

# PEACE CHILD – ALPHA OMEGA

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## A Proposal for an ‘Emblematic Action’

*for the*

## The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – 2008

*Presented by*

### PEACE CHILD INTERNATIONAL

**BACKGROUND:** *What is the Year of Intercultural Dialogue?* – The European Commission has promoted a number of ‘Theme Years’ just as the United Nations does. The rationale for this one is stated as follows:

- *to bring together the peoples of Europe and create an ever-closer union between them;*
- *to involve all those living in the European Union, especially young people, to manage the complex reality in our societies and galvanise them actively to get in touch with other cultures and thus to contribute to tolerance and mutual respect which are prerequisites for intercultural dialogue.*
- *to promote solidarity, social justice, greater cohesion and common values in the European Union and enable it to forge more effective partnerships with neighbouring countries*

Specific objectives are defined thus:

- *To highlight the contribution of different cultures to our heritage and ways of life;*
- *To bring together different communities and sectors of society to contribute to innovation and multiple perspectives in the promotion of intercultural dialogue, particularly amongst young people and exchange good practice and experience between the sectors.*
- *To finance 10-12 emblematic actions on a European scale with budgets of €100,000 - €400,000 - aimed at raising awareness, particularly among young people, of the objectives of the European Year. Each may receive Community aid of up to 80% of the total cost;*

**PEACE CHILD:** *Bringing the youth perspective* – before developing this proposal, the EYICD concept was discussed with young people from the EU + Russia, Georgia, Turkey, Bosnia and Azerbaijan. They thought good outcomes for the year would be:

- *A positive atmosphere across Europe in which to discuss different religions and cultures;*
- *ICD must help us understand that religion and culture do not divide us – but rather connects us. We must break down stereotypes and combat islamophobia and other phobias;*
- *Involve young people by drawing on their creativity and talents – have competitions, song and dance festivals, poetry readings, publications;*
- *We must discover interesting things in each culture and religion, and learn to co-operate better. All religions have common roots and common values. EYICD must celebrate that fact.*
- *Reform Education so that we can learn in schools about our different cultures in a fun way;*
- *Have more foreign language/culture courses at our universities to bring more international students to study in our countries;*
- *We need to stress the links between economics and culture – especially in natural resource use;*
- *We must involve All Different – All Equal campaign networks and build on all we have learned;*

**THE PEACE CHILD – ALPHA OMEGA PROJECT:** *Telling the story of the human condition through the eyes of a child:* “*Peace Child*” is best known as the musical which brought Soviet and American children together in the 1980s for the first Soviet-American youth cultural exchange. It gave its name to the youth-led educational charity, Peace Child International (PCI) which creates youth-friendly educational materials for the European Commission, the United Nations and others. In PCI’s 25 years, we have learned a great deal about working with young people – how to draw on their creativity, ideas and passions. Based in the UK, it has affiliates and contacts in every EU member state – and most of its neighbouring countries. With this network, it has recently conducted the “Faith in Europe” project – endeavouring to build confidence in European institutions by working through schools and faith communities, drawing on the natural idealism of young people. That experience – doing interviews in every EU member state of over 10,000 young people – taught us a

great deal about current levels of ignorance and indifference in most young people about the European Union, its institutions and the cultures of its member states. We thus seek, in this project, to transmit to the people of Europe, especially its young people, a warning about the dangers of such ignorance and apathy (jealousy, greed, desire to dominate etc. leading to war) – while at the same time educating and inspiring them to recognise the benefits of celebrating our common roots and cultural diversity (result: peace, prosperity leading to the creation of the ‘most dynamic, knowledge-based economy in the world.’)

“*Peace Child*” drew much of its music from David Gordon’s earlier oratorio, *Alpha Omega*. In this project, we shall link the two works – and co-create with religious leaders, academics, politicians, celebrities and young people themselves – a new work which explores the nature of the human condition through the eyes of a child. It will begin with the magisterial opening song which asks fundamental questions about the meaning of life: “*I - who am I, what is this world, why are we here...?*” – and ends with “*The Laws*” – a simple summation of the teaching of the world’s great religions sung by a child, which concludes with the line: “*Thou shalt forgive and thou shalt love!*” In between these two songs, each “*Peace Child – Alpha Omega*” concert presentation will be constructed anew by each school, university, community or faith group that performs it. The EYICD Study Pack will include Script, Score and Study Guide containing a framework narrative and over thirty songs, passages from scripture & literature + suggestions for further reading/study. Using this, each cast will create their own performance, translating it into their own language, adding their own songs and readings as they wish. This was the format that inspired over 10,000 performances of *Peace Child* in North America in the 1980s. Entirely copyright-free, it will be promoted throughout 2008 to inspire similar numbers of performances across Europe during EYICD and in the decades there-after.

**TIME-LINE: A step-by-step Overview of the Project –**

May-October ’07: Recruit interested partners. Submission of project proposal 31/10/07;

December ’07: European Commission decision on funding;

January ’08: Launch appeal across Europe and its neighbouring countries for youth contributions to the project: stories, paintings, songs, photographs, ideas for content;

March ’08: PCI youth create 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Study Pack and circulate to partners

April ’08: 3-day Meeting of the Intercultural Advisory Group to review and agree the content of the Study Pack, and finalise details of the celebrity performances later in the year; Finalise the Pack design and content; print up and package;

May - August ’08: Promote the pack with a campaign to reach faith groups, schools, performing arts colleges, universities, community choirs and orchestras across Europe; set up a number of ‘satellite performances’ in towns, cities, schools and universities alongside the 5-10 celebrity performances envisioned in this proposal;

September – November ’08: Start Rehearsals and stage the celebrity performances in the UK, Russia, Estonia, Bosnia, Austria, Turkey + other locations as agreed by the partners. In each, partners will be required to secure a choir and an orchestra or cathedral organ; each partner will also be responsible for promoting the performance, selling the tickets etc. Lead singers, lead child/children, conductor and rhythm section will travel to each celebrity performance along with representatives of the key partners. Before and after each performance, a series of seminars will be held with representatives of the key partners to explore the themes. These will be held in universities and schools – involving a dialogue between religious leaders from different faiths with young people;

2009: produce a TV & Radio Broadcast of one full celebrity performance of the piece + a TV documentary about the making of the project;

– *Listen to the music of Alpha Omega at: [www.peacechild.org/alpha](http://www.peacechild.org/alpha)* –