

# The 5th Inclusion and Choral Singing Conference

## The first choir of singers with aphasia in Spain and other examples of good practice for inclusion

On 11 April our fifth Inclusion and Choral Singing Conference (ICSC) was held in Barcelona. Since 2010 people from a wide diversity of backgrounds have met once a year in Catalonia to explore and explain how useful singing together can be for the wellness of people and society. Choir conductors, doctors, therapists, musicians, pedagogues, teachers, etc meet to share the results of their work, research and experiments but also projects and dreams.

This year we dedicated the conference to the memory of Juli Hurtado who had been the conductor of the choir of the Spanish Organisation for Blind People and very active in Hearts in Harmony activities and ateliers hosted by Hearts in Harmony partners in Europe but also for ECA-EC (maybe you can remember his atelier at the Europa Cantata Festival in Torino). Unfortunately the disease that ended his intense life full of passion for music prevented him from conducting the Hearts-in-Harmony atelier at the last Europa Cantata Junior.

There is some good news we can report from our latest ICSC:

1. Catalonia is full of small local initiatives for inclusion through choral singing (projects and initiatives, sometimes modest ones led by individuals or choirs, sometimes more ambitious initiatives led by municipalities or local authorities). In any case we see our country as an anthill of "small" initiatives, but initiatives which are small in size and area are not less important but can be the most useful and significant and have a major impact. The three initiatives presented during the conference were:

a. **Carles Riera Project: Music, education and city:** a project led by the municipality with an investment of more than €50.000,00 and the involvement of all the music and performing arts schools and companies in the city (including choirs, youth and professional orchestras, etc). More than 4.000 people took part in the activities run by partnerships between one of the artistic institutions and one social organisation. <http://wp.granollers.cat/emruera/projecte-carles-riera/>

b. **a cooperative activity between a choir (www.laroc.cat) and an association of disabled people in Vilafranca del Penedès.**

### The Inclusion and Choral Singing Conferences, from the beginning to now:

I ICSC (2010) – **Blind and other visual disorders:** organised by SCIC (the Catalan Children's Choir Federation) and winner of the Music Rights Award of the International Music Council.

II ICSC (2011) – **Immigration**

III ICSC (2012) – **The ages of the voice and choral intergenerationality**

IV ICSC (2013) – **Autism, dyslexia and other learning difficulties**

V ICSC (2015) – **Choral Singing as a therapy**, in memoriam Juli Hurtado

VI ICSC (2016) – **Finding projects and funding opportunities**



c. **Clavé XXI, the social project of Orfeó Català** ([http://www.orfeocatala.cat/en/the-social-project-clav%C3%A9-xxi\\_11861](http://www.orfeocatala.cat/en/the-social-project-clav%C3%A9-xxi_11861)): an impressive project with 19 choral groups in primary schools and social organisations in the Ciutat Vella (Old Town) district, involving a total of 362 children and young people led by the artistic team of Orfeó Català

2. Barcelona's Santa Creu and Sant Pau Hospital created the **first choir in Spain of people with aphasia**, promoted by Dr. Carmen García-Sánchez and led musically by the music-therapist Rubén León. This small choir with 20 singers rehearses three times a week in the Hospital and is an activity recommended by the doctors as a therapy for people with aphasia in order to recover language skills; to improve the mood and quality of life of the singers; but also to give visibility to a group too often stigmatised by their language difficulties (remember that these people are working to overcome known difficulties and that aphasia does not in any case affect the intelligence of the person - see the brief text below about aphasia).

### Martí Ferrer i Bosch

Director of Mediterranean Office for Choral Singing  
Co-founder of Ficta edicions i produccions sl  
Board member of ECA-EC

**Aphasia** is the name given to a collection of language disorders caused by damage to the brain. A requirement for a diagnosis of aphasia is that, prior to the illness or injury, the person's language skills were normal. The difficulties of people with aphasia can range from occasional trouble finding words to losing the ability to speak, read, or write, but does not affect intelligence. The term „aphasia“ implies a problem with one or more functions that are essential and specific to language function. Aphasia is most commonly caused by stroke. It can also be caused by other brain diseases, including cancer (brain tumour), epilepsy, and Alzheimer's disease, or by a head injury.