

WHY IS THE NEW WHERE

Planning performing arts tours with a purpose since 1955

TOUR NOTES



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The Touring Choir Of Fourth Presbyterian Church Of Chicago, who got out of their comfort zone in India

Photo by Adam Frieberg Imaging



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The University Singers from California State University, Fullerton, who experienced extraordinary concerts in Rwanda

Photo by Christopher Peterson



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Chicago Consort, who found rich musical exchanges in South Africa

When you first think about going on a concert tour, it's easy to start by wondering where you might go.

Having planned tours to over 60 countries in the last 70 years, we have learned what makes a good destination. And the most important thing we've realized about what makes somewhere truly great is how well it matches what a group needs and wants from it.

So while zeroing in on one part of the globe is fun, doing so too soon might mean you miss out on the perfect – for you! – experience somewhere else.

That's why finding the best tour doesn't start with picking up a map. It starts with thinking about what is driving you to tour in the first place. It starts by not asking Where, but: Why?

Why do you want to tour?

It might seem like a simple question, but every group has its unique answer. Here are some inspiring thoughts from directors we work with:

“We are all aware of the value (the incredible value) of touring in terms of expanding our personal views of life and encountering new life experiences. Grateful for these values, it has been clear to me over the past several decades that the most significant value of touring is the building of teamwork and strengthening our productive ways of effecting important values.

When a chorus is on tour, the performers' growth is extraordinary. They grow not just as musicians, but more importantly, they grow as citizens – citizens of the worlds they are visiting. That enriches their citizenship at home, a world view that empowers their lives and the lives of those in their community.

Beyond all else, touring is about enhancing citizenship and important growth in our lives.”

**Duain Wolfe, Chorus Conductor Laureate
Colorado Symphony Chorus**



The Colorado Symphony Chorus rehearses with the Orchestre Symphonique de l'Académie de l'Île Saint-Louis for a performance at l'Eglise de la Madeleine, Paris, France. Photo by Marianne Swienink-Havard



Cantabella Children's Chorus on tour in Ireland, 2024

“When we take our voices beyond the choir classroom and bring what we learned into spaces with acoustics meant for pure choral music, we strengthen our musicianship and have a shared social/emotional learning experience. Every choir director and chorister should make it a priority to have these special experiences and tour!”

**Clement Cano, Artistic Director
Cantabella Children's Chorus**

“I believe that touring has been essential to the musical growth and sense of community and ministry of the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Houston. ACFEA has been taking us on tour every three years since 2000, and each time we return we discover that we are better musicians and better friends than when we left. We strive for excellence each week, but there is an added urgency when preparing for a tour. And the feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction afterwards is unparalleled.”

**Robert Simpson, Canon for Music
Christ Church Cathedral, Houston**

“We tour to enhance the choir’s musical abilities through exposure to different traditions, styles, and techniques from around the world. When we can perform and interact with local communities, we foster mutual respect and understanding between our students and international audiences.”

**Emily Crile, Artistic Director
Colorado Children's Chorale**



The Madrigal Singers visit Sanssouci Palace on tour in Germany, 2024

“The Madrigals tour because it allows students the opportunity to see other parts of the world, to learn about history and other cultures, and to sing in beautiful spaces. Through touring, not only do we become better performers, but we also grow in our bond as an ensemble because we’ve lived this amazing experience together.”

**Erica McCants, Conductor
Greenwich Academy Madrigal Singers**

“To have new and extraordinary concert experiences”

Even if you have wonderful performance spaces at home, being able to create music in different places is a uniquely powerful experience. It helps connect with the music, and the greater world around you, in a new deeper way. Whether you're performing in a world-famous hall, or at a competitive festival, or in a small church venue with an especially warm and friendly audience, concerts are the centerpiece of a tour. Here are some examples of noteworthy performances on recent tours.

The University Singers from California State University, Fullerton, conducted by Rob Istad, were on tour in South Africa and Rwanda in July, 2024. The concerts in South Africa were as powerful, inspiring and tear-inducing as concerts there always are and, as normal, they took place in concert halls, on stages, with the audience generally sitting in seats.

Things were different in Rwanda.

Their first performance was planned as an informal exchange with the choir at the Gisimba Memorial Center, a wonderful after-school program that supports the residents of Kigali who need help during difficult times. The event started politely enough, but after each choir had sung its couple of pieces, and everyone had joined together in a joint piece, structure was replaced by spontaneity, and as the two conductors looked on redundantly from the sides, the choirs joined together in countless songs (almost none of which had been heard

before in a University Singers performance) that they found they had in common.

Next was the opening concert of the Ubumuntu (loosely, 'being human') Arts Festival, held in an amphitheater at the Kigali Genocide Memorial, where over 250,000 victims are buried in mass graves. The festival, however, looks forward more than back, and the concert was a startlingly eclectic mixture of myriad types of performing arts, all bound together by enthusiasm and optimism that were carried around the world on a live Facebook stream.

Then, in the small northern village of Sunzu, perched between two lakes at 7,000 feet, an old basketball court was the setting. The University Singers and the local school children sang to each other, surrounded by great natural beauty, in a sublime moment that challenged many performance preconceptions...

Finally, in a multi-purpose church hall in Musanze that was overflowing with hundreds of local singers, the most 'it's not like this in Fullerton' moment occurred. Rob was conducting his choir in 'Jerusalema', well known and loved throughout Africa, and the listeners just had to get to their feet and dance. Watching Rob's singers' expressions as a solid phalanx of dancers swept down the center aisle, at the end of which Rob was obviously conducting, finally engulfing him and forming a dance troupe between him and his choir, was a moment for musical history.



The University Singers sing with the local choirs at their performance in Musanze, Rwanda. Photo by Christopher Peterson.

The **Golden State Youth Orchestra** is no stranger to performing in prestigious festivals and halls like Barcelona's Palau de la Música Catalana (pictured, top right) on their recent tour of France and Spain.

Even very active church choirs, like **Myers Park United Methodist Church Chancel Choir**, relish the opportunities tours give them beyond their regular routine. While in Munich on their most recent tour, they thoroughly enjoyed spending time with the Evangelische Kantorei Moosburg in rehearsal, sharing a joint concert in the Evangelische Versöhnungskirche, and celebrating with dinner together afterwards.

There's also the **University of Oregon Chamber Singers**, who enjoy competing among the best choirs globally with appearances at events like the World Choir Games. It's all the more exciting when they win first place in their categories, with the highest score of the entire competition, as they did in Auckland in 2024!

Or maybe you'd like to seek out unique places on tour - like the **Siskiyou Singers** (pictured, bottom right) who rode a cable car to their venue in the mountains, as part of the Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival in Italy.



Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra performs in the Stadtkirche St Michael in Jena, Germany, in 2024.

“Each venue had its own joys and its own uniqueness which made each one a memorable experience: From the ancient beauty of the church in Jena to the Soviet-era church in Leipzig famous for its use as a recording venue and then the most beautiful and simplistic venue in the Moravian Church in Hernhut. And of course finally to Prague and the Musica Orbis Series. WOW. Simply WOW!”

Brian Worsdale, Conductor
Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra

“To perform with other musicians from around the world”

One of the best parts of touring is meeting fellow musicians from all over the world. Even if you don't speak the same language, the connection you can forge through making music together builds a sense of community and shared purpose.

From South Africa to Mexico, from New Zealand to Bulgaria, there are groups the world over who are eager to perform together. Here are some more recent stories of collaboration and connection.



Performing with Vox Medicorum, or 'medical center choir' (pictured, top left), at the Ursuline Church of the Holy Trinity in Ljubljana, Slovenia was a highlight of the **Penn State University Concert Choir's** 2024 tour. “It was fascinating to hear repertoire with which we were less familiar, much of it composed by composers from their country and region,” reflected Chris Kiver, Director. “It was also interesting to hear a different vocal timbre and enjoy some lovely low basses!”

Seattle Girls Choir met up with London-based professional women's choir Aurora Nova, which was a great kickoff to their 2024 tour, on their way to the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales! But the music you share doesn't have to be the same type as you normally perform: **La Jolla Symphony Chorus** learned an Austrian folk dance from a local troupe after their concert in Krems, while touring Austria.



And sometimes, touring even means getting to see old friends again, like when **Columbia Choirs** went from the Golden Gate to Gold Coast, Australia! In 2023, Columbia and Emmanuel College Vivace from Gold Coast, Australia, met at the Golden Gate International Choral Festival in the Bay Area. A year later, Columbia traveled to meet them as part of a tour of Australia (pictured, bottom left)!



While on tour in Bath, England in 2024, the Chorus of Westerly performed with the City of Bristol Choir and the Bath Philharmonia in the Bristol Beacon.

“Chicago Consort’s concert in Cape Town was our most special one yet: collaboration with the Cape Town Camerata. This partnership was a dream come true for Patrick Connolly, our Artistic Director.

After discovering the song ‘Iza Ngomso,’ performed by the Cape Town Camerata on YouTube, he arranged a version of this enchanting piece for us to perform. ‘Iza Ngomso,’ which translates to ‘The Future Is Coming’ in English, is a beloved South African song. It carries an uplifting and hopeful message about the future, reflecting themes of unity, resilience, and optimism.

The song is celebrated for its ability to bring people together and foster a sense of shared purpose. We were thrilled ACFEA facilitated this collaboration, allowing us to embody the essence of this piece in a truly meaningful moment.”

**Emily Connolly, Director
Western Springs School of Talent Education**



Chicago Consort performs “Iza Ngomso” with Cape Town Camerata in Cape Town, South Africa.

“To explore a new part of the world”



For many groups, going on tour is a chance for their members to get out of their comfort zone and visit a place they might not be able to otherwise – which might even mean getting on a plane for the first time!

Traveling with a group can make more challenging places easier, with benefits like translators handling the logistics. But “new” doesn’t have to be far off the beaten path. It might refer to a part of your own country you don’t know well.

The **Los Angeles Children’s Chorus** wanted to infuse their 2024 tour with an element of Civil Rights history and education. Touring the US South fit the bill: In addition to performing in New Orleans, and at historic venues in Birmingham and Atlanta, they visited the deeply moving Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, as well as Selma, Alabama (pictured, top left) where they walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.



When they plan tours, the **Cascade Youth Symphony** prioritizes destinations their students haven’t visited because performing in new places adds depth to learning about a new culture – and helps with recruiting. In 2024, this took them to Slovenia, Hungary, and Slovakia, where they performed in exciting spaces like the Slovak Radio Hall in Bratislava (pictured, middle left).



Blazing a new trail was high on Frank Van Atta’s priorities list when he started planning the next tour of the **Germantown Academy Madrigal Singers** (pictured, bottom left). It would be the group’s first post-Covid tour, and challenging the group’s comfort zone was an important aspect of his approach. So, he thought big picture, and settled on Japan, where the young singers had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the exciting new culture, tastes and sounds of Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima and Osaka.

Photo by Adam Frieberg Imaging.



“This wasn’t just a tour; it was a journey of discovery, connection, and inspiration that brought our choir closer together and deepened our appreciation for the world’s rich musical tapestry.”

Emma Cox, Music Coordinator
Chicago Fourth Presbyterian Church

Another group with these priorities is the **Touring Choir Of Fourth Presbyterian Church Of Chicago**.

This approach has taken them to South Africa, Israel, Palestine and Jordan, and in 2024, they toured India. Music Coordinator Emma Cox recalls the special moments of that tour:

“Our concert tour of India was beyond anything I could have dreamed! Our group of 28 singers, ranging in age from 36 to 70, embarked on a 17-day journey spanning six breathtaking cities: Mumbai, Delhi, Agra, Rohet, Jaipur, and Jodhpur.

“The experiences we shared were nothing short of magical. One standout moment was our guided tour of Old Delhi, where we explored the bustling streets on rickshaws, immersing ourselves in the vibrant markets. The Khari Baoli spice market, alive with an explosion of colors, aromas, and sounds, was particularly captivating. We took on a fun challenge: splitting into groups to haggle for spices and rice, which we later brought to the community kitchen at the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib. Witnessing the service preparations in the kitchen for literally thousands of people and engaging with the kind,

hospitable staff was both humbling and inspiring—a memory that will stay with me forever.

“Our musical exchanges were equally transformative. One highlight was our collaboration with Pt. Rajendra Vaishnav at the School of Hindustani Music. As a professional musician, I’ve always been fascinated by world music traditions, and this experience was a dream come true. Rajendra’s generosity in sharing his knowledge and the students’ enthusiastic participation created a deeply moving encounter. We were invited to witness a lesson in traditional Indian music, complete with mesmerizing performances and oral recitations. The beauty and depth of their art touched my musical soul in a profound way, reigniting my passion for music and connection after the challenges of recent years.

“ACFEA’s ability to craft these extraordinary cultural and musical exchanges is unparalleled. This wasn’t just a tour; it was a journey of discovery, connection, and inspiration that brought our choir closer together and deepened our appreciation for the world’s rich musical tapestry.”

“To strengthen your group”

Photo by Marianne Swienink-Havard



It's no secret: Groups who travel together are stronger. Sharing experiences builds a deeper sense of unity, camaraderie and support – key for any ensemble! This can begin before you even pack your suitcases, as preparing for a tour means working towards a big, exciting goal.

The **Portland Symphonic Girlchoir** (pictured, top left) performing in the Hochmeisterkirche, Berlin, has a long touring tradition, which enables them to be a stronger group back at home. “Tour opportunities provide a wonderful environment for ‘raising the artistic bar’ and for musical and personal relationships to mature creating lasting bonds and memories for a lifetime!” as Directors Roberta Q Jackson and Deb Burgess have noted.



Another way touring can make a group stronger is by helping it build its own history. **Berry College Singers** (pictured, bottom left) aimed to tour every four years. It's always a formative experience, as Director Paul Neal notices that there are a fair number of students who are applying for a passport for the first time. The tradition has proven so meaningful that the students approached him and asked to increase the frequency. They now tour every three years.

“One of the greatest benefits of touring is the bonding that takes place among members of the orchestra. As they get to know each other and share common experiences, their music and their minds open up. Having a chance to perform four times in a short period of time also has a great musical benefit. They return home fulfilled, with the pride of accomplishment.”

**Wendy Cilman, Director of Education
Santa Rosa Symphony**



Santa Rosa Symphony Youth Orchestra on tour in Spain, 2022. Photo by Elena Sloman.

“To connect your repertoire to a place”

Sometimes, the question about where to visit is clear the minute we start talking about what repertoire groups like to perform. Some pieces were written for specific places, after all, or with a certain setting in mind — which means inspiration might come from your own music library.

For church choirs like **Holy Comforter Church Chancel Choir** (pictured, top right), touring was an opportunity to share their specialty of service music with other congregations. In 2024, they toured Ireland and the United Kingdom, and sang three Evensong services in three countries.

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, **Calvary Presbyterian** and **Davidson United Methodist Church Choirs** both traveled to Caen to perform a special concert in the Abbey Saint-Etienne (pictured, bottom right). In addition to the historical significance, this particular program was special because it featured Requiems by Maurice Durufle and John Rutter — one French, one British.

Photo by Marianne Swienink-Havard



On a tour of Germany in 2024, **Summit Chorale** visited Leipzig (pictured left), and jumped at the opportunity to perform the Bach motet "Jesu Meine Freude" in its entirety, in the Thomaskirche, where Bach himself was choirmaster and organist.

“We’re not sure! Can you help us decide?”



Waterford School Orchestra performs on their tour of the Czech Republic, Austria and Hungary in 2024. Photo by Kathy Morris.



University of Richmond Schola Cantorum taking time to explore the landscape in Ireland, while on tour in 2024.



Texas A&M University Women's Chorus performing in Helsinki's Rock Church while on tour in Sweden, Estonia and Finland, 2024.

As fun as it is to think about your tour goals, it's not always easy to name or prioritize them right away. Even groups who have toured before might not be sure about what to focus on next.

This is precisely why we start by learning as much as we can about your group. By listening closely to your interests, caring about your missions, and combining them with our global travel expertise and passion for the performing arts, we can help you realize your tour goals – and help plan the best tour for you.

Since 1955, **ACFEA Tour Consultants** has been creating custom tours for performing arts groups throughout the world. As accomplished musicians, our Tour Managers know firsthand the special needs and concerns your group may have when touring abroad. When we combine that experience with our global network of travel experts and concert representatives, we're able to create opportunities for life-changing experiences worldwide.

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