



Bel Canto Chorus Brings Music to Germany and the Czech Republic

Bel Canto Chorus traveled on a 10-day excursion to Germany and the Czech Republic and held two concerts as part of the American Celebration in Music.



The concerts took place in Berlin and Prague and featured performances with local orchestras in some of the most historic churches in Europe.

The trip also included sightseeing tours of the Berlin Wall, "Checkpoint Charlie," a former Nazi Concentration Camp and many famous composer residences.

UPAF spoke to two tour participants to learn about their love of music and experiences on the tour.

Erica Breitbarth is the choir director at Reagan High School and serves on the Bel Canto Chorus board of directors. She participated in the chorus' recent tour as soprano soloist and section leader.

Erica received her undergraduate degree in music education from Wheaton College and a masters from Northwestern University. Although education is her main focus, she feels it's important to set an example for her students by being active in performance as well.

"I was really excited to come along on the tour as the soprano soloist," said Erica. "It was amazing to get to be in the cities where the great composers lived and worked. We had the chance to see the homes and workplaces of Bach, Handel and Dvořák."

Erica is passionate about supporting Bel Canto Chorus. "Bel Canto is a unique chorus

made up of singers of all ages and tackles quality choral repertoire, both traditional and new pieces. It has a strong community vibe and is made up of people who really care about one another. It feels like a musical family!"



Brett Hanisko received a degree in vocal performance from UW-Milwaukee and has sung with Bel Canto Chorus, Milwaukee Opera Theatre and Kalliope Vocal Arts. Brett has been singing with Bel Canto for 10 seasons and this was his third tour with the organization.

"I was particularly interested in this tour because of my German heritage and the fact that I studied German all through middle and high school," said Brett. "I had been wanting to go to Germany for years now so the timing was perfect!"

Brett served as a baritone section leader and was amazed at the receptivity of the German and Czech audiences. "It's hard to anticipate how an American chorus singing in German will be received in Germany, but our audiences were very appreciative. Our Bach cantata included Martin Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* and this was very timely since it is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation."

Both Erica and Brett felt that the tour was an incredible and enriching musical experience!



Bel Canto Chorus was founded in 1931 and was one of the inaugural groups funded

by UPAF. The organization is committed to enriching the lives of its audiences and members through the outstanding presentation of classical and modern choral music throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

For more information on Bel Canto Chorus and their upcoming performance season, [click here](#).

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