



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Sweden, Estonia, Finland and Russia
Colorado Children's Chorale

- 3 Australia
Mercer Island High School Bands

- 4 South Africa
Ragazzi Boys Chorus

- 5 Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary
Davidson United Methodist Church Chancel and Handbell Choirs

- 5 China
Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra

- 6 Israel and Turkey
Boston Gay Men's Chorus

- 7 Cuba
Young Men's Ensemble of the Los Angeles Children's Chorus

- 8 The United Kingdom and Ireland
Mission Peak Chamber Singers

- 8 Canada
Texas A&M University Women's Chorus

- 9 Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria
St. Louis Children's Choirs

- 9 In Concert: Kosovo
American University Chamber Singers

- 10 Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Greece
Berkeley First Presbyterian Church Chancel Choir

- 10 Offices / Overseas Staff

- 11 North America Staff

- 12 Tours Around the World



1955–2015: From Then to Now

Photo captions on the back cover



Colorado Children's Chorale Adds More Tour Memories

by Deborah DeSantis, Artistic Director
Colorado Children's Chorale

The Colorado Children's Chorale has been touring exclusively with ACFEA since 2002, and our 2015 Baltics tour now lives in our memories with even more extraordinary experiences both on and off the stage. Our 36 young performers, 18 boys and 18 girls, reveling in the fact that they were NOT sitting in their respective middle school classrooms, embraced every moment of this fact-filled, fun-filled, performance-rich adventure.

We kicked off the tour in the beautiful auditorium at Kungsholmens Gymnasium in Stockholm, Sweden, for a packed house of high school students. The following day we met many new friends at the Adolf Fredrik's Music School, where we were hosted by students the same age as ours.

We visited the Vasa Ship Museum and the Skansen Open-Air Museum. From the Sami Camp, complete with grazing reindeer, to the working village, there was plenty to see. And thankfully, there was time for shopping, as we had Swedish kronor weighing heavy in our pockets!

On our overnight cruise to Estonia, we watched the sunset as we drifted



through the Stockholm archipelago. We woke up in Tallinn and toured the city with a wonderful local guide who shared the history of Estonia, land of the Singing Revolution. Having been a part of the demonstrations and celebrations as Estonia fought for its independence just over two decades ago, she truly brought history to life. At the Song Festival Grounds we climbed to the top of the 'bowl' and offered our own singing revolution. At Rakvere Castle, we jousted, climbed walls, shot arrows, made gun powder, sang in the dungeon and enjoyed a medieval feast.

In the center of the wonderfully preserved Old Town, we saw the 15th-century Town Hall, where we then performed the next evening. We sang and danced with abandon to an audience of sweet, very reserved ladies and gentleman. One woman put her hands up during every

song, clapping along quietly with the most delighted, shy smile on her face. Following the show, many came to tell me they were "moved to cry" more than a few times and would "never forget", unable to let go of my hand as they spoke. And this is why we tour.

The impetus for this tour was a residency in Turku, Finland, where we were hosted by the Turku Conservatory of Music, including workshops, homestays for our singers, and a joint performance in their beautiful performance hall. We were so graciously hosted, both on stage and off. Homestays

provide such an extraordinary experience to learn about a culture on a very personal level. We embraced every moment, from delicious Finnish delicacies including

US Ambassador to Finland Bruce Oreck takes a selfie with the Colorado Children's Chorale in the Rock Church in Helsinki, Finland



Mercer Island High School Bands Welcomed in Australia

AUSTRALIA



Colorado Children's Chorale at twilight in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia

bacon-wrapped reindeer, pulla and salmiakki, to the evening sauna. And always, the music. We learned to play the kantele, along with several Finnish folk songs. Our joint performance was a joyous event.

We reluctantly left our Turku families and moved on to Helsinki, and were delighted when many of them showed up that evening for our concert in the Rock Church! What a perfect venue for a choral concert, acoustically and visually stunning. We shared the stage with yet another excellent choir, the Chameleon Youth Choir, and our warm, receptive audience included the US Ambassador to Finland, Bruce Oreck. We had the honor of visiting, and singing for, President Sauli Niinistö and his wife at Mäntyniemi, their private home. It was beautiful and they were such gracious hosts, chatting with us for quite some time. Most importantly, we managed not to spill the delicious, very red lingonberry juice on the baby blue carpet and white furniture!

And then, St. Petersburg. We arrived by train, then drove straight to the Pushkin Cultural Centre for rehearsal in the charming, albeit challenging, hall. Small proscenium stage filled with a grand piano, large, heavy platforms, and a four-foot drop to the house with no stairs. Two local men patiently pushed and pulled that piano, inch by inch, until we found the sweet spot where the accompanist could see, with room for 36 singing and dancing kids. And, magically, two large red-carpeted step units appeared! We staged the show both on and off the stage, much to everyone's delight, opening with the Russian national anthem. The audience fiercely clapped along at every opportunity.

Stunning architecture, colorfully gleaming in the sunlight; borscht and potato pancakes; a tour of Gatchina Palace; a glorious final performance in St. Peter's Lutheran Cathedral; a celebratory farewell dinner; and I am out of words. Except to say, once again, "Bravo, ACFEA!" 🎵

by Jennifer McLellan, Tour Manager
Mercer Island High School Bands

We loved our trip to Australia!

Our recent adventure 'down under' checked all the boxes one could ever wish for in a student music group traveling experience. We performed in competitive environments as well as in fun entertainment venues. We worked with world-class directors, had exchanges with two Australian bands and immersed ourselves in Australian culture.

We arrived in Sydney and after some quick sightseeing were able to clinic and perform with John Lynch of the Sydney Conservatorium (the 'Juilliard of the Southern Hemisphere'). It was so remarkable to be in a performance space with such brilliant acoustics and musical history. Then, over the course of the next several days, we spent time with the boys from St. Patrick's College, Strathfield, both practicing and performing, which was profound for all the students – American and Australian alike.

Our competitive venue was at the Australian National Band Championships in Sydney. Our two concert bands competed in their categories against Australian bands from all over the country. We were so proud of our students and their performances and so thankful for the reception given to us by the Australians.

We spent time marching and performing at the Sydney Royal Easter Show where, it seemed, the entire population of Sydney came out to experience a loud, percussive, American marching band. Our

favorite part? When the large audience at the huge cricket stadium joined in with our rendition of "Waltzing Matilda". Australians are truly the most warm and welcoming people.

We spent the last third of our trip in the town of Newcastle, which is about 100 miles north of Sydney. We had some personal history with that city: one of our band directors, as a high school marching band student, had visited Newcastle in a similar cultural exchange. The city was so taken with the idea of an American marching band that they created their own marching band, The Marching Koalas. The Marching Koalas have, in the last 25 years, visited and performed at venues and contests around the globe. They hosted our band for three days. We were invited into homestays, ate crocodile, learned how to bush dance and performed for each other and together. It was a remarkable time for every single person on this trip. We cannot thank The Marching Koalas enough for welcoming all of us.

This trip was a monumental feat consisting of moving 109 students, 10 chaperones, concert and marching equipment 8,000 miles. Our time in Australia was beyond busy, with 11 performances and/or practices in eight days along with all the cultural (loved the outback wildlife reserve) and sightseeing tours. But, the reflections about the trip from all our students and adults were that it was a once-in-a-lifetime trip and was deeply meaningful on a personal, professional, intellectual and social level. 🎵



Mercer Island High School Bands with The Marching Koalas at Foreshore Park in Newcastle, Australia

The Joy of Singing in South Africa



by Joyce Keil, Director, Ragazzi Boys Chorus

Ragazzi's tour of South Africa was amazing and life-changing for all of us. The wide variety of experiences gave us a vivid understanding of the country and its people.

We landed in Durban and met our courier Pieter Myburgh. Pieter was a warm and knowledgeable host and he knew all the best places to go. The boys swam in the Indian Ocean and had dinner on the beach where the staff at the restaurant drummed and danced for us and we performed for them.

That evening, we sang with the boys from Kearsney College, a local prep school. After many years of singing "Shosholoza" at home, we were overwhelmed with the audience response when we sang it for Kearsney College. The audience roared and leapt to their feet. I suddenly realized in a more visceral way what this song about freedom means to the people here.

Next, we drove to the beautiful Drakensberg mountains and sang with the Drakensberg Boys Choir. Their campus has lots of monkeys and driving down the road we passed zebras and ostriches. The director of the choir taught our boys a new piece of music that we performed with them that afternoon on a live internet stream where our parents at home could watch the concert.

We then traveled to the Pilanesberg Game Reserve for a safari. On our very first outing we were very lucky and spotted many animals. The highlight was a large pride of lions with eight cubs. They walked right next to our vehicles on the way to a nearby lake. There were many elephants with young and we also spotted a baby giraffe run by with its mother.

We had a BBQ on the reserve that night with a huge bonfire and wonderful food. We sang African songs with the staff. On our way back to our lodgings we had a night safari.



Ragazzi Boys Chorus with the Tandri Sibeko School Choir in the Duduza township near Johannesburg, South Africa

We then moved on to Johannesburg. We sang in one of the informal settlements there called Duduza, where driving through you see nothing but small tin shacks. When we arrived at the hall the townspeople and students came out running, shouting, laughing and dancing. They hugged the boys as we got off the bus. The boys learned a song together with the local choirs and the people were beside themselves with excitement and joy. The concert was a completely new experience as the audience claps and cheers throughout the music. The roar at the end of each piece is deafening. Everyone wanted pictures with the boys. Afterwards, we donated our 70 sleeping bags and pillows to them. They waved their pillows and screamed as we left.

One of our chaperones exclaimed: "The people in this township are so joyful and

enthusiastic; some of them literally ran up and embraced the boys as we got off the bus. This is a beautiful experience and the fulfillment of my deepest desire for this tour to South Africa."

After a visit to the Apartheid Museum and a guided tour of Soweto, we made our way to the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls. It is very extravagant, with amazing facilities comparable to the best schools in the US. There are around 200 8th to 12th grade girls all on scholarship. We sang for them in their beautiful facilities. The girls could hardly contain themselves when our boys sang. We had dinner with them and then a tour of their campus.

For the final leg of our journey, we flew to Cape Town where the boys gave their final concert with the South African Youth Choir. The hall is incredible – all wood and wonderful acoustics. After the concert the African group spontaneously started singing in the lobby. Our boys joined in and the concert continued for another 30 minutes with most of the audience staying to listen! The two choirs were enjoying making music so much they could not stop singing.

The next day in Cape Town was a free day touring and we marveled at the scenery, the beautiful town and the amazing views along the coast. We took a boat to Seal Island, went shopping, saw penguins and had a final dinner bonanza.

This was a life-changing experience for all of us, creating bonds with people who live so far away but with whom we could share music. 🎵

Ragazzi Boys Chorus performs with Kearsney College Choir at Kearsney College in Botha's Hill, South Africa



Davidson UMC Choirs Connect with Local Ministries in Europe



Meeting locals while traveling abroad gives one a unique and personal exposure to life outside the US – chatting with shop owners, interacting with the wait staff at restaurants or mingling with the audience after a concert are common examples. However, some groups actively seek a deeper connection through exchanges and joint concerts. Kevin Turner and the members of the Chancel and Handbell Choirs at Davidson United Methodist Church are such people. During the initial planning of their recent tour of the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, Kevin started reaching out to Methodist churches in these countries, with churches in Krakow and Budapest eagerly inviting the group to visit, sing and share fellowship.

Of the experience, Reverend Turner said, “We really appreciated the opportunity to make connections with Methodists in Poland and Hungary. While we love performing

in historic cathedrals, our choir members treasured the opportunity to sing and ring for local Methodists and not just tourists. I am grateful that ACFEA allowed us the flexibility to work in these opportunities. Flexibility is the key word, seeing as how one venue required us to play handbells *al fresco* in a courtyard. That was when the real ministry of music happened on our tour. We enjoyed making these connections and learning about the lives of Polish and Hungarian people, and we enjoyed the challenge of singing in marquee level venues as well. This is why we use ACFEA on tour. They provide quality experiences for our choir members.” 📖

“Having toured many times over the last 25 years with ACFEA, I know concerts will be well planned, couriers will be helpful, and excursions will be educational and fun!”

*Sharon Paul, Director
University of Oregon Chamber Choir*



SRSYO in front of the giant billboard advertising their concert in the He Luting Concert Hall of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music

Santa Rosa Youth Orchestra in China



The Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra (SRSYO) is one of the oldest continuous youth orchestras in the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 1959 as the Sonoma County Junior Symphony, in 1994 the organization became an education program of the professional Santa Rosa Symphony. Today, the SRSYO is a premiere pre-professional performing ensemble.

For its 2015 tour, the SRSYO set its sights across the Pacific Ocean to China. This was the orchestra’s second tour with ACFEA (its first was to Germany and the Czech Republic in 2009). For the concerts in Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai,

Music Director Richard Loheyde prepared a variety of symphonic works by Chinese, North American and European composers. A particular highlight came during the orchestra’s first stop in Beijing, where the prominent Chinese composer Wang Xilin worked with the group in rehearsal for their

performance that evening of the *Torch Festival* movement from his *Yunnan Tone Poem*.

SRS Executive Director Alan Silow commented, “Although the travel, rehearsal and performance schedule was fairly arduous, the students and chaperones alike all said that it was a fabulous once-in-a-lifetime experience. The concerts were really well attended and enthusiastically received by the Chinese audiences. ACFEA took very good care of every detail of our travel, concert schedule and sightseeing adventures.”

Added Jane Shelly, SRSYO Education Outreach Coordinator, “I had a wonderful time on tour in China! Thanks to all the wonderful chaperones and staff who made this tour so successful. ACFEA provided us with such great tour guides and travel managers! Thanks for such a fun trip.” 📖



Davidson UMC Handbell Choir members share their handbells with locals after Davidson’s concert in the Evangelical Methodist Church in Krakow, Poland

Boston Gay Men's Chorus Inspires Change



Boston Gay Men's Chorus performs in front of thousands at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey

by Amanda Bauman
ACFEA Senior Tour Manager

There is some debate about who said it first, but when the words "Middle East" were uttered, the room fell silent, as we all took in what had just been said. One could almost hear the sound of a steam train engine starting to chug, creaking into a slow but steady rhythm. Soon, the conversation accelerated to a full-speed brainstorm. The Middle East would be exciting, if risky, for any group, but for this group, there were added challenges; for seated across from me at this table was the leadership of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus.



Boston Gay Men's Chorus overlooking Jerusalem, Israel

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) choruses are not strangers to pushing the envelope. In 1999, ACFEA took the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles to Russia, where the word "gay" had to be craftily omitted from some of the publicity. In 2005, the Boston Gay Men's Chorus itself experienced bomb threats in Poland. But, with a clearly defined mission – "to create musical experiences that inspire change, build community and celebrate difference" – the BGMC sought no ordinary tour. After months of research, the decision was made: BGMC would tour to Israel and Turkey in 2015. The group embarked on

"We are coming here as a group of individuals who have fought in the past and have experienced a particular level of equality. We continue to develop that term in our own environment in the US, but what does 'equality' mean for the rest of the world? What could it mean? What is the potential of that word?"

*David Bell, tour participant
Boston Gay Men's Chorus*

a packed ten-night itinerary, visiting four cities, and there were several experiences that were particularly impactful...

Tel Aviv is famous for being one of the most gay-friendly cities in the world. But, just an hour away in Jerusalem the LGBT community is still facing an immense struggle, with supporters up against (sometimes violent) conservatives at every turn. What we found there was a small but fervent group, in great need of support. With the partnership of Jerusalem Open House (JOH), an LGBT outreach organization, plans solidified for a concert at the YMCA, a beautiful facility in the center of the city. Tom Canning, Director of Development of JOH, said, "Boston Gay Men's Chorus is coming at the perfect time to kick off our initiative, to bring LGBT culture to Jerusalem. We see it as the next phase of the struggle."

The program was a mix of Broadway and pop, but also featured two reflective pieces: Stephen Schwartz's "Testimony",

written for the It Gets Better Project (a project whose goal is to provide hope for LGBT and other bullied teens), and a new work called "Peace", commissioned by the BGMC from composer Joshua Shank, who accompanied the group on tour. The latter used lyrics taken entirely from text written by BGMC singers, all of whom completed the sentence "I was at peace when...". They include: "I was at peace when I looked in your eyes. I was at peace when I held my son's hand in the incubator before he died. I was at peace when I looked in the mirror and finally liked who I saw."

Throughout the audience were couples (gay and straight), mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, holding hands, some crying. The finale, Katy Perry's "Firework", was complete with colorful ribbons and choreography. The joy in the room was palpable, and the concertgoers gushed with thanks. One audience member said, "There's never been something like this in Jerusalem, and I have been here for over thirty years!"

To understand what happened in Turkey, some background is necessary. The group was slated to perform at the Zorlu Performing Arts Center, a state-of-the-art theater in Istanbul. Just one month before the tour, the concert was abruptly cancelled for political reasons. The concert, which was to happen during Istanbul's Pride weekend, had been generating a lot of support from the LGBT community, and an equal amount of opposition from the country's high-powered, right-leaning political parties. Unfortunately, the powers that be forced the decision, and BGMC was left without a concert venue for a Saturday in June.

Since the announcement of the choir's visit months earlier, the LGBT group at Boğaziçi University had been publicly

supportive of the impending visit, and as soon as news broke of the cancellation they came forward with a generous offer to host the concert on their campus. ACFEA and our Turkish partner, Ilker Ersil, worked tirelessly with the university and the US Consulate, and the resulting performance was beyond anyone's imagination. In addition to an enormous, professional stage, there was a mixing board and four cameras that were live-edited to jumbotrons that enabled the entire audience to watch and listen, no matter where they were. The 1,000 chairs filled up quickly, and another 2,000 people filled in behind them. The choir gave its best concert of the tour, and left the jubilant audience screaming for more.

The last day of the tour was the scheduled date of the Istanbul Pride parade. The group, still high from the previous night's concert, gathered and headed to the staging ground for the parade. As they approached Taksim Square, they were met by police donning riot gear. Through a translator, the group learned that the government had cancelled the parade an hour before the planned start time and that the singers could be arrested in accordance with anti-protest laws. Soon, BGMC learned of throngs of LGBT activists being attacked with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons on Istiklal Street, the would-be parade route. And so, after much discussion with the police and the US Consulate, the decision was made to return to the hotel.



Members of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus react to the news that the Istanbul Pride parade had been cancelled by the government

Two days earlier, the BGMC had been welcomed by the US Consul and his husband to a party at their home, where everyone celebrated the US Supreme Court's decision on marriage equality, which was announced earlier that day. The juxtaposition of that triumph with what happened at Taksim Square just two days later was hard to process.

As complicated as the situation in Istanbul was, it proved to be an incredibly poignant moment, as all were reminded of the struggles faced by LGBT people across the globe. If anything, the group's resolve to fulfill its mission was strengthened even more. 🇺🇸



Members of the Young Men's Ensemble of the Los Angeles Children's Chorus are driven in style to their farewell dinner in Havana, Cuba

CUBA!!



ACFEA has been sending groups to Cuba since 1998, starting with the Oakland Youth Orchestra. Due to the vagaries and vicissitudes of US government policy, these projects have ranged from the relatively straightforward to the almost impossible, with today's situation being decidedly at the straightforward end of the scale.

With our long experience in the country, and having Sylvia Garcia Marin, our Latin America manager, based in nearby Guadalajara, Mexico, we are very excited about the unique opportunities that we can offer to our groups, as we did for the Young Men's Ensemble of the Los Angeles Children's Chorus in June, 2015.

We have arranged six tours for LACC's Concert Choir since 1992, but this, the seventh, was our first with the Young Men's Ensemble, which is directed by Steven Kronauer. The planning process took place right over the time when the US government was relaxing the rules regarding travel to Cuba, so unfortunately a good deal of paperwork was prepared to comply with rules that disappeared overnight. There remain, however, some special hurdles to negotiate, and we are happy to lend groups our expertise in this area.

The Young Men's Ensemble flew on AeroMexico via Mexico City to Havana, one of easiest and most reliable ways of getting there until such time as regular scheduled flights are allowed from the USA. They were met by Sylvia herself,

whose passion for Cuba makes her want to be the courier for all our groups there.

Three full days in Havana allowed the group plenty of time for sightseeing, visiting a handicraft market and exploring Ernest Hemingway's haunts, as well as giving a formal evening concert with two local choirs and achieving one of its primary objectives: a workshop with the renowned men's ensemble, Sine Nomine.

From there they moved to Trinidad for two nights, stopping en route in Cienfuegos for some sightseeing. Their time in Trinidad was fairly relaxed, allowing the young men to be tourists in this UNESCO World Heritage Site, described by Lonely Planet as "one-of-a-kind, a perfectly preserved Spanish colonial settlement where the clocks stopped ticking in 1850 and – apart from the tourists – have yet to restart."

The next day they gave a concert in Santa Clara with another esteemed Cuban men's choir, the Coro AudiNos de Santa Clara, in the Teatro La Caridad. Then, it was back to Havana, with a long-awaited stop at a beach on the way. The final concert was in a beautiful church with their new friends from Sine Nomine, after which they set off for the farewell dinner in a fleet of vintage American cars. What a wonderfully Cuban way to end this great adventure, of which Steven Kronauer said, "We had a wonderful trip, Hugh [Davies, President, ACFEA North America]. Thank you very much for bringing us Sylvia, the best tour organizer I have ever met. The driver and tour guide were great as well." 🇺🇸

Amazing Venues and Standing Ovations



an interview with Michael Morris, Director, Mission Peak Chamber Singers

What was the goal of the tour?

This is an interesting question and one that the Mission Peak Chamber Singers actually discussed throughout the discernment, planning and development of the tour. It really comes down to the desire of the MPCS to constantly grow and develop in skill, repertoire and experience both at our home base of Fremont, California as well as the greater San Francisco Bay Area. A tour challenges the ensemble to strive for its best, perform in unfamiliar situations and to become a better choir. In addition, the chance to share cultures, traditions and our art through music are very powerful goals.

Why did the group pick the United Kingdom and Ireland?

MPCS developed three potential tours. We then asked ACFEA to prepare tour concepts for each of these possible tours. MPCS then voted on which tour we preferred and a tour of England, Wales and Ireland won by an overwhelming margin. There were several deciding factors – it was a region of the world that many of our singers had not traveled to, the desire to see the lands of our heritage with its history and fabulous churches and museums, the opportunity to perform in amazing venues, and it didn't hurt that the native language was familiar to us!

Was there a favorite performance on tour? What made it so special?

This is a difficult question because I can literally say that each and every performance was truly special and amazing! We had a total of six formal concerts and one service participation at St. Fin Barre's Cathedral in Cork, Ireland. The audiences were all kind, attentive and gracious and we were very well received by all attendees. We even received three standing ovations. All in all, each performance was special and unique!

The very first concert of the tour was in Chester, England in St. Mary's Centre, a former church that is now a community performance venue. The venue is rather new, and, as it turns out, we were the first choir to perform there! The audience was more than twice as large as expected, there were at least three local choirs in attendance, and the audience was extremely enthusiastic. One of the



Mission Peak Chamber Singers performs in St. Mary's Centre in Chester, England

community choirs was so excited that they asked if they could sing for us after the concert was over. They were delightful, we felt very honored and a very special and memorable cultural exchange took place.

Did you depart from your normal programming at home for this tour?

We did not depart from the kind of choral music that we perform at home, however, the music was chosen with three goals in mind: 1) A shared musical heritage. I chose music for the first half of the concert that was from the British Isles, including William Byrd and Philip Stopford, with the music for the second half all by American composers; 2) Music that had both organ and piano accompaniment (our staff accompanist, Janet Holmes, is an exceptional organist AND pianist!) mixed with some *a cappella* selections; 3) We have many outstanding composers who live in the San Francisco Bay Area and so we were delighted to present Henry Mollicone, Lothar Bandermann and David Conte in the American music section.

You collaborated with a Welsh men's chorus, including joint singing. How would you describe that experience?

We had the fortunate opportunity to perform a joint concert with the Penrhyn Male Choir (Côr y Penrhyn) in St. Mary's Church in Betws-y-Coed, Wales. It was an amazing evening of song, cultural exchange and visceral audience reaction. This was one of our standing ovations and it was rousing! I was very surprised to find out that the MPCS is the first SATB mixed choir to perform at St. Mary's in the long memory of the church staff and music director.

At many of our concerts we discovered that we were unique with our repertoire, the refined caliber of MPCS, the fact that we are an independent, community choir and that we are a mixed SATB choir. This tour was amazing, and I look forward to the day that we can go back to these beautiful, remarkable and gracious countries. 🇺🇸

Texas A&M University's 13th ACFEA Tour



ACFEA is very honored that Texas A&M University has toured exclusively with us for many years with its three choral ensembles – the Singing Cadets (the flagship men's chorus), the Century Singers (the SATB group) and the Women's Chorus: 13 tours over 21 years.

It was the Women's Chorus's turn in 2015, and after giving Mexico serious consideration they decided on Québec as the destination. The uniqueness of Québécois culture, its feeling of foreignness while being part of North America, and its relative affordability due to the weaker Canadian dollar made this a compelling choice.

After a conventional concert tour of Germany with the Century Singers in 2014, director Eric Posada asked for a different experience for the Women's Chorus: he wanted to offer their talents and artistry to those who would be unlikely to attend a formal evening concert. So, they sang to the elderly, poor, homeless and abused at a women's shelter in Montréal, a retirement home in Québec City and a soup kitchen in Saguenay. The evening before they sang at the soup kitchen for the clients, they gave a short concert for donors to the charity, as a way of saying thanks for their support. They also sang at a Mass in the Shrine of our Lady of the Cape in Trois-Rivières. This was very well received by the congregation and was followed by the opportunity to hear the grand organ and sing a couple of pieces in the main basilica – quite a thrill!



Texas A&M University Women's Chorus director Eric Posada with the mayor of Saguenay, Jean Tremblay

So, in the course of nine days they were able to spend time in the major cities of the province, see the rarely visited northeast corner, and give great joy to hundreds of people who do not often have the opportunity to hear great music beautifully sung.

We are now looking forward to taking the Singing Cadets on their 2016 adventure to Turkey and the Czech Republic. 🇺🇸

St. Louis Children's Choirs Reunite with Choral Friends



St. Louis Children's Choirs performs with the Jitro Children's Choir in the Church of the Holy Saviour in Prague, Czech Republic

The friendships created by making music with an ensemble can be some of the best in one's life. One of the most cherished benefits of going on a concert tour is the chance to either deepen these friendships or make new ones – and on some tours, especially lucky groups get to do both. The St. Louis Children's Choirs was one such lucky group on its tour of Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria.

In Prague, the group reunited with the Jitro Children's Choir, which had visited St. Louis on one of their own concert tours, where they performed with SLCC. Now, several years later, it was SLCC's turn to hop the ocean for a visit. "We enjoyed a special time of singing and camaraderie with the Jitro Children's Choir in Prague," Heather McKenzie Patterson, Choir Manager, said.

"In preparation for the tour, our choir worked diligently to learn a Czech folk song, 'Velet, vtacku.' It was a wonderful opportunity for our students to perform it with native Czech speakers. Our students loved hearing them sing in Czech, and it was so special for the two choirs to sing together. It was most surprising when our choir performed 'America the Beautiful' and the Jitro girls began to sing along from their seats in the audience. Their enthusiasm for one of our most patriotic songs was especially moving for me."

A trip to Leipzig wouldn't be complete without visiting one of choral music's greatest friends, JS Bach. In fact, an informal recital at the Thomaskirche was the first performance of the tour. Of that concert, Heather said, "I had the pleasure of sitting near Bach's organ and listening to the singers perform one of his beloved cantatas, just as it would have been heard hundreds of years ago. An unforgettable experience!"

The singers also visited Teisendorf, near Salzburg, where they met and performed with the Teisendorfer Gospelchor. It was an especially fun and festive end to the tour, with the audience requesting two encores. "The resounding applause at the end of the night stays in our hearts and minds as a fitting conclusion to a spectacular tour," Heather said. 📺

In Concert

American University Chamber Singers in Kosovo

The American University Chamber Singers are not strangers to new destinations. Their last tour included stops in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Perm and Kazan, Russia, the last of which was an as-of-yet unvisited city by any ACFEA group. The excitement of that experience carried over to their 2015 tour, when the AU Chamber Singers became ACFEA's first group to visit Kosovo. The entire tour included stops in Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia, earning the tour the award for most border crossings of any ACFEA tour this year.

As the group prepared to visit Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, we were all delighted to find out that the very weekend they were scheduled to be there would be the first weekend of an international contemporary music festival: ReMusica. The group was accepted to perform on the second night of the festival, in the new, large and almost-finished Mother Teresa Cathedral. The photo (below) was taken during the group's performance of *Kondalilla*, by Stephen Leek. 📺



American University Chamber Choir performs in the Mother Teresa Cathedral in Pristina, Kosovo

"I could not be more pleased with the level of support and service I received for our tour. From the moment we signed on, throughout the planning process, to the tour itself, everything was exceptionally well managed and organized. Thank you for helping to make this a wonderful and memorable trip!"

Joel Scrapper, Director, University of South Carolina Aiken Choir

Berkeley Blazes through the Balkans



The Chancel Choir from Berkeley's First Presbyterian Church, directed by Mitchell Covington, redefined off the beaten track on their 2015 tour. Of the five countries they visited (Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia and Greece), three (Croatia, Montenegro and Macedonia) didn't exist until the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990's, and Albania was effectively unvisitable (unless you were Chinese or North Korean) until 1991.

This was Berkeley's third tour with ACFEA, and the previous two demonstrated their proclivity for the unusual: Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany on the first, and Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland on the second. They are always looking for ways in which their performances can be expressions of their faith as well as simply concerts, and the repertoire is carefully conceived to achieve this. This time, they sang a Mass in Dubrovnik and concerts (three of them joint with local choirs) in Dubrovnik, Kotor, Ohrid, Veles and Katerini – yes, you may consult an atlas! They also participated in an outreach program in Skopje, arranged through the church.

Let's let the group describe the experiences they had. Mitchell Covington wrote from Skopje:

"It's hard to believe that we are already on the final days of our tour. Words cannot express what a fantastic trip we are having. Accommodations, tours and meals have all been superb. Performance venues have been stunningly beautiful, and concerts have been extremely well attended with standing room only for all of the evening performances. The cities we have visited have been lovely and interesting. [Couriers] Dragana and Savvas are

the best! Professional, efficient, thoughtful, very much in control, yet kind, friendly and flexible. My choir members simply adore both of them. Thank you so much."

Janice Kolberg, the group's tour coordinator, wrote after the tour:

"I just wanted to let you know that we had a wonderful time on the tour. I was surprised by the beauty and interesting history of all the places we visited. Each of the venues in which we performed was quite different and interesting with enthusiastic audiences at each concert. Our couriers, Dragana and Savvas, were great and took wonderful care of everyone. Given the busy schedule and complicated logistics in some places, I think things went very well. All of the accommodations were very good."

After the main tour finished in Thessaloniki, a smaller group of about 20 went to Istanbul for four days of sightseeing in that fabulous city.

We learned before the tour that Mitchell Covington was to leave his position at the church to allow more time for composing and teaching. We are honored that this tour was the last major project of his 24-year tenure and grateful for all the business that he has given us, and we wish him much happiness and fulfillment in the next phase of his life. 📺



Photo courtesy of Savvas Farangas

Berkeley First Presbyterian Church Chancel Choir performs in Sveta Sofija Cathedral in Ohrid, Macedonia

Office Locations

Philadelphia
San Francisco
Seattle

Bairnsdale, Australia
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Guadalajara, Mexico
Hong Kong
London
Rättvik, Sweden
Shanghai
St. Petersburg
Vicenza, Italy

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Tour Manager, London

Sylvia Garcia Marin
Manager, Latin America

Tony Hastings
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Anna Lavery
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Regional Representative, Poland

Sue Peter
Regional Representative, Germany

Séverine Robitaille
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Regional Representative
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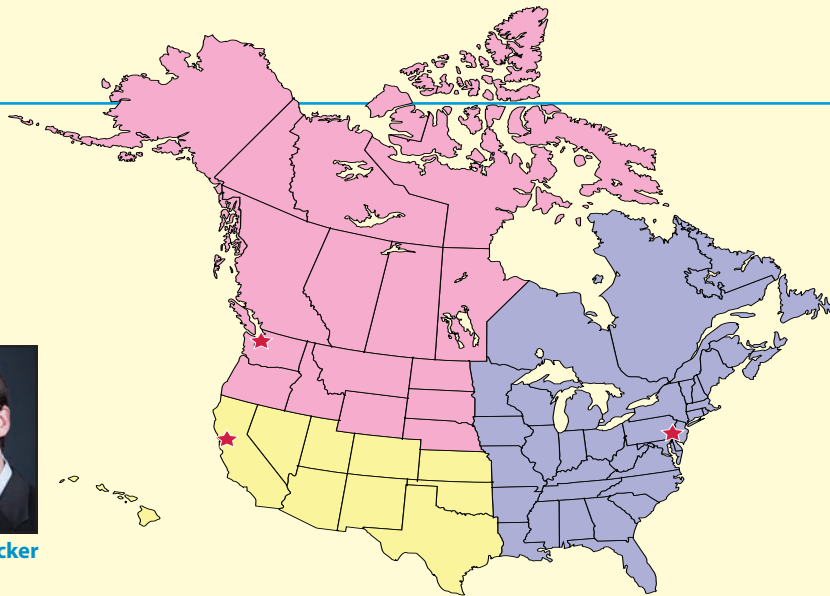
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AMANDA BAUMAN

is a Senior Tour Manager in the Philadelphia office. Amanda has been performing in bands and choirs her entire life, including several ensembles at her alma mater, Duquesne University, and the Young New Yorkers' Chorus, for which she also served as board member for several years. She has travelled extensively in Europe, South America and Asia, but her true passion is Africa, where she met her husband, Maurice. Amanda currently sings in the Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia.

HUGH DAVIES

is President of ACFEA North America, based in the San Francisco office. Born in England, he has a master's degree from Cambridge, where he sang at King's College under Sir David Willcocks. Hugh sang professionally in Europe, including with the Monteverdi Choir, before teaching music in Australia. He now performs as a soloist and with several professional ensembles in the Bay Area. Hugh was on the board of Chorus America for nine years, and was President of American Bach Soloists for six years and now serves as their Treasurer.

COLLEEN EVANS

is a Tour Administrator in the Philadelphia office. She graduated from American University with degrees in Vocal Performance and Business Administration. Colleen has been singing in choirs since an early age, beginning with the children's choir at her church, followed by multiple choral groups at her high school. While at American, Colleen sang with the American University Chamber Singers

and toured with them throughout Russia. Colleen has also traveled within Europe, Central America and Australia, and is excited to visit countries she has yet to explore.

RACHEL FLAMM

is a Tour Manager in the Seattle office. Originally from the Chicago area, Rachel sang with the Palatine Children's Chorus for 14 years, touring with them throughout North America and Europe. She graduated with a degree in Music from Carleton College, where she played clarinet and sang as well as studied abroad in Germany and Austria. Rachel has also traveled throughout Europe, Asia, Mexico, South Africa, Israel and Jordan. She currently sings with the Northwest Chamber Chorus.

EMILY HENRIKSEN

is a Tour Manager in the Philadelphia office. She grew up in Missouri, where she sang with the St. Louis Children's Choirs for nine years, including on tours to Russia and Scotland, and continues to sing in choirs to this day. Emily received degrees in Music and Magazine Journalism from Drake University, during which time she traveled to Paris for a study abroad program and toured Europe with the university's choir. She has also traveled extensively throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

JEFFERSON PACKER

is a Tour Manager in the San Francisco office and is a lifelong singer and pianist. He began touring internationally as a performer while a student at Harvard, where he received a degree in Music and Romance Languages and Literatures,

Our goal is to provide unique opportunities for memorable and life-changing experiences.

before going on to pursue a master's degree in Piano Performance at San Francisco State University. Jefferson has lived in Greece and Italy, and toured Germany and the Czech Republic as Manager of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra. He is particularly fond of Latin America for his own travels, but there's nowhere in the world that he wouldn't like to see, or see again.

JEFFERY THYER

is a Tour Manager in the Philadelphia office. He grew up in Indiana and holds a bachelor's degree in Church Music from Indiana Wesleyan University and a master's degree in Choral Conducting from Ball State University. Previously, Jeffery was Director of Program Development for Distinguished Concerts International New York (DCINY), a concert production company in New York City, and Conference Consultant for the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA). He currently sings with the Greater South Jersey Chorus. Jeffery has traveled to several countries in Europe as well as to Turkey, Mexico and Nicaragua.

Unseen but Indispensable

The Tour Managers are ACFEA's front line, but there are many others in our organization who make our tours happen. We gratefully acknowledge the mighty efforts of:

Bill Barber
Group Travel Manager

Jackie Cyr
Business Assistant

Christine McLaughlin
General Manager

Greg Newell
Marketing Manager

Ken Olson
Operations Manager

Andréa Wallis
Operations Administrator

Performance Tours from Around the World

Front Cover Photo Captions

Top: Our first tour: Penn State University Chapel Choir 1955 tour of the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France and Holland

Second from top: Colorado Children's Chorale performs in the Rock Church in Helsinki, Finland

Second from bottom: Members of the Young Men's Ensemble of the Los Angeles Children's Chorus with members of the Cantorías Coralillo and Solfa of the Schola Cantorum Coralina in Havana, Cuba

Bottom left: A member of Homewood-Flossmoor High School Orchestra during the group's 2015 concert tour of Spain
Photo courtesy of Marianne Swienink-Havard

Bottom right: Boston Gay Men's Chorus in the YMCA Mary Nathaniel Golden Hall in Jerusalem, Israel



Members of El Camino Youth Symphony during their 2015 concert tour of Spain
Photo courtesy of Marianne Swienink-Havard



Chicago Consort in the Apollon Theatre in Syros, Greece



Myers Park United Methodist Church Chancel Choir in St. Giles Church in Nymburk, Czech Republic



Members of Kettering Children's Choir are treated to an up-close view of an elephant during a visit to the Pilanesberg Game Reserve in South Africa



Cincinnati Boychoir at Manly Beach in Sydney, Australia



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