

CHAPTER 3: HOW IT ALL BEGAN

It was 1968: Leen and Ria La Riviere were just married and had a nice apartment on the 5th floor of a new block in Rotterdam-Ommoord, a new suburb. After marriage they decided to settle there. Leen found a job at a school for mentally retarded children, Ria was pregnant and decided to stay home; she had worked for some years for an evangelistic- missionmovement. They found a new church in the inner-city where Leen became part of the youth- and music-commission as the church saw his music- and management-skills. The music-director had contact with another director in the USA: Cam Floria, who wrote that he wanted to send his 'Continental Singers' to minister in the Netherlands. So in 1969 this Dutch director asked Leen to help organising in this first tour of the Continentals. Leen and Ria listened to these first LP's and thought it was 'just okay', but not contemporary enough. The director assured them that the group was not a traditional choir but was the 'hottest' thing in contemporary christian music. No, it was not black-gospel.....it was something totally new..... Lucky for the Continentals and for all that came afterwards Leen believed this statement so he decided to launch an experiment as nobody knew the potential of this new idea. So concerts were organised in a Catholic church, reformed church, pentecostal church, baptist church, in the wellknown Doelen concert-building of Rotterdam, and in the town-square, in a music-tent at the beach and at a campingsite in the forest..... The results were amazing, never in such a short time had so many non-christians visited those events, so many wanted to know more about the Gospel, so many wanted to see the Continentals again. These facts could be read in the first overall marketing-review Leen had organised to get the facts on the table. The data proved: this was really something new, something so special, so unique...God was really at work in a total new way. Based on these data Leen decided that he would love to continue with the Continentals. The report of the American director Ken Waggoner and his wife Nancy to the home-office in the USA about how all was organised in the Netherlands and how many had turned up made Cam Floria decide to ask Leen to organise all the concerts of the Continentals all over Europe and so it happened. From 1971 onwards Leen built a huge network in all the Western nations..... And as contacts grew soon the possibilities were explored to go also into Eastern Europe. So the first visit took place in Poland in 1975, which was a huge success.....cathedrals with 3000 seats had 6000 visitors.....This all was the result of the special vision and faith Leen had: as you cannot do all these things based on your family-account a foundation for creative ministries was founded in 1970: "Stichting Continental Sound" and you find there already in the documents mentioned: the target is ALL OF EUROPE.....