University of Victoria Chamber Singers

News from your former colleagues 1970s

Lorren Culley (73-75) is retired from his teaching in Castlegar, loves photography, cooking, woodwork. He conducted the Rossland Light Opera Players production of "The Wizard of Oz" this past winter.

Elizabeth MacIsaac (79-84) conducted two concert with Ensemble Laude in May describeds as "highly energetic & engaging" by Connie. She will sing a recital on June 15 at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris.

Sheila (Sartini) Johnson (78-79) conducted Duncan's Concenti Singers on May 1 and her Cowichan Valley Youth Choir on May 15.

1980s

Gloria (Borbridge) Kushel (82-83) is back in their U.S. home in Larchmont, N.Y. She is a bit sad about it, since she loved London.

Karen Wiltse Antonin (86-89) is Sales Director for the Hotel Grand Pacific in Victoria.

Sharon (Ferne) Sinclair (86-87) continues her active and successful career as a choral conductor of school and community choirs in Nanaimo.

Wade Noble (88-00), has just completed his second season as Prima's conductor and his first concert with Vancouver Island Chamber Singers (and all the alums in that ensemble) described as "really excellent" by Bruce.



1990s

Chet Garber (91-93) is Theatre Manager for the American School of Doha in Doha, Qatar.

Inge (Schenk) Illman (92-95) will have a break from teaching at GNS and take her children to Europe for 7 weeks this summer.

Dallas Bergen (95-01) and his wife Rinat had their first child Noa in February.

Michael Joyce (96-02) lives in Vancouver with his partner Ben. Michael is now the Technical

Director of the Internet Shakespeare Editions and the Web Application Project Coordinator for the UBC Mathematics Department.

Carrie Tennant (97-99) continues as conductor of Coastal Sound Youth Choir in Coquitlam.

Haley Tarnow (97-01) has returned from 6 months teaching voice at a school in Rome.

2000s

Johnny Popoff (01-07) has moved to New Zealand and is performing with a group called "Lava". They are currently on a world tour, having just completed their North America portion this Spring.

"http://www.theoconnors.co.nz/about"

Tim Dotchin (02-03) manages "Simply", Victoria's largest Apple store.

Taylor Collishaw (03-05) teaches at Point Grey Secondary School, conducting their Chamber Choir.

Jennifer (Bergstreser) Kirkpatrick and her husband Kelly had their first child Paige on December 27.

Nina Horvath ('04-'07) is back from grad school in Denver. Currently at home in Rossland, she will be in Vancouver in the Fall, studying with Rena Sharon. She'll join our daughter Alexis More's string quartet for some Kootenay concerts with piano next season.

Nate MacDonald (06-07), Rasma Bertz (87-90) and apparently several other Chamber Singers alums gave a concert at Lutheran Church of the Cross on May 22 described as "truly spectacular" by Nathan.

Stephanie Loo (06-10) is in her last year in education and did her practicum in the choral excellence of Magee Secondary School.

What are Bruce & Connie up to?

http://krunchd.com/morenews



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Chamber Singers and Opera

Returning from Valencia, Spain, opera performances, Richard Margison (76-77) performed a 13 recital tour of B.C. with pianist Kinza Tyrrell (92-96) in March, which continues in May. http://www.richardmargison.com/ schedule.html

Don MacDonald (84-89) is busy writing a full length opera called "KHAOS", a re-imagining of the myth of Persephone and Demeter. http:// www.khaosopera.com/ KHAOS is slated to premiere in Nelson in March 2012. The cast will include Allison Girvan MacDonald (86-90)

Charles Barber (83-84) is "crazy-busy" at City Opera right now. They have received a quarter million dollar grant from the Annenberg Foundation for their second commission, an opera by Tobin Stokes (85-87) based on "Christian Ellis' story". http://cityoperavancouver.com/. Charles' book on the great Carlos Kleiber is coming out this summer.

"http://www.carlos-kleiber.com/firstperson/53/2" (Alas, Carlos was not a Chamber Singer - I would have let him in if only he'd auditioned - honest!).

SUMMER RETREAT DETAILS - pg. 2

What dark secrets lurk behind this door?





Memories of Morehaven

Retreat memories are made of what you remember from your retreat(s) there. They will surely include sleeping on a floor of the house, cabin, loft or basement and the hilarious evening of games where a lot of ice was broken (both in and out of the glass). I have a myriad of memories which tend to blur together. The first retreat was held in September of 1982. Debbie Farwell (84-86) shares my memory of that first retreat with her comment "Whenever we sail past Thetis Island I fondly remember your "Chainsaw Wake Up Call". I also vividly remember the game that Kinza and others organized in '92. It involved 2 teams stretching their "belongings" between 2 sets of posts in the front yard. It kind of gave new meaning to "getting to know each other". But enough of my memories - let's hear your best stories in July.

Here is the plan and the participants thus far:



The Prist Chamber Singers Alumni Summer Retreat

Friday, July 15
afternoon: retreat begins
(Ferry info. here: bcferries.com)
7 pm: dinner & socializing
Saturday, July 16
Morning: Breakfast & socializing
11am - Singing (hope you can be there!)
1pm - Lunch

Afternoon: socializing, hiking, sports, swimming etc.
7 pm: Focus dinner

8pm - Best Chamber Singers stories, games, more singing.

Sunday, July 17 - Breakfast

10:40 and 1:10 departures.

(All meals are provided; feel free to bring contributions if you wish - please let Bruce know. Bring snacks & beverages, sleeping bag, suit & towel)









Retreat participants to dates

(please contact Bruce <u>very</u> soon if you wish to be included)

Wade Noble Ruth Bard Allan MacPherson Rasma Bertz Ivan Marko Celia Brownrigg Nicole (Mulroney) Mills Celia's partner Chris Hayley Crittenden Darryl Neville Tim Dotchin James Robertson Andrew Scambler Evan Fabri Sarah (Helgeson) Scambler Bruce Hill Lisa Shaw Dan Hogg Cam Wallace Stephanie James Connie More Rick Knoles

Simon Leung

Simon's friend

Bruce More

Alexis More

The Orient '93 - The Fourth Overseas Tour

This was the first of 5 forays to the "East" over the next 11 years. In 1993, this area of the world was called "The Orient". By the end of the decade it was referred to most commonly as "South East Asia". Needless to say the language barrier was the largest yet for us since unlike Eastern Europe, few of our hosts spoke English.

Like our '91 tour, most of the trip was arranged by our old and trusted friends at ACFEA, who arranged first rate concert venues in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. We were also fortunate enough to enjoy the organizational and financial support of the Pacific Cultural Foundation (Taiwan concerts) and the Victoria Language Institute (Tokyo concert). It was an expensive tour, but we still managed to fund raise enough to keep the cost to the students under \$2,000 each.

Organizing a concert tour is very much a process of "sales". One must "pitch" the trip to the singers, the university administration and potential donors. Many student organizations go on tour, whether it's a few joint concerts to neighbouring schools or a trip to Anaheim with a concert or two with LA schools plus a workshop with an American "hotshot" and an ourdoor concert on the bandstand at Disneyland. It was for this reason that I always differently referred to our trips as Concert Tours. Despite the huge opportunities presented to students, the "tour" was not always greeted with enthusiasm by some of my colleagues. One referred to one of our tours as "the Chamber Singers, off on another lark". It was never clear whether it was envy, a misguided association of our endeavours with the type of school trip previously mentioned, or whether these tours were seen as threat to the finances of the School. For the record, I purposely never received (or asked for) a dime from the School of Music.

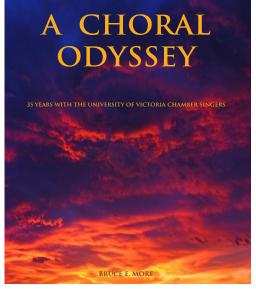
We travel, we sight-see and we party (oh, how we party), but first and foremost we sing concerts, probably over 300 concerts in 130 cities in 34 countries since 1980.

The Orient Tour of '93 was the fullest expression to date of the Chamber Singers' growing reputation as a renowned world-touring chamber choir.

Originally, the tour was to include Tokyo, Fukuoka, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Taipei and Taichung, but the routing would have been complex involving competing airlines with huge add-on fares. Consequently, we had to drop Fukuoka, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

As in '89, we began our concert series in Richmond, thanks again to alumnus Len Kay, flying to Tokyo the next day (via Seattle and San Francisco). Our 4 day stay in Tokyo had only one concert, at Waseda University in the northwestern part of the city. Our organizers, Nori Hagiwara and Yodhida Tohyama from the Victoria Language Institute, housed us at a comfortable university dormitory. The first morning of a tour is always memorable for me: a combination of excitement, incredible fatigue from the long journey and fascination with cultural differences. There were three that I particularly remember: the non-dairy noodle-based breakfasts; the bathtub, for which the water isn't changed between uses; and the astounding pet show on the TV which showed three people examining their respective dog feces! I apologize if that sounded negative, I guess we remember the cultural things which most surprise us. The cultural differences are what inspire us to travel and they were everywhere, and they were exciting and beautiful and delicious. The concert was memorable in the way that all first concerts in a new country are as we experience the customs of the audience. The custom in Japan seems to be reserved and quiet. Applause lasts only a few seconds despite enthusiastic comments afterwards. Nevertheless, we left Japan wishing we could experience more - particularly the countryside, since our stay was totally urban.

Our flight to Shanghai was only 2 1/2 hours long. On arrival, we were met by our delightful guide Vivian, who had excellent English and was much appreciated by all of during our stay. Our hotel, although quite a distance from



dowtown, was brand new and very high standard. I was told that these hotels are built in huge numbers but are not maintained well, so that a new 5 star hotel in 1993 would likely become 4 stars in 94 and so on. It was apparent that there was a great deal of new construction going in this part of China. We were to see the fruits of this growth on our next trip to Shanghai, 12 years later.

Like Tokyo (and most large cities of the Orient), our sight seeing included shopping areas and many temples. Shanghai had other attractions which our tour company included for us: a cruise on the Huangpo river took us from Bund upriver for a three hour tour, very relaxing and scenic. The Bund, which is the historical British colonial trade center, combined western business architecture from the 19th century with a few Russian monumental buildings. In '93, it was the primary large building architecture of Shanghai. Pudong, the area across the river, had no large buildings, except for the communications tower, which was in mid-construction. That side of the river had some docks, including one which housed a Russian submarine. I mention this because the change in the next 12 years is to be nothing less than phenomenal. On this busy day we also performed a mini-concert and had an audience with the mayor who treated us to two sumptuous meals. The food (yup, Chinese food) was wonderful and "bottomless" with endless plates of delightful creations. In all my trips to the orient, I felt badly that so much food was left over.....but.....when in Shanghai, do as the Chinese do. Shanghai also boasts the Shanghai Acrobats, which provided a marvelous evening's entertainment.

Our third day was filled with equally intriguing activities, including a crazy bus ride which inspired Noreen to suggest a new video game called "Shanghai Bus Driver". The Chinese were decades ahead of us, in that the principal mode of transportation was the bicycle - thousands of bicycles. Their presence defined some of the more hairraising experiences of vehicle travel in the city. I was told that bus drivers (indeed all drivers in urban China) were required to take strenuous driver training, including the art of avoiding bicycles. The penalty for hitting a cyclist, whereas not death by hanging, was apparently very seri-

The bus took us to a station at which we boarded a train for a day trip to Suzhou. A sister city of Victoria, Suzhou is a city of canals, fascinating residential architecture and beautiful parks. Our visit included a canal trip and a visit with the Mayor of the city.

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One of the most surprising things about concert touring in foreign countries has been the high level of hospitality which we have encountered. From the warm treatment of the School in Somerset, UK which housed us for 4 days in 1987, to the Hungarian Choir which met us at the border with a "belt" of palinka (Hungarian firewater) and proceeded to feed and house us for 5 days, to the generous

hosting by the mayor of Napier, New Zealand and innumerable guest choirs all over the world, we were always made to feel that our efforts in travelling to these exotic places were appreciated and honoured. As if housing, feeding and attending our concerts were not enough, it is quite common for gifts to be presented. This is not something we have been used to in our North American tours, where, in spite of an occasional warm hosting, very often we were made to feel that the host was doing us a huge favour by providing a concert venue only, sometimes even being charged rental.

Upon return to Shanghai, we attended a piano recital which had been arranged for Kinza at the Shanghai Center Theatre. It was a sizeable theatre, with dead acoustics and a sizeable audience which showed its appreciation for our "star". This was our first opportunity to experience the "Chinese Audience Syndrome" which consisted of constant talking throughout the performances. In fairness, the more "sophisticated" audiences in Beijing and later in Shenzen were contrastingly quite attentive.

The next morning we had our usual "western buffet" style of breakfast, which was always a welcome relief from the unending Chinese food restaurants. This was the day that Jennifer got "busted" for butting a cigarette on the sidewalk. The ticket cost was in the neighbourhood of 43 cents. This was also concert day and we now had to face the challenge of a choral performance in the dead hall which we experienced the night before. The rehearsal went well and we were rewarded with a seafood restaurant dinner before the concert. Carmen observed that there were two fewer turtles in the tank when we left. Against the acoustic odds, the concert went extremely well. Lisa summed it up best: "They saunter in at the last moment, chat, saunter in and out during the performances and are reserved in their applause. And yet, one still gets the strong impression that they are enjoying themselves." Following the concert our ACFEA Courier, the great Liz Kelly, managed to free our large poster-banner (three stories high) from its imprisonment on the outside of the theatre. This was the first of many such banners to come over the next decade. Later in the evening, the first tour party emerged with Tsing-Tao, "hickey making" and birthday cake. Happy Birthday Chris!

Our flight to Beijing was short and uneventful. The Chinese are definitely geared up for mass flight. We started to focus on the fact that the transfer vehicles at the airport were double wide and virtually all of the planes were jumbo jets. During the takeoff (you know, that marvelous moment when the plane leaves the runway and suddenly assumes a 45 degree angle, spearing up into the sky), one of the stewardesses decided it might be the appropriate time to take her seat. Starting near the front of the plane she ran down the aisle at a seemingly uncontrolled speed to her seat at the rear. I've never seen anything like that in all my years of travelling.

On debarking, birthday boy Chris became our second tour criminal, receiving a 5 yuan ticket for spitting on the tarmac, next to a sign reading "NO SPITTING, OTHER-WISE WILL BE FINE". My theory is that the syntax confused him and he interpreted it to mean that it was fine to spit. I was intrigued by the irony though, since we were regularly treated to the sight of Chinese men (never women) relieving one of their nostrils on the sidewalk. (I guess they knew who the "commissionaires" were better than we.)

Our first complete day in Beijing was very full. I awoke at 6 am and walked the streets for 2 hours, fascinated by the early morning activities in the great city. There were lines of outdoor barber chairs with attending barbers offering a "shave and a haircut ... 2 Yuan" (no, it doesn't have the same ring, does it?) As a student of Tai Chi, I was delighted to see crowds of people doing simultaneous Thai Chi sets. Unlike during the 2010 Olympics, in 1993 it was smoggy in Beijing, but in the early morning it just added to the exotic feel of the place.

The smog stayed with us all during this busy day which included a bus trip to the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall.

Our tour guide, Tony, was very verbacious and quite pushy. This offended some of the singers and earned him the joy of searching questions about Chinese culture and religion. Suffice it to say that his answers were less than logical much of the time. Frankly, I think a tour guide's version of Hell on Earth must be spending a day with a bunch of opinionated Canadian students.

The Ming Tombs were somewhat this side of fascinating, but the Great Wall was "great"! We managed to get beyond the smog and climb a goodly portion of the wall, enjoying spectacular vistas in the process. This is not a stroll in the park - it is hard climbing a lot of the time. Back at the tourist center entrance to the wall itself, we enjoyed a colourful presentation by a Mongolian dance troupe. We were very amused that the first thing one sees at the Great Wall parking lot is a large KFC restaurant - yes Kentucky Fried Chicken, folks! At this point in the trip, many of the singers yearned for some western food and that evening, we were actually delighted to be taken to THE BEIJING MACDONALD'S. At that time it was China's only MacDonald's. We ate and we sang for the staff, who all came out to listen to us, totally delighted.

Day three consisted of a visit to the obligatory attractions of the Summer Palace, Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square (the 1989 protests there were fresh in our minds). From the standpoint of Oriental beauty, grandeur and pure Chinese culture, they were all they were cracked up to be. In the same day, we also managed to squeeze in a rehearsal and concert at the Beijing Concert Hall. This was (for the time) a stunningly modern and acoustically excellent symphony hall, which was a joy to sing in to an almost full house. Following the concert, we took part in a joint choral workshop with the Chorus of the Beijing Central Conservatory. It was a wonderful, instructive and "full of good feelings" evening.

Our air trip to Guangzhou was again very short. Our arrival was one of the most memorable of my touring days, rivaling our '91 arrival in Krakov. We arrived at a city which was in the throes of a serious attack of humidity, all of us sweating profusely, even in our comfortable tour sweat shirts and shorts. We were taken to our hotel and given 15 minutes to freshen up before dinner. "Not to worry, dress casually, this is an informal day". We were taken to a restaurant dinner, hosted by the officials of several Guangzhou choirs with equal parts food and rice wine. We were instructed in the ancient Chinese art of toasting: one drinks each toast, emptying the glass during each. Our extreme discomfort at looking like slobs and being hosted by men and women in suits, ties and dresses was slowly alleviated by a wonderful "rice glow". We each received a little ceramic teacup and the group was presented with a large inscribed plate which still sits proudly on our mantelpiece at home. What followed the meal was like a scene from a Charlie Chan movie (for those over 75 years old). We were bused through dark streets and let off in an alleyway, then led through narrow lanes for at least a mile in the rain and humidity. No problem, it all felt wonderful, even in our glorious "slobdom". The biggest embarassment was just around the last corner. We arrived at a large meeting hall, full of singers, dressed to the "nines", in a scene looking for all the world like a Texas debutant ball, and here we were, ambassors of the great country of Canada, looking like a bunch of campers just returning from a strenous obstacle course. Just to make us feel better about our appearance, the evening included television coverage and press photographers. My personal theory is that the term "casual" means "formal" in Cantonese.

It definitely had a "sobering" effect on all of us as we put our individual concepts of dignity aside and plunged into the joint concert which was the evening's event. There seemed to be 3 or four other



choirs involved. We each sang a couple of pieces and then came the joint "effort". With no planned repertoire, we searched for a piece we could all sing together and finally settled on "Swanee River" as it was clear to me that Bruckner's e-minor mass wasn't going to happen this night. Perhaps the most exciting and humorous moment of the evening occured when I, as guest conductor, was leading the masses in the greatness of Stephen Foster (no, not David Foster) and in mid phrase the lights went out, ostensibly due to a lightning-induced power blackout. I kept conducting anyway, yelling out "one" "two" "three" "four" and we finished more or less together just as the lights came back on.

Happily, our last day in Guangzhou was more sublime and less traumatic. Although the rain and humidity continued unabated, we visited a 12 story pagoda (re-using many of the muscles discovered at the Great Wall), a lovely city park and the 5,000 seat Sun-Yat-Sen Memorial Hall. I vividly remember returning to the bus, having run through a particularly torrential downpour, which felt like somebody had poured a giant bucket of water over me. Upon boarding the bus and experiencing that horrible feeling one gets in high humidity when every ounce of clothing is sticking the body, I removed my shirt to relieve the discomfort. Our tour guide Vivian hid her eyes and said "Oh Dr. More, we don't do that in China". I didn't look half as disgusting with my shirt off in 1993 as I do today, so I was somewhat dissapointed with her reaction.

In the evening we met with the Guangzhou Philharmonic Choir for a most rewarding concert -this time in appropriate attire. Like our last evening in Beijing, good feelings and good music abounded. Well done, well planned - Hugh Davies and ACFEA!!

Our transportation of choice to Hong Kong was train. As a waiter-bartender on the CPR run to Winnipeg in my student days, I learned to love the railroad. This was a most enjoyable trip for me, far and above the most exotic way to travel. This was no exception, lasting only a few hours, but wonderfully relaxing.

Ah, Hong Kong: it is hilly lands, it is sea, it is the smell of durian in the supermarkets (Yuck!). To those of us who grew up in Vancouver or Victoria and remember the childhood fascination of a visit to the Chinese precincts, Hong Kong is the ultimate Chinatown. It is Victoria Peak, it is a thousand sky-scrapers and in '93 it is the furthest and most exotic expression of the British Empire. There was much to do from our hotel in Wan Chai. We shopped, we took the funicular to the Peak, we shopped, we rode on the Star Ferry, we shopped, we took a bus tour to Aberdeen and ate at the jumbo floating restaurant in Aberdeen. My own shopping included a search for the wiley Rolex in deepest, darkest Kowloon. Success! I know I got the real thing because it cost 10 bucks and on the face was clearly printed: "Rolen".

We sang 2 lovely concerts - a noon hour at St. John's Cathedral and an evening concert at the Hong Kong Baptist College, the latter due to a connection made through our Lieutenant Governor David Lam. (How's that for name dropping?) At this concert, we met John Higginbottham, Canadian Ambassador in Hong Kong. He and his wife were most complimentary about our concert and we began a correspondence which lasted a number of years. Oh yes, we also ate. The final banquet, laid on by ACFEA, was another never to be forgotten culinary spectacle.

Our last stop was Taiwan. Depending on who you believe, it is the <u>real</u> China. I'll clear it up for you: Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou are on "mainland China", aka PRC, or the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan (on the island of Formosa) is ROC, or the Republic of China. (I'm surprised that the patent office let them get away with that!)

Arriving in Taipei didn't clarify matters much. The city looks pretty Chinese to me, although even more smoggy than the mainland. This was the point at which the tour hosting was passed from ACFEA to the Pacific Cultural Foundation and their president, James Wang. This was the most lavish hosting of the tour, including a sumptuous banquet, gifts for all, 2 huge concert banners and a plaque. On the second day we were treated to the culture and history of Taiwan with a visit to the

National Museum and other landmarks, treated to a Mongolian barbecue and in the evening a joint concert with the Taipei Children's Chorus and Teachers Alumni Choir at the Taipei Normal College Theatre. This was a wonderful display of contrasting audience reactions. Unlike the adult audiences from most of the tour, the kids went nuts with screaming and endless applause. After the concert, we were besieged by the children for requests for autographs, while the adult choir and their conductor just "disappeared".

Our last day of the tour took us on a 5 hour bus ride to Tunghai University in Taichung. We got out of Taipei's smog and were treated to the beautiful landscapes of mountain and sea on Taiwan's west coast.

Hosted by the University President, we spent a short day on the beautiful campus and were presented in a memorable evening concert in their Luce Chapel (designed by I.M.Pei). It was the best concert of the tour, with a university audience who clearly understood and greatly appreciated our music, givings us many encores and callbacks. The evening ended with the traditional Chamber Singers Tour Awards. The return to Victoria was brutal: 6am wakeup; 3 hours to Taipei airport; 3 hours in the airport; 11 hours to San Francisco; 4 hours in S.F. airport; 1 1/2 hours to Seattle; 1 hour in the airport; 45 minutes to Vancouver; 2 hours in immigration and cab to ferry; 2 hours ferry to Swartz Bay and 30 minutes to UVic, arriving 30 hours after we left Taichung.

This seems like an appropriate time to talk about Tour Awards Ceremonies. This has been a tradition since our earliest domestic tours. A committee from the singers is struck at the beginning of the tour, the members of which determine an award for each member of the choir during the course of the tour, often based on suggestions from others. In the early years, these awards ran the full range of kind and congratulatory awards to sarcastic and sometimes hurtful awards to often "deserving" individuals. Travelling in close quarters for three weeks can and does bring out the best and worst in individuals. Happily, the trend over the years has been to soften the awards considerably, so that more recently they tend to be quite humorous for everybody, but not so cutting as some in the past. (Thankfully, the traditional "Tour Whore" award has disappeared, as has the "Longest Member" and later "the Longest Standing Member"). It is always an evening of loud laughter and yelling, usually over a meal. Choosing the appropriate space has sometimes been difficult, but all in all it has been a very happy, exciting and generally memorable event for all, especially those who have graduated and will possibly never see their colleagues again.

I end this chapter with a quote from Wade's journal entry: "This group has been by far the most unified and professional group I've ever had the pleasure to travel extensively with. Everyone, more or less, adhered to Bruce's "suffer in silence" guideline, and no matter how ill several of our troupe got, everyone was always contributing 110%. Kudos on the best tour yet!" And from our tour repertoire, a translation of Rossini's "Quartettino". The sky and sea are calm, we row from

shore to shore. Love leads us on. Now the wind blows waves on the lake. Let us hurry! Ah the moon comes out again. The entire terror was in vain on such a happy earth. We sing, yes we sing!

