



# Le Don du Chœur

Chœur d'Enfants des Écoles Privées Genevoises



## HIGHLIGHTS

### Don du Chœur prepares 6<sup>th</sup> concert

- 400 children from 12 private schools in Geneva will be on stage at the Victoria Hall; save the date: 9 May 2019!

### Next project: Mexico

- Funds raised from the concert will allow more children to learn music

### Madagascar

- Fears for children's health after WFP stops supplying canteen at Andohasatra

### Cambodia

- 550 children registered for 9<sup>th</sup> school year at Ta Pen
- 51 pupils graduated in two years

## Don du Chœur Committee

**Isabelle Isabelle Chatel**  
President

**Jean-Philippe Bernard**  
Multimedia communication

**Jean-Claude Brès**  
Schools liaison  
Project leader, Kenya

**Claude-Alain Burky**  
Project leader, Madagascar

**Michel Firmenich**  
Project leader, Cambodia

**Catherine Firmenich**  
Schools liaison  
Project leader, Mexico

**Laurence Parent**  
Treasurer

**Sue Power**  
Events

## Our next concert: ¡Vamos a México! Music brings passion to children in a shantytown

Don du Chœur, which in 15 years has contributed to the education of some 2,500 children around the world, now plans to help children in a shantytown in Oaxaca State, Mexico. At a concert on Thursday 9 May 2019, at Geneva's Victoria Hall, 400 children from private schools will sing to raise funds to expand the Santa Cecilia music school.

The school was founded in 2011 at the foot of an enormous rubbish tip near Oaxaca de Juarez city. The initiative came from the young people themselves, some of them in school, some not. Camerino López Manzano, a clarinetist from the Music Conservatory in the city, became the school's artistic director. Very quickly, 25 youngsters became passionate about music and vowed never to be drawn into the world of drugs and violence.

Seven years on, the school has 130 students who work in three instrumental groups: a brass band, a chamber orchestra and a symphonic orchestra, which



Music has changed these two boys' lives

in 2017 played in Mexico City.

From the beginning, Isabelle de Boves, a French airline pilot, started collecting second-hand instruments and bringing them to the school. Some lock-ups were built to stock them in. Two instrument repair workshops were opened to the public and these have become a source of income for the school. The registration fees paid by the students cover the modest wages of the five teachers.

Gradually, a number of instrument makers, education specialists and music teachers, local and foreign, and working for free, came along. DDC committee members who vi-

sited in October were struck by how much the project was grounded in solidarity between the different actors, going beyond music itself.

Today the school could take in 200 students if it had enough space for them. The young people play either in the one room available or out in the open courtyard, but they are still proud of what they do: "I play the violin...!" says one, "I play the trombone!" cries another. Music has given them dignity and, for some, a true passion.



Camerino, the school's founder



The brass section rehearse in the courtyard



All the students at Santa Cecilia send a big THANK YOU to the children in Geneva!

## Twelve Geneva private schools prepare to sing ...

Teachers and musicians from the 12 participating schools came together on 30 October to be briefed about the programme for the 2019 Don du Chœur concert, presented with brio by artistic director Sue Power with Daniel Darbellay and Benjamin Lubrano, music teachers at the Institut Florimont. Those present were left in no doubt as to the amount of work waiting for them – but with the assurance that the pleasure of performing on The Night would be more than adequate recompense.

In a sign of the times, this was a no-paper meeting: all documents were distributed digitally, from a teaching kit on Mexico to music scores and a karaoke recording, to help the children learn the English songs. Underlying it all, a sense of community, uniting professionals who had done it before, most recently just over two years ago.

# THE MADAGASCAR PROJECT

## As hunger looms, emergency steps to save schoolchildren

Following the decision by the World Food Programme (WFP) to cut its support to school canteens in the drought-stricken south of Madagascar, owing to budget constraints, Don du Choeur is to take over the provision of food until next March. This exceptional intervention is intended to help the vulnerable children at Andohasatra-Betioky get through until the next harvest.

The WFP decision was confirmed to DDC committee member Claude-Alain Burky, by its local representative, Mr. Etienne Tchecounou. A correspondent from Le Monde newspaper, quoting government figures, reports that severe malnutrition now affects two-thirds of the population of the Betioky area.

The WFP cut-back is seen as a severe blow in an

area where the food situation is already at crisis point. The canteen at the DDC-funded school is likely to see a huge increase in its daily clientele, with hungry children converging from miles around – if they have the strength to do so. More information coming on [www.don-du-choeur.ch](http://www.don-du-choeur.ch)



The canteen has served the children's only balanced meal



WFP has provided food for the canteen since January 2018

# THE CAMBODIA PROJECT

## Sweet success comes in twos!



Sreylen was there to support Pheakdra when he received his certificate

A sister and brother duo, Sreylen and Pheakdra, who come from a family of six children, are today two of the great hopes for Ta Pen. They were respectively nine and 11 in 2010 when Don du Choeur opened its primary school in the heart of the forest. At the time they lived five kilometres away, with the longest and most difficult journey of all to reach the school.

But nothing was going to stand in their way. They advanced through the levels one by one, completing their schooling in seven, rather than the usual nine years, thanks to crash courses set up by their excellent primary teacher, Sakit. In 2017 they both received their secondary school diplomas, with merit – a well-deserved achievement!

Sreylen opted for a three-year course at high school while Pheakdra went onto the Haven hotel school in Siem Reap for a one-year chef's course; now well qualified, he will soon start his apprenticeship at the 5-star Phum Baitang hotel.

## Diploma success for 51 secondary pupils at Ta Pen

For two years now, 51 pupils and their teacher at Ta Pen have achieved an ambitious objective: having a 100 per cent success rate in their final exams. A noteworthy success!

This December, DDC committee members Isabelle Chatel and Michel Firmenich will be in Ta Pen to prepare for the ninth school year and to meet these young school leavers who are continuing their studies:

- 24 are at the Khnar Sanday high school, 10 kilometres from Ta Pen – 13 of them are in their second year;
- 13 live in Siem Reap, 45 kilometres away, and are on three-year professional training courses in fields such as electricity, mechanics or the hotel business, at state-run establishments (Institut National Polytechnique d'Angkor and Techo Sen).

Our ONG partners, based in Siem Reap and specialising in training restaurant staff (Sala Bai, Haven and Friends), have already taken on six students, including Pheakdra (see left).

Eight students have unfortunately had to move away or leave their courses in order to help their families.



The 51 Ta Pen graduates (2017 in red, 2018 in green)

*Your donation will help us help these communities*

## Don du Choeur

Swiss non-profit association, tax-deductible since 2008

2, rue Munier-Romilly - 1206 Genève  
[www.don-du-choeur.ch](http://www.don-du-choeur.ch)  
[info@don-du-choeur.ch](mailto:info@don-du-choeur.ch)

UBS SA. Case postale - CH 1211 Genève 2  
IBAN: CH 10 0024 0240 6036 14M1P

CCP: 17-540730-8

## PARTNERS

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