly at church services in the home congregations of individual members – to commemorate or celebrate milestones of individual choir members. Members also support students and others within the choir to attend their rehearsals and performances (subsidising transport costs to/from rehearsals, for example).



**Afro-Gospel Bona Deus Choir**

Incidentally, and in a reinvigoration of the use of the German *Heimatlieder* tradition, many migrant communities living in Germany gather to celebrate the role of music in their lives through regular "*Heimatliederabende*".<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.heimatliederausdeutschland.de/home.html>

## 10. Case study: Germany's LGBT choral movement

A particular interest of this study was the work of choirs and choral groups of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities in Germany. As the project developed and given the large number of interviews with these groups in particular, it was clear a separate case study was important. This report may also be a useful reference point for Australian LGBT choirs seeking inspiration and ideas to develop their choirs.



I was fortunate to attend the Various Voices European LGBT choir conference in Dublin during my time in Germany. There, I watched countless German choirs in performance and interviewed singers and music directors about their choirs. I also met with a German committee member of the European-wide organisation in Munich (Various Voices host for 2018).



Germany has a burgeoning LGBT choir scene with a range of choirs and repertoire styles. Typically, LGBT choirs are smaller (under 40 members) and they tend to specialise in their repertoire and performance styles. Some focus on classical repertoire where others celebrate pop and contemporary styles. A cappella singing is common.

Choir types include:

- Show choirs
- Pop choirs
- Protest choirs
- Specialist classical music choirs
- Choirs of sopranos and altos, choirs of tenors and basses, and mixed SATB choirs
- Cabaret choirs that use irony and humour and feature story-telling through music and with a "red ribbon" that ties the concert together according to a theme

Diversity and a sense of irony are important elements to the approach of most LGBT choirs in Germany.

Repertoire is typically selected and prepared to match a chosen theme. A popular approach of many choirs is the reinterpretation of German cabaret tunes of the 1920s and 1930s with the creation of new lyrics. To this end, the work of LGBT choirs in Germany in developing and preserving choral music traditions of previous generations has been recognised more generally (Brusniak, 2014; Reimers, 2012). *Männer Minne* (Berlin) provide an excellent example. In 2010, the choir performed a program of two well-known German songwriters of the 1920s and 1930s who were persecuted under the N-S regime - Friedrich Hollaender and Bruno Balz (Männer Minne, 2014).



**Männer Minne: Berlin's first gay male choir**

Several LGBT choirs in Germany benefit from shared facilities built for or rented by the LGBT community. Two Stuttgart LGBT choirs – for instance, *die Rosa Note* and *Musica Lesbiana* rehearse regularly in the *Weissenburg Zentrum* (<http://www.cafeweissenburg.de/>), Stuttgart's LGBT community centre. The centre provides a focal point for activities and events, a bar and café for social gatherings (and post-rehearsal drinks!). The centre is volunteer-run and managed, and all groups using the facility regularly staff the bar/café as part of their commitment to the venue.

I detail below the lessons I learned during my time observing Germany's wonderful LGBT choirs in action.

*There are a diverse range of reasons for joining an LGBT choir, not all relating to social inclusion*

Members joined choirs for a range of reasons. For many, socialising and non-musical aspects of the life of the choir (that is, socialising in the pub afterwards!) were important. For others, the choice of repertoire and musical quality of the group was their primary reason for joining. In situations where several LGBT choirs existed in the same city, for instance, some members said they would not join another LGBT choir.

Some choirs specialised in a particular type of music



**die Taktlosen: First LGBT choir of Cologne**



(Classical choral repertoire in the case of Canta:re or The Classical Lesbians, for instance). Others took on ambitious opera or new music projects, often working over a season to prepare the repertoire for performance.

For the majority of members I interviewed, choir was family - a safe place and a place of social support and of belonging. For some this was the only place they could live their sexual identity in public. I heard this comment from singers across a wide range of ages, along with a range of stories about both the positive and challenging aspects of membership of this family entails.

### *LGBT choirs as cultural ambassadors*

Interestingly, during my time at the Various Voices conference in Dublin, Germany's LGBT choirs were distinctive in their musical style and interpretations. In part this was due to the choice of most choirs to sing in German language. LGBT choirs in this setting were effectively cultural ambassadors for Germany and its choral music scene.

A stand out experience that demonstrated for me Germany's commitment to singing and opportunities was the performance of a project choir that brought together LGBT singers from across Germany's smaller towns and regional centres. This was a choir for those who did not have access to a local LGBT choir.



**Die Rheintöchter Mixed women's choir (Cologne)**

### *LGBT choirs as activists*

Germany's LGBT choral movement has faced similar challenges to similar choirs around the world. In some cases, they have faced discrimination in applying for membership of Germany's regional choral association (and therefore access to funding). In the case of three LGBT choirs from Baden-Württemberg, this ultimately required a decision of the Karlsruhe District Court (2000). In others, members have opposed decisions on the basis of gender. Members of *Musica Lesbiana* told me about their decision to decline an invitation to attend a women's choral festival when it became clear their male musical director would not be welcome.

### *LGBT choirs are typically smaller and tight-knit*

- Commitment is expected within a choir, and most commented about friendship networks developing largely through choir.
- For some, these choirs are places to socialise, make friends, perhaps even find a partner! For others, choirs are family – invaluable connections to the LGBT community of which they belong, but to which they may not necessarily have day-to-day involvement.
- There was much variety in the organisation of choirs. For instance, several choirs had a membership and audition process that included use of a “veto” if it was felt prospective members were not compatible. For others the application process was open.
- Generally, there was a consensus among German LGBT choirs that musical quality took precedence above other considerations – members not able to sing were typically not accepted into groups. Membership of a choir was exclusionary to this end but a quality performance/product was felt to be most important to the choir’s sustainability.
- “Movement, costumes, divas!” The cabaret style was integral to the repertoire and performances of a number of choirs, with significant effort toward costumes, staging and movement. For choirs such as *Die Rheintöchter*, a dedicated choreographer worked alongside the music director to prepare the choir (in their case, as a comical cabaret-style choir).
- High-quality, genre specific and therefore pioneering. Several LGBT choirs focussed on classical music, including *The Classical Lesbians* (Berlin), *Canta:re* (Berlin) and *Regenbogenchor* (Munich). By choosing to perform in classical music festivals alongside other community choirs, they have contributed to perceptions of quality. One singer told me of the surprise expressed by a high profile audience member about the performance quality of their mixed LGBT choir at a regional choral festival.

#### *LGBT choirs welcome city and regional choral collaboration*

Several cities and regions hosted choral celebrations/festivals regularly within Germany (Cologne’s StimmFusion combined choirs festival, a collaboration between the choirs of Munich to celebrate a milestone for one female choir, for instance, or for South Germany’s LGBT choral festival, for instance).



**StimmFusion Festival, Cologne**

## 11. Concluding remarks & ideas for Australian choral music

According to Reimers (2012, p.1), community music making is the largest citizens movement in Germany. This research project has provided an outline of community choral singing in Germany and the policy settings, financial backing and support mechanisms that have created such a large community movement. In exploring life in a choir it has sought to shine a light in particular on the work of community choirs that might not otherwise receive recognition for their work: for persons with disabilities, experiencing homelessness, for new migrants to Germany and for the LGBT communities.

With the lessons and experiences of this research project in mind, the following list of ideas and examples may be useful for Australian cultural policy makers interested in developing community choral singing.

There are a number of positive signs for Australian community choral music already, including a comprehensive review of community music in an ARC linkage project in 2009 and updates about the state of community music and choral music in Australia since (Bartleet, Dunbar-Hall, Letts, & Schippers, 2009). Awards for service in music education were established in 2014 by AmUSE. The appointment of Dr Leigh-Bartlett as a staff member of Music Australia is a further positive sign, allowing Dr Leigh-Bartlett to advocate for Community Music within Australia's peak music industry body. Community choral singing in Australia is at present limited by the lack of a dedicated community choral project officer/administrator to expand opportunities for community choral singing and to add scale and expertise.

### *Ideas for the Australian National Choral Association (ANCA)*

- Establish an awards scheme to recognise conducting ability at a national level (an accreditation that recognises service and abilities and sits alongside other formal academic or technical qualifications).
- Establish a national community choir awards scheme and awards that recognise service to community music, not just in the area of music education/schooling.
- Negotiate an agreement with the Australasian Performing Right Association or APRA (Australia's equivalent of GEMA) for a single annual fee for all choir arrangement and performance rights across a pre-approved list of songs. This arrangement might be similar to the existing liability insurance arrangements ANCA has negotiated. It may make membership of ANCA more attractive to member choirs,

and would certainly make administration of choir concerts easier (reporting 1x per annum to APRA per the agreement with ANCA). Songs not on pre-approved lists would need to be negotiated separately with APRA but the bulk of commercial choral music in Australia could be covered by the agreement.

- Establish a medallion or citation similar to the “Zelzer-Plakatten” for choirs that have reached a certain age. Given the young age of Australia’s community choirs (Masso, 2013), I suggest 20 years is a more appropriate threshold for us than Germany’s 100 years! This award recognises many Australian community choirs are not competitive and that recognition of the longevity of these choirs is in itself important.
- Consider awards for new and innovative choral programs, youth choirs and/or special interest choirs, including those with a social inclusion focus.
- Seek out a high profile national patron for choral singing. Among other defined tasks and roles, this patron would help to raise the profile of community music in Australia.
- Establish a professional development track for choral leaders to open up a vocational pathway for them.
- Germany is a strong backer of the arts through its state and federal governments, and its network of associations support community choirs in various ways. This network remains key to its successes with government grants providing support for choirs where individual member contributions fall short or to undertake administrative processes and roles that members are not willing/able to do. Hence the importance of groups such as the DCV and BDC, which retain both block funding and eligibility to bid for project funding. ANCA might lobby for similar government support, backed by performance targets.
- The link between professional and community choirs is important in Germany and might be developed in Australia. Having both enhances the work of community singers – it was clearly a motivator for them. Australia does not currently have a full-time professional



Die Zelzer-Plakatte

choir (though there are choirs formed around specific projects at various points in the year, and some other paid part-time choir roles).

- There are many opportunities to foster closer collaboration with chamber ensembles and other smaller singing ensembles. ANCA might work on building closer ties between community choir 'sector' in Australia and the semi-professional chamber ensembles and symphonic choirs. This could include supporting the training of conductors in more specialized musical and other skills needed as a community choral conductor. (e.g. inclusion of community music leaders in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chorus conductor development program). There are already some excellent models of collaboration between state symphony orchestras and schools.

*Ideas to support community singing (for Music Australia, federal and state governments and for individual community choirs)*

- Commission further research and advocacy that promotes the public health benefits of singing for individual and community wellbeing. The further this is recognised, the more incentive there is to fund community singing in Australia.
- Create rehearsal venues purpose designed/built/rented for community choirs in a particular region, in the same way as community houses operate. Some choirs in Germany have even collaborated to fundraise and build their own dedicated rehearsal venue.
- Explore ways to foster closer collaboration between and use of music across all life stages, including:
  - Kindergartens and Day Care
  - Primary Schools
  - Secondary Schools
  - Tertiary Institutions - music performance, school-based music education, community music leadership
  - Youth and adult community music settings
  - Singing for older persons
- Explore the idea of a scheme similar to *Die Carusos* that promotes good quality singing and teaching for pre-school aged children (0-6 years).

- Explore a similar accreditation scheme that promotes good quality and age-appropriate singing for Australia's elderly population (65+).

## 12. Further reading for the choral enthusiast

### Essential Reading

German Music Information Centre. (2011).

*Musical Life in Germany: Structure, Facts and Figures:*

German Music Council (Deutscher Musikrat):

<http://www.miz.org/musicl-life-in-germany/>

Reimers, Astrid. (2012).

*Laienmusizieren*: Deutsches Musikinformationszentrum:

[http://www.miz.org/static\\_de/themenportale/einfuehrungstexte\\_pdf/06\\_Laienmusizieren/reimers.pdf](http://www.miz.org/static_de/themenportale/einfuehrungstexte_pdf/06_Laienmusizieren/reimers.pdf)

Brusniak, Friedhelm. (Ed.). (2003).

*Chor – Visionen in Musik. Essener Thesen zum Chorsingen im*

*21. Jahrhundert.* Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Chorverbände.

### Regular magazine subscriptions

Chorzeit, the monthly Choral Magazine of the  
*Deutscher Chorverband*:

<http://www.chorzeit.de/>

Magazines from Germany's many regional choir  
organisations:

<http://www.deutscher-chorverband.de/chorzeit/zeitschriften-der-landesverbaende/>

### A visit to the German National Choral Archives and research centre

*Stiftung Dokumentations- und Forschungszentrum des Deutschen Chorwesens*

A research institute and museum of German choral  
singing in Feuchtwangen, Bavaria:

<http://www.saengermuseum.de/>



### 13. List of interviews & choir visits

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Michael Betzner-Brandt	Universität der Künste Berlin Fabulous Fridays Ich Kann Nicht Singen Chor High Fossility	Berlin
Prof. Dr. Helmke Jan Keden	Universität zu Köln	Cologne
Prof. Dr. Alexandra Kertz-Welzel	Ludwig-Maximilians Universität	Munich

*(in alphabetical order by institution)*

Gertrud Grimme		
Philip Mayers		Berlin
Danny Wazolua Dr Dieudonné Tobbit	Afro-Gospel Bona Deus	Berlin
Monseigneur Prof. Dr Wolfgang Bretschneider	Allgemeine Cäcilien Chorverband (Germany's Catholic Choral Association)	Bonn
	Australian Embassy Berlin	Berlin
Nina Wende	Australian German Association	Bonn
Richard Middelmann	Australian German Association	Melbourne
Dr Debra Shearer-Dirie	Australian National Choral Association	Brisbane
Kerstin Behnke	Berlin Cappella	Berlin
Simon Pickel	Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Chorverbände e.V.	Marktoberdorf, Berlin
André Zwiers-Polidori	Canta:re	Berlin
Ole Schmalfeldt	Choir of Union Hilfswerk	Berlin
Thomas Bender	Chorverband Berlin (Berlin State Choral Association)	Berlin
Sibylle Fischer	Classical Lesbians	Berlin
Dr Konrad Schmidt-Werthern Brigitta Razlag	Cultural Ministry, Berlin State Government	Berlin
Stefan Schmidt	Der Strassenchor	Berlin
Moritz Puschke	Deutscher Chorverband e.V. (German Choral Association)	Berlin
Gudula Kinzler	Die Rheintöchter	Cologne
Oliver Rademann Amadeus Hoffmann	Die Rosa Noten	Stuttgart
Frank Stuckardt-Feierabend	Die Taktlosen	Cologne
Stefan Greving	Die Zauberflöten	Cologne
Martin Brophy OBE	FruitVOX	London

Peter Mandel	Handiclapped	Berlin
Bettina Curella	Hard Chor ELLA	Berlin
Caroline Roth	Katholischen Kirchengemeinde St. Maria - Magdalena (Choir Leader)	Endernich (Bonn)
Martin Gerrits	Legato Choirs	Munich
Frank Möllerbernd	Männer Minne Schwuler Männerchor Berlin e.V.	Berlin
Armin Leidel Michael Kuntze	Nogat-Singers, Lebenshilfe GmbH, Berlin (Neukölln)	Berlin
	Philhomoniker	Munich
Till Wagner & Kristina Hays	Querchorallen	Berlin
Mary Ellen Kitchens	Regenbogenchor Munich	
Katarina Widiger	RIAS Kammerchor Berlin	Berlin
	RosaCavaliere e.V.	Berlin
Antonia Bährens	Rundfunkchor Berlin	Berlin
Ulrike Lachmann	Schrillerlocken Hamburg Miss Klang Hamburg	Hamburg
Monika Brocks	Schwäbische Chorverband	Stuttgart
Heike	Musica Lesbiana	Stuttgart
Very Revd Dr Andreas Loewe	St Paul's Cathedral	Melbourne
Alexander Arit	Stiftung Dokumentations- und Forschungszentrum des Deutschen Chorwesens (German choir museum and archive)	Feuchtwangen



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