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Pacific Chorale Takes French Music to Paris

"Thank you for bringing our music back to us!" This was one of many accolades accorded Pacific Chorale (conductor, John Alexander), from Orange County, California, during its mini-season of concerts in Paris.



The concept was simple, but it took a chorus the caliber of the 100-strong Pacific Chorale, and a director with the vision of Alexander, to carry it off: spend nine days in Paris, giving four concerts of four different programs in four major churches. Some of the music had not been heard in Paris for decades, and those scores were hard to find: one was even tracked down in Australia! Three of the concerts featured music by composers who had worked in the churches where the performances were given, and two of them were with orchestra. Furthermore, two of the

Pacific Chorale . continued on page 2

Empire State Youth Orchestra Shines in China and South Korea

by Amanda Bauman, ACFEA Tour Manager

In the spring of 2010, I got a call from one of my favorite people, Beth Antonio, Tour Coordinator of the Empire State Youth Orchestra in Albany, New York. Beth and I had worked on ESYO's 2008 tour of Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria, and I was excited to help design its next tour. I expected her to say the orchestra had decided on Italy or, maybe, France. She really threw me

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Pacific Chorale rehearses for its concert in La Madeleine in Paris

Empire State Youth Orchestra at the Yeosu Expo Concert Hall



Santa Clara Chorale Experiences the Splendor of South America



When we asked then artistic director Ryan Brandau for a few quotations to include with the article we were writing about Santa Clara Chorale's tour of Uruguay and Argentina, he took the ball and ran with it. We love it when directors give feedback, and it doesn't get much better than this:

The trip crescendoed beautifully, starting in the urban capital of Uruguay, Montevideo; continuing to an adorable, historic coastal town, Colonia; and peaking in the urban and cultural splendor of Buenos Aires, in Argentina.

Our performance venues were beautiful, intimate, and nicely suited to our needs. Each of our three performances was well attended, by enthusiastic, warm, appreciative audiences. They were unabashed, showing their enjoyment on their faces so much that my own singers' faces lit up in a way I'd never seen before. I only wish I had had eyes in the back of my head to see it too! During our first concert, in Montevideo, two of our singers sang *The Flower Duet* from *Lakmé*, beautifully. The rapt audience burst out into the most enthusiastic, untempered applause one could imagine. We loved the sense of connection they gave us while we sang.

It was a delight to perform with local ensembles on each concert, to meet the singers and listen to their music. We loved having a workshop with a local director in Buenos Aires. The reception put together for us by the local choir in Montevideo provided us a great opportunity to 'talk shop', meeting halfway in the middle between Spanish speakers with a little English and English speakers with a little Spanish. Discussions about music were easiest: it's a language we all understood!

All of the trip logistics flowed along without a hitch. I was delighted, as the leader of the Chorale, to have seemingly nothing to take care of or worry about except the music.

The highlight of the stay in Montevideo was, for me, getting dressed up and heading out for a modern dance performance at the beautiful, historic Teatro Solís. To see such a great performance in such a beautiful space was truly special.

Colonia offered an entirely different feel from the two capital cities we stayed in during the tour. A quaint collection of centuries-old cobblestone streets and colonial-era buildings, perched on the banks of the massive Rio de la Plata, Colonia offered all of our singers the chance to stroll around and take in the history of the colonial era in Uruguay.

Buenos Aires throbbed with an urban, high-energy beat. We felt it immediately at the tango show our first night. Some of the members had been preparing for our trip by taking a series of tango lessons with an Argentine native back in California in the months leading up to the tour. They went out for a fabulous evening of dancing to try out their newly acquired skills. On a later night, everyone was feeling the energy of the city so much that we had an impromptu sing-a-long and tango dance in the hotel lobby.



Santa Clara Chorale performs in the Basilica Cathedral in Colonia, Uruguay

Food, naturally, played a big part in everyone's experience in all three cities. Singers sampled a wide variety of restaurants, from tiny local cafes on side streets to major restaurants considered to be among the finest in their cities. Steak was a highlight for many; I shudder to think how many

pounds of beef we consumed. And yet the vegetarians among us ate like kings, too. We enjoyed the local delicacy, *dulce de leche*, in all sorts of ways – ice cream, *alfajores*, and more.

Having traveled on an ACFEA tour before, I had high expectations and hopes for our courier and guides. They didn't disappoint. Our courier, Claudia, and our guide during our time in Uruguay were both fantastic. They exuded the South American warmth and hospitality we were hoping to find, and readily and happily answered every question we had. They were natives of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, respectively, and their love for their hometowns was infectious. Everyone was emotional when it came time to say goodbye. 🇺🇾

Pacific Chorale . continued from page 1

concerts were accompanied by two of Paris's most distinguished organists.

Here is a summary of the programs:

St. Etienne-du-Mont (Duruflé's church, with orchestra and Thierry Escaich, Duruflé's successor, organ)

Motets by Escaich, Paulus and Lauridsen

Duruflé: Requiem

St. Suplice (Widor's church, with Daniel Roth, Widor's successor, and Thierry Escaich, organ)

Motets by Roth, Widor, Dupré, Messiaen and Poulenc

Organ works by Widor (including the famous Toccata, of course, on the organ for which it was written)

Widor: Mass for two choirs and two organs (a work written for this church, but nonetheless almost unperformable due to the spatial complexities involved, and which saw Alexander doing world-class work as traffic cop)

St. Louis-en-l'Île (a delightful church on an island next to Notre-Dame)

This concert featured Pacific Chorale's professional core, the John Alexander Singers. It was probably a Josquin Mass and Allegri's *Miserere* that attracted the audience, but it was Bernstein's Chorus from *The Lark* and, most compellingly, David Lang's *The Little Match Girl Passion* that made the most impact.

La Madeleine (Fauré's church, with orchestra and Thierry Escaich, organ)

Motets by Alexander, Poulenc and Lili Boulanger (a student of Fauré's)

Fauré: Requiem

Unique Touring Partnership Combines Stanford University's Chamber Chorale and Taiko Ensemble



An interview with Stephen Sano, chair of the music department at Stanford University. In June, he took the Stanford Chamber Chorale and Taiko Ensemble on a tour of the United Kingdom.

What was unique about touring with two very different ensembles?

Logistics was the biggest challenge, since none of the performance events between the two groups overlapped. We planned carefully for this with dedicated logistics support for each group – specifically,



Stanford Taiko Ensemble performs in Bartholomew Square as part of the 2012 Brighton Japan Festival

people who knew exactly what kind of support would be needed for the unique needs of each ensemble. The one frustration for me was that I wasn't able to be at all the performance events for each group!

It would be hard to imagine a more suitable climax to a wonderful week of performances in great Parisian churches than this last concert on a Sunday afternoon. A standing room only audience of 2,000 packed the Madeleine, and Pacific Chorale, still on top form after a demanding week, made every moment one of truly telling effect. After the concert, chorale members, many with decidedly damp eyes, made their way to a restaurant for a suitably festive farewell dinner. 🍷

The key is definitely planning, organization and having the right people in key positions for logistics support. With the right people in place, you give them a job and get out of their way!

Stephen Sano, Music Department Chair

Why did you choose the United Kingdom for this tour?

Our Chamber Chorale tours to the UK every fourth year. I have a special fondness for British choral repertoire since I learned much of it as a boy

treble singing in the choral tradition of the men and boys choir. And singing that repertoire *in situ* is always an incomparable experience for our students; there's nothing like singing Byrd in Lincoln Cathedral, or the Stanford Motets in Trinity College Chapel in Cambridge. Or singing Jonathan Harvey's work in St. John's College Chapel, Cambridge, which we were honored to do this tour. Or singing Evensong in one of the great British cathedrals, giving our students the chance to understand the development of liturgy and music in that

particular tradition. We were originally scheduled to do a UK tour in 2011, but Stanford Taiko received an invitation from Kagemusha Taiko, one of the UK's finest taiko ensembles, to headline the opening concert of the UK Taiko Festival this summer. So we decided to take both ensembles on tour together this year.

What surprised you the most about the tour?

I was (thankfully) surprised that the dollar remained reasonably strong for the duration of our tour. Seriously, I think the absolutely unbridled enthusiasm the audiences showed for the taiko art form was so wonderful to see. Since the context for the art form is completely different compared to the States – i.e., there is no Japanese American community and its evolutionary activism that was so contributory to the growth of the art form here – it was thrilling to see British audiences so completely captivated by the drumming.



Stanford Chamber Chorale in Exeter Cathedral

What were the tour highlights for the group? Were they different for the Chamber Chorale and Stanford Taiko?

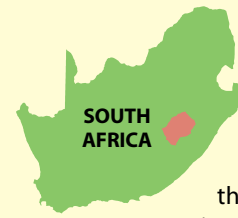
Learning to live and perform on a professional touring schedule is always a great experience for students. There is a level of artistry and professionalism that happens on tour that's unique and pretty incomparable. For the Chorale, our residency at Exeter Cathedral was an incredibly rich experience. They really got to know that building and had the opportunity to dig into Evensong repertoire – psalm chant, responses and music written for the optimized configuration of *decani* and *cantoris*. For Stanford Taiko, the opportunity to bring North American taiko to British audiences, most of whom had never experienced it before, was definitely a highlight. Also the teaching – for our taiko students to have the opportunity to teach some of the UK's most gifted music students in workshop settings was very special, indeed.

Do you have any advice for other multi-talented directors who might be considering taking more than one group on tour?

Hahaha – not multi-talented! We actually had a good foundation to build upon from our 2008 tour when we took 350 Stanford musicians (Chamber Chorale, Choral Union, Orchestra, and Stanford Taiko) to China for three weeks. Compared to that, this was a much more streamlined affair! 🍷

Head Royce School's Colla Voce Sings and Blogs in South Africa

The Head Royce School's Colla Voce spent almost two weeks in South Africa, all the while keeping a blog, authored by Kelly Brown and Jim Graham, two of the school's teachers who accompanied the group. The blog was a great way for family and friends to keep up with the happenings on tour, and for the travelers to capture their experiences in the moment. Here are a few memorable excerpts:



First the all-girls choir performed, donned in their gorgeous brown and orange dress, and they blew the roof off! Their voices were magical, their moves were unified and inspiring, and got the crowd of 250+ moving and



The Holy Cross Anglican Church Choir in Soweto

June 14

There is no room for minced words here, folks. Our lives are no longer the same after our full-day and evening tour of Soweto. Tonight's joint concert was one of the most powerful experiences in my life. South Africa is fascinating and filled with endless smiles and genuine warmth.

June 15

After a group lunch in the Museum Cafe, we had a bus tour of Jo'burg and then headed back to the hotel for



Head Royce Colla Voce with Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy School Choir in Henley-on-Klip

a quick change into our HRS Colla Voce polos. And then...to Oprah's school! As the kids say, "OMG!" As my mother says, "In your life!" This school is like nothing we have ever seen in our entire life. She gives "state of the art" a new meaning. When we arrived, all of the girls from their chorus group came right up to our kids, shook hands, introduced themselves, and began their tour of the school. They served us a delicious dinner and the kids ate together and formed quick, sweet friendships. Then, our joint concert began.

shaking. Then it was time for our kids. Oh, are they gifted. I've gone through two Kleenex packets...the kids sang about a dozen songs, where the kids in the audience where "ooohing" and "ahhing" with "WOW, they can sing!" Afterwards,

Empire State . continued from page 1

for a loop when she said: "We've decided on China and South Korea; have you ever done an orchestra tour to South Korea?" The answer was a nervous, "Well, no!" That didn't seem to be a problem. The group had been invited by the Korea Institute for Advanced Theological Studies (KIATS) to perform in conjunction with the 2012 World Expo in Yeosu, on the southern coast. Helen Cha-Pyo, the group's artistic director, a Korean-born American, introduced the idea. The group and the board responded so enthusiastically that the wheels were put in motion and we started planning the tour: six nights in China, six nights in South Korea.

ESYO performed its first concert to a full house in the Beijing Concert Hall, a government-run venue. One of the challenges of performing a concert in a municipal hall is that the venue sometimes likes to have some suggestive input into the program. Four months before the tour, the hall requested something they'd seen on a past program from ESYO – the *Butterfly Lover's Violin Concerto*. The piece is well loved by Chinese audiences, and the group happily complied. Serendipitously, ESYO's concertmistress (and soloist on the piece) was Lisa Liu, a Chinese-born, Mandarin-speaking senior in the orchestra. The reaction of the audience, which included many members of Lisa's Beijing-based family,



was overwhelming, and the group played three encores!

After an equally successful concert in the world-famous Shanghai Oriental Art Center, the group traveled to Korea. KIATS, the group's host in Yeosu, had set up a number of performances, varying in formality. The first was in the Yeosu Expo Concert Hall. I'd been to the hall a few months earlier, when it was a construction site inaccessible without a hard hat.

I wondered quietly if there was any possibility that the hall would be finished by the time the group arrived, but was assured that Koreans can pull off the impossible. Well, I ate my (hard) hat. The hall was unbelievable! The structure is subterranean, terraced into a hillside that descends into the sea. It is covered by a glass roof meant to symbolize a waterfall, as water was the theme of the 2012 Expo.

The concert began, and this time it was Helen Cha-Pyo's turn to embrace her roots. Addressing the audience in perfect Korean, Ms. Cha-Pyo captivated them easily and the orchestra took her lead without pause. Not a seat was empty as the orchestra played its first of five concerts in Korea.

Two days later, ESYO participated in one of the most unusual performances ever on an ACFEA tour. Part of KIATS' work focuses

both choirs got together for impromptu singing, picture taking, and hugging. It was so sweet.

I would write more, but it's been tough, I tell you, to find the words for these intense, mind-blowing experiences.

June 19

We spent two days in the bush. It was



Elephants in Pilanesberg Game Reserve

absolutely wonderful. In just two days we saw baboons, black and white rhinos, zebras, springbok, jackals, elephants, giraffes, kudu and more. Our first safari trip departed at six in the morning, and our second left in the afternoon. At one point on we stopped for about 40

minutes and stayed next to a tree, where we watched a dozen elephants and their babies from just a few feet away. One of the babies was a week old, and it could barely walk. The kids were so thrilled during the safari. Of course, in between the animal sightings there was plenty of singing.

June 21

The most powerful moment of the evening

came at the end, where our group started the South African folk song, "Shosholozza," an African anthem of sorts. Soon, the entire crowd of children joined our kids and the place erupted in song, dance and drumming.

Words feel inconsequential, trite, overused at a time like this. One student told me

that her eyes take the best pictures, and for me it's just an overall sensory overload, and my eyes, ears, and heart will never see/hear/beat the same. Mostly, I've realized that people are people are people and humans are humans are humans. We are all the same.

June 23

We are at the end of a two-week experience for which we do not have words to describe it adequately. We will all return home different from when we left. It will always be one of the high points of my life to have spent this time with your sons and daughters, all of whom brought



Head Royce Colla Voce at Cape Point

joy, insight and keen powers of observation to the group. We all would stay longer if we could but, as the old saying goes, all good things must come to an end...and this has been about as good as it gets. 📷

on advocacy and outreach for sufferers of Hansen's disease, more universally known as leprosy. Near Yeosu is Sorok Island, a place originally used to quarantine people with the disease. There are currently only about 600 people living on the island, but they remain, as Sorok is a safe haven for them and the only home they know. ESYO had the privilege of performing a full concert for the patients and residents of the island, an emotional and fulfilling experience for everyone.

Soon, it was time for Seoul, where the group would perform its two final concerts, the last of which was a special highlight, as the group was invited to play at the Yongsan Garrison, one of the largest United States Army bases outside the USA. The performance was, for lack of better words, really, really cool! It was attended by a four-star General, who gave the closing remarks, along with several other uniformed military, who all stood ceremoniously when the group played its encore: "The Army Goes Rolling Along". It was the perfect end to an incredibly rewarding tour. 📷

In Concert

Roosevelt Jazz Band at the Umbria Jazz Festival

Seattle's Roosevelt High School Jazz Band added to its illustrious history this summer with a tour of jazz festivals in France, Switzerland and Italy. The group was honored to perform at two of the most prestigious jazz festivals in the world, Montreux and Umbria. Outdoor stages in beautiful surroundings with hundreds of spectators at each performance made for a wonderful tour. Capping off the tour in Perugia at the Umbria Jazz Festival was a highlight of the trip for many of the students. 📷



Roosevelt Jazz Band performs in the Piazza IV Novembre



The audience at Roosevelt Jazz Band's performance



Heinz Chapel Choir

at Lake Titicaca in Peru



Southern California Children's Chorus

at Thunderbird Park in Victoria, British Columbia

New ACFEA Website to Launch Soon

Our new website will be packed with exciting information about all our worldwide destinations, a blog with travel and music articles written by our Tour Managers, updated biography information about our esteemed global representatives, and an archive of photos and videos from many of our past tours.

We hope it will be informative, entertaining, and, most importantly, highlight our passion for arranging the best possible tours for your group. Stay tuned for an exciting launch announcement, and get ready to think of the "where next?" possibilities for your group. 📌

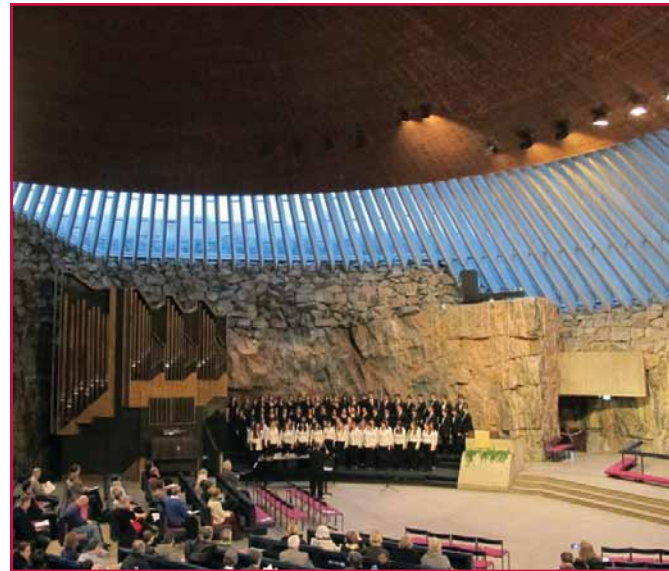
All Around the World

Photo courtesy of Marianne Swenink-Hovard



Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra

performs in the Conservatori Liceu in Barcelona, Spain



Lexington High School Choir

performs in the Rock Church in Helsinki, Finland

Experience a New Culture without Leaving Home

Every year, ACFEA arranges tours to the United States and Canada for musical groups from all over the world. Many of these groups wish to enhance their tour experience with homestays. It can be a very enriching experience to host an overseas group as it provides the opportunity to learn about a different culture, share performances and make new friends.

If your group may be interested in hosting an overseas group, please call us at (800) 627-2141 or email seattle@acfea.com. 📧

In Concert

Chicago Consort in Cusco

After several successful tours to Europe, Chicago Consort chose to venture to South America, deciding that Peru was the dream destination. The timing of the group's travel just so happened to coincide with *Inti Raymi* (Festival of the Sun), which was an Inca ceremony held every summer solstice to honor the Sun God and plead for his return. Today, it's the second largest festival in South America, and Cusco fills with thousands of people from all over Peru and South America for a week of celebrating. With colorful costumes, music, and dancing filling the streets, it's quite the sight.

Chicago Consort's concert was held right in the middle of it all, in the Iglesia Santo Domingo, one of the city's main festival venues.

"The concert in Cusco was magical!" director Ed Kreitman said. "Every single seat was filled, and they were absolutely rapt with attention to the performance!" 📧



Chicago Consort performs in the Iglesia Santo Domingo



The audience at Chicago Consort's performance

Blazing the Balkan Trail



In the fall of 2010, Singing City, directed by Jeff Brillhart, began the process of planning its next tour, slated for July of 2012. After weighing a few options, the choir

fixed its eyes and hearts on the Balkans (including Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and Montenegro). To understand the motivation and complexity of the decision to travel to a new destination, we spoke with Mr. Brillhart and Lauren Anderson, Singing City's Executive Director.

First, why the Balkans?

Jeff Brillhart: Singing City was founded in 1948 as one of America's first integrated choirs and for 64 years we've been committed to breaking down barriers between people of different colors, religions and cultural backgrounds. For us, the very recent, ethnically charged history of the Balkans was what drew us to the region. Their formidable choral tradition was an added bonus.

Although ACFEA has taken groups to Croatia and Serbia, we had never sent a group to Bosnia or Montenegro. How did you weigh the risk of being the first against the potential for great reward?

Lauren Anderson: Singing City members are very open to new places and ideas. Having worked with ACFEA before, we were confident that you could fashion a trip that would resonate with our approach to traveling and singing abroad.

While many choir members receive announcements saying they would be traveling to Italy, Germany or the French Riviera, your choir got word they would be heading to Bosnia. How did they respond to the unconventional nature of the destination?

LA: Singing City has a unique history, and that includes its tour destinations. The first tours were to the American South in the 50s and 60s, during the Civil Rights era. This was a bold step for an integrated choir at that time. These tours were followed by trips to Israel and Egypt in the 70s and 80s, and then to the former Soviet Union in 1991, Cuba in 2002, Northern Ireland in 2006 and finally Brazil in 2009. Our tours have always taken us to places that have known strife; it's a part of our culture. After announcing the tour to the Balkans, and Bosnia in particular, there was excitement and, of course, many questions. We planned the trip two years out, so there was ample time for singers to learn about the culture, the history, the language and the customs.

And how did the tour itself meet their expectations?

LA: Everyone loved the trip, even the ones who were a little skeptical beforehand! We met wonderful people, sang in some of the most beautiful places imaginable, were feted by our host choirs, learned much about each country's history and were challenged to understand more about the diverse cultures and religious groups that make up the region.

Indulge us: what was the highlight of your tour?

JB: If there was a clear message about humanity's hope to live together, it came during our final concert in Kotor, Montenegro, hosted by the church's superb youth choir, the Serbian choral assembly Unity. Sharing no common language, we reached unity through the singing of a work that was in a language foreign to all of us: Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Bogoroditse Devo*. We hadn't planned on performing together at all, but just before the concert their director and I compared repertoire, found the piece in common and decided to sing it together totally unrehearsed. And so, at the conclusion of the concert, as I gave the downbeat, all incredibly understood what was to happen and the music poured forth. At the climax of the work, I cued all of the young Montenegrin basses to enter with our basses. Together they let out the most remarkable unison I've ever heard. At that moment I realized what is desperately needed is for people to communicate with one another, instead of refusing to communicate with those whose views are different from our own. 📌



Singing City performs in the Catholic Church of St. Ilya in Zenica, Bosnia

Touring from Another Perspective

*by Rachel Flamm
ACFEA Tour Manager*

At ACFEA, all our Tour Managers are musicians. In fact, we all have a common background of singing as children or students in choirs that toured, and have continued singing as adults. However, it isn't often that one of us gets to experience the magic of an international concert tour with our own choir, and I was incredibly fortunate to have that experience this July when my choir, the Northwest Chamber Chorus, embarked on a tour of Slovakia and Hungary.

Though the choir had toured with ACFEA more than ten years ago and had a wonderful experience, they ran into the same challenges a lot of adult groups face when planning a concert tour. The choir is made up of singers who range in age from those in their 20s to those who have sung with the group for its entire 44-year history, and with that comes a wide array of budgets, interests and vacation time availability. It was decided that for this tour we needed to find a destination that wasn't too expensive, could be well





covered in a week without rigorous travel days and would appeal to participants with diverse interests, ranging from the very


well traveled to those who were just getting a passport for the first time. Slovakia and Hungary fit the criteria perfectly.

I had seen Slovakia on a company trip three years ago and loved the warmth of the people, the beautiful venues, the delicious food and the great sightseeing. I could tell the experiences to be had would be a great fit for my choir. Not too many choirs come through towns like Bojnice and Banska Stiavnica and the audiences there are very enthusiastic to welcome guest choirs. Our audiences included many families with children (a refreshing sight), and all the venues we sang in were absolutely lovely, from Bojnice Castle to



Northwest Chamber Chorus performs in St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest, Hungary

St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest. Smaller groups got together for excursions to mineral baths, museums, a zoo, great hikes and lots of delicious meals. The singers really enjoyed exploring all these towns with friends new and old.

With four superb concerts that stretched us to adapt musically to new situations and acoustics, and some wonderful opportunities for bonding over sightseeing and meals, I think we became more cohesive as a choir, musically and socially, and I'm looking forward to what the new concert season will bring. 

University of California, Davis Symphony Orchestra Delights Spain



ACFEA and the University of California, Davis choir and orchestra have a long history together: we have been arranging tours for the choir since the early 1980s, when the director was Albert McNeil, and for the orchestra since 1989, when we took a large group of instrumentalists and singers on a Berlioz extravaganza, giving concerts in

Australia (in the Sydney Opera House and the Melbourne Tennis Centre!), New Caledonia and Tahiti, under the leadership of the orchestra's conductor, D. Kern Holoman, one of the world's experts on the life and music of Berlioz.

Most recently, in March 2012, traveling during the spring to take advantage of lower prices and cooler weather, the orchestra, now under the direction of Christian Baldini, visited Madrid, Granada, Valencia and Barcelona. A group of 85 enjoyed the variety and contrasts that this large country offers, from the elegant capital in the center, to the Moorish culture in the south, and the vibrant Catalan renaissance in the east.

Performing a repertoire centered on Schumann's Symphony No. 4, and including at various times Beethoven's *Fidelio* overture, Debussy's *Prélude à 'l'Après-midi d'un Faune'* and concertos for clarinet and for piano by Mozart, the group gave four well received concerts, starting in a university concert hall in Madrid, then playing in a cultural center just outside Granada and the Palau de la Música in Valencia, and culminating in a spectacular sold-out concert in the stunning Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona.

Although it was the final concert that will stay longest in most people's memories, it was the one in Granada that proved again the benefits of

working with a tour company that has solid resources in destination countries. Nine days before the tour started, a general strike was called in Spain for the day of the Granada concert, meaning that there would be no concert hall, no buses to move the group and no public transportation for the audience – and the hall we had booked was already reserved for the other evening that the orchestra was in Granada. Two business days later, using ACFEA's resources in London and Spain, we had a new venue confirmed, a whole new publicity campaign started, and tickets on sale. Phew!


The tour ended with a most enjoyable farewell dinner in a restaurant in Barcelona's Barri Gòtic (old center), reached on foot through narrow cobbled lanes from the Palau. The atmosphere of celebration and conviviality, and the many words of thanks and congratulations, expressed perfectly what a successful venture this had been. 

Photo courtesy of Marianne Swienink-Havard



UC Davis Orchestra performs in the Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona

Piedmont Children's Choir Finds Mexico a Great Destination

Mexico has long been an ambivalent destination in many groups' minds: its wonderfully rich culture, including a wealth of classical choral music dating back to the Baroque, spectacular churches and cathedrals, and an abundance of excellent choirs on the one hand, and the violence that we hear about on the other hand. Every now and



Our choir tour to México was a unique and unforgettable experience. As we embarked on the tour, I had no preconceptions about México; the only certainty was that I would have a great time. How could I not, surrounded by the music and people I love? In fact, on our first day in México, as my friends and I sang together on the roof of our hotel in San Miguel de Allende, we agreed that we'd never been in any country quite like it. The beautiful buildings, delicious food, and in-depth explanations of México's history and daily life immersed our choir in a rich and colorful culture. The hotels and performance venues were well chosen, and we took many interesting sightseeing tours on foot.

I loved our practice of singing to every restaurant we dined at as our sincerest way of saying thank you. Before our journey to the pyramids of Teotihuacan, we ate breakfast at a very picturesque hotel, and ended our visit with El Jarabe Tapatio [the traditional



Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir is joined by the mariachi performer who was inspired to dance during their singing of the Mexican hat dance

then, however, a group digs below the headlines and realizes that those two aspects of the country are in quite distinct regions and that the delights of the first can be enjoyed with no more than the usual risks inherent in any tour.

The Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, directed by Robert Geary, was one such group. Reassured by the fact that ACFEA has an office in Mexico, and after allowing ample opportunity for parents to have all their questions and concerns addressed by chorus and ACFEA staff, effectively the whole senior ensemble experienced a wonderful tour of this amazing country.

Building on Geary's existing contacts and using ACFEA's local knowledge, the group visited San Miguel de Allende, Morelia and Mexico City. Four formal concerts were given – one of them joint with two Mexican children's choirs, with a most enjoyable workshop beforehand.

Here is what Daphne Williams, a 16-year-old participant, wrote about her experiences:

Mexican hat dance, once banned due to its suggestive nature]. A mariachi singer was inspired to ask us to sing our song a second time, so that he could perform a dance to go along with it. It was wonderful to connect with someone on the basis of our music.

The highlight of our trip, though, was our concert in the Conservatorio de las Rosas in Morelia. The acoustics were absolutely breathtaking. In preparation for our performance, we had the opportunity to work with José-Luis Hurtado on his brilliant composition Mar Eterno [commissioned by Piedmont Choirs], which was truly brought to life under his direction. It was a well-attended concert, and we performed at our very best.

On our last day of tour, we gave a joint concert with the Niños Cantores de la Escuela Nacional de Música and Schola Cantorum in the Teatro de la Escuela Nacional de Música. In addition to another rewarding performance on our own part, we were exposed to the music of two excellent choirs from México.

Our choir improved and grew closer through this enriching opportunity to perform in a new country and expose ourselves to its culture. 🇲🇽

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is a Tour Manager in the New York office. An Ohio native, she moved to New York City and joined ACFEA in 2001, just after graduating from Duquesne University with a degree in Music Education. Amanda currently sings with and serves on the board of the Young New Yorkers' Chorus, and has sung professionally in the New York area. She has traveled throughout the world, most extensively in Europe and Africa.

HUGH DAVIES

is Managing Director 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, and serves on the boards of the American Bach Soloists and Chorus America.

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, including touring with them throughout North America and Europe. She graduated with a degree in Music from Carleton College in Minnesota. At Carleton, Rachel played clarinet and conducted and managed the Carleton Choirs on tours to Los Angeles and New Orleans. Rachel has also traveled throughout Europe, Mexico, China, South Africa, Israel and Jordan. She currently sings with the Northwest Chamber Chorus.

EMILY FRYE

is a Tour Manager in the New York office. She grew up in Missouri, where she sang with the St. Louis Children's Choir for nine years, including on tours to Russia and Scotland. 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 is currently singing with the Pasadena Master Chorale.

CHRISTA TUMLINSON

is a Tour Manager in the San Francisco office. She has a degree in Music from California State University, Fullerton where she studied voice in classical and jazz styles. She grew up in Kansas, where she was involved with children's choirs. In Southern California, Christa taught voice, piano, choir and musical theater. She has also sung professionally with choirs, jazz bands and orchestras in the Los Angeles area. Christa's travels include Germany, Eastern Europe, China and South Africa. She is currently singing with Volti, the award-winning professional chamber ensemble dedicated to the performance of new vocal music.

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

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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:

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Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra Performs at Summa Cum Laude Festival in Vienna

by Emily Frye, ACFEA Tour Manager

When the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra sat down to plan its 2012 tour, one of the things the group was considering was participation in a festival. As we considered what would be the best one to include, the Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival, held every year in Vienna, shot right to the top of the list. Spread over four days, it brings together young people from all around the globe to perform in one of Europe's musical capitals. The festivities begin with an opening ceremony in the Stephansdom. Three days of performances in and around Vienna



Photo courtesy of Marianne Swienik-Hovard

MYSO at Mozart's statue in the Burggarten in Vienna, Austria

follow, including a workshop at the University of Music and an optional competition with multiple group categories.

One of the most exciting aspects about Summa Cum Laude is the access young musicians have to internationally renowned conductors and venues. The competition is held in

the Golden Hall of the Musikverein, home to the Vienna Philharmonic and arguably one of the finest halls in the world. Not only that, but if they competed well, they could be invited back to the Golden Hall to play at the festival's Gala Winners' Concert, where they would perform for all the festival goers as well as the general public.

We suggested MYSO start the tour in the Czech Republic and play in another prestigious venue: the Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, where the group was accepted in a snap. MYSO decided to compete in Summa Cum Laude, so the performers knew they would get to play in Musikverein at least once. With the festival application submitted, we were on our dream tour-planning way.

Early last fall, I got an email from my colleague Nick Abbott, who was operating the tour out of our London office, with some updates from the festival:

The other significant piece of information is the location of the Gala Winners' Concert: it will, unlike previous years and contrary to all announcements so far, not be held in the Musikverein...

My heart stopped. Not in the Musikverein?! And then I kept reading:

...It will be held in the Great Hall of the Konzerthaus. The competition will still be held in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein.



Photo courtesy of Marianne Swienik-Hovard

MYSO performs in the Musikverein for the judges of the Summa Cum Laude International Youth Music Festival

So, if MYSO was invited to the Gala Winners' Concert, they would be able to say they played in the Musikverein and the Konzerthaus? Not one, but two of the most important venues in Vienna? Not bad! Not bad at all!

"Hearing the announcements, I didn't know what either of those places looked like. But when I saw a photograph, I immediately recognized the venues from performances online and YouTube. That's when I got really excited," said Elliot Yang, MYSO cellist. "After I told my teachers about it and saw some of them geek a little, that's when I started having daydreams."

MYSO's performances began with a concert in the House of Culture in Teplice, followed by the concert in the Dvořák Hall, which they deemed "magic!"

"That hall is fabulous," Margery Deutsch, Senior Symphony Music Director, said. "The acoustics are so interesting. The students played differently than they ever have, and better than they ever have."

When MYSO got to Vienna, they found it bursting at the seams. The group was joined by 1,400 other festival-goers, representing 35 ensembles from 19 countries. It was the biggest Summa Cum Laude festival ever.

"The festival was pretty eye-opening," remembers Yang. "Taking in the culture, scale and excitement took a second because I hadn't experienced anything like it before."

MYSO spent the next few days zipping around Vienna for run-out concerts, playing the competition program and doing workshops. The news came Sunday night: they'd not only won second place in the competition, but had also earned the final performance slot in the Gala Winners' Concert! They were going to play to a sold-out Konzerthaus – their third world-famous venue in less than a week!

And how does such an honor feel? "It was fantastic!" Yang said. "I could really tell everyone was enjoying themselves and that they were trying to take in the experience as much as possible. I feel that the performance was great because both the orchestra on stage and the audience really seemed engaged. Seeing that many people was unreal. I felt like we were giving back to the festival with performances. For me, it was extremely humbling and something I'll remember for the rest of my life." 🇺🇸



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