



Le Don du Chœur

Chœur d'Enfants des Écoles Privées Genevoises



HIGHLIGHTS

Switzerland

- Our Geneva children get to grips with the "Great Dictation Challenge"
- Don du Chœur: now on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Mexico

- Coming up in May: the first two rehearsal rooms ready for business!
- 14 scholarships already awarded thanks to the Geneva schools

Cambodia

- Celebrating 10 years in Ta Pen: 20 August 2020
- The new school cook is – a former pupil!

Don du Chœur Committee

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Mexico: the extension of the music school forges ahead!

Community solidarity is at the heart of this project

After eight years, the children of the Santa Cecilia music school will finally have brand new rehearsal rooms. Up until now, pupils have been scattered over several areas, carrying their chairs and instruments into the kitchen, under a porch roof in the courtyard, into the street or into the church hall ... !

However, since September 12, when the foundation stone was laid, the local community of the shanty-town of Vicente Guerrero has poured its efforts into extending the school premises. Families have dedicated whole weekends to building walls or salvaging construction materials to save on costs.

This amazing solidarity has given the project its very special character. A wellknown, Mexico-

based architect, Axel Araño, designed the new buildings and is overseeing the construction along with a fellow architect and former professor at the prestigious La Salle University in Oaxaca. Having such professional competence involved has a huge, positive impact on the realization of the project and inspires even greater commitment from all those involved in this new Don du Chœur initiative – the children of Geneva's private schools, the sponsors and the volunteers.

In May, the first two rehearsal rooms, as well as storage rooms for instruments, will be ready for use. And after this first big step, the community will tackle the extension of the orchestra rehearsal space.



A construction meeting with the project's architect, Axel Araño (on the right)

Aurélie returns from Santa Cecilia ...

Aurélie is a teacher at the La Découverte school in Geneva who appeared on stage at the Victoria Hall with 51 children at our concert last May. She was passing through Mexico at Christmas and visited the Santa Cecilia school where she was welcomed with open arms by the community leaders of the school and by the schoolchildren.

By chance, she was there on the same day as Hervé Brisse of the Orchestre National de Lille, who was conducting the Santa Cecilia orchestra in Beethoven's Ode to Joy. "It was a magical moment", Aurélie told us, on her return to Geneva. She was also delighted to have seen the work being done on the school extension, made possible by the proceeds of our last Don du Chœur concert.



The first two rehearsal rooms will be ready in May!

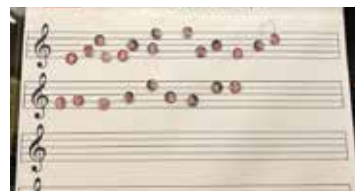
Our new "Great Dictation Challenge" takes off!

Many of Geneva's private schools asked us to revive Don du Chœur's "Great Dictation Challenge". And they have now just received it ... with enough content to amuse everyone from 3 to 77 years old. The pack of materials is based on the themes of Mexico and the legend of chocolate and the rituals of the Day of the Dead. The money received will go towards the extension of the rehearsal area for the Santa Cecilia orchestra. We hope you have fun with it and don't hesitate to contact us if you need anything (cfirmenich@don-du-choeur.ch).



Sale of musical notes – a big success!

A huge thank you to the Geneva schools for their support. 697 notes of music were bought, at 10 CHF each, and will pay for music lessons for the poorest of the children attending Santa Cecilia. Fourteen children have already benefited from this initiative.



THE CAMBODIA PROJECT

2020: The first ten years ... and the first senior high school graduates

Our Ta Pen school reaches a new mile-stone this year. The primary school opened its doors in October 2010 with the aim of giving a basic education to 250 totally illiterate children living right in the heart of the forest. And it was the object of our 2009 Don du Choer concert. It was also the challenge that Chamrong LO, a former Khmer refugee living in Switzerland, set himself, when he left in 2008 to retire in his own country and set up the school.

It was a challenge that met with success! Today, the school welcomes 550 children from nursery school to junior high school, and supports some 50 young students a year as they continue their education at senior high school level or in professional training.

This year, for the first time, and thanks to the amazing commitment of all the friends of



Soon we can say "The Ta Pen school has helped produce senior high school graduates for Cambodia"

Don du Choer, 13 students will receive their senior high school leaving certificates at the end of August. They are incredibly motivated young people and are fired with ambition. They want to become doctors, photographers and teachers of physics and Khmer. We are currently putting them in touch with NGOs specializing in tertiary education, to help them achieve their dreams; they certainly deserve it!

August is going to be a landmark month! Our students' success coincides with the 10th anniversary of Ta Pen. A big party will be organized at the school, for the whole team as well as the students and parents. We are thrilled to invite you to celebrate too, with the Don du Choer team, on 20 August. For more information get in touch at info@don-du-choeur.ch. We're waiting for you!



A leading partnership: Chamrong LO with Sokmean PUT, his right-hand man for over ten years

Maintaining this lovely school is a shared goal

The Ta Pen school is ten years old – as is its woodwork! Some maintenance was greatly needed to avoid it becoming run-down. Sanding and repainting the doors and shutters of the five-classroom school was an enormous task for our two handymen. So, in January, the class 9 pupils and some of the parents and teachers came to lend a hand during the weekends. And it was "mission accomplished" before the period of very warm weather began. The school is looking lovely and everyone is very proud of it! Many thanks to all involved.



The school has had a facelift thanks to a communal effort

Former pupils of Ta Pen take the helm

Many former pupils have remained very attached to Ta Pen. They fell in love with their school thanks to sport and now want to continue to contribute. They talked to us about it.

When the children of Ta Pen found themselves together at their school desks for the first time, on 1 October 2010, they had never seen a book in their lives and were all of totally different ages. But sport helped them find a feeling of belonging.

"We spent our playtime with a ball, practising passes" one of them told us. Gifted in sport they also had an excellent sports teacher. And they regularly appeared on the winners' podium during inter-school competitions in Siem Reap Province. "The more medals we won in basketball and volleyball the prouder we were of our school."

Chanda was 15 in 2010, when she started the second year of primary school. In 2013,

as captain of the volleyball team, she found herself on the winners' podium. She stopped studying for a year to help her family pay off their debts. Then she came back, gaining her junior high school leaving certificate and going on to train as a cook at the prestigious Sala Bai school. As of this year, she is assistant cook in our school and told us recently that she was "so happy be back at Ta Pen".

Two former students, Ratha and Py, who are among the top runners in the Angkor Marathon, completed all their schooling at Ta Pen and, since 2017, are following a three-year training programme in Siem Reap, to become electricians. They enjoy doing the school repairs together.

These three young people have found their career paths but the Ta Pen school remains an important part of their lives and those of their families.



Chanda, a graduate of Sala Bai, helps prepare 550 school meals a day



If there's an electrical problem, we can always rely on Ratha and Py ...

Two young people from Phnom Penh give their support to Ta Pen

Two young women, brought up in an orphanage in Phnom Penh and now university graduates, came to the school last November to talk to our 550 pupils about their professional life, to encourage them in their studies and to give each of them a gift-bag. A generous Cambodian donor, who had been touched by their project, helped them to realize it. It was a moment we will always remember and that will remain forever in our hearts!



PARTNERS

Geneva Association of Private Schools, Banda de Musica, Brolliet SA, 1875 Finance, Fondation Coromandel, Fondation Covalence, and with the support of the City of Geneva.

Your donation will help us help these communities.

Don du Choer

Swiss non-profit association, tax-deductible since 2008

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