

QCTA

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October 1992

CHORAL PERFORMANCES ACROSS THE BUCKEYE STATE

OCTOBER

- 25 The Faculty Jazz Quartet and The Denison Singers, conducted by William Osborne, in a program of Broadway, Tin Pan Alley and jazz classics; Burke Recital Hall, Denison University, Granville, 3:00 PM.
- 25 The Bowling Green State U. Collegiate Chorale and A Cappella Choir with the BGSU Philharmonia Orchestra presenting **A German Requiem** of Brahms, conducted by Emily Freeman-Brown; Kobacker Hall, 3:00 PM.
- 25 The Vocal Arts Ensemble conducted by Earl Rivers with brass, winds and percussion performing music by Copland, Bernstein and Persichetti, plus new works by Ron Nelson, David Conte and Mark Keller; Cathedral Basilica, Covington, 3:00 PM.
- 25 The Cantari Singers of Columbus conducted by Maurice Casey in a program of works by Schütz, Allegri, Bernstein, Thompson and Pinkham; Pontifical College Josephinum, Worthington, 7:30 PM.
- 4 The Collegiate Chorale and A Cappella Choir of Bowling Green State University conducted by Richard Mathey and Mark Munson in their Annual Christmas Concert; Kobacker Hall, 8:00 PM; the concert will be repeated at Epworth United Methodist Church in Toledo on December 6, 3:00 PM.
- 6 The West Shore Chorale conducted by John Drotleff in a concert of works by Halsey Stevens, Buxtehude, Bach, Monteverdi, Schütz and Pinkham; Rocky River United Methodist Church, 7:30 PM.
- 6 The Concert Choir and Orchestra of Denison Univ., conducted by William Osborne presenting Britten's **Saint Nicolas** and John Rutter's **The Wind in the Willows**; Swasey Chapel, Granville, 7:30 PM.
- 12 The Cantari Singers of Columbus conducted by Maurice Casey performing the Pinkham **Advent Cantata**, Britten's **Ceremony of Carols** and other seasonal music; Worthington United Methodist Church, 8:00 PM.

NOVEMBER

- 8 The Ohio State University Chorale and Symphonic Choir conducted by James Gallagher and James Major; Weigel Hall, 3:00 PM.
- 9 The Lakewood High School Symphonic Mixed Choir conducted by John Drotleff performing the Beethoven **Mass in C**, opus 86; Lakewood High School, 7:30 PM.
- 11 The Columbus Symphony Children's Chorus directed by Sandra Mathias in a joint concert with the CSO Youth Orchestras; Upper Arlington HS, 7:00 PM.
- 14 The Masterworks Chorale of the Summit Choral Society with an orchestra from the Akron Symphony conducted by Frank Jacobs performing Bach's **Mass in B minor**; E. J. Thomas Performing Arts Hall, Akron, 8:00 PM.
- 15 The Ohio State University Symphonic Choir conducted by James Major; University of Rio Grande, 2:30 PM.
- 22 The OSU Men's Glee Club conducted by James Gallagher in a joint concert with the University of Michigan Men's Glee Club; Mershon Auditorium, 3:00 PM.
- 17 The Lakewood High School Christmas Choral Concert conducted by John Drotleff; Lakewood Civic Auditorium, 8:00 PM.
- 19 The Vocal Arts Ensemble conducted by Earl Rivers performing Britten's **Hymn to the Virgin**, Paulus' **Jesu Carols**, Susa's **Mystical Carols**, Finzi's **Magnificat**, music by John Rutter and others; Athenæum of Ohio, 8:00 PM; the program will be repeated at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Madeira on December 20, 3:00 PM.
- 20 The Chancel Choir with an instrumental ensemble conducted by Maurice Casey performing William Haller's **Christmas Pageant**; Worthington United Methodist Church, 9:30 and 11:00 AM.

DECEMBER

- 1 The Ohio State University Chorus and Women's Glee Club conducted by Randol Bass; Weigel Hall, 8:00 PM.

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HERE AND THERE: A MISCELLANY

Lora Loore has announced an OCDA **Fall Children's Choral Conference** at Otterbein College on Saturday, October 24. The day will begin with registration and a conference welcome by President Richard Mathey from 8:30-9:00 AM in the lobby of the Battelle Fine Arts Center. At 9:00 Herb Henke will offer a session on "Teaching Musical Concepts Through Movement." This will be followed by Amy Chivington with Otterbein's **Kinderchor** dealing with "Developing the Child Voice/Choral Rehearsal Techniques That *Really* Work with Kids!!" After lunch Michael Lisi of the Lakewood Public Schools and Amy Chivington will present a reading session. A panel discussion on "The Business Aspects and Organization of Children's Choirs" will precede a concert at 3:00 PM by the **Jubilate! Children's Choir** of Winnetka, Illinois, conducted by Chris McQueen. The registration fees are \$35.00 for OCDA members and \$20.00 for OCDA student members.

Gwen Brubaker invites ODCAers to a workshop on "Vocal Techniques For Church Choirs" at Grace United Methodist Church, Harvard Boulevard at Salem Avenue in Dayton on Saturday, October 31. A session on vocal techniques led by Dr. James Mismas of Kent State University from 10:00 AM until noon will be followed by an open rehearsal from 1:00 until 3:30 PM with Dr. Mismas as soloist and the Chancel Choirs of Grace Church, directed by Gwen Brubaker, and the First Baptist Church, directed by Madonna Goss. These same groups will appear in concert on Sunday, November 1 at 7:30 PM. Lunch will be available for \$3.00. Please make reservations by October 26 at 513/278-4731.

Tate Newland invites OCDAers for a Northeast Ohio Children's Choir Festival on October 31 at the First United Methodist Church of Cuyahoga Falls. All singers in grades 1-6 are welcome.

The Festival will last from 9:30 AM until the concluding concert under guest conductor/clinician Allen Pote at 3:00 PM. The schedule will include rehearsals with Pote, a parade of choirs and games. The five festival anthems deal with different seasons of the church year and can be used by children's choirs of all sizes. There will be a directors' round table discussion with Mr. Pote at 7:30 PM on October 30. For more information contact Tate Newland or Dean Wagner at 216/923-5241.

Richard Dean has announced an OCDA **Junior High/Middle School Music Workshop** at Bowling Green State University on November 7. Registration at 7:30 AM will be followed by welcomes from Dean and President Mathey; concerts by the Findlay Middle School Choir conducted by Nick Vengeloff and the Defiance Middle School Choir, conducted by Bruce Denniston; a reading session led by Dean; a concert by Dean's North Central Middle School Choir; and a session on "The Changing Voice" led by Mark Munson of the BGSU faculty. The Registration fees for OCDA members are \$25.00 and \$5.00 for OCDA student members. Lunch will be offered by the BGSU student ACDA chapter for \$5.00.

Jim Gallagher is planning a Male Chorus Day at Ohio State on February 7. Interested schools will be invited to send a participating quartet. Jim will deal with all matters leading from rehearsal to performance. The event will include a cameo appearance by the OSU Men's Glee Club.

Danual Forsberg is planning an Ohio State Boychoir Festival to be held at Battelle Auditorium in Columbus April 23 and 24, 1993. The participating groups: Austintown Boychoir, Danual E. Forsberg, director; Cincinnati Boychoir, Dr. Randall Wolfe, director; Columbus Boychoir, Otis Z. Jones, director; Dayton Boys Choir, Daniel B. Greene, director; and The Ohio Boychoir, Alexander Musichuk, director. The choirs will meet at the Lane Avenue Holiday Inn to sing for one another

and prepare joint selections for the festival concert on Saturday evening. It is hoped that the guest conductor will be Gerald Wirth of the Calgary, Alberta Boys Choir. For more information, contact Mr. Forsberg at PO Box 445, New Bedford, PA, or 412/964-8079.

Maurice Casey, associate director of **The Robert Shaw Choral Institute at The Ohio State University**, has announced its 1992-93 schedule of activities. The Saturday Seminar series was to have begun on October 3 with a session on Part I of Handel's **Messiah** given by Mr. Shaw. That has been postponed to a later date. The session of January 23 by Robert Levin will focus on the **Requiem** and other choral/orchestral works by Mozart. On April 17 Mr. Shaw will study Mendelssohn's **Elijah**. On May 8 Thomas Dunn will present works by Haydn for chorus and chamber orchestra appropriate for community and church choirs. The Saturday seminars, which run from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM, cost \$45.00 each. In February Mr. Shaw will conduct two concerts with various of the OSU choral and instrumental ensembles. The event of February 24 in Weigel Hall will include the Hindemith **Apperebit Repentina Dies** and Stravinsky's **Symphony of Psalms**. The Brahms **Requiem** will be heard on the 27th in Mershon Auditorium.

Jim Gallagher announces changes of responsibility at The Ohio State University occasioned by the retirement of Maurice Casey as Director of Choral Studies. Jim will conduct the Chorale and Men's Glee Club while the Symphonic Choir will be conducted by James Major. The University Chorus and Women's Glee Club will be directed by Randol Bass, the new graduate assistant.

Ernest Hisey has retired as head of the Vocal/Choral Division of the Department of Music at Cleveland State University. He will continue as conductor of The Cleveland Chamber Singers, who are in residence at CSU. A former

continued next page

HERE AND THERE (from page 3)

state president of OCDA and regional ACDA president, he has conducted performances at both OMEA and ACDA conferences.



The **Cantari Singers of Columbus**, conducted by **Maurice Casey**, will present three concerts during its 11th season. In addition to the two listed on the calendar, their year will include works by Argento, Grieg, Elgar and Hennagin at Mees Hall on the Capital University campus on May 1 at 8:00 PM.



The **Vocal Arts Ensemble** of Cincinnati, with Earl Rivers as Music Director, will present four concerts during its 13th season. In addition to the two listed on the calendar, their year includes movie music of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, the Rossini **Petite Mess Solenelle**, and new music by Cary John Franklin and William Hawley on February 7 at the Omni Netherland Plaza Hotel; and Handel's **Dixit Dominus** (guest conducted by Richard Westenberg), Argento's **Peter Quince at the Clavier** and works by Barber, Hindemith and Steve Barnett on June 19 at the Plum Street Temple.

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THE OCDA AT KENYON

The OCDA Summer Conference at Kenyon College in Gambier July 8-11 offered a potpourri of performances, reading sessions, discussions of rehearsal techniques, multicultural music, and vocal health and rehabilitation for singers. All in attendance returned to their responsibilities with new insights and an enlightened determination to make better music with their own choirs.

Wednesday evening began with a stimulating session on Renaissance choral techniques given by Linda Hasseler. William Bausano then led us through a collection of Christmas music. The day concluded with a panel discussion on "The Choral Assembly Line: Are We Helping Each Other Achieve Our Goals?" Discussants included Lora Moore, Sandi Gesler, Wade Raridon, Richard Dean, Richard Mathey, Carol Longsworth and moderator William Osborne.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday Walter Ehret shared with us mountains of music and many anecdotes out of his long career. Kelly Scurich offered show choir reading and movement sessions. Keith Hampton inspired us to perform and teach music from all of the world cultures. Thomas Stokes in his sessions on junior high music challenged us to include music reading skills in our choral rehearsals and then presented materials we can use to accomplish this. A Saturday morning session on vocal technique by Andreas Poulimenos proved all too short. The evening session on vocal health by Kim Wigglesworth and Drs. Michael Trudeau and David Kelly of Ohio State was both informative and picturesque. Videotapes of the vocal mechanism in action and explanation of the physiology added to our knowledge. The evening performance by the Franklin Heights Women's Alumnae Ensemble conducted by James Myers with soloist Carol Myers was truly outstanding.

Douglas McEwen directed the conference chorus with expertise and a wonderful sense of humor. We rehearsed and performed music of various periods and styles, including **Beati quorum via**, a motet by Stanford, and Victoria's **Ave Maria**. We sparkled as we sang Lloyd Pfautsch's **Echoes** and **Stars**. Daniel Pinkham's **Alleluia** from **Fanfares** demanded our attention to rhythm and Brahms' **The Trysting Place** drew out our romantic souls. The men's performance of George Mead's arrangement of **Down in the Valley** left all the ladies swooning. We closed with Norman Luboff's arrangement of **Old Dan Tucker**. We certainly had a delightful time making beautiful music together.

The two *Gemütlichkeits* were fun as we laughed together, renewed friendships and made new ones. Stanton's Sheet Music and Musical Resources provided ample music to review and graciously hosted one of the social events.

OCDA President Mathey called a concluding meeting at which he announced a fall board meeting for August 29 at Ohio State. We discussed future plans and sites of summer conferences. Is a more clinical approach needed to address the interests and needs of our members? Could we have a group heading our summer gathering? What about finances? More about church music? President Mathey closed our meeting by stating that we can grow through participation. He challenged the R & S chairs to become more active and all to submit articles to REsound and the **OCDA News**.

Certainly a review of the OCDA 1992 Summer Conference would be incomplete without an enthusiastic thank you to host Ben Locke. Ben and his committee laid the groundwork for this successful event. Thanks again, Ben. Bravo!

Amy Chivington

OCDA News, the Bulletin of the Ohio Choral Directors Association, William Osborne, editor, is published three times a year from the editorial office at Denison University, Granville, Ohio. It is distributed without charge to members of the Association as well as to selected members and officers of the American Choral Directors Association. It is mailed from the Post Office in Granville, Ohio 43023. The OCDA News is printed on paper made from 25% recycled fiber.

HOW TO START A STUDENT ACDA CHAPTER

With the academic year underway, now is a good time to start a student chapter of ACDA. Congratulations to C. M. Shearer and students at Kent State University, where Ohio's newest chapter was recently formed. We now have chapters in Ohio at Cleveland State, Kent State, Miami, Ohio State, Bowling Green State and Otterbein College.

Any college or university can form a student chapter to serve the choral program, and provide experience and leadership roles for students interested in choral music. The purpose of a chapter is not to compete with other organizations, but directly to involve students in assisting the choral director and the choral program. Chapters do not need to be large to be effective. A few interested students is all that is needed.

Many activities are possible, including the sponsoring of concerts and festivals, repertoire sessions, student conducting sessions, travel to concerts, and assisting in recruitment for the choral program. This semester at Bowling Green the chapter is sponsor-

ing a series of sight-reading sessions and a first-year teacher panel discussion. On November 7 its members will assist with the OCDA Junior High/Middle School workshop. Last year, twenty-five of the members attended the regional convention in Chicago.

To help you organize a chapter, an information packet is available from: Guy B. Webb
National Chair, Youth and Student Activities
Department of Music
Southwest Missouri State Univ.
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**EVERYTHING BUT A COUP:
THE DENISON SINGERS
INVADE VENEZUELA**

At the risk of seeming to abuse my editorial privilege, I thought that it might interest at least some to hear of a venture I undertook last May, since it involved venturing into an area of the world little frequented by American choirs.

By way of introduction I might inform you that The Denison Singers' tradition of touring dates back to 1963, the second year of the group's existence, when we undertook a spring vacation visit to alumni clubs in the Midwest. Since then we have visited twenty-three states and the District of Columbia, usually on swings through the Midwest or the Northeast, but we once ventured through the Southeast as far as the tip of Florida and once spent January in California, travelling much of the state between Sacramento and San Diego. At first these trips were made during the spring vacations of what were then sixteen-week semesters. The advent of a January Term allowed more extensive itineraries as well as the possibility of foreign travel. Hence we went to Central Europe in 1972 and again in 1983, Romania in 1975, and Spain in 1978, alternating domestic with foreign travel and touring only in alternate years. Substitution of a May term led to a tour of Poland and what was then the Soviet Union in May 1990.

It became apparent last fall that the new group thirsted after some sort of off-campus experience. Friendship Ambassadors, a non-profit organization headquartered in New Jersey (the same group which had twice sent us to eastern Europe) had shared with me information about a new program they were developing in Venezuela in an attempt to fill the void left in their original mission of exchanging individuals and groups across the Iron Curtain. They had been contacted by the New

York-born director of Gaudeamus, a Caracas-based choral ensemble involved not only in performance, but also in education and international exchange. He was interested in the possibility of American groups coming to Venezuela in an effort to fertilize what was already a quantitatively active albeit fairly rudimentary choral culture. So we carried with us a polyglot repertory, one intended to present a healthy swath of American choral literature, as well as a major liturgical piece from 16th-century Spain and several works that would symbolize links between North and Latin American culture.

We somehow managed on the Monday following Commencement to catch a 7:30 AM flight to Nashville, with a change of planes to Miami and, after a five-hour layover, the three-hour flight to Caracas. After perfunctory immigration and customs routines we were met by a coterie of our Gaudeamus hosts and bussed east for about half-an-hour to a modest hotel near the beach in the Macuto area. A welcoming ceremony and refreshments were followed by a bit of sleep before breakfast at 6:00 AM: juices, virulent Venezuelan coffee and a special breakfast pastry filled with ham and cheese, all served on an open sixth-floor veranda facing a mountainside covered with lush tropical vegetation and fancy apartment houses directly abutting the squalid shacks of the *ranchitos* which sprawl virtually everywhere in most urban areas.

Then it was back to the domestic wing of the Simon Bolivar Airport through the teeming noise and confusion of seaside exurbs of the capital that had awakened with the sun. Our goal was an 8:10 flight to Guanare, some 200 miles to the southwest. A belated decision had been made to use a commuter airline, rather than flying us into an adjacent city on a conventional jet, which would then have been

followed by a two-hour bus ride. However, nobody on either side of the equation had considered how much luggage we might be carrying, and the pilot wisely refused to fly with an excess of 350 kilograms. After an extended period of animated conversation about who was to blame, we re-packed on the tarmac, taking with us only what we would need for the night, with the rest of our belongings flown out the next day. After an uneventful trip on an eighteen-passenger turboprop, we were deposited at the city's minimalist airport into the arms of an enthusiastic welcoming committee, and bussed a short distance to the Venezuelan equivalent of an American motel: La Sultana's rooms were what might be called basic, but, with air-conditioning, were apparently the best in town. The food served in its restaurant was regional and probably amongst the most authentic we met.

Guanere: The Spiritual Capital

Guanare is a city of about 55,000 inhabitants, founded in 1591 and capital of the Portuguesa state. It lies at the edge of a great sweep of western plains with the foothills of the Andes looming close by. We also quickly learned that it is the spiritual capital of the country when we were immediately taken to the local cathedral to rehearse for our first concert. That Spanish colonial basilica, put under construction in 1710, contains the votive image of Our Lady of Coromoto, the Patroness of Venezuela. Fascinated by the architecture and oppressed by the scorching heat, we nonetheless got accustomed to the building's acoustic and then walked across the Plaza Bolivar to pay a ceremonial visit on the director of the local music school, a facility so primitive as to defy description. We were also invited to visit a seminar being

conducted for young orchestral conductors from across Latin America. After much flourish and ceremony we were cajoled into singing a couple of spirituals, joined by a student from Uruguay who knew one of the arrangements. Their enthusiasm was overwhelming, the first of many accolades we were to receive over the next nine days. A funny postscript to that experience: In our impromptu audience was a woman who had flown from Caracas with us that morning. We then learned that she was a well-known opera singer who was to perform De Falla with the local orchestra as part of the seminar. In the confusion over our luggage, all of hers had been left behind, including her scores.

Siestas and Incongruity

After a well-earned siesta we set out on a late-afternoon excursion that, incongruously, began with a visit to a local pasta factory, since its owner. With our souvenir packages of pasta in hand (much of it later donated to our personable bus driver), we headed downtown for visits to a former Franciscan convent dating from 1756 that now houses the administrative offices of the local university as well as a chapel converted to a handsome concert hall, and then across the street to visit the local museum, filled with undistinguished bric-a-brac housed in another pleasing colonial structure. We then walked a block to the Teatro Tempo, a marionette theater apparently widely known across Latin America. We visited its extensive museum and were treated to an excerpt from a work-in-progress.

Despite the excruciating heat, our 7:00 PM concert in the Cathedral proved an enormous success. A crowd of about two hundred (including a phalanx of about thirty nuns in full regalia) cheered and demanded multiple encores. Afterwards we were besieged with requests for autographs and conversation. Several of us spoke rudimentary Spanish, and one was absolutely proficient and invaluable as a means of communication, although the Venezuelans tittered at his elegant Castilian accent (something akin, I

gather, to a West Virginian's instinctive response to a proper Oxbridge accent). Then it was back to the hotel for dinner, which was interrupted by two groups that came to serenade us as a means of offering gratitude: first, a pair of gifted teenagers who sang and played the

We had not yet learned to adapt to what is by some called VIT, or Venezuelan Irregular Time.

bandola and quattrò (the latter a national instrument something like our ukelele), and then, a local choir who sang from their repertory of regional folksong arrangements.

Wednesday morning's excursion took us to the mammoth shrine being built to honor Our Lady of Coromoto out in the country where the miracle supposedly took place in 1652, a monument under construction for about a decade and nowhere near completion, although it is scheduled to be visited by the Pope late this year. We were treated royally by the host nuns, since they had heard us the preceding evening and considered our voices little less than instruments of God. Then it was on to the local campus of The University of the Western Plains and a fascinating visit to its zoological museum, run by an American with degrees from the University of Illinois. That afternoon we were invited by a local cattle rancher for some R & R. The promised thirty-five-minute drive took more than an hour, since the modest facility (a lovely pool its only apparent luxury) lay in the midst of a holding of one hundred square kilometers, apparently only half

the estate. Soaking up the sun with only mango trees and coconut palms intercepting the limitless horizon in one direction, the Andes looming in the other, proved idyllic, except when recalling the abject hovels we had passed on the way, built of bamboo, mud wattle, palm fronds and sheet metal, sometimes with virtually naked children sharing the mud with chickens and pigs.

Our concert that evening was in the auditorium of a local high school and it proved a mixed blessing. We had not yet learned to adapt to what is by some called VIT, or Venezuelan Irregular Time, meaning that nobody expects an event announced for 7:00 PM to begin anywhere near the hour. Part of the problem that evening was wrestling into the space one of the three pianos in the city. Another was having in the audience a large number of kids whose only goal was to meet us gringos afterwards, meaning that their buzz of anticipation made it difficult for the serious listeners to concentrate. The formal performance was followed by a workshop for local choral conductors and singers, the first of three during which I talked about the American traditions of shape-note singing and the singing school tradition using examples from Alexander Auld's *The Ohio Harmonist* and a piece by William Billings. The locals seemed fascinated and it was always heart-warming to get all the participants singing together, although we made less headway at this first try, since none of them, including some real charmers in a rather large children's choir, could read musical notation.

Thursday morning allowed a bit of time downtown where some merely wandered, sopping up the sights, sounds and smells, while others made a valiant start on their covert goal of considerably worsening the U. S. balance of payments deficit for the month. Then it was off to Barquisimeto, a two-hour bus ride. Our driver was a typical Venezuelan daredevil, for whom, by example, a red light was only a momentary inconvenience to be acknowledged casually and obeyed only at major intersections. Speed limits and no-passing zones are dutifully marked and just as dutifully ignored. This particular

driver crossed himself every time we passed a church, which made me a bit uneasy at first, especially with the number of small roadside shrines dedicated to those who had perished there. One other peculiarity: periodic checkpoints on even inconsequential roads manned by either the police or civil guard, at which in former times everybody had to stop and produce identification, but are now little more than traffic bumps which slow vehicles sufficiently that one can notice the lounging officers paying no attention whatsoever to passersby.

Barquisimeto, a more cosmopolitan city of about 335,000 inhabitants, is the capital of the Lara state. We were housed in the comfortable yet spartan quarters of the local military club, whose food was perhaps the least interesting of the trip. A late lunch allowed only a bit of slack time, which the men spent mastering a kind of lawn bowling whose rules and idiom were taught them by a pair of MPs. Some went for a conducted walk of the neighborhood, enlivened mostly by a stop at a fruit and vegetable shop to buy some tiny bananas freshly cut from the stalk, whose moist sweetness reminded me of the relative blandness of the botanical hybrid offered us in this country. I might mention that virtually all the fruits were wonderful, whether served whole or in the form of juice. Our snack before that evening's concert included fresh raspberry juice; at other times we were offered the fresh juices of the mango, guava, passion fruit and melon. The performance was held in the Ambrosio Oropez Auditorium of the West Central University of Lisandro Alvarado. Apparently the publicity had been minimal, and the crowd that gradually materialized was slight, but they were enormously responsive, especially when we sang our final encore—*Noches larenses*, a folksong from that area, an arrangement of which had been sent me by the cultural attaché of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington. In fact the piece was so popular that whenever we offered it many would sing along with us.

The Attack of the Microbes

Friday was a bit difficult, since the

few whose stomachs were attacked by the local microbes had to deal with the results that day. We had a bit of time downtown after a brief stop at the cathedral, a relatively new building in the idiom of Saarinen's original TWA terminal at the Kennedy airport, but already in a state of disrepair. Little of the city's architectural past remains, but some of us spent time in the local museum,

Perhaps a thousand people listened as we sang before the 12:30 PM Mass and periodically throughout its celebration.

housed in a sprawling Spanish colonial building that had earlier served as both convent and jail.

Then it was on to Caracas, much of the journey on an *autopista*, whose toll was the same as when it had opened many years ago: 5 bolivars (@ 65 bolivars to the dollar). At least this one was staffed with toll collectors; the one we had travelled the day before was marked by unfinished and unoccupied toll booths. Since Guntars Gedulis, the director of Gaudeamus and our genial manager throughout the trip, had been born in New York of Latvian parents, his group borrows the Riga House as a kind of social center, and it was there that we were first taken. We were joined by Gaudeamus singers and staff for a lavish meal followed by some communal singing led by Guntars, after which we were sent off to homes for the weekend. This three-night home

stay proved a vivid experience for all but the three of us who were housed in a faintly seedy hotel downtown because of some last-minute complications.

On Saturday morning we were escorted downtown by a Gaudeamus chorister, using the city's Washington-style Metro, since traffic and parking are virtually impossible in this metropolis of 4,500,000 people. Late that afternoon we offered a performance *cum* workshop in the concert hall of the Central University of Venezuela, a boisterously ecstatic affair, since the audience was comprised mainly of a considerable number of choral singers and their conductors who crowded the stage afterwards to sing spirituals and *Noches larenses* under my direction, the whole event recorded both by the university and a local radio station. A wonderful group called Canto Mundo gathered afterwards and sang for us to express their appreciation and I enjoyed fruitful conversations with several conductors at a backstage reception. That evening we all gathered at a wild Brazilian nightclub to dance and drink a potent concoction of rum and passion fruit juice.

Sunday morning took us to the Don Bosco Church in the Altamira section, a sprawling concrete monstrosity, filled with perhaps a thousand people who listened as we sang before the 12:30 PM Mass and periodically throughout its celebration. Perhaps two hundred of them lingered afterwards for a thirty-minute concert, which they received with yet another standing ovation. The women of the church then presented us a delicious lunch in the adjacent parish hall.

The students spent the rest of the afternoon climbing the Avila peak north of the city (which lies at 3,000 feet, the Avila range rising another 6,000 feet above it). I spent the time in the Museums of Fine Arts and Contemporary Art, an integral part of the new Parque Central, a concrete city-within-a-city delineated by two fifty-six-story skyscrapers, before meeting Guntars at the Teresa Carreño arts center for a concert marking the end of a week-long celebration of music from Latin America. The program was a strange one: a

retrospective and clumsy piece for strings having something to do with a waltzing violinist, written by a young Guatemalan composer and played in a lackadaisical fashion by the Soloists of Venezuela, supposedly the country's leading chamber orchestra; and a bizarre performance piece for actor, string and vocal quartets and pre-recorded sounds by a Caracas composer, a work that lasted forever and made no sense even to Guntars. But the hall was handsome and I enjoyed the opportunity of experiencing professional Venezuelan musicians at work. That evening offered a final Caracas party, given in the handsome home of a Gaudeamus singer whose late mother had been some kind of successful film star.

On Monday it was up early for breakfast at the neighborhood pastry shop and then five hours on one of the few air-conditioned buses in Venezuela (built in Brazil by Mercedes-Benz under the seemingly incongruous brand name of Marco Polo) on our way to the Spanish colonial town of Barcelona, capital of the state of Anzoátegui, and its sister city, Puerto la Cruz, a posh resort town that was to be our home for the final three days of the trip, the whole area with a population of about 450,000. We were housed in a four-star hotel whose owners were co-sponsors of our visit. The facilities and service were first-class, but the food, while competent, was, as is so often the case in such circumstances, ersatz continental and correspondingly bland. After lunch the afternoon was spent in a walk through the business district to the beach and harbor, marked by a Paseo Colon, or Columbus Promenade, a broad esplanade lined with restaurants and street vendors' stands amongst the palms. Then it was back to the hotel's splendid pool.

The concert that evening was in the municipal art gallery for an invited audience of local choral singers and conductors, whose response was absolutely rapturous, although they were so eager to watch us work that they intruded on the warm-up process, leaving the students more than a bit edgy. Again, the workshop that followed elicited an enormously positive response and a

closing serenade by the very fine choir of the local campus of the University of the [Venezuelan] Orient. Our host was the director of the local music school, a French-born trombone player who had been trained in Germany and resident in Venezuela for 12 years. He took me to see his facility on the way to the gallery, and again I was appalled at the primitive circumstances under which he

Our genial local driver, who had become a groupie as he attended both concerts and participated in the workshop, insisted on taking us to a local nightclub.

worked: an open-air rehearsal room and four studio/practice rooms to service almost four hundred students. Oh, and a computer that did not function because of the lack of a suitable power supply.

Friday a small group of us toured the El Morro resort complex being developed between the two cities, apparently the original model for Cancún. We were on our way to Barcelona, a town whose core smacks of the 17th and 18th centuries. On the way back to the hotel we paid a ceremonial visit to the university choir, complete with singing by them, a speech by the rector, presentation to us of one of their recordings, and a group portrait after they escorted us back to our bus. After a somnolent afternoon at the pool we offered our final concert, this in a fine hall in our hotel, since the city apparently lacks conventional performance

spaces. The hotel, however, lacked a conventional piano, meaning that we had at our disposal only an electronic gadget made by Yamaha, which, I must admit, came as close to simulating the real thing as any substitute I have encountered.

Most of our final day was spent on an excursion about another thirty miles further east to Playa Colorada, one of those picture-postcard Caribbean beaches. The mid-part of the day involved being taken in two fishing boats to one of the offshore islands that constitute part of the 360 square miles of the Mochima National Park. The sun was overwhelmingly intense, the water tepid and wondrously transparent for the snorkelers, a lunch of fresh pompino with fried plantains and scrumptious corn meal arepas perhaps the best meal of the trip. A beatific experience except for those who absorbed too much of the ultraviolet stuff without realizing it. Back to town during the late afternoon for some final shopping and a walk on the esplanade to watch the sunset through the palms. Our genial local driver, who had become a groupie as he attended both concerts and participated in the workshop, insisted on taking us to a local nightclub, a zany place with a staff in bizarre costumes offering impromptu entertainment and drinks like piña coladas in ceramic mugs suggesting that you were imbibing your mother's milk. It might have been more fun if we hadn't been approaching the point of exhaustion.

Then, about midnight, we again boarded our Marco Polo for the six-hour ride to the Caracas airport, the only drawback being that the thermostat control for the air conditioning no longer worked, meaning that the system was either on or off, transporting us alternately from freezer to sauna, and leaving at least me with a wretched cold. After fond farewells to the Gaudeamus people who had come to see us off, it was back to Columbus via Miami and Nashville, where the whole glorious experience abruptly dissolved as we went our separate ways.

Indeed, all that was lacking from an otherwise exhilarating and edifying venture was a promised coup.

William Osborne

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OCD A NEWS

William Osborne, editor
61 Country Lane
Granville, Ohio 43023

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