



SHIP OF SONGS
S.O.S
THE VIENNA BOYS' CHOIR



SHIP OF SONGS - The Film

directed by Curt Faudon

The Pitch

They are over 500 years old, yet they are children. They have sung to kings, queens, chiefs, and emperors. In the last century alone, they have performed live for over 30 million people around the globe. Wherever they go in their trademark sailor suits, they delight their audience: The Vienna Boys Choir.

The world's best-loved choir has more than 500 years of experience in the education of outstanding, confident young men. Music and singing in particular are the backbone of its curriculum. Mankind needs music – it is the language of emotion, understood everywhere. We need music to connect, to survive, to live. We need to sing.

In 2017, the world is shifting; nothing is guaranteed anymore, or safe. Climate change has sparked a series of environmental disasters, and man has had more than a hand in this – we have a lot to answer for. People are scared by possible horror scenarios. To deal with these challenges, the globetrotting choir has decided to take its classroom to the High Seas and embarks on its most ambitious expedition yet: Ship of Songs.

The ship is a square rigger, both a teaching vessel, and a kind of ark. The boys have a mission: to observe, learn, take stock, see and hear what the world has to offer and what we are in danger of losing forever; ultimately, to begin to devise strategies of how to preserve it. In the course of their voyage, the boys learn to face and tackle problems. Even if you do not have a solution at hand, there is always something you can do. You have to know what you are good at, work at that, and use it. Aboard a ship, everyone is needed, everyone matters.

The three-master “Ship of Songs” takes the Choir from Argentina to the Antarctic, from Cuba to Quebec, from New York to Cape Verde, from Shanghai to Sydney, and on to the Pacific with its vanishing islands and the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Aboard the ship, the boys travel as crew, not as passengers; the adults on board, experienced crew and master craftsmen, scientists, engineers, and of course musicians, teach the boys to sail, to navigate, to steer, to mend planks and sails, to cook, to observe their surroundings, take notes and note, to plan and behave accordingly.

En route, the boys tell each other stories of past expeditions and present endeavors, of explorers and great discoveries – knowledge that would otherwise be lost. Each story is captured in a song – the stories become songs.

Wherever the choirboys land, they meet fellow musicians. As they sing together, an exchange takes place between the singers, a bond develops as they discover that they are not alone, after all. Viewers will witness true music in the making, never heard before, performed by world-class artists.

On this voyage, the boys gain first-hand experience of the planet's problems: supersize siphonophores in the Yellow Sea, melting icebergs, shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels, pelagic plastics and chemical sludge in the oceans, overcrowding in some animal species, the threat of extinction for others.

Amid spectacular scenery, the boys learn to respect the interdependence of the different species in an ecosystem; sailing, they learn to rely on each other – as in a choir, in a crew everyone is needed. Everyone matters, and everyone can make a positive contribution. This trip of a lifetime will enable them to meet the challenges of our changing, broken environment. Our future depends on it.



About the Vienna Boys Choir

Founded in 1498 by Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, the Vienna Boys Choir nowadays consists of four touring choirs of 25 boys each. The choir accepts boys from all backgrounds; 31 nations are currently represented. From its inception, the choir was a travelling band. The boys accompanied the Emperor on his journeys throughout the empire. No other band of musicians travels this much: In the last century alone, they have clocked up 1000 tours in 97 different countries, performing a staggering 28.000 concerts.

As cultural ambassadors, the Vienna Boys Choir has a longstanding tradition of collecting songs from all over the world; their first “world music” recording dates to 1931. Partly due to their exposure to different cultures, the choir members, many of whom come from countries outside of Austria, are open-minded and passionate youths. It is the foremost task of education to foster the enterprising curiosity of children, bolster their undefeatable spirit, equip them tenacity, and above all, teach them compassion. This voyage sets out to do just that.



Curt Faudon, Director and Producer on the film Ship of Songs – Searching for the right medicine

In early 1992, I was in Arizona, filming an interview with Chief Geronimo III, grandson of *the* Geronimo. At the time, Chief Geronimo was 104 years old and in excellent health. He was stunning: tall, with long, white hair and a beaded headband, which might well have belonged to his famous forebear. His bearing reflected pride and wisdom. And humor.

Two black and white images of presidents Reagan and Bush senior were pinned to the wall of his simple hut. Next to those were congratulatory letters on his 100th birthday. Paper and pictures were stained with age, their corners curling inward.

I asked him if he would take back his land if one of these gentlemen would offer it as compensation. “You mean the entire country?”, he enquired. “ Yes. All of it.” “Are you kidding me? You fucked it up - you bloody keep it!”

He did not have anything good to say about the 500-year-celebrations and what we had made of his ancestral lands. As far as he was concerned, there was nothing to celebrate. Quite the contrary. But he did wish us luck, saying that we would need it.

I asked if we still had a chance. “Maybe,” he said after a while and looked past me towards the setting sun. “Maybe, if you find the right medicine.” A smile turned up his lips, and he added, “But only the Indians have the right medicine.” He then turned towards the sun, spoke with it in his language and waited until it had disappeared beyond the horizon.

Twenty-five years have passed since this memorable conversation, and we are more in need of the right medicine than ever. If we don’t take care, our children are going to inherit from us a broken world. For me, *Ship of Songs* is also a film dedicated to finding the right medicine: to find sources of hope and inspiration, to find bridge-builders and visionaries, men and women, collect ideas of how we could go forward. “We” means all of us; in every culture. And we are going to let those who are most concerned in the future of our world do the talking. To me, the Vienna Boys Choir – arguably the world’s most famous children’s choir – represents society; the kids come from 33 different nations, including refugees from the Congo or Afghanistan. Everyone can identify with them. This is my fifth film about and with the Vienna Boys Choir; and I continue to be deeply impressed by the boys’ personalities, their commitment to their music and to what goes on around them, their energy, with which they tackle any situation they find themselves in. When we were filming a piece by Bach, they started discussing the dark imagery of the text and brought up environmental issues. Fukushima had just blown up: it mattered to them; they were not just upset, they felt with Japan. It is their

enthusiasm that will aid them in their search for the right medicine. And young people have fresh minds; they can come up with surprising solutions, like Boyan Slat's ingenious Ocean Cleanup.

I love music; it makes for better people. The world is definitely a better place with music. To me, music is medicine. At least part of it.



Why we are passionate about Ship of Songs and this film **Gerald Wirth, Artistic Director of the Vienna Boys Choir**

We are a choir with a long tradition; we travel a lot. To us, travelling is part of the boys' education. Wherever we go, we communicate with song – and people react to that. The best moments are when you are completely in the moment, in the music, with everyone present.

In recent years, there has been a lot of research about the beneficial effects of singing, both on the singer and the listener. It is good for the heart – literally -, it furthers brain development, and it strengthens the immune system. Singing together gets people's hearts beating in unison – a choir is a microcosm, singers feel instinctively that they depend on each other. Choral singing teaches you to work as a team, and the common goal is to make music.

As Vienna Boys Choir, we are in an extremely privileged position; people know us and come to hear us sing. We receive many invitations to perform. What we do is seen and heard. Therefore, we have a clear responsibility towards society, to give back, to contribute in a positive way, to make a difference.

This film is a chance for change, a chance to work towards securing our future. We do not know what will happen on this voyage; but we are optimistic, and we – everyone at the choir – are thrilled to be a part of it.

Shooting Schedule

October 2017: Shanghai (harbour, concert scenes, meeting with local choir)

October 2017: Concerts in Beijing and Shanghai;

Concert at Sydney Opera and in Cairns/Northern Territory, Australia – with Gondwana Voices indigenous choir

January 2018: Open Air Concert in Hong Kong, Concert in Singapore

February 2018: Shoot in the Antarctic and in Patagonia (Chile and Argentina)

May 2018: Shoot in Alaska with Native Whaling People

July, August 2018: Yellow Sea shoot; concert in Guilin;

Principal photography in China (Studio/Sound Stage in Beijing)

First Unit shoot in Mongolia and Tibet

September, October 2018: principal photography on board of “Endeavour” in the Pacific.

Detailed Shooting schedule will follow.

