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Kathy Sorensen takes 5



Kathy Sorensen



With Mary Donnelly

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Here is the rest of Dr. Sorensen's response to the following question. Please read on.

Q: What has been the most interesting performance/travel experience of the ICC from your perspective from the children's perspective?

A: Nothing musical in this one. In another scary feat, one of the older girls and I rode donkeys up steep and rocky cliffs to the very top of Petra (way higher than Indiana Jones was in his movie set there. The guide said at the start it was only twenty minutes to the top. Twenty minutes later he said we were half way. You get the idea. We had put enough effort into it already that we did not want to give up. Almost the whole way, these sure-footed donkeys were about a foot from the edge, which means we were about a foot from a fall to our deaths! About an hour later we arrived to the most amazing hideout ever created by those historic people. It was worth it! Luckily the ride down was faster and we got to our waiting buses late but alive and allayed the fears of our worried comrades.

Terezin, Czech Republic. You probably would expect me to say that the highlight of the Czech Republic was our performance with the Czech National Orchestra in Smetana Hall in Prague, but it really was the moving, private memorial performance we gave at a former concentration camp for children called *Theresianstadt* in German and *Terezin* in Czech. Charles Davidson, composer of "The Butterfly," had given us permission to perform his composition. At the entry to the town, we filed past row after row of gravestones with names of children who had been taken from their families and eventually killed. In all, about 15,000 children died. The town looked rather ordinary because it was used as a model camp to fool the rest of the world. Visitors were shown how the children were educated, fed, etc. But when the visitors were gone, the children were treated poorly and fed "black potatoes," as one of Davidson's other songs says (based on poetry by the children imprisoned there.) In a memorial area, our

choir members looked in hushed silence at a child's painting of the yellow butterfly that inspired the poem to which Davidson wrote his music. It begins "I never saw another butterfly..." The child that painted this and the child that wrote the poem had both been killed. "They were like us," thought our children, "and they never got to grow up." In a small auditorium there, we paid our respects by singing "The Butterfly." Hardly anyone could get through without crying, singers and audience alike. This connected our children to other children across both culture and time of almost 60 years.

World Choir Olympics in China. We are not a competitive choir, but we always wanted to go to China. Since I won't take the choir anywhere without a good educational purpose, this was our answer. We met so many singers from literally hundreds of choirs. Yes, we were honored with two medals, but the experience of brotherhood among all of the children was far more rewarding to us all. As for memorable, I will never forget the Opening Ceremonies, for which the ICC was invited to represent the Americas (North and South). As we were singing Mack Wilberg's composition "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise," the big screen above us displayed the Statue of Liberty and other scenes from the Americas. It was so moving to be thousands of miles away, seeing those images as we sang. We also sang "Alma Llanera" to represent South America and Spanish speaking North America, and "Praise His Holy Name" to represent African Americans. The event was filmed by CCTV (Chinese Central Television) and broadcast all over China. All week long, whenever we would arrive back at our hotel rooms, and just turn on the TV, we would see the opening ceremonies and ourselves! Of course, this is the official Chinese television, and other channels are extremely scarce, so almost all Chinese people with televisions would have seen this. We even heard "Let Zion in her Beauty Rise" playing in the taxi cabs. Chinese people told the children it was their favorite song! Later, on our last day in China, we sang it on the Great Wall as we

looked out over the rolling mountains. Back home, when Mack Wilberg was told about the success of his piece by one of the tourists, he humbly said, "I never thought I would live to see one of my pieces performed in China." The children and I are so grateful that we were able to share something of this wonderful composer with the people of China.

Bergen, Norway. We were there at the invitation of ISME, the International Society for Music Education, to sing for their convention. A classical song that we love is Edward Grieg's "Våren." When we visited Grieg's home in Norway, the children were thrilled to see the actual original handwritten composition in the museum there. They even got to sing the song there. As the tour guide was then taking us back to the buses, I said that we wanted to see the cabin where Grieg did his compositions. She said we didn't have time. I told her it really mattered to us all, and that we would give up the other things scheduled for that day just to do that. The children entreated her as well, and we enjoyed the highlight of our trip to Norway—walking through the moss-covered, "troll-infested" forest to a tiny, red cabin with huge windows overlooking a beautiful lake. Grieg built it just for a place to compose. Instantly we could feel what Grieg must have felt when writing many of

his compositions. I think we will always see that scene when singing or listening to Grieg. In fact, I keep a postcard of that little, red cabin in a prominent place in my own cabin. In English, Våren means "The Last Spring," and the gist of the song is "perhaps this is the last spring I will ever see." It holds an awareness of the beauties of nature through the eyes of someone partaking of the scene for the last time. Touchingly, when we looked high up into the rock hillside, we could see his burial place.

Back Home in Utah. We have had the fantastic experience of singing with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on many occasions. Some of our favorites have been performing for President Hinckley's Birthday Gala when he was ninety-five, with the Osmonds on several occasions, with John Williams, The King's Singers and Fredericka von Stade during the 2002 Winter Olympics. One of our boys won the auditions to be the soloist singing the role of "Youth" in Elijah and took his bow with the famous Welsh baritone, Bryn Terfel. If you ever see the PBS special "A Gift of Music," those children in royal purple robes with sparkly velvet collars really are the ICC. The children dress in the robes for serious classical events such as that one which was accompanied by the Utah Symphony. They also wear character outfits when performing with the Utah Opera.