

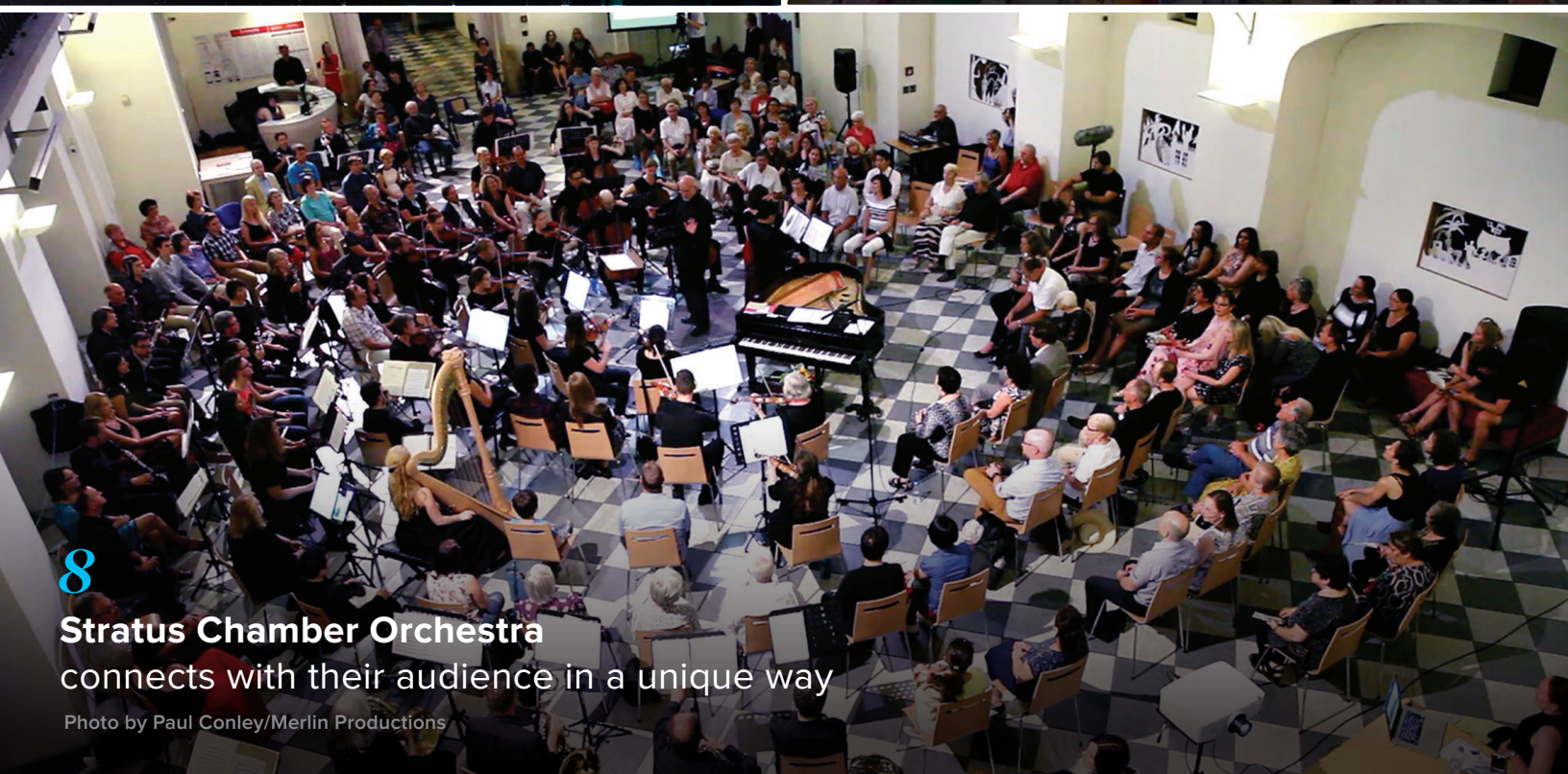
3
Portland Symphonic Girlchoir
visits the Belfast Peace Wall

Photo by Vivian Pinger



4
Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers
reflects on singing in a post-attack Paris

Photo by Marianne Swienink-Havard



8
Stratus Chamber Orchestra
connects with their audience in a unique way

Photo by Paul Conley/Merlin Productions

Welcome

...to this issue of Tour Notes!

When I was 13, I went on a concert tour to Russia with the St Louis Children's Choirs. While I was excited to visit a place I knew next to nothing about and sing with my friends in beautiful spaces, some of the simplest experiences I'd have would turn out to be the most profound.

Over two weeks, we visited town after town, meeting Russian choristers our age. One of my clearest memories is the feeling of not being able to really talk to each other, yet there being no language barriers; the music was communication enough. I began to see both how big and small the world is, and how much all people have in common.

It's amazing how often we hear similar impressions from our groups after they tour. But how to keep those ideals alive in tour planning today? How do you travel in the spirit of connectedness when so much of our political discourse is about being separate? And what if you're concerned about how your country or community is seen by the world?

Across our 60-plus year history, ACFEA has seen some trying world times. But the same refrain has

always rung true: Go anyway. Be the citizen of a country you want to be proud of. Remind yourself and the people you meet that we can accomplish so much more when we have a true understanding of all that we share.

The stories on these pages remind us of this ever so important—and timely—truth. We hear how the Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers took song to a grieving Paris (p4). How Chicago Consort didn't merely perform for the people of Cuba, but bonded with them (p6). How the Davidson United Methodist Church Choir brought light to a place with a dark history both distant and recent (p11). They, along with all our wonderful touring groups, show us that why you go abroad is important: for you, for the world, and, most of all, for the future.

We hope you enjoy.

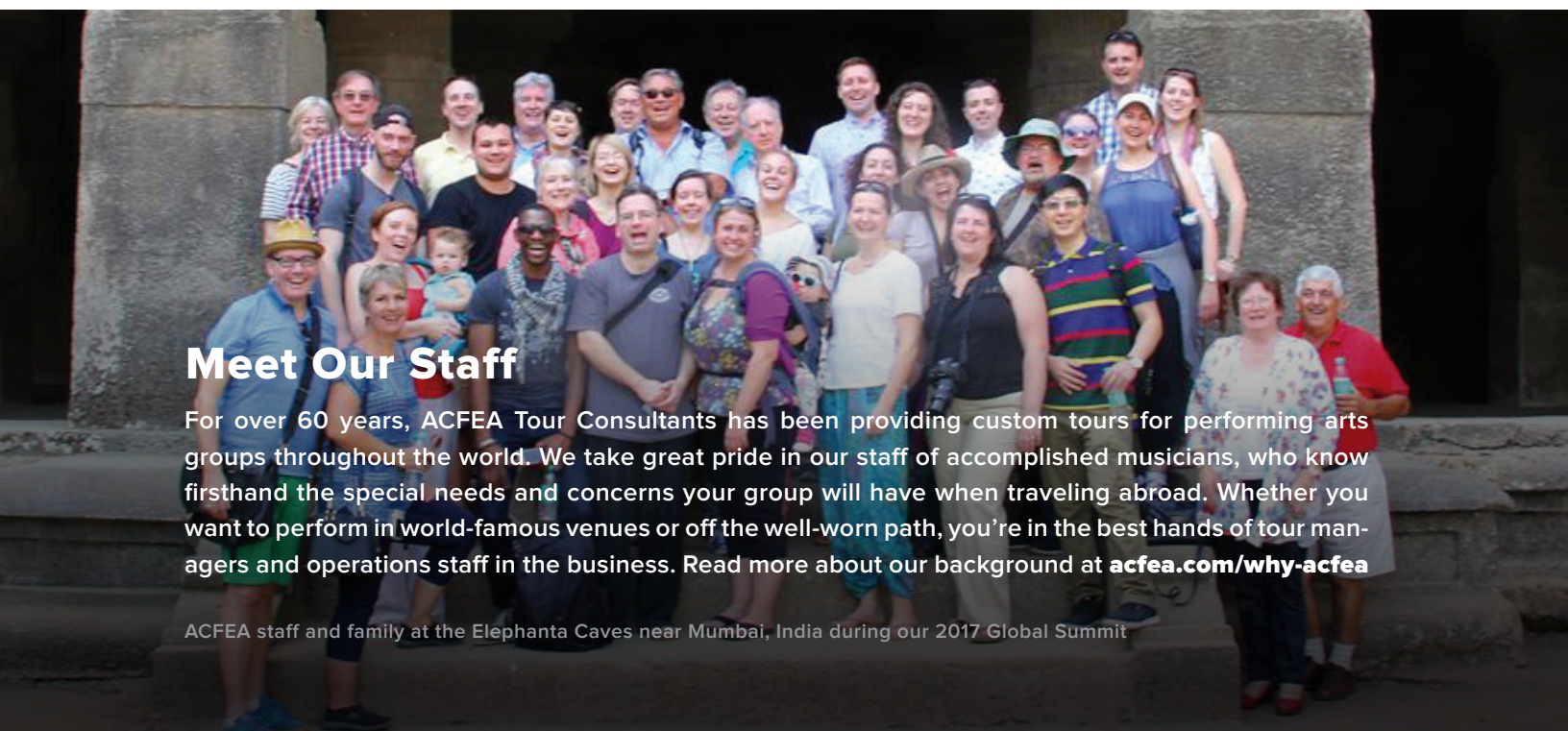


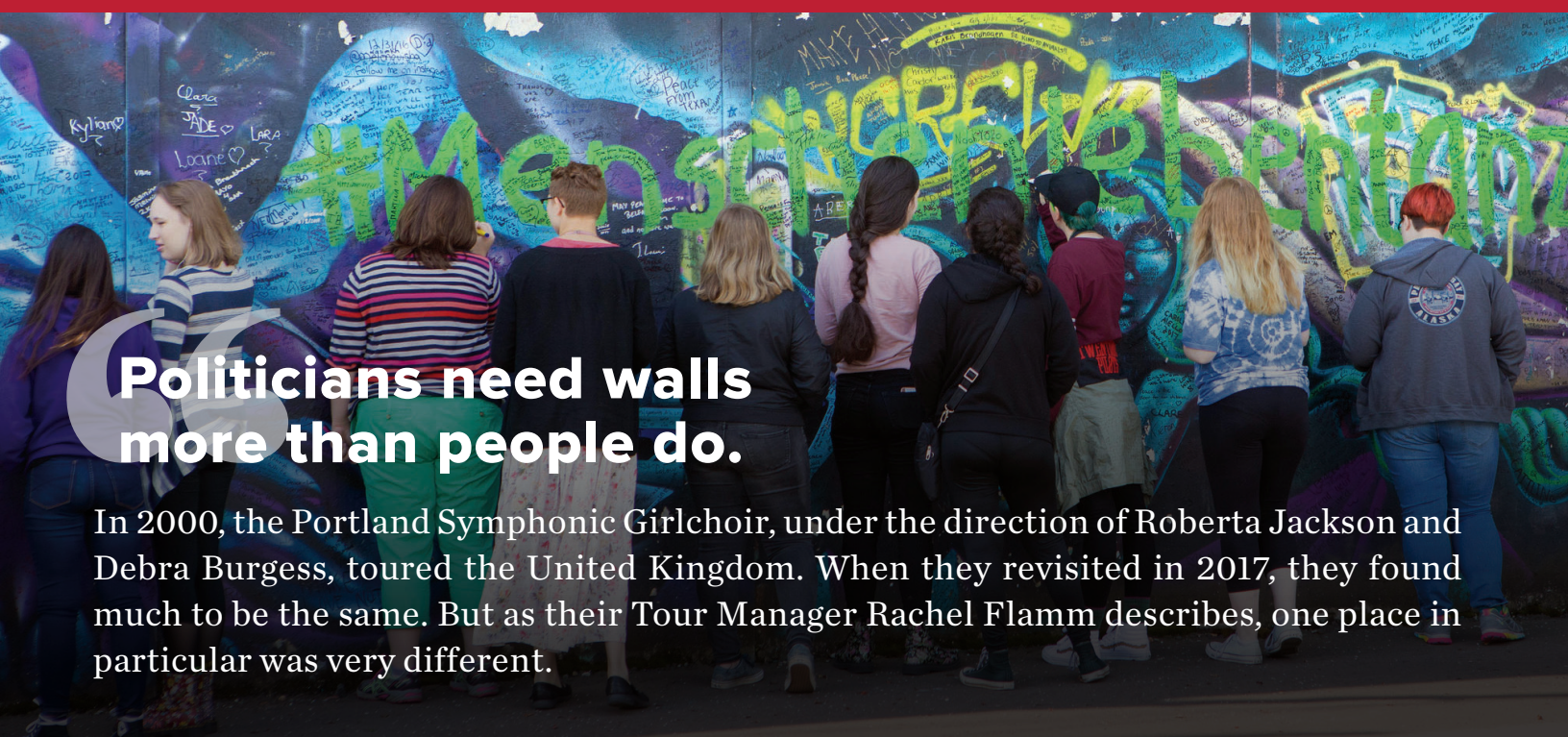
Emily Henriksen, Marketing Manager

Meet Our Staff

For over 60 years, ACFEA Tour Consultants has been providing custom tours for performing arts groups throughout the world. We take great pride in our staff of accomplished musicians, who know firsthand the special needs and concerns your group will have when traveling abroad. Whether you want to perform in world-famous venues or off the well-worn path, you're in the best hands of tour managers and operations staff in the business. Read more about our background at acfea.com/why-acfea

ACFEA staff and family at the Elephanta Caves near Mumbai, India during our 2017 Global Summit





Politicians need walls more than people do.

In 2000, the Portland Symphonic Girlchoir, under the direction of Roberta Jackson and Debra Burgess, toured the United Kingdom. When they revisited in 2017, they found much to be the same. But as their Tour Manager Rachel Flamm describes, one place in particular was very different.

When the Portland Symphonic Girlchoir set to plan their 2017 tour to the United Kingdom, they naturally had their 2000 tour in mind. They'd visited the UK then, too, and wanted to incorporate some of the highlights from that trip. On the short list was a performance at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, and we were thrilled to be able to secure that for them again.

But one city that has changed dramatically in seventeen years is Belfast. PSG's planning process for their 2000 tour started just before the Good Friday Agreement went into effect, which would outline how Northern Ireland would be governed. The city was very much still divided and turbulent.

Knowing that Belfast is much different today, Deb and Roberta took that as the opportunity to cross the North Channel and include Ireland on their tour. The ferry from Cairnryan took them right into Belfast Harbour.

Visually, some neighborhoods of Belfast are still divided by so called Peace Walls. Despite increased peace within the city, these walls have grown in both height and number since the Good Friday Agreement. Beyond the walls, you can clearly see sectarian identities

within neighborhoods—Union Jacks are notably more prominent in the Protestant neighborhoods, for example—but little of the animosity seems to remain, especially among the younger residents.

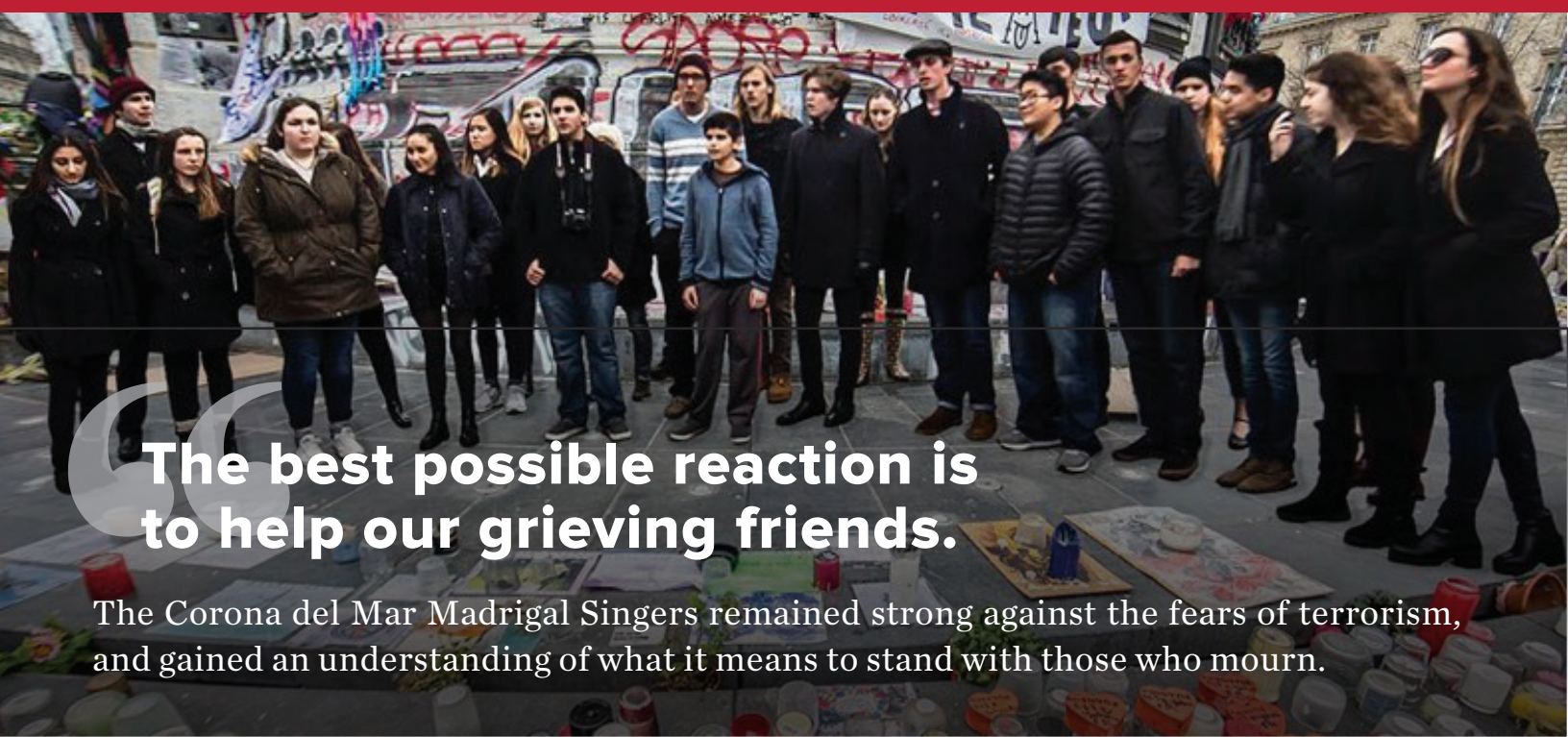
Our tour guide, Nollaig, grew up in a smaller town in Northern Ireland, and she was well aware of how that period continues to shape contemporary Northern Irish politics. One thing she said particularly struck a chord with me and the rest of the group: "I think at this point, the politicians need the (Peace) Walls more than the people do." It was hard to deny the resonance in our own political situation at home.

The choir stepped off the coach to see one section of the wall, rich with art, graffiti and political statements. Nollaig passed out markers to those who wanted to add their signature or their message, and many of the young women in the choir did so, but they also spent time reading the names and statements of those who had visited the wall before them. The plan is that by 2023, the Peace Walls will all be dismantled, though if other such

walls in history are any indication, the role it played will not be forgotten as soon.



Portland Symphonic Girlchoir performs in St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh. All photos by Rachel Flamm.



The best possible reaction is to help our grieving friends.

The Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers remained strong against the fears of terrorism, and gained an understanding of what it means to stand with those who mourn.

In November 2015, awful tragedy struck Paris when 130 people were killed in a series of coordinated terrorist attacks. The world grieved, but one high school choir director in southern California had an additional situation at hand: The city in the headlines was the same one at the top of the concert tour itinerary he'd travel in three months' time with his choir.

Instead of canceling, Andrew Ball, the director, stood with his Corona Del Mar High School and its families in recognizing that their concerts could play an important role in the healing of the city's citizens and education of their students. As he wrote to the tour members and families:

In response to tragedy and conflict, it is often musicians that act as envoys to bridge the rifts between nations and heal the wounds in peoples' hearts. In light of the events that unfolded in Paris, it is vital that we stand with our European friends and family members, and show the aggressors that these acts of terrorism will do nothing but strengthen our ties and our support.

In this my administration and I are in agreement: it is more important now than ever that Madrigal Singers continue their planned tour of France, including our four day stay in that nation's capital. It is with pride that I will conduct our concerts in the spirit of peace and brotherhood in a city that has suffered so much unnecessary hurt and loss, and it is certain to be an experience our students will never forget.

We caught up with Andy to see what lasting impressions that tour made on his students.

Tell us about your tour.

In February of 2016 the Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers took a ten day trip to France that included three primary destinations: Antibes in the south of France, Gap in the southern French Alps, and Paris. Antibes is a sister city of Newport Beach, where our school is located, and did a wonderful job of hosting our first concert at the Antibes Cathedral. In Gap we stayed in the homes of a local community chorus, with whom we shared a concert in a local church that was equally well attended. Last was a four night stay in Paris which included, along with the necessary sightseeing, a Mass participation in Notre Dame and a concert in La Madeleine. To perform in those venues, so rich with history and significance, was a true highlight of my life, and the memory of those performances is one I will hold on to for many years to come.

Did you visit the attack site?

While we were only able to see the Bataclan Theatre in passing, the people of Paris had created an impromptu memorial at the Place de la République, where thousands of people had left signs and burned candles in memory of the victims of the attack. Upon hearing about this memorial, I insisted that we visit; when the time hasn't been taken to make these events real and relevant, it is so easy to hear about attacks on the other side of the world and walk away with nothing more than a statistic. But to stand in that place, to see the hurt and the despair and the anger poured out in sign after sign after sign... it makes clear the impact an attack like this can have upon a culture and a people, affecting so many beyond simply those who have died. After spending some time taking in the images at the Place de la République we joined together to sing Prayer of the Children, a song originally written in response to ethnic cleansing in what was then Yugoslavia, and one that felt incredibly relevant given the senseless violence of the Bataclan attack.

What was it like being in Paris after an event like this?

Surreal. It was surreal to be in Paris to begin with; it is a city with a timelessness about it. To be in a city that holds enough history to feel timeless at a time when so much immediate history has just taken place is almost disorienting. We don't want to give up our romantic ideas, but faced with the reality of an attack like this we can't help but adjust how we look at this city, and at the world at large.

How do the students remember the tour now?

As a life changing experience. A year and a half later when my most recent seniors were graduating, France remained a prominent feature of stories and speeches. The memory of the tour even made it into the Valedictorian's speech—he was our Baritone section leader. What seems to have resonated the most was the incredible hospitality we encountered, especially in Antibes and Gap, and the images of the trip are still present on the walls of my classroom.

Do you think it changed how they view terrorist attacks which have happened since?

How could it not? I remember what it was like to grow up in the Southern California bubble—the first time I left the country (barring brief trips to Mexico) was when my high school choir traveled to Poland my junior year, and it changed my life. Learning about the second World War and the Holocaust in school was one thing; walking through the Auschwitz death camp and seeing the piles of hats, of glasses, of human hair... it's something completely different.

When we read about history, especially when we are young and haven't traveled much, it's hard to make a real personal connection. We simply haven't seen enough history to understand our place within it. But when we travel, when we see



Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers perform in La Madeleine, Paris.

how life has been affected by historical events, when we see the damage that terrorist attacks can do both at the moment and in the aftermath, it makes it much easier to see where our bubble ends and the real world begins.

What lasting impressions do you think this tour made on your students?

On the flight home from France I asked all of my students to write about their experience, and many took the opportunity to write about the impact this trip had on their views of the world. One student wrote "The world is filled with violence, but I hold this to be true; if more people sang together, there would be no more wars. What we did was the best possible reaction to help our grieving friends."

I know that my students will remember the places they went and the sights they saw, but I hope that most of all they will remember the people they met. Whether it was those who acted as part of the Sister City association, their hosts in Gap, or the citizens of Paris we saw contemplating the memorial of the Bataclan attack, it is the humanity of these places that leaves the biggest mark.

"In response to tragedy and conflict, it is often musicians that act as envoys to bridge the rifts between nations and heal the wounds in peoples' hearts."

Tour Participant
Corona del Mar Madrigal Singers

“Not like any other tour.”

Cuba presents many interesting differences from other tour destinations, but perhaps none more profound than the opportunity to meet with local musicians at every turn. Here, director Edward Kreitman recalls the impressions this created for his Chicago Consort group.

Going to Cuba was not like any other tour. Typically, when the Chicago Consort tours, we travel as tourists and play concerts in churches, public and private concert halls and often are included in ongoing music festival or concert series programs. In Cuba, we were invited by the Ministry of Culture and we required a special visa to be able to present public performances. Each of our concerts was a shared event, opened by the local professional orchestra.

Our first concert was in the Basilica de San Francisco de Asis in Havana, and was shared with the acclaimed Ensemble Solistas de la Habana under the direction of Iván Valiente – an impressive group. Their performance of Dvořák’s *Serenade for String Orchestra* was spectacular and belied the poor quality of instruments and strings that the performers were using.

Cubans love classical music and we were thrilled to play to an entirely packed Basilica.

The next day, we made the long coach ride to Matanzas to perform in the newly refurbished Sala Jose White, a beautiful boutique concert venue dedicated to the famous Cuban composer Jose White who was originally from this town.

This concert was perhaps the most special to me. The hall, which seats 150 people was filled with at least twice that number. The residents of the town waited in line for an hour outside in the heat and after every seat was taken, they filled



Why does your group tour?

Embarking upon a concert tour has always taken a considerable amount of effort, time, and resources, and now, it could be said, a level of commitment to global citizenship. We asked some directors we get to work with: Why is touring a priority for your organization at this moment in time?

We find that when we travel we have the opportunity to build relationships in ways that we cannot attain through weekly studies, meetings or rehearsals. To share new experiences and sites together is such a valuable tool for true community building.

Stephen Mitchell, Director
Athens First United Methodist Church

There is an important educational part of touring. It expands cultural awareness of other parts of the world and helps our singers become global citizens. Touring opens up the world to our young women, many who would never have such an experience in their lives.

Susan McMane, Artistic & Executive Director
Young Women’s Choral Projects of San Francisco

“As we become a society of elitism and exceptionalism, it is all the more important for our next generation to visit a foreign country to find out for themselves what is true about the world.”

Edward Kreitman, Director
Western Springs School of Talent Education

the aisles and stood in the back of the hall. Pressed skin to skin, they didn't budge during the entire two hour program. The program was opened by the Matanzas Symphony Orchestra performing Mozart's Symphony No. 40. We also enjoyed hearing a modern string orchestra arrangement of the José White *La Bella Cubana* which we were also performing that day in its original form for two violins and piano.

Our third stop on the tour was in the small town of Santa Clara. The concert hall in Santa Clara was the Teatro de La Caridad (Spanish for "Charity's Theatre"). It was built in 1885 and is one of The Eight Grand Theaters of Cuban Colonial era. The theater, which seats over 500 was filled with enthusiastic Cubans from the region. The concert opened with the Symphony of Villa Clara.

There was so much excitement about the concert, much of which was generated by the music director of the local a cappella choir. When I inquired about why the choir was a cappella, he explained that there was no piano, keyboard or accompanying instrument in the town. As we were packing our equipment and getting ready to load the bus, we decided that we would leave our electronic keyboard, amplifier and

speakers so that residents and musicians of Santa Clara could enjoy having a keyboard of their own.



Chicago Consort with Maestro Iván Valiente & members of Ensemble Solistas

Before flying back to the US, we went back to Havana for a workshop together with some of the members of the Ensemble Solistas and their conductor, Iván Valiente. Maestro Valiente first worked with our group on the *La Bella Cubana* helping us understand better the importance of just the right tempo for each section of the piece and how that tempo serves the dance of the music. Then we got to sight read some traditional Cuban pieces and Maestro Valiente gifted the score to us so we can incorporate this Cuban music in our repertoire.

Throughout the tour, we learned many things about the culture, government, political environment, educational system and daily life of Cubans from our amazing tour guide, Manny. His incredible welcoming presence made each member of our group feel at home in Cuba and he emphasized

many times how the people of Cuba are not interested in having a poor relationship with the United States. We all left feeling like we had made many new friends and understood a little better about life in Cuba.

This summer, my students and I had the privilege to sing for audiences in Sweden, Estonia, Finland, and Russia. The students were overwhelmed with the hospitality, love, and enthusiasm they encountered in every country. They discovered the truth that all well-traveled people already know: The majority of people around the globe are dedicated to finding peace, love, and security for their families.

Colorado Children's Chorale visits residents of David Harper House in Monash, Australia. Photo by M. Stacey Smith, Grand Prize Winner in our 2017 Photo Contest.



Experiences and choices made in a child's young life will not only define them, but stay with them for a lifetime. Travel, whether to rural Colorado or around the world, can open eyes, change a perspective, engender empathy, and inspire one to think about and care for issues way bigger than oneself.

Deborah DeSantis, Artistic Director
Colorado Children's Chorale

Robert Istad, Director of Choral Studies
California State University Fullerton



Their minds and hearts were changed.

Stratus Chamber Orchestra's immersive concert brought musicians and audience together in ways that neither may have anticipated—and left them with a new understanding of how a classical music concert could make them feel.

While on tour to the Czech Republic in 2017, the Stratus Chamber Orchestra, based in Denver, Colorado, performed at Prague's Czech Museum of Music, as part of the American Spring Festival and the inaugural Prague Multicultural Music Project. For this special concert, the 20 orchestra members sat side by side with musicians from the Czech Republic, Iraq, China, New Zealand, South Africa, and Germany, and the program featured music by Czech and American composers, some of which were conducted by Stratus Chamber Orchestra's director David Rutherford, and others by Indian-born Czech resident Debashish Chaudhuri. All of this deeply resonated with the Project's themes of East Meets West and the coming together of people of different cultures.

One major element of surprise was the non-traditional staging. Audience members sat among the musicians, so that everyone present was hearing, seeing, and experiencing the concert.

"There was an older Czech couple close by me. By their smiles I could tell they were enjoying being close," said violinist Lois Owsley.

While some were hesitant about this unorthodox setup, "their minds and hearts were changed," Rutherford observed. "Our approach to music making in an interactive and immersive format changes all the regular dynamics of how musicians see each other, work together, and relate to the audience."

The immersion went beyond the seating arrangement. The final piece on the program, *Mosi-oa-tunya*, written by American composer David Mullikin for orchestra, called for

audience participation in the form of body percussion and the jangling of keys. Tour participant Judi Buehrer shared that "the people around me shook their keys vigorously and slapped their knees on cue, with big smiles on their faces. One tiny elderly woman in the audience participated joyfully,



shaking a set of keys with all her might."

After the concert, Czech people in the audience asked, "How did you know about the keys?" They turned out to be more than uncommon percussion instruments; the keys were an important link to Czech history. During the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Czech people jangled their keys to express freedom from communist regime.

As David Rutherford remarked, "The significance of the keys is still a part of the cultural fabric in the Czech Republic. We couldn't have planned a more ingratiating piece to play for Czech audiences, and wherever we played it, they relished it!"

“Our approach to music making in an interactive and immersive format changed all the regular dynamics of how musicians see each other, work together, and relate to the audience.”

David Rutherford, Conductor
Stratus Chamber Orchestra



All photos by Paul Cronley/Merlin Productions



The power of music touched their souls.

When the Georgetown Day School Chamber Choir learned Germany, their 2016 concert tour destination, was experiencing an influx of refugees, the group decided to help. Here, director Ben Hutchens describes visiting the former Olympic Village in Berlin which had been converted to a shelter for thousands of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond.

We arrived very jet lagged from our flight and came with only a few bags of coloring books and pencils to pass out to the children. What we found upon entering was hard to view. There were hundreds of refugees milling about in the foyer. Some makeshift tables were scattered here and there and at these, German volunteers were busy teaching the basics of the German language to some of the refugees.

As we passed the doors to the arena, our group took a moment to look inside. What we saw was a sea of thousands of cots—not much more than cheap beach chairs, really—neatly lined up in row after row on the playing floor. Seeing this truly helped our group understand a small part of the desperate situa-



tion in which the refugees have found themselves.

A few moments passed, and we were escorted further down the foyer to our performance space. The volunteers assembled a few rows of chairs and refugees began to fill them in. Our repertoire included a host of classical music and some American Spirituals. While our audience did not speak the language in which we sang, it was evident that the power of the music definitely touched their souls.

After a few moments of singing, the children became quiet and focused on the choir performing, adults stopped what they were doing, some were in tears. What a privilege it was to provide a small glimmer of beauty to this group of people.

How do you calm travel fears?

The health and safety of tour members has always been a chief priority for leaders. But as global travel worries grow, so does the need to reassure tour participants and their families of their relative safety on tour. Here are ten ways Tacoma Youth Chorus Managing Director Martha Leonhardt calms fears for her group:

1. We understand that there are no guarantees of safety. While any terrorist event is a tragedy, we try to keep in perspective that millions of people travel safely each year.
2. We discuss any international concerns with ACFEA so that we are in a position to answer parents' concerns. On tour, we know we are in good hands with ACFEA's well-trained couriers.
3. We seek destinations that are smaller and less traveled but have significant performance or culture exchange opportunities.
4. We minimize time in big cities, knowing our singers have a lifetime to travel and will, no doubt, have the chance to see the big cities and crowded tourist attractions another time.

“We need light here.”

Davidson United Methodist Church Choir’s tour to Germany in 2017 included singing in a Berlin church which has seen dark tragedy on more than one occasion. Here, director Kevin Turner recalls how one audience member explains how their singing impacted this special place.

On our tour to Germany, our final engagement was at the Kaiser Wilhelm church which has stood as a monument for peace having been bombed out in World War II. This congregation chose to stay in that location with a bombed out shell of a building next to the modern building next door.

Immediately following our concert, an older lady spoke to one of our choristers. She spoke, through tears, of how we had brought light into that space. She said, “we need light here.” I found that comment very sentimental, but I overlooked its significance.

We stepped out on the plaza outside the church where I was confronted with the sight of numerous red candles, portraits, and flowers. It was only then when I realized the woman was right. Outside this church in the previous December, a terror-

ist used a van to plow through the crowded Christmas market. This church had been the epicenter of the tragedy. It now holds significance for two tragic events.

World War II was a dark time in the history of our world. In December, that crazed man tried to spread darkness again. Every day since these tragedies, the Kaiser Wilhelm church stands in solemn contrast showing itself as a beacon of light against these monuments of darkness.

We were honored to be just a small part of this light. Our choir loves to sing and experience travel because we are able to participate and share in moments like this.



Photo by Bill Giduz

- 5. Our tour staff consists of the same people from tour to tour, a combination of TYC alums and staff. They are a very well-traveled team that understands rules, expectations, and our organizational ethos.
- 6. Each staff member has international cell phone capability so we can communicate with one another throughout the tour.
- 7. We take a medical person with us on every tour.
- 8. We approached airport planning more proactively during our most recent tour, reducing “stand and wait” time in unsecured areas.

- 9. Communication, communication, communication! Safety is an ongoing discussion we have with our families. In case of worrisome international events, we communicate that we are aware and monitoring the situation. In the weeks leading up to departure, our singers meet with their chaperones and have a chance to talk through any concerns they may have.
- 10. Because of the thoughtful way in which we approach our tours, we find that as a staff, we are confident in our planning and, in turn, can reassure any parents who might be uneasy.

≡ GIVING BEYOND MUSIC ≡

One of the greatest gifts our groups give to the audiences around the world is sharing their music. But often, they're able to offer additional aid to the communities they visit by raising money through concert ticket sales or donations. We're so proud of the contributions our groups made in 2017, including:

El Camino Youth Symphony

Musikverein, Vienna

With support from Lions Club Vienna, raised €15,000 for "Grow Together," a social project for children

Washington National Cathedral Choir

Holy Trinity Church, Richmond

Raised £1,000 for the Riverbank Trust, supporting single parents in the community

Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra

Rudolfinum, Prague

Gave a benefit concert for Auto-Mat, a local charity which promotes environmental issues and green living

American University Chamber Singers

Chopin University, Warsaw

Gave a benefit concert for the Laski School for the Blind

Hartford Chorale

Stephansdom, Vienna

Gave a concert aiding the restoration of the cathedral



Chorus of Westerly
St Johannis Kirche, Magdeburg
Gave a benefit concert for a stained-glass window project

Georgia State University Singers

Heiligkreuzkirche Konzertsaal, Landshut

Raised €1,265 for the local hospice

Woodside Priory School

Santa Ana de Barcelona, Barcelona

Raised €300 for the local homeless

SOMETIMES, the connections made during just one concert create a relationship which lasts well beyond the tour. In 2007, Jeffrey Brillhart visited South Africa with his Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church Senior Choir. The choir was particularly moved by the experience of visiting Pam's Creche, a care center of 140 kids from birth to age six in Klip-town, a shantytown in Soweto. In the years since, the choir has raised close to \$50,000 for the creche.

Then, nine years later, Jeffrey found himself returning with his other choir, Singing City. "Words cannot convey my thrill at seeing how the contributions given by the Bryn Mawr choir had come to bear fruit: modern restrooms (Kliptown has only 80 outhouses for its residents) and a real kitchen. I am so grateful to ACFEA for organizing our first visit to Pam's Creche in 2007 and for this profoundly moving second visit. Thanks to Pieter Myburgh, ACFEA's man on the ground, meaning life-changing connections are being made."



Singing City gives an informal performance at Pam's Creche, 2016.