

# Tenso North+South 10+11 project plan



## TENSO NETWORK EUROPE

Tenso Network Europe was created in 2003 by the artistic staff and the managers of four professional chamber choirs that regularly perform contemporary music (in France, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands). The network now consists of seven members (FR, NL, DE, LV, NO) and three associate (candidate) members.

The initial goals, as formulated in an informal statement in 2003, were:

- exchange of expertise, both artistic and managerial: programming, new presentation forms, education and employment of singers, marketing and more  
— *promoting mobility of artists and expertise* —
- make existing, but sometimes lesser known repertoire for chamber choir accessible : create a database (on internet) with the core information about works for choir  
— *exploring and exploiting cultural heritage* —
- create new repertoire through joint commissioning to prominent European composers  
— *adding to the collective European cultural heritage : creating the classics of the future* —
- work with young composers on the specific needs for composing for choirs  
— *promoting mobility of artists and expertise; creating common heritage* —
- make (professional) chamber choirs visible on international platforms: to get wider support for the needs of professional chamber choirs, and to set an example for and give support to the range of choirs - from amateur choirs to semi-professional to professional - that are necessary for a creative and productive music life in Europe  
— *strengthening the position of choirs in general, and professional choirs in particular* —
- joint presentations of the member choirs in the annual festival Tenso Days (taking place in different cities in Europe every year) around contemporary choir music, as a focal point for national and international attention for (contemporary) choir music from all directions: media, audiences, politics  
— *strengthening the position of contemporary music and its performers* —

In the six years of its existence, the network has taken important steps towards realizing these goals:

- In quarterly meetings (hosted in rotation by the members, usually combined with the presentation of special projects, festivals etc) the exchange of expertise has become a natural fact of life for the members, that is continued in bilateral e-mailing and regular conversations. The initial carefulness about being competitors has been supplanted by a shared feeling that

members are colleagues first and foremost. Members help each other solving practical problems, share knowledge, trade solutions, give international support to national issues etc.

- Several round table discussions and symposia with invitees have created a nucleus of connected organizations and persons - professionals in the fields of music, programming, writing, cultural policy - that are in one way or another involved in the same areas as the Tenso network. This extended network significantly increases the scope of the individual members, both in making new professional connections and in the presence - individually and as a network - in the international field.
- Intensive (“deep”) artistic collaboration is now common practice between the members and has resulted in well-received joint projects, including cd’s (see the annex for an overview).
- Many lesser known works for chamber choir have been shared through internet; this has led to an evident increase of international performances of these works that were often only nationally known.
- New works of promising young composers are brought to the attention of other members, knowing that it is to the advantage of all to stimulate the creation of new works for chamber choir.
- Joint commissioning has become a fact, with several models in place for credits, premieres, (international) publicity and likewise
- Workshops with young composers have resulted in an increase of well-written compositions for chamber choir, that are also available (sometimes in rewritten form) for amateur choirs
- Five editions of the annual Tenso Days have been organized, in Paris (2005), Berlin (2006), Paris (2007), Riga (2008) and Amsterdam (2009). The Tenso days are now a fact, visible in the international media and sought after by other partners: thus, the prestigious Ultima Festival in Oslo will host the Tenso Days 2010, and there are talks with Marseille (Cultural Capital in 2013) about the 2011 edition.

**The previous support from the Culture Programme of the European Union for a one-year period (*project Tenso 09/10 La Voix Humaine*) has given an enormous impulse to the scope, frequency and impact of these activities and has made it possible to take decisive steps.**

### Tenso Network: the organization

The Tenso Network is an informal organization. It has taken a conscious decision not to create a (separate) European foundation; instead, the task of coordinator up till now has been assumed for periods of one year by the member who hosts and organizes the annual festival. The other members (in the persons of the managers of the member choirs) take on responsibilities and tasks as agreed in the quarterly meetings. If necessary, members take over tasks from each other.

Thanks to this rotating system, the expertise remains within the group and does not get lost when the person of the manager changes (as has happened - only - twice in the six years since the network came into existence). Also, new members can step in quickly and assume responsibilities: a good example is how the new member Det Norske Solistkor has taken over the commitment to perform a concert at the festival in Amsterdam from RIAS that encountered an unsolvable agenda problem.

As the network grows, we aim to delegate administrative and coordinating tasks to a network coordinator on the one hand, while on the other hand the members keep the responsibilities for the content of the projects (singly or jointly, depending on the project). The coordinator is not necessarily located in the same country as the organizer of the festival or the coordinating partner of the EU project; the lines of communication have proven to work excellently, complemented by the quarterly meetings and regular individual visits.

### Tenso Network: finances

A great part of the activities of the Network are now funded by external sources, such as the financial input of a festival that invites the Tenso Days (thereby taking on the costs for venues, organization, local publicity etc); contributions from national music information centres; co-productions with educational institutions; etc. However, the network will have to look to Europe for support for transnational activities: mobility, linking national databases, translations, opening up national repertoire and lyrics; in short, all activities for which it is virtually impossible to find national funding, but that are essential to the development of the network as a strong player in the European cultural field and a provider of support and resources to members and other parties.

### Members of the Tenso Network Europe (as of September 2009) :

chœur de chambre accentus / Parijs (FR)  
Cappella Amsterdam / Amsterdam (NL)  
Latvijas Radio Koris / Riga (LV)  
Nederlands Kamerkoor / Amsterdam (NL)  
RIAS Kammerchor / Berlijn (DE)  
Det Norske Solistkor / Oslo (NO)  
Eesti Filharmonia Kammerkoor / Tallinn (EE) *associate member*  
SWR Vokalenensemble / Stuttgart (DE) *associate member*  
Musicatreize / Marseille (FR) *associate member*

## **PLANNED ACTIVITIES period May 2010 - August 2011**

### **(1) NORTH**

The Network is already strongly visible in the Northern (Scandinavian and Baltic) countries, and will expand its activities there in the project period.

#### **Tenso Days Oslo** (September 2010)

The prestigious Ultima Festival for contemporary music in Oslo (NO) has offered to host the Tenso Days in September 2010. The members of the Tenso Network will participate in the usual way: bring 'artistic content' to the festival, in the form of concerts and participation in activities such as audience outreach, workshops etcetera.

During the Tenso Days Oslo, the choirs and conductors will work with young composers from all over Europe (application process open to all, and on recommendation of the Tenso choirs).

The Latvijas Radio Koris (LV) and the Norges musikkhøgskole in Oslo (NO) will present results of the research and performance *Concrescence*, which aims to introduce microtonality in vocal music through the study of the heritage of (Scandinavian and Baltic) folk music and introduce traditional techniques in the formation of singers.

The festival proves to be a very effective tool for the involvement of audiences, local organizations, amateur choirs, musical education institutions, cultural policy makers, etcetera. It sets an example for singing, programming, and collaboration and gives the network immediate visibility and momentum, which has a (national and international) effect beyond the period of the festival.

For that reason, the festival in Oslo is part of the project plan, even if no EU subsidy is asked for this part of the project.

#### **Oslo Symposium** (September 2010)

Jointly with the Norwegian Music Centre, Det Norske Solistkoret will organize a Tenso Professionals Day, inviting professionals in the fields of choir music, contemporary music, music education, music writing, cultural policy and others. Purpose: involve national and international organizations, investigate and define common and diverse needs and lay out strategies for the future.

## **(2) SOUTH**

The Networks want to extend to the Southern parts (Balkan and Mediterranean) of Europe. For this, it needs to search the organizations that are possible collaborators, explore their potential and their needs, and together with these partners, define strategies to support their development, including possible membership of the network

### **Marseille symposium** (March 2011)

Purpose: broadening the scope of the Tenso network in Southern Europe.

At this moment, none of the southern European ensembles are in the Tenso network.

Southern Europe has very few vocal ensembles that can compare in their organization, their cultural outreach and their repertoire to the more 'established' choirs in Northern Europe. It therefore seems difficult to find ensembles that are up to par on a professional level and that dedicate a significant part of their repertoire to creating new works and the performance of works of the 20th century. With this in mind, we see that it is necessary to establish a process of systematic scouting for southern European professional ensembles as well as their different ways of existing, making themselves known, and ways of working.

Because it is built on a strong set of criteria based on the gathering of ensembles, the Tenso network allows their mutual enrichment by way of bringing together their differences and particularities.

Thus one of the objectives of this programme would be to show the particular shapes and of the way life is given to the creations in the South, where the image of the South is still too attached to that of its heritage.

The arrival of Musicatreize among the Tenso network in 2010 - as the proposed organizer of the Tenso Days in 2011 - illustrates this will to develop links with the South of Europe in the long term. Musicatreize has been established in Marseille since 1987, a city which is very representative of Mediterranean realities and has been voted Culture Capital of Europe in 2013. Musicatreize is a member of the Anna Lindt Network, a Euro-Mediterranean foundation for cultural communication.

This goal of broadening the network, but also the actual mobility of musicians and composers, forces us to ask ourselves new questions as to the activity of these ensembles, and more specifically their belonging to a territory. What does it mean for an ensemble to be « settled » in Marseille or Berlin, in Paris or Riga ?

### **Objectives and possible productions :**

- To scout out and promote the particular shapes and ways of giving life to creations in the South, advertising themselves... (ensembles, composers)
- Finding and connecting to existing (informal) networks
- Promoting new choral works and composers to ensembles that have less experience with contemporary repertoire
- Promoting composers from the Southern European region within the Network
- Offer training, internships for (artistic and administrative) staff, on line consults and other guidance to ensembles from these regions

### **(3) NORTH+SOUTH+EAST+WEST : an INTERNET PORTAL for choral repertoire**

In the spring of 2010, Tenso will have developed an internet database for choral repertoire that can be searched on different criteria, such as division of voices, number of singers, additional instrumentation, but also on relevant information such as historical context and performance dates. This tool provides access to and information about valuable, but sometimes lesser known repertoire. In the period 2010-2011, data will be added to this database by members on a regular basis.

Two goals have been added:

- **providing non-musical information**

Practical experience with sharing scores demonstrates that it is also necessary to provide background information on the works ('notes'), the lyrics in original language and different translations, and supply pronunciation and language coaching. All the members have separately developed information on how to interpret, pronounce and understand the repertoire of works originating from other European countries. The aim of this project is to collect this information and put it on line so that it is accessible to other members, but even more so, accessible to other choirs that have limited access to this type of this information, such as amateur choirs or choirs that are in countries with minimal support for choir practice.

For the sake of both (young) conductors (and conductors of amateur choirs) and performers, the notes of the Tenso conductors and the singers on the performance (often premieres) of works will also be made available.

- **connecting to other databases**

The scope of access for the database for the choral repertoire and its performances will be expanded by linking to national or international portals or gateways, such as the site [musiquecontemporaine.fr](http://musiquecontemporaine.fr) (gateway to contemporary music resources in France, a specialized search engine for art music from 1945 to this day).

By opening the Tenso database architecture to other users, other music information centres can use it for their own purpose. This does not supplant the sites of the individual organizations; rather, it provides an extra facility that gives a global view of other, connected sites. This *portal* or gateway harvests meta-data related to contemporary music from each of the partners' databases (which may hold other contents, which is not harvested). The meta-data describe the partners' resources according to a common model specifically designed for this gateway. Local and remote access to the online instances is controlled directly by the holding organizations: the gateway does not contain a copy of the digital document. Rather, it provides to the user the address allowing for a direct access (i.e., without having to search for it on the remote site) according to the relative location of the user and the resource (in the same intranet, in the partners' extranet, on the internet).

During the Marseille Symposium, Tenso will further develop concrete plans to implement this project together with other national entities (such as British Music Centre, Scandinavian Music Centres, but also non-government organizations, especially in the mediterranean countries; and also partners in jazz, renaissance and baroque music, etc) in order to create a joint data-harvest site. It is not our intention to create new tools; instead, it should combine existing tools ("meta-harvesting"). Several national organizations, eg. in France, Norway and the Netherlands have expressed their willingness to invest in this project. The scope will lead up to extensive

cooperation, ultimately involving beyond vocal chamber choir music because the developed meta-harvesting facility can be applied to other music databases as well, and will so through the involvement of national music information centres.

#### **(4) MOBILITY OF ARTISTS and EDUCATION OF SINGERS**

The Tenso Network organizes internships for conductors and singers with other member choirs. Another practical way to stimulate mobility for young artists is to search for singers for colleague choirs and even organize local auditions for colleague organizations (in other words, to step in as local 'desk' for the colleague partner). Young, promising conductors are encouraged to come and work with the different choirs, in order to develop their skills; a good example is the young Estonian Risto Joost, who has been invited to work with the Nederlands Kamerkoor and RIAS after his choir debut with the Eesti Filharmonia Kammerkoor.

At a more basic level, the network invests in the education of singers. This starts the ongoing debate with national and international governments about the necessity for music education at the most basic level, in primary schools and secondary schools, and in the curriculum of the higher education institutions. More specific, the network also talks to conservatories and music academies about the training of singers: too often singers are trained to become soloists, and if the level of the individual singer is not 'good enough', all that remains for them is to become teachers. The art of chamber choir singing often has to be reintroduced to the conservatories and music academies.

The situation in the East-European countries, where the musical education at all levels has set an example for the rest of Europe in the past, is quickly deteriorating under the influence of EU budget rules and privatization. Especially in these countries, Tenso Network Europe has the task to raise awareness and come up with (practical) solutions.

- draw attention to these issues in regular publications, newsletters, activity reports and other publications, both from the network and from the individual members
- organize workshops for choir singing at institutes for education at all levels
- initiate an academic study into the use and value of choir singing for solo singers and for musicians in general

#### **(5) EXTENSION OF THE NETWORK**

In 2010, the network will have grown from 4 (in 2003) to 10 or 11 members. The extension of the network should be taken another step ahead in the next year:

- continue ongoing talks with professional chamber choirs in other countries with a view to possible future membership of the Tenso network
- initiate talks with possible participants in other countries, especially Balkan and Mediterranean countries
- identify possible threats and possible solutions on national levels, as well within a European context

The value of membership of the Tenso network has a strong national component: all member choirs state that their position in the national arena has strengthened as a result of the Network. If necessary, the Network can directly influence national negotiations of individual members, like when the economic crisis in Latvia threatened to cut the entire budget of the Latvijas Radio Koris.

The Tenso Network will have formulated a business plan (including conditions and commitments for members) and a communication plan for the years 2010-2012 in the first months of 2010. These should be re-evaluated regularly when new members join the network.

## **(6) NEW REPERTOIRE**

As in previous years, the members of the network will give joint commissions to prominent composers for works for a cappella choir, that are beyond (financial) reach of individual choirs. Two choirs will take the lead and do two separate premieres (publicized jointly), and share the honours. In the agreement with the composer and the editor, the performance of the new work by Tenso member choirs is included.

Even more important it is to encourage young composers to write works for chamber choirs, and to work with them on techniques, vocal ranges and possibilities, text setting and interpretation, etc. Workshops with young composers, led by eminent composers or conductors such as James Wood will be organized twice a year: once during the Tenso Days, and on a separate occasion.

The artistic directors of the Tenso choirs will decide jointly on a Tenso commission for the most promising young composer, for a work that will be taken on the programme by the member choirs in the upcoming season.

## **(7) SHARE WITH AMATEURS**

Professional choirs do not exist in a vacuum; on the contrary, the best professional choirs originate from countries where amateur and youth choirs blossom. Tenso choirs are the top of choir music, but the top cannot exist without a strong and broad foundation - and the broad field needs examples to look up to. Therefore, the Tenso network wants to maintain and expand close working relations with amateur (youth and adult) choirs and the organizations that represent them. Together with Europa Cantat, the European network for amateur choirs, Tenso has started a survey of the needs of amateur choirs and will develop tutorials for amateur singers, composers and conductors.

The cooperation with amateur choirs takes many forms:

- organize workshops with professional singers to work on vocal skills and ensemble performance, especially those needed for the performance of contemporary repertoire
- organize workshops in score reading of contemporary music
- organize additional training for conductors for contemporary repertoire, in the form of internships during projects of the professional choirs
- coach amateur choirs in their choice of repertoire. The Tenso website with the database of repertoire will play an important role in this, because it will contain information on setting, special demands on the singers and/or instrumentalists, performance notes from professional conductors, additional information on the music and the lyrics, and other relevant information. Through the Tenso network, conductors of amateur choirs can contact members of the network for individual coaching in working on specific compositions.
- joint concerts during the international and national Tenso Days: amateur choirs are invited to give concerts with their own choice of contemporary repertoire during the Tenso Days. This may or may not take the form of a competition; in other cases – depending on the situation in the country where the Tenso Days are organized – a number of choirs may be invited upon recommendation from the field.

The Tenso members each have specific, but different experiences in this field, both in the framework of (music) schools and in working with amateur choirs. The aim of Tenso is to share the insights and results, find ways to copy best practices to other countries, and to accumulate the expertise and disseminate it both via the Tenso website (specifically the database of repertoire) and via the professional exchange during seminars and working visits.

Composers will be encouraged and coached in writing works that are (also) suitable for amateur choirs; existing repertoire with multiple instrumentation should be rearranged for piano accompaniment.

At the Tenso Days, the exchange with amateur choirs in a specific country are intensified.

Previous years have shown that the effects of this exchange last long after the Tenso Days.

More in general, amateur choirs will profit from the attention that the Tenso activities generate in the media, and the resulting increased audience awareness of choir music.

## **TENSO NETWORK EUROPE**

annex: joint projects (one-to-one “deep” artistic collaborations)

### **2005**

- Rias + accentus + Nederlands Kamerkoor + Latvijas Radio Koris *Tenso Days Paris* (DE, FR, LV, NL)
- Cappella Amsterdam + RIAS Kammerchor + Concerto Köln (DE) 2005 *les Folles Journees* (DE, NL + tour in FR, PT, Japan)

### **2006**

- Rias + Latvijas Radio Koris + Accentus 2006 *Tenso Days Berlin* (DE, FR, LV)

### **2007**

- Accentus + Nederlands Kamerkoor + Cappella Amsterdam + Latvijas Radio Koris + National Chamber Choir Ireland (IE) 2007 *Tenso Days Paris* (FR, NL, IE, LV)

### **2008**

- Latvijas Radio Koris + Rias + Nederlands Kamerkoor + Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor (EE) 2008 *Tenso Days Riga* (LV, DE, EE, NL)

### **2009**

- Latvijas Radio Koris + accentus + Nederlands Kamerkoor + Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor + Cappella Amsterdam+ Det Norske Solistkor *Tenso Days Amsterdam* (LV, FR, EE, NO, NL)
- Latvijas Radio Koris + Accentus *Strauss A cappella works* concert and CD recording (LV, FR)
- Cappella Amsterdam + Eesti Filharmoonia Kammerkoor recording Frank Martin *Golgotha* (EE, NL)