

Chœur d'Enfants d'Ile de France

Maîtrise du Conservatoire Maurice Ravel de Levallois

Francis Bardot, a former professor in classics Latin and Greek literature, and in pedagogy at the Catholic Institute of Paris, created his very own children's choir in 1969. Its name changed according to the several institutions to whom they have been associated since that year, but it remained, among musicians, as well as for the audience, *Francis Bardot's choir* ; renowned for its round and strong vocal spectrum, the trustfulness and loyalty of its members, the exigence of the repertoire and quality of their performances.

It has been the Paris Opera children's choir for over twenty years, as well as the choir of the Orchestre de Paris. Under Prof. Bardot's direction, known to be a specialist in matters of children voices in France, (he gave master classes at the University of California and the Beijing National Conservatory, only to name a few), the choir would gain recognition from the critics : an enthusiastic French and foreign press, a fair few *Orphée d'or*, and numerous records, some of which were revered.

For nearly half a century, touring on every continent, the children choir has sang under the direction of most famous wands (Mehta, Osawa, Barenboïm, Collins, Abbado, Kübelik, Maazel...), and provided such figures of lyrical music as William Christie or Philippe Herreweghe with singers and soloists; throughout its career, the choir sang alongside legends of lyrical arts among which stood for example Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Teresa Berganza, Jessye Norman and Natalie Dessay.

The Children Choir, which is subsidized by the city of Levallois, has been entitled for a decade to the city's music and dramatic arts conservatory, of which Francis Bardot was also the director. Each of the hundred and ten members who evolve within the choir is given the opportunity to receive a custom vocal and musical education.

While lead by Francis Bardot and co-managed by his spouse Martine, in close partnership with the parents, the Maîtrise finds its rooting in a more global project aiming at the education of boys and girls within a children's choir where the key word is that "*it is made for them, not the other way around*".

Its most recent tours took the choir to the USA, Canada and Greece, where its performances of the french repertoire, at the same time classical, original and virtuoso, ensured its success:

> 2011 & 2015 in West USA: San Diego, Santa Barbara, Los Altos, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Phoenix, Flagstaff, Sedona, Santa Fe Festival, Los Angeles

> 2013 in Canada and the USA: Montréal, Toronto, Burlington, New York, Greenwich (CT), Worcester, Cape Cod, Boston, Bangor, Quebec

> 2012 & 2014 in Greece and the Cyclades archipel: Aegean Festival, Syros, Tinos, Mykonos, Paros, Naxos, Ios, Santorini

The Chœur d'Enfants d'Ile de France recently performed Vierne's *Solemn mass* and *Requiem* by C. Saint Saeëns, Haendel's *Messiah* in full, Bach's integral of Saint Mathew and Saint John's *Passion*, live movie scores of *The Lord of the rings* trilogy and *Titanic* during the movie projection at the Palais des Congrès in Paris, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Waisenhausmesse*, as well as Francis Poulenc's *Sept Répons de Ténèbres*.

The choir also recorded DVDs of Gabriel Fauré's *Requiem* at the Madeleine, and Charles Gounod's *Messe de Sainte Cécile* in Saint Eustache church, places of there first performance.

By the end of their curriculum within the children's choir, singers can apply to the *Jeune Choeur d'Ile de France* (Youth Choir of Greater Paris).

Discography :

- *Requiem* de Gounod, *Waisenhausmesse* de Mozart, *Messe de Vierne*, (Forlane)
- *Te Deum* de Berlioz (Nelson, Alagna, Marie-Claire Alain, Orchestre de Paris, Virgin).
- *Othello* de Verdi (Domingo, Studer, Myung-Whun-Chung, Deutsche Grammophon)
- *Amadis* de Massenet (Fournillier, Forlane)
- *7 Répons de ténèbres*, de Poulenc (Prêtre, Emi)
- *La Petite Renarde Rusée* de Janacek (Orchestre de paris, Mackerras)
- *Requiem et Messe en Ut* de Mozart, *Requiem de Fauré*, *Requiem de Duruflé*....
- *Bastien, Bastienne* (Forlane)

Recent collaborations :

Orchestre de Paris, Ensemble Orchestral de Paris, Orchestre des Concerts Colonne, Paris Symphonic Orchestra.
 Orchestre de l'Opéra de Massy, Bernard Thomas, Bell'Arte
 The Magic Flute : Festival of Aix en Provence, Marseille and Vichy operas ; role of Yniold, Compiègne opera.

FRANCIS BARDOT'S CHOIRS AND THE USA : A 40 YEARS LONG FRIENDSHIP

- 2017: Francis Bardot's 25th tour to the USA, and :
- 1976 : The choir represented France in Philadelphia on the 4th of July, for the Bicentennial of American Independence, in presence of President Gerald Ford.
- 1989 Francis Bardot directed *The Marseillaise* and *Jessye Norman* during the Bicentennial of the French Revolution, on the 14th of July, on the Place de la Concorde in Paris.
- Francis' choirs hosted around thirty American choirs and invited American music directors to perform in France.
- Friendships that were born from these exchanges with choirs overseas have kept on going: three former singers got married in America and the very first year's friendships still last today.
- *The Star spangled banner* and *America the beautiful* have been part of the permanent musical repertoire of the children's choir since 1976.