

Knox Choir Tells Of European Tour;

Memorable Experiences Leave Many Lasting Impressions As Globe-trotting Choir Sings From London To Brussels

By Carl Kalmus

Months of preparation, of concert tours, of worries and problems, of intense rehearsals, suddenly drew to an end for the Knox choir on July 20. They were on the plane bound for Europe at last. The choir robes were on board, no one had been left behind, so all settled down to enjoy the flight. For many, the long sequence of new adventures had already begun, with the thrill of flying itself.

First stop, Gander, Newfoundland. There in the midst of a cold, driving rain, of a foreign land—bleak, desolate, empty. Trench coats on, they wandered around the deserted airport. Before long, the huge plane was speeding on toward Europe and even greater surprises.

First Day In London

At 4:45 p. m. July 21—They were in London. After a quick trip through customs, busses took them to Oxford and their first new home, Oriol college. The college, built in 1300, is one of the 25 colleges which make up Oxford university. Pubs, gabled houses, thatched roofs, and above all, the landscape so different from our own—tiny, irregular farms with dense forests scattered here and there—filled their first evening. A quick wash-up at the common baths, and to bed for a much needed rest.

The next morning began early for the choir. After a short rehearsal in the oldest music building in all Europe, the New College chapel, dated 1370, they toured the Oxford campus and had their first experience handling foreign currency.

Begin Hectic Touring

Wednesday, July 23, was crowded with history—Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace, the Hathaway cottage and the Holy Trinity church, Shakespeare's final resting place. That evening, the choir enjoyed "Romeo and Juliet" at the Shakespeare Memorial theatre.

Lunch the next day was served in London, where they learned that not all the big cities keep the same hectic pace as Chicago or New York. There a guide was waiting to take them around the large city. The afternoon's sights will not soon be forgotten, in spite of the guide, who made them all uncomfortable by shouting "Come on Knox, don't dilly-dally, we haven't got all day. My heavens!" Then a trip to Madame Toussard's waxworks where everyone smiled politely at the guard and the "bobby," later dis-



Final arrangements completed, choir members embark on the first lap of their European tour as they board the bus for the airport.

covered to be parts of the exhibits!

Tuesday, July 28, the choir gave one of its best concerts at Toynbee Hall, London. After the intellectual audiences before which they had previously performed, Toynbee Hall was quite a surprise; it is a settlement house for London orphans. The audience, so hungry for culture, was spellbound. "Hi, neighbor" sang the choir for their final selection, and as they waved to the audience at the close, one very tiny old lady waved back and answered them, "Hi, neighbor."

Farewell To London

A rehearsal on the rooftop of a University of London building, a visit to the House of Lords, an exciting concert at the Surrey Music School, a ballet, and the choir said goodbye to London.

Thursday, July 31, began at 5 a. m. with preparations for the flight to Stockholm. After a bumpy ride, in which the planes seemed to progress sideways, the choir was directed to their hotel, a lovely modern building, complete with private bath! What a welcome change after those common baths!

Stockholm was found to be surprisingly modern, skyscrapers mushrooming everywhere. But not much souvenir hunting was done that day, for the Swedish still close their shops at 3.

The next few days were spent in sightseeing, in trying to find English-speaking people to find bearings, and best of all, in giving a concert at the Millesgarden. This was the memorial for Carl Milles, a famous sculptor, and naturally the gardens were filled with statues and fountains. A beautiful sight, and a never to be forgotten evening.

Rain or no, the choir left the following morning for the island

of Drottingham, summer home of the royal family, and the 17th century theatre still in use. There all of the ingenious stage tricks of that era are still employed: large rocks for the sound of thunder and a wave machine, among others. The only instrument ever used was the harpsichord, so well suited to the 17th century plays presented.

The evening of August 2, the choir gave an impressive concert before a huge and enthusiastic audience, right in the center of Kungstradgarden Park.

On To Copenhagen

That night they slept in the 3-deck high pullman of the train bound for Copenhagen, only to wake up in a ferryboat in the middle of the strait between the two countries. The train was wheeled on board during the night.

Copenhagen was indeed wonderful! Especially the lovely statue of the Little Mermaid sitting on a rock in the middle of the harbor, waiting, goes the legend, for her love to return.



Laundry all ready, girls? That's one thing they couldn't travel away from. The scene of all this industry was Now College Hall, their home during their London stay.

The evening was spent at the Tivoli Gardens, where cotton candy and concerts were delightfully combined with ferris wheels, and above all, the bumper cars. Many of the Knoxites found the cars a refreshing change of pace!

After a visit to Elsinore and Hamlet's castle, dinner and a concert at the International Peoples' College, suitcases were packed and thoughts turned to the next stop—Hamburg, Germany.

The ferry across the Baltic was rough, but without calamities. And soon they were on land in Hamburg. The lights of the city at night were exciting, and so was the Total Menkehaus, their home for the next two nights.

Due to the lack of tourist facilities, the only hotel large enough to accommodate the entire choir was in the Reeperbahn, a somewhat shady section of town. Again, no calamities.

Although they had seen the results of the war all along their journey, Hamburg was the hardest hit—about 40 per cent of the city was still in ruins.

Eventful Days In Munich

Early Friday, August 8, the choir reached Munich, after a charming train ride through the German countryside filled with old towns with one church spire each, an old castle now and then, and fields being worked by women and oxen.

The members of the choir stopped at the German Museum to see the collection of musical instruments, including pianos, clavichords, organs, harpsichords dating as far back as the 18th century. There, the guide, an old man who had once dreamed of becoming a musician but was forced to work, went from piano to harpsichord to organ, playing on each an appropriate selection. His tremendous love of music made him decide that if he could not become a musician, he would be content to spend the rest of his days showing people the wonderful instruments in the German Museum.

War Scars Remain

While in Munich six of the choir members hired a chauffeur driven car to take them to the nearby concentration camp, now

new plate glass and tile interiors. Stepping into an old world cathedral was like stepping from one century into the next, for the insides were modern in design, symbolizing the forward thinking of the German people. There is a balcony off a large paved square where less than 20 years ago, Hitler reviewed his troopers. The choir saw only young mothers pushing baby carriages, old men feeding pigeons and a window washer at work on the balcony.

Enjoy German Pastime

The choir spent many delightful hours in the Hausbrauhaus, drinking beer in German style—by the liter—to the music of a merry German band.

Monday, August 11, destination Salzburg, and the first glimpse of the Alps. There, among the beautiful scenery, they saw Mozart's birthplace, the cabin in which he wrote much of his music and many of his original manuscripts. Also, they came across a small bakery which has been in operation since 1429—63 years before Columbus sailed for America! The entire city fitted their ideas of what a European city should look like—gargoyles, castle fortresses built into the mountains and open markets, in addition to the catacombs dating back to 200 A. D.

Venetian Highlights

Upon arriving in Venice, Italy, the following Wednesday the



Eins, zwei — soufa. A toast to the Hofbrauhaus, Munich, Germany. Who could forget those evenings in this world famous hall? And even more important, the size of those stems.

kept as a memorial to those who died there. There the barbed wire fences, the thick-walled tower from which the prisoners were supervised, the many ovens and gas chambers, the sieves used to strain any left-over liquids from the ashes made the group unusually silent. Now the grounds are covered with flowers; a row of bright red is all that is left of the firing range. How strange it was to those six to pass by the peaceful fields on their way home.

members of the choir were overwhelmed to find that all they had heard about the city was true. There are no cars, not even bicycles! Venetians either walk, or ride boats through the many canals. Luckily the choir arrived in time for the Night Fete, a national celebration on which everyone climbs aboard a gondola for a huge two hour parade through the grand canal. Leading the procession was a lighted gondola, complete with orchestra and soloists. An evening bursting with romance, interrupted only by an occasional water fight among the gondoliers.

And who could forget St. Marks Square, lined with renaissance baroque buildings and pigeons, pigeons, pigeons!

While in Venice, the choir took a trip to the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello and were impressed with the tremendous poverty. There was a great deal of disease, particularly among the children, who scarcely wore any clothes at all. After almost losing two of the chaperones, the choir returned to Venice.

Awaken In Switzerland

Falling asleep on the train in Venice, theoretically, the choir awoke in Switzerland. The arduous train ride was more than compensated for by the lovely Swiss scenery, and it was refreshingly cool for a change!

Sunday was spent in the tiny churches and later in the mountain which they climbed by

Nailingsby, Sweden and throo of its cutest citizens. All along the tour, the students found children eager to pose for pictures.

Munich still tastes of war, in spite of the tremendous effort of hiding the scars. Old walls and towers are used as the bases for



Yorkshire pudding and roast beef topped by English pie: The best dinner in all England was served in a small cafe not far from Windsor Castle.