

## Apropos Choir – A journey

*This is a little blog story about my experiences and challenges with my choir for street newspaper sellers (and everybody else who is interested).*

### The beginning

During one of the rehearsals of the Community orchestra Salzburg, one of the participants, Andrea, a street newspaper seller, came to me and said: “Our newspaper would like to have a choir and I think you should start it!”

She was right! After one hour of meeting the staff of the newspaper we had come up with the concept, ideas for locations and a kick-of event – we were in a flow!

So in February 2019 we launched our new “Apropos Choir”. In a vendors event with coffee and cake. I brought two songs with me – a Ghanaian song and a Rumanian song (the vendors in Salzburg are either from Austria, Rumania or from different African countries). We had a fun time singing together with the about 20 people in the room. The actual rehearsals would start the following week. As a location we had found an empty store in a shopping center at Salzburgs main station – easy access for everybody.



**WIR SINGEN  
VIELE LÄNDER,  
VIELE STIMMEN,  
EIN CHOR!  
SINGEN SIE MIT!**

Mit Ihrem Zeitungskauf erheben Sie Ihre Stimme für ein soziales menschliches Miteinander. Jetzt laden unsere Sänger und Sängerinnen Sie ein, in den Chor einzustimmen!

Jeden **Donnerstag** singen wir von **15 bis 16 Uhr** im Shoppingcenter Forum 1 direkt am Bahnhof, Südtirolerplatz 13. Treffpunkt ist bei der Biblio-Take/ der freien Bücher-Entnahmestelle.

Chorleiterin Mirjam und das Apropos-Team freuen sich auf Sie!

**STADT : SALZBURG**

**APROPOS**  
STRASSENZEITUNG FÜR SALZBURG

### Challenges

At the first rehearsal we have been six people – including me and one of the staff members of the newspaper. We continued with our songs and a small Austrian round. In the following rehearsals there have also only been about five to six people and even though I talk to everybody I see on the streets, if they would like to join the choir, it is really hard to get more people to come.

One of our rules is, that everybody can wish for songs that they would like to sing – so the choir builds up their repertoire of favourite songs from everybody’s wishes. In the second rehearsal there was a Rumanian lady coming – and I was so thrilled to see her there! – and of course we sang our

Rumanian song. I asked her, which song she was wishing for and after singing it to me, I found it on youtube and transcribed it for the choir. So the next rehearsal I proudly brought her wish song with me (including Austrian lyrics to the melody for easier access for the others..) – but the lady never came back (nor one of the other Rumanians that I had invited) and I am sure our Rumanian pronunciation of the song is very poor.

### Successes

One day Louise, who has been coming to rehearsals from the beginning on, brought a little poem about why Apropos is important to her. It was very touching to see her reading out her feelings to us and we decided to make a song out of her words. The next rehearsal I brought a few small string instruments (my father is an instrument maker) which would help us to find a good melody to our song and within half an hour we had created our signature song. What a joy singing our own song!

After one month of summer break, our group is still not very big, but by word of mouth we are mostly around eight people rehearsing together. In September we got asked, if we would like to perform during the Jazz & the City Festival (a big Jazz festival all around Salzburg) and the staff of the newspaper had already agreed to make a performance there. So within three weeks we set up our setlist for the concert. The idea was to combine it with a few texts, that the people had wrote, and stories from Georg, who does social city tours around Salzburg showing the places where you go when you are homeless or deprived. Another aspect was to include the audience – since our songs were mostly well-known songs, we would let them join in in the chorus. We had also agreed on Solos and Duos and would be singing for the first time in public and for the first time with a microphone. Everybody (including me) was visibly nervous and Norbert, who was there to take pictures of us, helped us by giving clear instructions on where he wanted us to pose. From the moment, the lady from the festival started to introduce us and we had sang our first song, I could feel that the audience had captured our spirit – they listened carefully, rewarded the brave solos (with imperfect voices) and joined in during the chorus (I had prepared a song sheet with all the chorus words on it and people gladly took it). The hour of concert passed quick and at the end I had the feeling that all the singers had grown about a meter... at least it felt that way! We celebrated our first concert with cake, photos for everybody and words of praise – what a feast!



Apropos Choir – captured by Norbert Kopf

## Changes

In order to get more people from the streets to join in we are thinking of changing our concept. Hearing from other street choirs we realized that those are mostly either connected to a shelter or day center or/and offer a meal with the rehearsals. Since this could be a possibility to create easier access for people who are already there, we are planning on cooperating with the brand new homeless shelter that opened up in October in Salzburg. It is located in an old theatre rehearsal studio and could therefore also be a good spot for our choir.

If you have been reading until here and have got ideas on how we/ I could improve my choir and/or get new/more people to join in, I would be very happy to receive a message from you: [mirjam@community-arts.eu](mailto:mirjam@community-arts.eu).

Another request: since I am doing research on my choir and am always on the search for articles and researchers in this field (especially in the german speaking countries – since community music/arts and projects like these are very rare and unknown here)- please also contact me if you have the feeling you could help me in this field.

For now: Enjoy singing wherever you are and THANK YOU for caring!



Mirjam Bauer – captured by Norbert Kopf

## About me

My name is Mirjam Bauer and I am from Salzburg, Austria. I guess my motivation to become a community artist started quite early with me being a child in a very musical environment (my father is an instrument maker and my mom a music teacher) – and my passion to share the arts with others. By now I am in the middle of finishing my Masters in Community Music (the first possibility to study this in the german speaking countries... because Community Music is a total new concept here) and have a degree as theatre pedagogue and music and dance pedagogue (my first education was becoming a kindergarten teacher). While studying I always had my focus on inclusive projects – so I started an inclusive music- and dance theatre project (the Grüntöne Ensemble), played in an inclusive band, founded the first Community Orchestra in Salzburg and created the Community Arts Network here. There is still lots of things to do and ideas in my head – so will keep on singing, playing music, acting, dancing and most important of all: connecting people through the arts.

[www.community-arts.eu](http://www.community-arts.eu)