



THE TOUR EFFECT

Benefits of touring for groups,
individuals, and communities

How the **Cincinnati Boychoir** approaches touring—and deepens the impact it has

Page 6 | Photo by Steve Stricker



Members of the **Boston Gay Men's Chorus**, the **San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus**, and the **Portland Gay Men's Chorus** reflect on their landmark tours

Page 8 | Photo by Izzy Berdan



All Saints Episcopal Church's Trouvères Choir connects civil rights history with current events

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Welcome

...to this issue of Tour Notes!

2019 will mark my eighteenth season as an ACFEA Tour Manager. For the last seventeen years, at parties, on first dates, at family reunions, in airport bars and on crowded train cars, I have struggled to answer the same impossible question: “So, what do you do?” Describing the role of a tour manager to someone outside the sphere of people who are likely to, say, read this newsletter, has always been a challenge.

Explaining the nuts and bolts is easy. I’ll tell them about flights and hotels and concert venues, and entrances and meals. An unindoctrinated conversation partner will eventually reveal that they had no idea that companies like ACFEA existed, or that choirs, orchestras, or bands would consider taking an international tour. When they learn how complicated a tour can be, how long it takes to plan, and how much detail and effort is involved in taking a hundred teenage orchestra members to China, for example, they have one question: Why on earth do they do it?

The fellow sitting next to me on the train asking “Why?” has a very good point. In fact, it’s the first question we ask groups who want to talk about touring. Before Where, before When, before How much, it’s always Why. More times than not, it’s a question the group has yet to ask itself. The answer, however, steers the rest of the conversation, and affects every single part of the tour.

This year’s Tour Notes explores that very important initial question by examining some recent tours, and the impact they’ve made, both immediate and long-lasting. In the following pages, we’ll share some

stories from groups who have thought a lot about the Why, how those groups set and achieved their goals, and what it’s meant to their organizations, their members and their audiences.

You’ll read about three groups—San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, Boston Gay Men’s Chorus, and Portland Gay Men’s Chorus—who took song and solidarity with them to three parts of the world where the LGBT population is underrepresented and in many cases disenfranchised. You’ll read about the teenagers from All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena who toured the southern US to learn more about historical and current civil rights issues, and how that education continued after they returned home. The Cincinnati Boychoir director will tell you about how he ensures their tours have the biggest impact for his students. And then there’s the countless groups who went beyond the gift of song to offer support to the communities they visited through donations, help with a project, or simply standing with them in time of need.

If these examples are any indication of the breadth of motivation behind taking a tour, it should go without saying that there is no correct answer to the “Why do you want to tour?” question. There is no right mission for a tour. There is, however, a right tour for your mission, and our job is to help you find it. So, when it comes down to it: That, sir, is what I do.



Amanda Bauman, ACFEA Senior Tour Manager

These recent tours give just a few examples of how to answer: **Why tour?**

1. Concert tours are a potent way to **connect with the world** through exposure to other venues, seeing iconic historical sites in person, and connecting what you learn at home to first-hand experiences. Over nearly three weeks in 2018, the Yale Institute of Sacred Music did an in-depth study tour, complete with lecturers and private entrances, followed by specialized extensions for their organ and art departments. It also included a concert tour for the Schola Cantorum, the program's chamber choir, pictured here performing to a full house in Leon's Iglesia Santa Marina la Real.

2. Tours can **give students extraordinary experiences** on top of what even the best school and learning environments can offer at home. In the summer of 2018, both Roosevelt High School Jazz Band and Garfield High School Jazz Band (pictured here), both from the Seattle area, performed on some of the biggest stages in jazz at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland.



3. A concert tour might be a way to **explore your heritage**. Trevecca Nazarene University Singers, from Nashville, TN and directed by Tom Lerew, traced their roots and visited the original location of their namesake Colege Trefeca in Wales.

4. Tours share music with the world and **give new works an even bigger audience**. Dallas Symphony Chorus premiered *Proud Music of the Storm* by Jake Runestad, performing alongside the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra at the Stadshuset in Stockholm.

How can I help heal my country through choral music?

For this church youth choir, connecting civil rights history to current events happened through sharing music, and taking the time to listen and learn.

The Trouvères Choir pays tribute to Dr Martin Luther King, Jr by singing under the spot where he was assassinated at the Lorraine Motel.

During the summer of 2018, the Trouvères Choir of All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, CA embarked upon an incredibly challenging, illuminating, and ultimately hopeful concert tour.

In developing the tour, choir director Jenny Tisi had been inspired by the stories of Estonia's "The Singing Revolution," remembered in the context of our struggles here in the US today. "I thought about my choirsters," she said, "and the healing power they bring to me and our congregation and it got me thinking: How can I help to heal my country through choral music?"

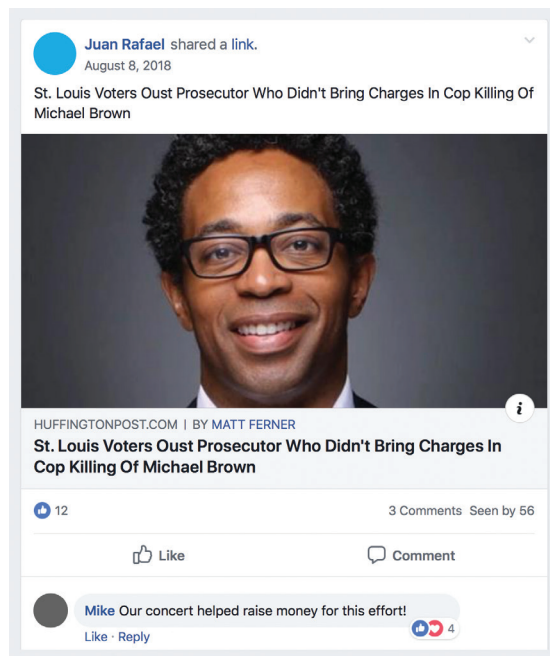
She found an answer in a ten-day "We Are One" concert tour of hope, healing and unity throughout the American South, retracing the steps of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and learning more about current issues of social justice.

Their first stop was Montgomery, Alabama, where they visited the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, honoring the memory of thousands of African-American victims of lynching. They continued to Birmingham, where they visited the Civil Rights Institute and the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, which still bears the scars of a 1963 white supremacist bombing which killed four young black girls. It was in Birmingham they first performed, in a concert which included pieces such as *We Are Not Alone*, *MLK*, *The Storm is Passing Over* and *Glory* (from the film "Selma").

The group's final stop in Alabama was the town of Selma, a key location in the Civil Rights struggle. First, they visited Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which played a major role in the events that led to the adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Civil Rights historian Joyce O'Neill shared her experiences in the historic movement, and the choir serenaded her in return. Then, they heard stories from Civil Rights participant Joanne Bland, to which they responded with an impromptu performance of the song *MLK*.

Jenny remembered: "Joanne sobbed into her hands when we were finished. She simply looked up at us afterwards and said, 'You are the ones we have been waiting for.' Our kids said, 'We just cannot let her down now.' They were forever changed." Next, the choir marched in complete silence across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, retracing the route that freedom marchers attempted once, were met with police tear gas, and then successfully completed, in 1965.

Then it was time to hit the road for a brief visit to New Orleans, before landing in Memphis, Tennessee. There, they visited the Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum and the Rock 'n' Soul Museum, with its emphasis on music's role in the Civil Rights movement. A highlight was performing at the National Civil Rights Museum, at the very spot beneath the balcony where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The gravitas of that



*Sleep
Sleep tonight*

*And may your dreams
Be realized*

*If the thundercloud passes rain
So let it rain
Rain down on him*

Let it be

MLK by U2

place and time was not lost on the choir, and they sang with reverence and solemnity in memory and honor of Dr. King.

“As we went along our journey, with each bit of knowledge we gained, the voices of our youth soared and each concert sounded different, not just because of the venue, but because we were changed – gutted, horrified, and blessed beyond measure,” Jenny noted.

The final stop was St Louis, Missouri, where they visited and serened some historic spots such as the Gateway Arch and the Old Courthouse. But it was here that the group chose to also focus on current events and issues in the community.

Following a visit to the memorial site for Michael Brown in Ferguson, the choir met with local Black Lives Matter activists Alexis Templeton and Kayla Reed, who organize the local nonprofit Action STL (formerly the St Louis Action Council). Action STL is a black-led grassroots organization committed to year-round political education, which at the time was focused on ousting incumbent St Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Robert McCullough, who in 2014 decided that his office wouldn’t file charges against the white police officer who shot and killed Brown, a young black man. The Trouvères were so inspired that they donated all proceeds from their concert at Christ Church Cathedral the following evening to the St Louis Action Council.

The choristers returned to their lives in Pasadena with a more profound understanding of our country’s past and a greater degree of social and political awareness. But though their tour came to an end, they didn’t stop learning and following current events. Through a facebook group set up for the tour, they share articles and resources that are relevant to the ongoing discussion – including a bit of good news they’d worked towards with their concert donations. During the 2018 election in St Louis County, the Prosecuting Attorney had not been re-elected, but rather, had lost his position to Wesley Bell, a young black Ferguson city council member. Seeing tangible results of grassroots actions is just one of many examples of how “We Are One” concert tour formed these young musicians for life.



While in St Louis, the group met Black Lives Matter activists Alexis Templeton Kayla Reed to learn about their work with Action STL.



The group gathers at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama.



The choir sings their final tour concert in Christ Church Cathedral in St Louis.

Singing someone else's song with authenticity and heart is one of the best bridge-building tools.

Concert tours are an important part of Cincinnati Boychoir's program. Here's how they prepare for them—and how it maximizes the impact their touring has.

After more than twenty years of touring with choirs, I think I finally did it right.

Each year, all 150 or so boys of the Cincinnati Boychoir go on tour. If you are a brand new singer, that means a bus tour to three retirement homes in one day followed by a pizza party. For our intermediate level, it is a three-day tour to another city in the region. And our top guys follow a three-year rotation of small (bus, domestic), medium (plane, domestic), and large (international) tours.

From an internal perspective, travel is one of the three pillars of our educational philosophy. Being somewhat landlocked in the Midwest, we feel that it is exceedingly important to leave our community and learn about how people live in different places, whether that is across town or across the world.

At the Boychoir, I talk often with the boys about their personal 'orbit.' Your personal orbit is what your field

of stimulus is taking in. For a ten-year-old, his orbit tends to be his immediate needs. Where is his music binder? Coat? Shoes? When touring, the primary focus can often be simply getting from one place to another with all of his personal items.

For a boy entering adolescence, his orbit expands, generally, to include interactions with friends. He will be hyper-aware of his friends' emotions, and building close relationships is of prime importance.

For the older teen, we can, with work, ask boys to expand their orbit to include not only the needs of the younger stu-

dents, but to handle personal interactions with perspective. My goal, when we travel, is that each boy's orbit expands at least a little bit – if not a lot. Furthermore, if we work to expand the orbit before we travel, then the trip itself can be that much more valuable.

This past June, the Cincinnati Boychoir Ambassadors traveled to South Africa and Swaziland. With the amazing gang at ACFEA, we developed a tour that invited us to experience these amazing countries from all angles: we were able to perform in Desmond Tutu's church in Soweto, work with youth in Kliptown, and also enjoy the excessive beauty of Cape Town.

What made the tour exceptional, however, was the preparation that we did ahead of time. We cultivated a year-long relationship with an amazing human and scholar of South African choral music Dr.

Mollie Stone, and she taught us about things as basic as appropriate movement while singing, and as challenging as issues of cultural appropriation. We discussed the history of the country, explored apartheid, and talked at length about how it was young people, in the end, that helped turn the country around.

South Africa changed us. By learning the songs of black South Africans—and not just *Tshotsholoza*, but music that American choirs rarely perform—we were able to build connections more immediately with our hosts, wherever we traveled. The simple act of singing someone else's song with



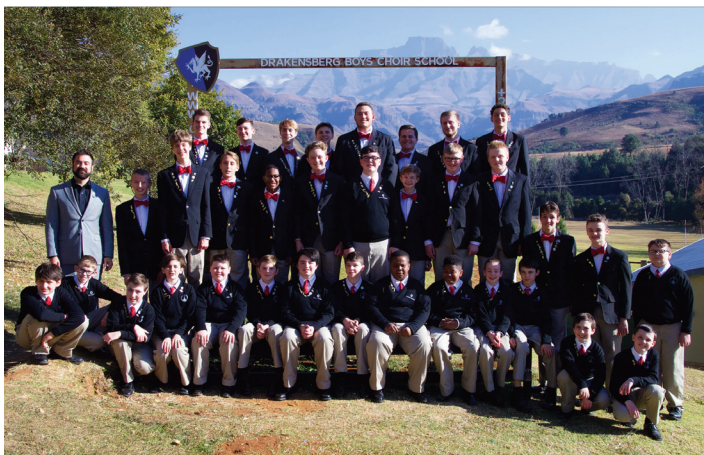
Thandi Thelele, conductor of the Holy Cross Anglican Church Choir in Soweto, sings with the boys.

attention to authenticity, and, most importantly, heart, is one of the best bridge-building tools I know of.

Mostly, however, by preparing diligently for this trip, our boys' orbits were primed to grow. What a waste if that ten-year-old spent all his time looking for his belt: It was much more important that he develop a new relationship with his counterpart at Drakensburg. Our teens may have expanded their orbits the most; I recall an end-of-day debrief which delved into cultural misconceptions relayed by the American media, and the culture of materialism they felt was harming our communities at home.

As Americans, we have a tendency to inflict ourselves on other cultures when we travel, rather than quietly absorb the vibe of our surroundings. Never is this more true than when we travel in large groups of young people. But, if we each work hard to expand our own personal orbit before we land in a new place, we can be much more attuned to the nuances of each community.

More than ever, learning to pick up on small cultural nuances, without judgement, is a critical skill for our young people. Therefore, the sooner we can help them expand their own personal orbit, the sooner they will develop the skills to build meaningful bridges with friends across the world, or, as importantly, across town.



The boychoir visits the beautiful campus of the Drakensburg Boys Choir.



While visiting St Francis High School in Mbabane, eSwatini, the boys helped build choir risers for the choir and then immediately put them to use with a joint concert (pictured in the top photo, opposite page).

How does touring benefit your group?

Given the amount of education, attention, and effort that goes into producing a concert tour, change of all sorts is nearly inevitable. What impact do you see touring having on your group?

Every three years since 2000 ACFEA has organized our residencies at great English Cathedrals from St. Paul's and Durham to Salisbury and Canterbury. In preparation I have seen the Choir's musicianship and comradery grow. And once there, it is difficult to describe the sense of awe one feels entering the Choir of Westminster Abbey, for example, knowing you are about to take your place, however briefly, in its 800-year-old musical tradition. The good times over a pint in the pub afterwards are pretty memorable, too!

Robert Simpson, Canon for Music
Christ Church Cathedral | Houston, TX

An international concert tour—where students are traveling together, living together, eating together, performing together—can fundamentally change a teenager in a way that little else in such a short time. While touring can be a lot of work, preparation, and require many, many cups of coffee, it is worth every minute. How can you set a value on preparing a teenager for the rest of his or her life?

Lindsey Nova, Executive Director
Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra | Pittsburgh, PA

For our community-based symphony chorus, the members come from widely ranging backgrounds. Spending time together on tour gives us a chance to bond both socially and artistically in deeper ways, breaking down barriers and enhancing our music-making.

Joshua Habermann, Conductor
Dallas Symphony Chorus

Our European tour was important to the growth of our choirs. We wanted performances that would show our students how their music could speak to all who heard them. They saw that music can be a universal translator and the hours of hard work and practice were the reason our performance was so impactful. Now, our current singers are stronger singers and leaders. They have an even more determined desire for performances that really do speak to audiences.

Paul Neal, Director of Choral Activities
Berry College | Rome, GA

Over the span of roughly a year, we operated three ground-breaking tours for gay men's choruses in quite different areas of the world. On the following pages, members of the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, the Boston Gay Men's Chorus, and the Portland Gay Men's Chorus talk about what those experiences meant to them, their fellow singers, and the communities they met.

“**WE
ARE
HERE,
WE
ARE
PROUD,
WE
ARE
DIVERSE,
AND WE
LOVE YOU.**”

Introduction by HUGH DAVIES, President, ACFEA North America

I have been privileged to be present at many tour moments that were spectacular, prestigious, impressive or triumphant, and these have always been spine-tingling experiences.

However, it is often not those moments that I cherish most, but rather the smaller, more introspective, intimate and personal ones that I'm sure occur on every tour: the moment when the group—or just one person—suddenly realizes the ‘why’ that Amanda writes of so eloquently in the introduction to this newsletter.

It is always heartwarming when this happens with young people, but it is perhaps more important when it happens with adults: It takes much more to jolt us out of our own, strongly defended reality and to communicate with strangers on their terms and on their turf. This is when prejudices and preconceptions are broken down, and when people discover the strength and courage to be humble.

Gay men's choruses, with their genesis in a time of AIDS, prejudice and discrimination, have a natural affinity with people struggling for human rights, whether LGBT or otherwise, and I have seen many powerful examples of them standing side-by-side with oppressed people around the world. It has been an especial joy for me to work on these tours and I maintain a deep admiration for their directors, such as Jon Bailey, Tim Seelig and Dennis Coleman.

In the essays to come, you will read about the experiences of three participants in such tours, but I first want to describe one I had in Moscow with the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles. The chorus and director Jon Bailey had just finished a spectacular, prestigious, impressive and triumphant concert in Tchaikovsky Hall, parts of which had been broadcast live on national television. I was approached by a couple who said, through an interpreter, how grateful they were for the concert. I made the usual polite but anodyne response, to which they said, “No, you don't understand. We came expecting a freak show, having thrown our son out of our house long ago when he told us he was homosexual, and have not spoken to him since. But we just saw 150 men who were courageous, proud and talented, and are going to go home, call our son and ask him to forgive us.” ♦



Tim Seelig conducts the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus in concert at the Alys Robinson Stephens Performing Arts Center in Birmingham, Alabama.

Being a lifelong and self-identified “choral junkie” I’ve been asked by many what my most rewarding choral experiences have been. Without hesitation I tell them: “my concert tours!”

Participating in performance touring is always fun, never predictable and provides me with a choral high like no other. It’s one thing to rehearse and perform with your buddies at home and in your usual venues. It’s quite another to be with them 24/7 in unfamiliar settings, traveling at all hours of the day and night, and eating unusual food—all while making a difference in the lives of strangers you encounter. That’s what really gets my endorphins surging!

In October 2017, I had the pleasure and privilege of being one of the 300 men of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus who, together with the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, toured five states in seven days. We arrived in Jackson, Mississippi on a dozen different flights only hours after Hurricane Nate blew through—and we hit the ground running! ACFEA arranged five major concerts and 23 different appearances at universities, interfaith church services and “World Cafés,” where we sang, marched, and exchanged ideas with leaders of various communities. Due to pre-departure threats and America’s increasing climate of violence, our six buses were escorted by

police, and embedded security was present at our concerts and other activities. But because of meticulous planning, the tour went off without a hitch and we singers were free to enjoy ourselves—and that we did!

During the long travel days, we participated in drag karaoke, briefly transformed the restrooms at the Tennessee border into gender neutral ones, visited Dollywood, and ate more fried food than we’d care to remember. But beyond the fun was a serious agenda. Although the chorus had originally planned an international tour, the election of Donald Trump and the subsequent passing of laws eroding LGBT rights in several southern states prompted the board to change direction. Their vision was to demonstrate connection, support and understanding amongst our own neighbors by visiting states that had the most repressive laws threatening LGBT freedoms.

The emphasis for our touring mission would be on listening to and learning from those we encountered, and showing our support through our mission-driven words, music and activities. Highlights included a mass protest and sing-in on the steps of the Mississippi State Capitol, joint performances with three local gay men’s choruses, and meetings with groups representing queer youth, trans and HIV+ members.

The San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus gathers with the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir on the steps of the Mississippi State Capitol in Jackson to protest HB1523, anti-LGBT legislation.

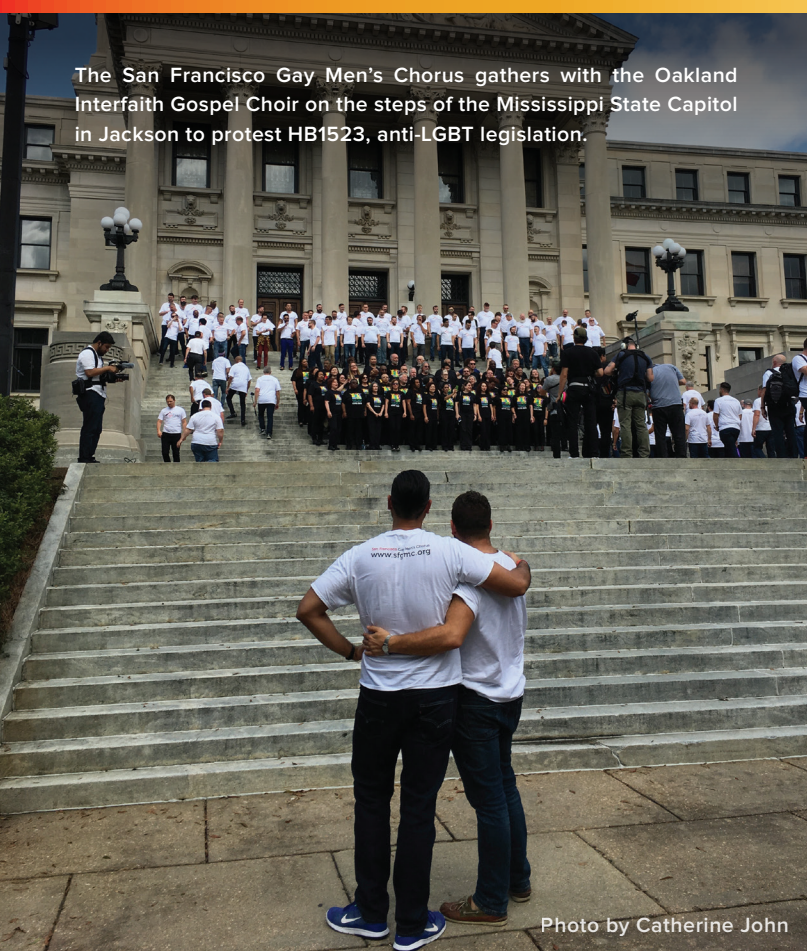


Photo by Catherine John

The mission of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus is to create musical experiences to inspire change, build community and celebrate difference.

Its values and function include the inward nurturing and support of its 300+ members as a community, as well as the outward nurturing and support of other communities.

In June 2018, 120 members of the BGMC furthered that mission by touring South Africa for two weeks. Through concerts, marches, appearances and events, we partnered with local nonprofit organizations to help raise money and awareness about issues such as HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ youth, and LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers. The concerts raised, or we directly donated, a total of \$38,000 to the communities we were supporting.

We enjoyed once-in-a-lifetime learning and adventuring—who could go to South Africa without learning about Apartheid or going on safari! But surrounding all these activities we met with people of South Africa. We directly connected with and experienced a very different world and communities than our insular individuality and communities of the United States.

In Soweto, we visited the Kliptown Youth Program along with the Mzansi Gay Choir. Traditional Gum Boots dancers performed, we sang, they sang—from the oldest grown-up to the littlest child, everyone sang. We heard personal stories of the Mzansi Gay Choir, and we shared some of ours.

Outside of Cape Town in Langa Township, we met and heard the stories of LGBTQ refugees who faced difficulties getting into South Africa. We heard of the challenges of delivering health services to those at risk of and living—and dying—with HIV. We heard from PASSOP (People against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty), a grassroots nonprofit that advocates for the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants in South Africa, which has an LGBTQ refugee outreach program. It was an altogether very intense and meaningful experience.

We constantly felt the power of connection with each other and with our audiences. BGMC member Matthew Honeycutt said, “Our message of love and acceptance along with the emotional support from my brothers helped me complete the tour despite the sudden passing of my father. [Before rehearsal in Johannesburg it was] a little too much to walk in so I sat outside and listened. I was literally brought to my feet in that moment by the strength of our voices. The night he passed, and

Reflecting on our tour after our return home revealed that we all had been profoundly impacted by this truly life-enhancing experience.

Socially, we had been privileged to interact with members of different ethnic and economic backgrounds whose political and religious affiliations differed from our own. We found that we shared more similarities with them than we had initially thought. Artistically, it was immensely rewarding to prepare and finely hone an entertaining but meaningful program and perform it in venues ranging from intimate churches to impressive concert halls. Spiritually, regardless of our religious backgrounds, lack of any, or negative feelings about religion, we were surprised and often moved by the role of churches in various communities.

Whether it was the unexpected thrill of a post-concert accolade from a complete stranger, the embrace from parents of a deceased gay son, a standing ovation from a church congregation, applause and shrieks of laughter from vacationing families reacting to a conga line of drag queens at a rest stop, or the joy of serendipitous camaraderie shared with fellow singers at a Waffle House, we all experienced moments that were unexpected—and even transformative!

These were moments for which I'll forever be grateful – and ones I couldn't have experienced had it not been for a chorus' vision of demonstrating connection, support and understanding, and the tour that ultimately brought it to life. ♦

by FRED BAUMER

every other night, the performance halls we visited were filled with joy. The audiences clapped and sang along, cried, cheered and were brought to their feet from the same energy that got me back up again.”

Throughout the tour, we were profoundly educated and inspired by the way those we met represented their country. BGMC member Tyler Brewer said, “The starkest difference I noticed between the US and South Africa is that no matter how hard a person or family has fought to overcome poverty, violence, hunger, rampant abuse of their minds, bodies, and souls... every single person I met had one thing on their mind: ‘How do I help more people out of this?’”

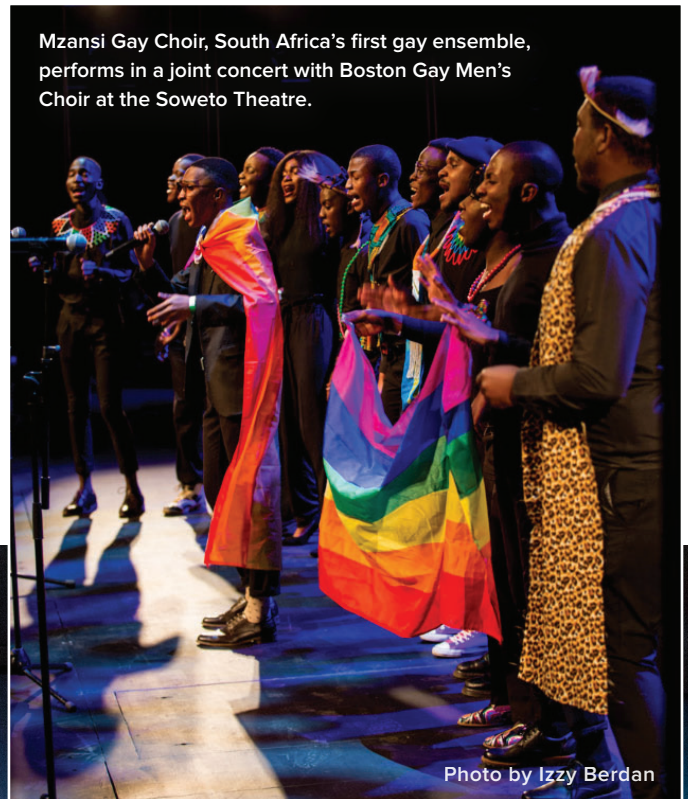
And, to South Africans we proudly represented our own country as the BGMC: a community based on love, music, passion, curiosity, respect, generosity, adventure, and fun. ♦

by AL INGRAM



Boston Gay Men's Chorus members connect with the local community by hearing stories and sharing their own.

Photo by Amanda Bauman



Mzansi Gay Choir, South Africa's first gay ensemble, performs in a joint concert with Boston Gay Men's Chorus at the Soweto Theatre.

Photo by Izzy Berdan



Boston Gay Men's Chorus performs at the first ever Pride Parade in George, South Africa.

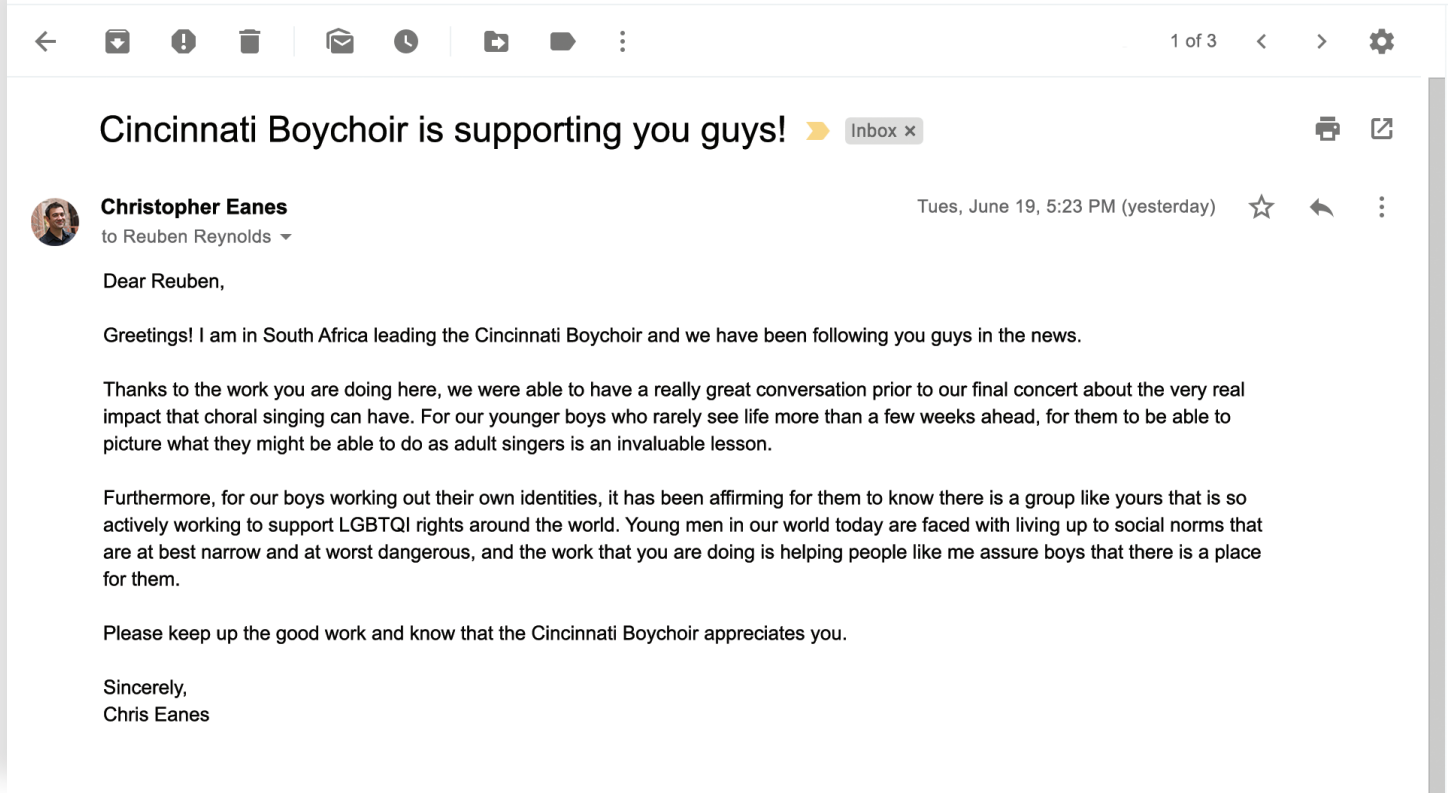
Photo by Amanda Bauman



Boston Gay Men's Chorus, directed by Reuben Reynolds, performs at the Great Hall of Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa, to benefit GALA - Memory in Action's "YOUth" initiative.

Photo by Izzy Berdan

Sometimes touring groups even have the power to be role models for other touring groups. Here, the Cincinnati Boychoir Artistic Director thanks the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus for setting an example for his students:



When Portland Gay Men’s Chorus toured China, it felt like a leap of faith into the unknown.

Would there be any problems traveling with a large and diverse group? Would we create controversy in the cities we visited? Would anyone come to the concerts? Would we have an impact? All of these questions were going through the Chorus’ members and leadership’s minds as we boarded our flight to Beijing.

It was surprising to learn that Chinese audiences come mostly from word of mouth. This was so different from our usual marketing strategy, but it worked. The audiences were large and very receptive.

We had the privilege to sing with two Chinese choruses in Shanghai (Shanghai Hyperbolic Singers) and Beijing (Beijing Queer Chorus). We were welcomed by PFLAG parents in Xi’an and Suzhou, where mothers had traveled from across China to attend and treat us to a delightful fashion show of traditional Chinese dresses called qipao. Each concert had a different mood and feel. Beijing was a beautiful homecoming since we had sung with members of the BQC when they visited Portland. Xi’an had heart and an incredibly warm welcome, Suzhou challenged us to perform in spite of our exhaustion, and Shanghai was a triumph of pure joy.

We were told PGMC presented a role model to the younger Chinese choruses. They saw members of all ages and gender identities who had been singing together for years, even decades. It is a simple yet profound message to say, “We are here, we are proud, we are diverse, and we love you.” By simply being who we are as the Portland Gay Men’s Chorus we demonstrated longevity as a group, strength of purpose, and a common goal.

It is hard to quantify the impact we had in the cities on our tour, but each chorus member came home from the tour with a knowledge that we had reached someone in a special way. Every member of the tour had a personal moment where we connected with one of our audience, a parent, or a fellow chorister. Whether it was a conversation with an audience member, or a spontaneous rendition of “Sure on This Shining Night” with some Shanghai singers backstage, every member of the tour had a story. Even with the significant language and cultural barriers we faced, the universal language of music allowed us to communicate, sharing mutual warmth and appreciation. ◆

by GWYNN GOODNER



Photo by Bill Barry



Photo by Bill Barry



Photo by Bill Barry



Photo by Rachel Flamm



Photo by Bill Barry

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Portland Gay Men's Chorus in concert with the Shanghai Hyperbolic Singers.

PFLAG mothers from across China treated the group to a fashion show of traditional Chinese dresses fashion show.

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus takes the stage in the Opera & Concert Hall of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, becoming the first official American LGBTQ choir to perform in China.

The chorus performed for happy, receptive audiences in Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai.

Group members enjoy tasting Chinese tea.

These visits may only be short, but leave a lasting impact for years to come!

Concert tours can benefit communities in any manner of ways, but all have the power to create lasting change.

The Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra performs in the Dvorak Hall of the Rudolfinum in Prague, raising money for the local organization Auto*Mat.

It's not hard to talk about the effects of tours on communities in broad strokes: The concerts are inspiring, locals are happy to welcome visitors, everyone feels warm and fuzzy. But what does impact actually look like?

Sometimes it looks like money raised for a local organization. In the past year across Europe, our groups raised over \$10,000 which benefited things like an unemployment center in Berlin, music education in Ireland, and mothers and children in need in Germany. ACFEA groups also helped contribute to an Alzheimer's society, a school in Burkina Faso via an Austrian association, a children's hospice in Northern Ireland, and good quality of urban life in Prague.

Occasionally, the fundraising doesn't come until after the tour. In 2016, the West Village Chorale, from New York, NY, ended their tour of Greece singing a concert with Ta Paidia tis Horodias, a local youth choir on the island of Tinos.

After they returned home, the Americans were inspired to pool donations, and soon had \$1,500 to send back to Greece. Of the gift, Georgia Bakogianni, the director, said, "It is like a gift coming from heaven. This is proof that music can bring people together and make us better!"

The impact doesn't have to be monetary, however, or even tangible. In Bucharest, Romania, the First Congregational Church Chancel Choir sang a concert to raise awareness of local LGBTI organization ACCEPT. Simply the presence of such a strong group in their corner strengthened the spirit of the local activists.



First Congregational Church Chancel Choir, from Bellevue, WA, in concert in Romania.

In Australia, we've arranged for many groups to perform in the Starlight Rooms in children's hospitals. "Starlight Rooms are equipped with closed circuit radio and television transmission which reaches every child's bed throughout the hospital," explained Robert Latimer, ACFEA Manager for Australia and

New Zealand. “Those kids who are bedridden and unable to enjoy performances in person can do so by means of the transmission. The impact on both the patients and the performers is truly an amazing and, in many instances, an emotional experience. It is such an honor to be welcomed into the Starlight Family.”

Another way to connect with the local community is by performing with a group, which is fairly common on our tours to many places around the globe. We often talk about how it’s an educational experience for traveling musicians, to sing or play alongside their peers from another part of the world. But it’s a great experience for the host group, too.

When in Colombia, the Colgate University Choir, from Hamilton, NY performed with the Coro de la Escuela in Villa de Leyva. “The town is trying to motivate young musicians and provide culture to its community, which is heavily affected by mass tourism,” noted Sylvia Garcia Marin, ACFEA’s Latin America Manager. “After the concert, the teacher and kids had lots of questions about Colgate’s repertoire. The teachers wanted scores and exchanged emails with the director in order to keep the dialogue open.”

Lycoming College Choir, from Williamsport, PA, had a similar experience, a hemisphere away. “This was truly a learning opportunity,” said the Fudan High School conductor, Shengzi-ong Yuan, after singing with Lycoming on their tour to China. “Not only is this exchange a good display of different cultural backgrounds, but a good opportunity to enlarge our vision musically and understand western choral music from various perspectives.”

Meeting locals is also a highlight in South Africa. The Kalamazoo Junior Symphony Orchestra spent a full day with the Soweto Theater Youth Orchestra, and also performed a joint concert with the Johannesburg Youth Orchestra. And in South Africa’s Garden Route, we’ve arranged many visits to the Life Community Center. Visitors might do a project like painting the jungle gym, or they might play with the kids in the daycare center.

“It is always a privilege for us at Life Community Services to have guests from all over the world to come and visit,” said David May, a center representative. “These visits are a great opportunity for the kids and staff to learn about different cultures. These visits may only be short, but leave a lasting impact for years to come!”

Whatever it is you give through your tour—funds for a program, a hand with a project, solidarity on an issue, or simply an hour’s worth of beautiful music—the effects extend far, wide, and long after you go home.

STRANGERS in a STRANGE LAND

by AMANDA BAUMAN

In the course of planning a concert tour, the knowledge, expertise and kindness of strangers is an invaluable element. The hospitality shown by hotel staff, coach drivers, couriers and concert hosts is an intangible thing. It can’t be booked on the internet, it can’t be budgeted into a tour, and it can’t be taken for granted. Every year, ACFEA sends dozens of groups and thousands of human beings around the globe, and it’s that welcome—those open arms—that turn an exercise in tourism into a life-changing, culture-crossing experience.

Over the past year, a light has been shined on how countries, organizations and individuals themselves respond to the needs of others, specifically refugees, but our encouragement of groups reaching out to and supporting refugees isn’t new.

In 2016, the Georgetown Day School Choir, from Washington, DC, sang for refugees at one of the largest shelters in Berlin. This past year, the West Village Chorale raised money for Actions Refugiés Montréal (part of Canadian Council for Refugees) at their concert in Montreal. In Erfurt, the Davenport First Presbyterian Church Choir raised money to, in part, fund a refugee project supporting children and mothers in one concert, and performed another in Wettin which was filmed and made into a short documentary by a local station which employs refugees, teaching them how to make films and present shows. Also in 2018, the Boston Gay Men’s Chorus spent an entire day in South Africa meeting and interacting with LGBTI refugees from other African nations, hearing harrowing stories of their journeys. *(More about this tour on page 10.)*


Are the needs of refugees on the same level as a group who needs a host choir in Spain? Obviously, no. But we can’t help but look at the way that we, as a relatively unscathed people, accept the offerings of people all over the world with a smile and a thank you. By reminding ourselves of the needs of others, we can make a point to return these kindnesses in our own ways.



**BELLEVUE FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
CHANCEL CHOIR**
Directed by Dennis Coleman
Accompanist: Laura Ouimette

**PRO-LGBTI CHRISTIANS
IN CONCERT**

Together for Equality,
Human Dignity and Family

 APOLLO111 THEATRE
STRADA ACTOR ION BREZOIANU 23-25
BUCHAREST

 THURSDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2018 7:30 PM
Free Entry All Welcome



Karen Moore
Chormitglied

Member of the Davenport First Presbyterian Church Choir on German TV discussing why helping refugees on their tour was so important to the group.



IN MEMORY: Andre Havard

Last year, the ACFEA family said goodbye to one of our closest friends and longest-standing colleagues, Andre Havard. He was known for his warmth and ever-present calm, and photography skills; sometimes he was not only the courier, but also the unofficial tour photographer. Along with his wife, Marianne, he was one of our most beloved and accomplished couriers. It's impossible to overstate the critical role that couriers play on a tour, and with Andre looking after them a group was in the safest, most caring, most passionate, and most diligent of hands. It is a great loss, not only for ACFEA, but for all who knew him.

At ACFEA Tour Consultants...

...we believe concert tours should be unique, inspiring, and dynamic. They have the power to change groups, individuals, and communities—and likewise, the world. We can help find the right tour for your group by listening closely to your interests, caring about your goals, and combining them with our global travel expertise and passion for the performing arts. For over 60 years, this has led us to create opportunities for life-changing experiences throughout the world time and time again.

Read more about our background at acfea.com/whyacfea



ACFEA staff and family at the Sacred Valley near Pisac, Peru during our 2018 Global Summit