

Voices Of Harmony



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Selected photography by Jessie Palanca
Additional images courtesy of Ajay Aloni

The **Doha Youth Choir** treated **QH** to a spine-tingling performance as they prepare for their first international concert. **Choir Director Alena Pyne** talked with us about Qatar's first professional youth choir, and we also chatted with some of the students.

QH: Alena how did the idea for the Doha Youth Choir begin?

AP: I'm passionate about musical education. I grew up singing in choirs and have studied music long and hard; when we moved to Doha I couldn't see a good choir that my own children could experience so I started [the] Doha Youth Choir in 2013. I've enjoyed really wonderful support from people here in Qatar including choir parent Maralyn, and fellow teacher Katrin who is leading the junior choir.

There are currently 37 students representing 14 nationalities in the Doha Youth Choir. Our ideal is 40 students because the bigger it gets the more difficult it is to control the quality of sound – and that has to be our aim at all times.

QH: How can students join?

AP: We want kids to join this choir who have a genuine love for singing. I would ask anybody who is interested in joining: Can they sing in-tune? Do they really enjoy singing? Why do they like singing?

There is talent everywhere; it's just a matter of spotting it and encouraging it. There is a three-pronged approach. There is the singer and his or her commitment; there is my commitment, preparation and teaching; and then there are the parents at home who I really expect to support the kids, and help them practice. We don't sing just in English, we sing in French, we sing in Finnish... the repertoire that we are singing is getting more and more difficult and so it's harder to have the motivation at home to sit and actually do the rehearsal and practice the songs.

QH: You have a mix of youth from different backgrounds in the choir. How do you keep it harmonious and friendly?

AP: I was very keen that they get along socially, so we put on events for them to come together – whether it's a picnic or bowling. New members have a buddy who shows them where we are in the music, introduces them around and involves them in break time. Choir is all about the collective and so this is all critical for maintaining the spirit of choir.

QH: And there are some fantastic opportunities for the students...

AP: Yes, in a few weeks we'll be performing in our first international concerts with the Madchenchor Choir in Berlin and Hamburg. I want to ignite them with the desire to sing better, and at the moment we have three rehearsal sessions a week to prepare for the concerts. You can imagine many of the students haven't been to Europe and it's just incredible for them... and thanks to our sponsors everybody's coming!

Without the parent and community support this wouldn't have been possible. I just think this



Children from the Doha Youth Choir will be performing in Germany for the first time this month



Choir Director Elena Pyne works on a composition with fellow choir leaders



choir generates goodwill. The Doha Singers, the orchestra... all these communities have embraced us and have encouraged us – it's that kind of warmth we meet everywhere.

This choir is a legacy for Doha and we're keen to establish it as a legal entity so that what we are doing now isn't lost. It brings out the best of co-operation from the broader community and kids step into the magic of music. That's a good thing and should be supported so that the legacy of choral singing continues for all.

Michelle: *"I used to sing every time I feel sad because it's my best thing to do when I'm sad. I like choir because we have the opportunity to sing better and someone can teach us better like Miss Alena."*

Monica (Choir Leader): *"In the first year I joined this choir... it was different nationalities coming together into a room that all had the same passion for singing, singing different songs from all over the world."*

What The Kids Have To Say!

Evan: *"Choir has contributed massively to my confidence and gives everybody such an amazing opportunity to sing and be with each other. It doesn't matter if I'm in Qatar or South America or Japan, everybody sings. Some of our songs are very difficult, and they take a lot of time and effort and it all comes down to repetition and concentrating on the fine details".*

The Doha Youth Choir is a community choir open to children ages 11 to 18 years-old, while the Doha Junior Choir is open to 7 to 10 year-olds. Both choirs will hold a joint concert on March 19 at the International German School Doha. Tickets cost QR 50 for adults and QR 30 for students.

For more information about the choirs and their concerts check their Facebook page or email info@dohayouthchoir.com.

