

Choral singing in the 19th and 20th Centuries

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ABSTRACT

Since Josep Anselm Clavé created choral singing in Catalonia in 1850, it has become one element of identification of Catalan culture. When the “Orfeó Català” was set up in 1891 it generated an associative movement that was fundamental to the cultural life of the country thanks to the creation of the “Germanor dels Orfeons de Catalunya” (Brotherhood of Catalan Choral Societies), 1917. The Spanish Civil War put a temporary brake on this huge undertaking, but there was a recovery during the first decades of Franco’s regime, when it became not just a musical activity, but also an excuse to give a cultural cohesion to the country through the creation of federative bodies, encouraging gatherings and activities. As well as Clavé, there were other people of note, such as Lluís Millet, Joan Balcells, Antoni Pérez Moya, Enric Ribó, Oriol Martorell, Manuel Cabero, Pep Prats, Jordi Casas, Pep Vila or Pere Artís in the field of the study and spreading of the movement.

KEY WORDS: choral singing, musical sociability, associationism

Catalonia has long been a land of musicians. The list of composers who have gone beyond our borders and taken their music around the world is quite considerable. We only have to remember Father Antoni Soler, chapel master of The Escorial; Ferran Sor, composer and guitarist well-known in Paris, London and Saint Petersburg; Blai Parera, Jaume Nunó or Ramon Carnicer, authors of the national anthems of Argentina, Mexico and Chile respectively;¹ Isaac Albéniz or Enric Granados, maestros of the piano at the beginning of the 20th century; Pau Casals, author of the *Anthem of the United Nations* and a cellist of world repute, of Frederic Mompou, creator of an intimate style of music that is performed by pianists all over the world. Behind this vitality lies a long standing passion for music in the Catalan people. It is in this context that choral activity arose and became popular, with its beginnings basically in a social strata that was economically not well off but very interested in the production of music.²

THE ORIGINS. JOSEP ANSELM CLAVÉ

During the first half of the 19th century Catalan choral singing developed, as it did in the rest of developed socie-

ties, in the church and in the theatre. The Church had a considerable say in the matter of collective singing, as Catholic society took great care to follow musical patterns that did not evoke the liturgical life of Protestant areas, where singing by the people formed an essential part. On the other hand, in 19th century musical theatre it was very common to have a chorus that in fact personified the popular masses acting collectively against tyranny or any other established power. One must remember the political background in which the 19th century developed, a melting pot of utopian and scientific socialisms, the rise of anarchist movements and an increase in republican passions as a sign of opposition to absolute monarchies.

This is the background from which the figure of Josep Anselm Clavé (Barcelona, 1824-1874) arose. A tireless worker in his adolescence and early youth, Clavé knew well the hardships of the working class. He joined the early revolutionary movements which were encouraged by Abdó Terradas or Narcís Monturiol (father of the first submarine, the “Ictineo”). In Barcelona these led to failed actions, such as the taking of the Ciutadella (1843), many of those who took part ending up in the dungeons of the castle. It has become a legend that during the months that Clavé spent in the Ciutadella, he worked out a plan for the recovery of the working classes through singing, in harmony with the redemption movements of the time. From an early association called “La Aurora” (The Dawn), which was actually a group of musicians who gave serenades to order, came the idea of creating a group of sing-

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ers made up of working people who would exchange their leisure time in the taverns for choir practice and popular concerts. A similar idea had already been started in France by the pedagogue Louis Bocquillon-Wilhem (1771-1842) and had met with a certain success. Whether there is a connection between this movement and the one started by Clavé is not clear, but a musical visit by a group of singers from the French Pyrenees, the *Banhèras de Bigorra* Singers, hosted in Barcelona in 1845, could be the key. This large group of farmers and woodcutters from the highlands – all men – gave concerts in the Raval neighbourhood in Barcelona and with their freshness and originality made a significant impression on the people.

Whatever the case, Clavé started his first group in 1850, under such an illuminating name as “La Fraternidad”, which linked the choir movement to populist ideals of the time. He endowed it with a suitable ideology, focused on the wish to redeem the working class through music, an idea which had come from the revolutionary ideologists from the end of the previous century, one being the philosopher Schiller, who considered that dedication to music improved people. The history of the early years was one of rapid expansion, and after ten years it had become so important in people’s lives that its preeminence brought about rivalries.³

Clavé offered his “choir balls” (sessions of choral singing to which people could dance) in the gardens of the *Ninfa*. The City Council were afraid that this kind of movement would spread and raised all kinds of objections to it, and even encouraged an element of competition with an association founded in this first decade, the “Orfeón Barcelonés” (1853). Things became worse when Clavé was arrested in 1856 in the climate of great social disturbances started by the leaders of the more skilled workers, and the choir went through times of artistic penury. However when Clavé was released the following year, he set up his institution again under the name of *Societat Coral Euterpe* and hosted his concerts in the gardens of Euterpe, located in the central street *Passeig de Gràcia*, and later moved to the *Camps Elisis* an area which occupied about fifteen blocks of what is now the right side of the Barcelona *Eixample*, from *Passeig de Gràcia* to *Carrer de Llúria*. The consolidation of the group as a leader and organizer of musical activities and social gatherings woke a mimetic movement in the whole of Catalonia, to the point that three years later, in 1860, it was decided to set up an associative body, the *Federació Euterpense de Cors de Clavé*.

The key to the choir’s success lay both in the fact that it promoted concerts and was a gathering place for the working classes, who were attracted to the programme and to the climate of “*costellada*” (picnicking) that was created there.⁴ People went to the gardens either to have breakfast before going into the factory, or to dance, to have an afternoon snack, or leave the children to run about in the open spaces. In order to keep up the music, Clavé had an orchestral band conducted by Josep Maria Moliné which interspersed instrumental episodes, nor-

mally made up of overtures from operas his choirs knew well, with works written entirely by Clavé and which alluded to typical themes such as “*La Maquinista*” (local metallurgic factory), “*Els pescadors*” (The fishermen) or “*Les flors de maig*” (The flowers of May), in which the choir sang tunes that were both easy to sing and had a variety of expression. They also included vocalizations and other effects their listeners were fond of. To complement the activities and advertise them, in 1859 Clavé edited the first number of the review *El Eco de Euterpe*, which continued into the 20th century, in which he explained the programmes and wrote about musical and social subjects.

This amount of success again worried the authorities, to such an extent that the brothers Pere and Joan Tolosa, directors of the *Orfeón Barcelonés*, and with the support of the Barcelona City Council, started a campaign to discredit the Claverian movement by claiming – in the press of the day – that their Orpheonic movement was special and the first of its kind in the whole of Spain. To back their statements, they used the date of the founding of their organization and, more important, they exhibited the high musical training of their choir members, bringing forward certificates that showed the support of the Spanish Crown for their enterprise. Clavé accepted the challenge and in a publication of his own, *El Metrónomo*, which he started in 1863, he held a hard controversy with his adversaries.⁵ The tone, which was characteristic of the dialectics of the time, did not just defend his own viewpoints as regards the matters in dispute, it aimed at ridiculing the opponent by means of ironical comments on the texts published. This shows how important it was to decide what kind of choral singing predominated.

Apart from this dispute, which clearly benefited the Claverian movement, other organizations sprung up, demonstrating the importance of choral life. One of these was the *Societat Coral Barcino* (1865) conducted by Ramon Bartomeus. The great choral festivals organized by the Claverian movement in 1860, 1861, 1862 and 1864 were an example of its primacy. The 1862 festival (27, 28 and 29 September) had the greatest number of participants known yet, with one thousand two hundred singers on stage. In 1864 two thousand singers from fifty seven choral organizations and three hundred musicians gathered together in a musical and political demonstration. In tune with the spirit of the time, Clavé also organized several competitions; in 1863 there was one for the best composition for solo voices and the jury was made up of the most notable musicians of the time. The prize was won by Baltasar Saldoni. After Clavé’s death, two musical and literary events were still held (1876 and 1878) with the presence of other cultural personalities, an unequivocal sign of the social penetration of the movement.

An important turning point in the history of music was on the 16th of July 1862 when Clavé gave the first performance in Spain of the “*March of the Troubadors*” and the “*Pilgrims’ Chorus*” from *Tannhäuser* by Richard

Wagner, which needed the cooperation of the Liceu (Barcelona's Opera house) women's choir to give more contrast and colour to the pieces. This was a daring decision on Clavé's part as *Tannhäuser* had been booted when it was put on in the Opera in Paris, a nationalistic reaction against a German musician. Nevertheless, the situation of conflict at the time, which in 1868 led to the Six Year Revolution and to the proclamation of the First Republic of Spain, did not favour the Clavé choirs, partly because the popularity of their director brought him positions such as that of Governor of Castelló or President of the Barcelona County Council, which took him away from the leadership of the movement and generated uncertainty.

When he died in 1874 the profound mark he had made on the population became evident. Biographies and analytical studies of his works soon appeared, competing with the innumerable monuments that were erected all over Catalonia as a sign of the unanimous recognition of his work.⁶

Clavé then became a reference point for a type of choir that was to be decisive. With his disappearance the Euterpe society had many problems because of constant changes in conductors and the fragmentation of the movement, but there were also many significant moments that brought choral groups to their present state. Most choral organizations that have been set up since then, both popular and high class, have also "flown the flag" of the Claverian inheritance which has given them a historical legitimacy.

In 1887 the Claverian movement split in two: on the one part the Euterpe Association, with Aurea Rosa Clavé, his daughter and heir to the Clavé legacy, and on the other the Association of Clavé Choirs, which was the more numerous and counted among its members the Societat Coral Euterpe, founded by Clavé. This was to give rise to arguments about the inheritance, and the appearance of publications of opposite opinions, such as *La Aurora*, - the name that the official organ of the movement has at the present time - as well as certain disorientation as regards choir activity. Nevertheless the founder's influence remained powerful. It could be felt, for example, in the spirit of the founders of the main choir organization in the history of Catalonia, the Orfeó Català, when Amadeu Vives and Lluís Millet aspired to consolidate a choral group that based its activity on the musical training of its members so that they could perform the main monuments of symphonic-choral music while claiming to be Clavé's heirs.

THE ORFEÓ CATALÀ

The incentive to found the Orfeó Català came from the poor performance that the Catalan choirs gave in the choir festivals held in Barcelona during the Universal Exhibition of 1888. Coinciding with the inauguration of a monumental statue of Clavé that was first placed in the

Rambla de Catalunya and now is right at the top of Passeig de Sant Joan in November 1888, two competitions were held, one for "orpheons", who required a certain level of musical training, and another for choral societies, which followed the Claverian model. The former had only five participating choirs and was won by the Sociedad Coral de Bilbao, the Societat Coral Barcino obtaining a bronze medal. The competition for choral societies, for which it was not necessary to be able to sight read and which had a jury made up of musicians of the category of Francisco A Barbieri, Maria Obiols, Joan Goula and Antonio Peña y Goñi, was won by the Eco Coruñés, with the Societat Coral l'Àncora from Tarragona in second place and third La Taponera from Palafrugell.

In these competitions the difference between "choral society", an organization without specific musical training and to a great extent populist and the "orpheon", a choral organization with rigorous musical training, became established. In both cases, the Catalan groups had had poor results and decided to do something about it. When in 1891 Amadeu Vives and Lluís Millet decided to found a choir in the neighbourhood of La Ribera, they did not hesitate to call it "Orpheon", and with great foresight they took on the most pompous adjective possible, that of "Catalan", thereby rivaling other existing groups that made reference to geographical areas, such as the *Eco de Catalunya* or the *Orfeó Barcelonès*. The way they later developed showed how right they had been, as they became the most influential organization in the history of Catalan choir singing.

In 1891 Barcelona was in a time of great splendor and this was the base of what was called Modernism, with a powerful middle class that demanded a greater economic and political autonomy from the central powers in Madrid and the need to connect with more advanced European movements that would allow them to enjoy welfare and commercial expansion. The "Bases de Manresa" (1892) gave rise to the "Unió Catalanista" and later to the "Lliga Regionalista de Catalunya" (1901), a centre-right political movement which wielded the little regional power that the political structure of the time allowed.⁷

Millet and Vives were two people who came from a rural background, the former from Masnou and the latter from Collbató. However they soon became in tune with the modernist cultural movements and found room to spread. The members of the "Orfeó Català" came mainly from the middle class and had therefore different goals to those from the Claverian movement (with working class roots and very committed to emerging trade union movements). There were however, at that time of great activity, other choral enterprises of lesser importance such as the "Societat Coral Catalunya Nova", founded and conducted in 1895 by the master Enric Morera. A portrait of this group by the painter Santiago Rusiñol can be found in the Cau Ferrat museum in Sitges, showing the typical clothing and choir arrangement of the workers' movement.⁸

The first Orfeó Català came across certain difficulties

when they started up. They changed their headquarters often as they needed a space big enough for them to work and take in the increasing number of members. Following in the steps of Clavé the first choir was only made up of men, but the visit of the Russian National Chapel Choir conducted by Dmitri Slavianski d'Agrenev (1895) revealed the possibilities of a mixed choir with roots in their homeland and, from then on the choir was open to female and children's voices. The visit did not just serve to appreciate the vocal contrast, but also to exchange repertoire so that some popular Russian themes such as "*Kalinka*", "*The Ships of Stenka Razin*" or "*The Volga Boatmen*" became part of the library and choral repertoire of the Orfeó Català and were later incorporated into popular musical culture.

A motivated choir was then able to attain some of the goals that were to mark the Orpheon's record right from the start. The first was a successful visit to Nice, where they had their international presentation. Then their own voice training academy was set up, which improved the level of the singers' voices and, finally, the solemn presentation in public with the Barcelona premiere of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. This was arranged for the 30th March 1900 for the Lenten Concerts which the Liceu held each year at this special time in the religious calendar, when opera was not allowed. The Catalan conductor Antoni Nicolau, a person who was very close the Orfeó Català, had worked out a suggestive presentation of the symphonic works of Beethoven and had offered them one after the other, every day. At the time there was real restlessness in Barcelona to hear the *Ninth*, but the lack of a well-prepared choir made it impossible. In the end the symphony was played without the chorus.

The presentation of the Orfeó Català on the stage of the Gran Teatre del Liceu on that day was notorious for two very different reasons: firstly, because of the challenge that it meant for the choir itself and secondly, because of the political conflict that the Governor of the Province unnecessarily brought about. As he wanted to impede their expansion he removed their banner, the excuse being that they had not paid their taxes on the non-existent profits from the Music Academy. The classes were actually free of charge. When the choir threatened not to turn up at the Liceu – the seat of the most conservative middle class – without their banner, the authorities decided to turn things back to their natural state and the concert was held without any problem.

Right from the start the Orfeó Català was of a conservative Catalan orientation – the patriotic essence, the ideals of the *Lliga*, defending an all-embracing nationalism which comprised militant Catholicism, following in the steps of the Bishop Torras i Bages. This brought with it some notorious enmities, especially from those who did not agree with such ideals, for example Enric Morera, a defender of more left-wing ideas. However Millet's stance was accompanied by constant success.⁹

Lluís Millet was a young musician with enormous en-

thusiasm which he never lost in all his musical career. He came from a family that had emigrated from Gasconia two centuries before and had settled in the Maresme. His father worked in the merchant navy and from the family arose two branches that they themselves described as "the musicians" and "the businessmen". Lluís Millet (1867-1941) was born in Masnou but soon after the family moved to Barcelona, where the conductor to be studied in the Liceu Conservatory under Miquel Font and Josep Rodereda, as well as having contact with Felip Pedrell, Carles G. Vidiella and the folklore specialist Sebastià Farnés. He worked as a shop assistant in the Can Guàrdia music store and later in the shop belonging to Conrad Ferrer, Clavé's son-in-law, where he was always in touch with the world of music, especially the world of choirs, which he knew well and loved even more.

He began his career as a performer by playing the piano in the famous Café Inglés and Café Pelayo, where he knew the musicians and artists who went there. As well as founding the Orfeó Català, he created and conducted the Sant Felip Neri Choir (1896) and was chapel master of the Mare de Déu de la Mercè church (1906). These experiences consolidated his ideals as defender of the liturgical reform instigated by Pope Pius X and instituted in 1903. In fact he became one of its main defenders. This Cecilianist leaning also determined his general orientation in music with the Orfeó Català, his connection with the Schola Cantorum in Paris, with religious musicians such as Domènec Mas i Serracant and with the successive musical congresses on sacred music. As a creator he was a man of the church as, apart from his well-known "*El cant de la senyera*" (Song of the Flag), with lyrics by Maragall, - established as the anthem of the Orfeó Català- he was the author of very popular religious music such as the "*Prayer to the Virgin of Remei*" and the famous "*Via Crucis*" which was sung by all Catalan Catholics until quite recently. Lluís Millet and Millet, his son, and Luis Millet i Loras, his grandson succeeded him at the head of the institution. Relations of his, such as Félix Millet i Maristany and his son Fèlix Millet i Tusell, directed the institution and later the Palau de la Música Foundation.

Amadeu Vives (1871-1932) helped to encourage the early years of the Orfeó Català, although his theatre projects moved him away from actual management. Throughout his life, however, he always maintained a close link to the organization. Vives first worked for the stage and wrote works such as *Les Monges de Sant Aimant* (1895) and *Euda d'Uriach* (1900). He then moved to Madrid and became one of the most prestigious composers of Zarzuela of his time, with works such as *Bohemios* (1904), *Maruxa* (1915) or *Doña Francisquita* (1923).

MAIN GOALS OF THE ORFEÓ CATALÀ

With the encouragement and support of the Catalan middle class, Millet and the board of directors, with his broth-

er Joan Millet acting as chairman, and afterwards Joaquim Cabot, set up various enterprises that were particular to the Catalan choral movement. In the first place, the "*Revista Musical Catalana*" – a name that matched the nationalistic spirit representative of all the country, as well as of the choir– continued with the task carried out by other earlier musical journals, such as *El Eco de Euterpe*, *La Gaceta Musical de Barcelona* or *La España Musical*, to name only three of the most important. In 1904 the management of the Orfeó Català launched it with the sub-heading *Butlletí de l'Orfeó Català*, with aspirations that history was later to recognize as being correct: "A commentary on our songs, a study of the types of music we are dedicated to, their history, their form; the voice that awakens: the love of music and musical bibliography that can help us to become aware of what truly Catalan music should really be like", said Lluís Millet in the editorial of the first number, "Why?" The journal, during its first thirty-two years of life before the Civil War and in those that have followed after it was brought back in 1984, shows an exceptional journalistic stability that gives it decisive importance in the field of criticism, in information and in the creation of musical thought of the first order. Each period corresponded to an aesthetic orientation and a journalistic profile that at the present time is of enormous interest if we wish to understand the history of Catalan music in the 20th century.

In the early years the *Revista Musical Catalana* was more than anything the spokesman of the Orfeó Català and therefore gave information on its activities and projects. The most ambitious of these was without doubt the Palau de la Música Catalana. There was a team of experts made up at the beginning by Frederic Lliurat, Vincenç M de Gilbert, Joan Llongueras, Joan Salvat and Francesc Pujol, who gave the publication its characteristic stamp. Into its pages went the whole process of how the building of the Palau de la Música Catalana was started, the solemn act of placing the first stone and in number 50 of the journal, corresponding to the first fortnight in February, there was a fully-illustrated special edition for the inauguration of the building. Thanks to written reports and photographs, the event that made the Orfeó Català a musical entity of the first order can be relived, as much as the distance of a century allows.

Constancy, national and international exchanges (with Paris, London, Washington, Moscow and Berlin) set up by the people in charge, a variety of content and the accurate information given helped to increase public interest in Catalan musical life, both nationally and internationally. The series of articles by Felip Pedrell on "*Old musicians of the land*" made people aware of authors who are now very much appreciated in the sphere of concert going. Some of these were Pere Alberch Vila, Joan Carles Amat, Joan Brudieu, the brothers Fletxa, Joan Pau Pujol, Nicasi Zorita, Joan Marti, Joan Cabanillas, Francesc Valls, Antoni Martin i Coll, Antoni Soler, Pere Rabassa and Domenec Terradellas. Internationally famous names of the

time such as Albert Schweitzer, a promoter of J.S.Bach; Wanda Landowska, who promoted interest in the clavicord; Maur Sablayrolles, a researcher into Gregorian chant, Arthur Schindler, a prestigious musicologist; Blanca Selva, a French pianist who played Beethoven's piano sonatas; Joaquin Rodrigo, a composer from Sagunto, or Miquel Llobet, a prestigious guitarist, helped to accentuate the international standard of the journal.¹⁰

Secondly, the Orfeó Català started up musical events called "Festes de la Música Catalana" in which prizes were given to different types of musical composition. These events had a great following in different circles of the city and were later imitated by other institutions. These Festivals were held on nine occasions (1904, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1911, 1914, 1917, 1920 and 1922), and through them it became evident that the Orfeó Català was becoming the potential backbone, both for those who received the prizes and the institutions that promoted them.

Thirdly, the Orfeó Català built the first auditorium of Spain, the Palau de la Música Catalana, headquarters of the Organization and a centre for concerts of increasing interest and scope. It was inaugurated on 9th February 1908 and is a jewel of Modernist architecture and sculpture. A group sculpture by Eusebi Arnau called *El cant popular*, located on the corner of the two facades, exalts choral singing. Musical festivities are portrayed in a mosaic by Lluís Bru situated at the end of the main facade and busts of the most important musicians, Palestrina, Bach, Beethoven and Wagner, are also on the facades. The inside of the building is magnificently decorated. For example in the concert hall there are two sculpture groups which show the sensitivity of the period: on one side, to the left of the entrance to the stage is the group *Les flors de maig* (The flowers of May), which represents this famous song by Clavé, surrounding a bust of the composer himself, and to the right, in front of him, is a group representing classical music, a bust of Beethoven that links up with the cloud of inspiration together with a group of Valkyrie in full cavalcade. The Palau de la Música Catalana made a decisive contribution to the formation of a specific musical taste in Catalan society, making concert goers familiar with the great repertoire and orienting musical sensitivity towards an august concept of concert music that to some extent has been basic in the definition of Catalan music in the 20th century.

THE ASSOCIATION OF ORPHEONS IN CATALONIA

With all this background, the Orfeó Català consolidated its role as the central pillar of Catalan music. They organized a gathering of the Catalan "orpheons" in 1916 to commemorate their 25th anniversary. It was then that the idea arose of creating a federation of choirs under the pompous name of "Germanor d'Orfeons de Catalunya" presided by Millet and run by Joan Balcells, Joan Llongueras, Joaquim Pecanins, Francesc Pujol and Francesc

de P. Baldelló. Their aim was to hold group events through regional gatherings and plenary committee meetings and encourage the spread and dedication to Catalan choir music. The success of this came both from the sponsorship of the Orfeó Català and the great number of institutions from all the counties in Catalonia that wanted to take part in it and join forces in order to achieve the desired objectives. Some weeks later a *Festa de Germanor* was held in the town of Sant Feliu de Torelló organized by two choirs, the Orfeó Vigatà and the Orfeó Cirvianum, but the real starting point on a grand scale was on June 23rd and 24th, 1918, during the *Assemblea de la Germanor* held in the hall of Manresa which had hosted the *Bases de Manresa*, when Millet, Pujol and Llongueras gave speeches aimed at encouraging the artistic, economic and social life of choir institutions. This first meeting was preceded by a *Festa de Germanor* of the Orpheons of the Bages County, where the *Cant de la Senyera* (Hymn of the flag) by Millet became established as the hymn of the Association. Members were also encouraged to make musical training compulsory in order to improve the quality of the singers' performance.

The second assembly took place in Vic in 1920 with the support of seventy-six choir institutions, and again the Cecilian leaning of the Orfeó Català was evident as it was agreed to accept the church pronunciation of Latin instead of the classic pronunciation which was becoming prevalent in more cultured circles. The third and last "Assemblea de la Germanor" took place in 1931 in Manresa, once life had settled down again after the proclamation of the Republic. A total of fifty organizations were present as well as about fifteen supporting bodies. A year before, in 1930, the most solemn act of *Germanor* had taken place in the Barcelona Olympic Stadium, although there was certain tension between political powers and the representatives of the "Germanor", who already had quite considerable power. Between meetings the life of the Germanor was made up of regional gatherings that, under the name of "Festes de Germanor" were held in Manresa (1918), Vic (1921), Figueres (1922), Reus (1923), Manresa (1931), Tàrrrega (1932) and Terrassa (1933), or other solemn occasions such as the blessing of banners. The Orfeó Català practically disappeared when the Civil War broke out, due to its obvious Catholic leaning; while during the years of the Republic its presence had been very much felt in public life.

ORPHEONIC MOVEMENT AND CLAVERIAN MOVEMENT

Choral singing had spread all over Catalonia. Some regions had just one Association, such as the Baix Ebre (Orfeó Tortosí), the Garrotxa (Orfeó Popular Olotí) or the Pallars Jussà (Orfeó La Lira de Tremp). Some areas were very well represented, such as the City of Barcelona, which had more than thirty federated choirs. The federated As-

sociations preferred the name "Orpheó" (choral society) plus the geographic name, or other names such as "Schola cantorum", "Choir school", or "Orpheonic school" to show that there was a pedagogic aim, whether of a religious nature or not. Most choir Associations set up in the first thirty years of the 20th century followed the spirit of the choral society, whereas those that were founded in the second half of the previous century followed the Clavé tradition.

The Orfeó Gracienc was one of the most significant associations and was conducted for many years by Joan Balcells (Barcelona, 1882-1972), a disciple of Antoni Nicolau and Eusebi Daniel, a professor of the Barcelona Municipal School of Music and choir master in the Sant Felip Neri church from 1912, under whose sponsorship arose the "Associació Íntima de Concerts" in 1920. They maintained a dedication to an extremely rich and complex repertoire such as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Liszt's *Faust Symphony*, Haydn's *Creation*, *The Damnation of Faust* by Berlioz, Kodály's *Psalmus Hungaricus*, Schumann's *Mansfred*, etc., and carried out meticulous work worthy of a great organization, in making Catalan music popular by cooperating with other Associations to make the symphonic-choral repertoire possible. In 1917 they began to organize their own musical festivals, the so-called Festivals of Poetry and Music, on the same lines as those organized by the Orfeó Català and with the aim of encouraging musical creativity, especially for choirs or for voice and accompaniment. These were held on three occasions (1917, 1920 and 1923).

It would take too long to describe all the ups and downs of choral life during these enthusiastic years. With Millet and the Orfeó Català as patrons, choir singing was one of the most obvious signs of collective identity. There were constant exchanges which meant that the singers were not just brought together, but there was a kind of healthy rivalry which improved the singing. Also members and singers became identified with the ideals of the association, which were at the same time shared by most Catalan institutions and it was a good catalyst of pro-Catalan and Christian feeling, as well as being an excellent musical education in those years. As well as the traditional concerts in which the massed choir offered a repertoire made up of traditional songs and some new items by Catalan composers or their close contemporaries, there were sessions of chamber music, preferably with solo singers or instruments and piano, such as the "Hours of Art" by the Orfeó de Manresa or the "Sessions of Art" by the Choral School of Terrassa, or solemn concerts such as the one given in the Palau de la Música Catalana by the Orfeó Nova Tàrrrega, with Bach's *Magnificat*, conducted by the Maestro Güell to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the foundation. They were also present in solemn acts in their own towns.

Besides this intense choral activity, the Claverian movement offered a less nationalistic and much less Christian approach than the federated choirs, being aimed at differ-

ent population groups, basically the lower social classes. They were not the only association to do this however. The founding text of the Cantors de l'Obrera Association, a choral group depending on the Associació Obrera de Concerts (1926), founded in 1935 and with Manuel Borguñó as conductor, makes essential reading. (This group did not come to anything because of political reasons). This text is a sum of the ideals of the "orpheons" and choral societies and echoes the Claverian workers' ideals, while boosting interest in collective singing. The objective was to enable the singers to perform the great choral repertory, with the aid of the Orchestral Institute of the Associació Obrera de Concerts, and make it popular among the working classes. The fundamental aim of the Claverian institutions was to spread the Claverian ideal through singing and contact between choirs. Their main activity was to have choir exchanges, move from town to town and travel abroad as a federation.

Because of this pastoral spirit, besides the travels of each choir on its own, the group was able to visit Valencia, San Sebastian, Pamplona, Lyons, Paris (on two occasions), Geneva, Mahon, Madrid, Zaragoza, and Nice, etc. On their travels they were always received by the authorities and singing began after fiery speeches. In Paris, for example, they visited the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and were received by Marshall Joffre. Lacking an intense musical activity – their aim being to repeat again and again the Claverian repertoire, with some small modifications introduced when they sang some works by Enric Morera who was their artistic director for a few years, the social vitality of the Claverian groups was more of a cultural nature; nevertheless, and to give a lie to the myth that they were musically ignorant, especially when compared with the "Orpheons de la Germanor", in 1908 a school of music was set up in the headquarters of the Asociación Euterpense, originally called Institución Horaciana de Cultura, created by Valentí Martínez and conducted for many years by Josep Voltas i Viñas.

In these choir gatherings the whole family took part. They were social events with lots of singing and good food. There were also visits to local places of interest. Thus the idea of being an association had more importance than the musical activities as such. Their stance as working class, republican and non-religious, as well as decidedly apolitical, separated them from the Christian and profoundly nationalistic position of the Orfeó Català and their colleagues. The cultural level in which the Claverian movement developed was that of the Spanish-speaking members of society as they did not have the means to learn Catalan and so they could not appreciate it. Apart from Clavé, they looked to Pep Ventura, Apel·les Mestres, Enric Morera, Josep Roca i Roca, Conrad Roure and Josep Aladern (who conducted *La Aurora* until his death) amongst others. The texts of the bulletins were to begin with in Spanish and later, in the time of the Republic, in Catalan, as society began to change and with it the choir members.

The number and character of institutions who kept names that were characteristic of the utopian language of the 19th century such as "lyre", "violet", "dawn", "union", and also names that referred to Republican mysticism, show that the popularity and spirit created by Clavé half a century before was still valid, totally apart from the activities of the Germanor d'Orfeons. Going through the literature that they periodically brought out, the personality cult of Clavé is evident. It abounds in spontaneous poems, articles of praise and constant celebrations around the figure of the founder. The great sense of collectivism shown by the Claverian societies encouraged numerous activities and made it firmly rooted in the society of the time; however, paradoxically, this prevented the creation of a single federating body in the way that the "orpheons" had managed. On one hand there existed *l'Associació Euterpense dels Cors de Clavé* and on the other the *Federació de Cors Clavé* and thirdly, the *Unió de Societats Corals de Clavé*. Of the three, the most lasting and most modern in its outlook was the first, which in 1935 tried to join them all together by changing the name of the bulletin, from *La Aurora Claveriana* to *Butlletí de la Federació Euterpense de Cors i Orfeons de Clavé*.¹¹

The federative bodies tried to make a joint effort to organize collective events. Their trade union character was noticeable in their frequent activities for charity or "Caixa de Resistència", such as a concert held in May 1902 for the benefit of workers arrested in strikes or the festival of 1914 in aid of those wounded in the war in Morocco, and its nature based on assemblies was clear in the annual celebration of assemblies for all the associated, with the presence of representatives from the whole country. During these meetings the management team was chosen and the problems of the federation were discussed.

Not everything was limited to social activities; there were also significant musical events, such as the choral competition started in 1902, with Joan Coula, Antoni Nicolau, Celestí Sadurní and Càndid Candi on the jury; in 1915 a festival for all the groups was held in Montjuïc and they took part in the Exhibition on Electrical Industries at the request of the organizers, which they repeated in 1921. In 1916 they managed to persuade the Barcelona City council to change the name of the street where Clavé had been born from carrer Ample to Josep Anselm Clavé. This was celebrated with a magnificent festival with the participation of more than one hundred choirs that sang following the order of their antiquity, in which personalities from the choral world took part, including Lluís Millet. A Literary Musical Competition was also organized and prizes were awarded for the best study on the figure of Clavé, the best poem praising the founder and the best music on the text of "*Gloria a España*" by Apel·les Mestres, (won by Sancho Marraco). A similar vitality was shown in 1924, the centenary of Clavé's birth, with a series of celebrations throughout the year and a big festival in February with the typical ritual of choral associations.

During the years of the Second Republic, the Clavé

choirs became extremely politically involved associations. Catalan became the official language of their institutions and they expanded significantly. In 1934 they followed the fashion of organizing congresses – in a city that began to be of some significance in this field because of the installations the International Exhibition of 1929 had left ready for use – with the First Congress of Choral Associations attached to the *Assemblea Euterpense*. This event, held at the end of June, 1935, was an example of anarchist faith taken to the extreme, as there were no prepared speeches so that the plenary session had to decide on the subject matter to be debated.

Although their activity was intense enough to not interfere in the life of the “orpeons” and the orientation of the “Germanor” movement and the Claverian one were very different, a study comparing the activities of the organizations shows that some of their initiatives were to a point mimicked. The Claverian way of association sowed the seed for the Germanor d’Orfeons and interest in having their own headquarters evoked the situation of the Orfeó Català or the Orfeó Gracienc, who already had one. All in all, choral societies and “orpeons” have a similar musical and social leaning.

The postwar years

The result of the Civil War was adverse for the life of choirs in the sense that their nationalistic character was annulled and their vitality and capacity for organizing social gatherings was suppressed. During the early post war years the main choral groups either dissolved or went into hibernation. The Orfeó Català, after the death of Master Millet in 1941, was forced to give up its name and had to call itself “the orpheon conducted by Master Millet”, referring to the new conductor, Lluís M. Millet i Millet, the founder’s son. The Clavé choirs were strangely allowed to keep up all their social ritual because they had no nationalistic links and because the Franco régime wished to ingratiate itself with the working class through choral entertainment.

In this situation new groups were formed which in later years were to consolidate the great choral life that has developed in the last fifty years: the *Capella Clàssica Polifònica* (1940), part of the *Foment de les Arts Decoratives* and conducted by Enric Ribó; the Orfeó *Laudate* (1942), conducted by Angel Colomer i del Romero; the *Coral Sant Jordi* (1947), founded discreetly by Oriol Martorell and a group of enthusiasts and which was to become one of the great choral referents of the second half of the 20th century, also administratively linked to the *Cercle Artistic de Sant Lluç*; the *Cor Madrigal* (1951), founded and conducted by Manuel Cabero; the *Coral Antics Escolans de Montserrat* (1948), conducted by Leo Massó, the Orfeó *Lleidatà*, renewed in 1953 under the management of Lluís Virgili; the *Coral Cantiga* (1961), conducted by Pep Prats; the *Coral Càrmina* (1972), conducted by Jordi Casas and in later years entities of great prestige such as the *Cor de Cambra* of the *Palau de la Música Catalana*, conducted by

Jordi Casas since 1990; the *Lieder Càmera* choir, conducted by Pep Vila, and many others.

The choir movement was to slowly recover. The fiftieth anniversary of the Orfeó Català (1941) could not be celebrated because it was too close to the end of the war, but the anniversary of the *Palau de la Música Catalana* was celebrated in 1958 as was the 75th anniversary of the choir (1966). Furthermore, the festivity of the enthronement of the Virgin of Montserrat (1947), the gathering of Orpheons at Montserrat (1951) for the fiftieth anniversary of the Orfeó de Sants, and the concert of a thousand voices, conducted by Pérez Moya for the International Eucharistic Congress (1952) or the homage to Pérez Moya (1959) permitted a glimpse into a reconstruction of the pre-war choral fabric. The natural evolution of taste together with the greater facilities to travel favoured the creation of new links and new repertoires. The choirs linked up with the group *À Coeur Joie*, founded by César Geoffray, in which Oriol Martorell played a role of great responsibility and took part in the creation of the European Federation of Young Choirs “*Europa Cantat*” (1975).

Oriol Martorell (1927-1996) was one of the main leaders in this renewal, being director of the *Coral Sant Jordi*, which over many years became the best trained and most committed group form on the Catalan choir scene. Son of the pedagogue Artur Martorell, Oriol Martorell, a professor at the University of Barcelona, socialist MP in the Parliament of Catalonia and a man of proved managerial capacity, welded together the choral movement, grouping choirs together on many occasions to provide the ideal performance for the great symphonic-choral repertoire. Under the guidance of Martorell, Colomer, Ribó, Cabero, Massó, Prats or Casas, the choral movement encouraged a cultural, associative and, naturally, a musical life. They became familiar with the great repertoires, combining efforts when necessary, and worked on the traditional Catalan choral repertoire, which was then very rich precisely due to the vitality of the movement. A special effort was made with international choral repertoire, with a preference for the Renaissance period and the 20th century, thereby opening up to their public an awareness of new, contemporary pieces. The traditional repertoire was becoming popular among certain areas of the population thanks to two complementary initiatives, choral life and the scout movement,¹² which brought young people together and kept up a very high standard of national and cultural ideals.¹³

SOC and FEPEC

One way of revitalizing the movement was the creation of supra-choral bodies which coordinated different choirs and offered them artistic and administrative support in order to encourage their activities. In 1959 Fèlix Millet i Maristany, the then president of the Orfeó Català, called a meeting of choir conductors in Montserrat which led to the creation of the *Secretariat d’Orfeons de Catalunya*

(SOC) in 1960. This gave rise to the *Revista dels Orfeons de Catalunya* (1964), which was the organ of renovation of the movement and from which came enterprises such as the Setmana Cantant de Barcelona, the International Courses for the Teaching of Choir Conducting by the Orfeó Lleidatà, the International Day of Choir Singing, the Aplec (gathering) Santa Cecília and others.

When democracy returned to the country, choirs were able to fully develop their activities once more. One of the most significant steps was the creation of the Federació Catalana d'Entitats Corals (FEPEC) in 1980, presided by Oriol Martorell, who not long afterwards, in 1984, held a gathering to celebrate the centenary of the conductor of the Orfeó de Sants, Antoni Pérez Moya. It was not difficult for this new organization to join the International Federation of Choral Music, set up in Namur in 1982, becoming part of the managing board.

This outwards movement also materialized in the setting up of the Confederación Coral Española (COACE). From that time on, federated choir activity has been continuous. In 2003 the FEPEC organized the Fifteenth Europa Cantat in Barcelona and at the present time there are 450 federated groups and almost twenty thousand singers.

OTHER FEDERATED INSTITUTIONS

In the sixties and seventies, the main choral institutions developed musical training activities for children as there was hardly any music in the schools. The importance of these Saturday sessions for different age groups and especially of the collective gatherings of many of the children's sections of the parent choirs was such that a Secretariat for Children's Choirs was set up in 1968 at a choir gathering in Manresa. The Secretariat de Corals Infants de Catalunya (SCIC) had various functions. It published a *Circular*, which was the organ of communication between the various bodies and encouraged collective gatherings with common repertoires so that choir exchanges could take place, to such an extent that, beyond a merely musical activity, these exchanges have become a meeting point with common cultural and political aims focused on the promotion of Catalan culture.

In order to bring children closer to great music, some composers wrote music specifically for these gatherings. This is the case of Frederic Mompou's *L'ocell daurat*, written for the SCIC in 1966. Others are *En Pere sense por* by Ernest Cervera and Núria Albó, *Tirant lo Blanc* by Antoni Ros Marbà and Núria Albó; *El bruel de l'estany* by Enric Ribó and M. Àngels Anglada, *Concert desconcertant* by Antoni Ros Marbà and Miquel Desclot, *Cantijoc* by Josep Pons and Ricard Creus, *El timbaler del Bruc* by Manuel Oltra and Núria Albó, and *Transatlàntida* by Baltasar Bibiloni and Miquel Desclot.

In a similar way the Corals Joves de Catalunya (Youth Choirs of Catalonia) were created. They provided for the junior branch of choral singing which required a different

kind of attention than for children and adults. The idea came from a musical workshop in Banyamars in 1970 and was formally constituted after the Grups Intermedis de Catalunya (GIC) had been created in 1986. A repertoire suitable for this age group was built up and this allowed them to give some notable concerts, such as the first performance of the work specially composed for them by Jordi Domingo Mombiola in 1989, *La Primavera*, the performance of Schubert's *Mass in C Minor*, with the Youth Orchestra of the Joventuts Musicals de Catalunya, conducted by Francesc Llongueras in 1994, the first performance of the work *Fills del segle* by Albert Guinovart and Miquel Desclot in 1994 and *Carmina Burana* by Orff, conducted by Pierre Cao, with six hundred singers and the Orquestra Sinfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya (OBC), in the year 2000.

A less intense but nonetheless interesting movement is that of children's and young people's groups orientated towards liturgical singing. This also gave rise to the Federació Catalana de Pueri Cantores, linked to an international movement founded in Paris in 1921. The person who started this in Catalonia was the Piarist Josep Vidal i Bachs (1961) in the Choir School of the Mare de Déu de la Pietat in Igualada. The movement spread and eventually was constituted as a Catalan Federation in 1991, with Josep M. Torrents as President. The most important of these choir schools is without doubt the Escolania de Montserrat, an emblem of Catalan religious choir singing throughout the world, and conducted in later years by Ireneu Segarra. Its basic principles are the encouragement of education in Christian values through religious, popular, classical or modern singing and by taking part in liturgical celebrations and other events of a cultural nature. In this country these premises have a Catalan dimension, with service to parishes and the encouragement to perform religious works by Catalan composers. The Federació Catalana de Pueri Cantores has been recognized since 1992 as being a full member of the International Federation, in spite of the fact that most of them belong to the State structure.

Finally, the desire to unify the whole Catalan choral movement, incorporating not just choirs coming from the old Germanor de Cors de Catalunya, but also from the Claverian federations, gave rise to the creation of the Moviment Coral Català. The background of this movement was the Aplec Catalunya Canta (1992) with 7,500 singers performing, and a second gathering in 1995 on the occasion of the 2nd Congress of Popular and Traditional Catalan Culture in Manresa, which gave rise the same year to a movement which brought together 25,000 singers, reflecting the importance of choral activity in Catalonia. Its first activity was the next year an homage to Oriol Martorell who had died short before. Priority has been given to encouraging exchanges between federated members and making people aware of choral music in this country, as well as the programme of activities for the Jornades Europees del Patrimoni.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief review of Catalan choral life from 1850 to the present day shows the central nature of choral life in Catalan musical history. The Catalan people, who are musical and have a great sense of collectivity, have become strongly identified with the choral phenomenon, both because it encourages a participative musical life and because through singing they felt they were taking part in the construction of the country, in their own musical education and in that of their children, and that it linked them to international musical culture. Music and a social sense are the two keys to the vigor that Catalan choral life has shown for over a hundred and fifty years, with a perspective of consolidation and enlargement which will give even more substance to these ideals.

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- [2] The basic work for detailed knowledge of the history of choral singing in Catalunya is: Pere ARTÍS I BENACH. *El cant coral a Catalunya (1891-1979)*. Barcino, Barcelona 1980.
- [3] For detailed information on the Claverian activities consult J. CARBONELL I GUBERNA. *Josep Anselm Clavé i el naixement del cant coral a Catalunya (1850-1874)*. Galerada, Cabrera de Mar 2000.
- [4] To complement the panorama of social life in those times, consult – X. FÀBREGAS. *Les formes de diversió en la societat catalana romàntica*. Curial, Barcelona 1975.
- [5] Torres Mulas (1982) has studied the controversy in detail, which also appears in other publications about choral singing during that period.
- [6] No other Catalan composer has had so many monographies written about him as Clavé, although most of them are in a hagiographical style typical of 19th century historical literature See: C. BARALLAT. "El poeta Anselm Clavé. Records de 1858 a 1864". *La Renaixença*, num. 6-10, Barcelona 1874; J. BUXÓ DE ABAIGAR. "José Anselmo Clavé. Su vida y su obra". In: *Discursos*. Publicacions de la Secció de Premsa de la Diputació Provincial de Barcelona, Barcelona 1956; T. CABALLÉ I CLOS. *José Anselmo Clavé y su tiempo*. Freixinet, Barcelona 1949; C. CAPDEVILA. "Josep Anselm Clavé". *Revista de Catalunya*, 4, Barcelona 1924; A. CAPMANY. "José Anselmo Clavé, cantor de Cataluña". *Programa del 75 aniversari de la Societat Coral La Floresta de la Bordeta*, Barcelona 1953; "Centenari de Josep Anselm Clavé". *Revista Musical Catalana*, 247, Barcelona 1924; "Clavé d'avui estant". *Serra d'Or*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 183, Barcelona 1974; D. GUANSÉ. *Josep Anselm Clavé, apòstol, agitador i artista*. Quaderns de Cultura. Bruguera, Barcelona 1966; "José Anselmo Clavé (1824-1874) en el centenario de su muerte". *La Vanguardia*, Barcelona 22nd February 1974; J. LLEONARD. *Josep Anselm Clavé*. Barcelona 1937; O. MARTORELL "De Clavé a Millet", *Destino*, 1673, Barcelona 1969; A. MESTRES. *Clavé, sa vida i ses obres*. Establiment Tipogràfic d'Espasa Germans i Salvat, Barcelona 1876; J. M. POBLET. *Josep Anselm Clavé i la seva època (1824-1874)*. Dopesa, Barcelona 1973; J. ROCA I ROCA. "José Anselmo Clavé". *Boletín del Ateneo Barcelonés*, 9, Barcelona 1881; J. RODOREDÀ. *Clavé y su obra*. Imprenta y Litografía de José Cunill y Sola, Barcelona 1897; J. SUBIRÀ. *El músico-poeta Clavé*. Imprenta Alrededor del Mundo, Madrid 1924; E. VIDAL I DE VALENCIANO, J. ROCA I ROCA. "José Anselmo Clavé". *El Eco de Euterpe*. Barcelona 1874, p. 408 ff.
- [7] For the complete musical life of this period, see X. AVIÑOÀ. *La música i el Modernisme.*, Curial, Biblioteca de Cultura Catalana, 58, Barcelona 1985.
- [8] Enric Morera is a musician of great importance in Catalan musical life. See: Ignasi IGLÉSÍAS. *Enric Morera, estudi biogràfic*. A. Artis impressor, Barcelona 1921; J. PENA. *Enric Morera. Assaig biogràfic*. Institució del Teatre, Barcelona 1937; R. PLANES. *El mestre Morera i el seu món*. Pòrtic, Barcelona 1972; M. SAPERAS. *El mestre Enric Morera*. Andorra, Barcelona 1969.
- [9] See: Pere ARTÍS, Lluís MILLET I LORAS. *Orfeó Català. Llibre del Centenari, 1891-1991*. Barcino, Barcelona 1991; I. M. ROIG I RUSICH. *Història de l'Orfeó Català, Moments cabdals del seu passat*. Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, Barcelona 1993; Manoli NARVÁEZ FERRI. "Orfeó Català: cant coral i catalanisme". In: *Pensament polític als Països Catalans, 1714-2014*. Pòrtic, Barcelona 2007.
- [10] See: "Revista Musical Catalana, primera època". In: *Revista Musical Catalana* (1993), pp. 83-98, and "Revista Musical Catalana, Centenari de la primera època i vint anys de la segona". In: *Revista Musical Catalana* (2004), pp. 27-37.
- [11] On the history of Claverian entities, as well as the magazine *La Aurora-Federació de Cors de Clavé*, which is still going strong, the following can be consulted: Jaume CARBONELL. *La Societat Coral Euterpe*. Rúbica, Barcelona 2008.
- [12] Encouraged by Father Batlle, this movement, which followed the guidelines of the International Boy Scout movement founded by Baden Powell in Great Britain, brought together numerous groups of boys and girls in different age groups, who carried out a series of activities, some just being for play and others for training and learning, such as singing. The singing was often done on outings to the country-

side and the mountains, where certain activities were not so controlled by the authorities in Franco's time.

[13] As well as the book by Pere Artís on choral singing in Catalonia, there are published monographic

works on the activity of these choral organizations showing the background, programmes and analysis of how they have evolved.

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