

Serenade Choral Festival – Washington, D.C., Maryland & Virginia

The FCCC Chamber Singers recently attended the Serenade Festival, which involved concerts and touring in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. This remarkable festival had incredible international and multi-generational elements. There were four youth choirs: from the Czech Republic, Norway, Canada and the U.S. There were three young adult professional groups from Zimbabwe, the Netherlands and Russia. (This was a highly unique aspect of this festival.) Finally, the Yale Alumni Chorus (from Connecticut!) was made up of recent grads up to singers in their 80's. Concerts and other festival events took place at local churches and concert halls, including the Strathmore Music Center, which was a beautiful hall that many choristers compared to Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood (where we performed in June 2013).

One highlight of the festival was the final "Singing Dinner." Throughout the evening various groups were encouraged to get up and perform, or to lead the entire crowd in song. The boys from Quebec surrounded our group and performed a choreographed version of "My Girl." A Spanish guitarist had everybody doing the tango in the aisles. The Yale group had numerous offerings, including their old college theme song (Bright College Years) and some yodeling. The FCCC led the group in some vocal jazz improvisation on Blue Skies. Many soloists from all over the world got up to join us in improvising a chorus or two.

Tours are one of the most important aspects of the Chamber Singers' experience in that they help to broaden their world view and form international friendships. On a practical level, our choristers learn how to take care of themselves over many days of an often grueling schedule and to get along with others in close quarters, developing tolerance and patience. Another important thing we learn on tour is how to maintain personal and group safety, our catch-phrase for this crucial skill is "situational awareness," which stresses each individual's need to perceive what is happening around that individual at any given moment. Tours provide our choristers with invaluable and enduring life lessons.