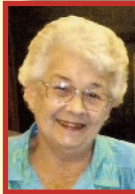


The Choir visited Berne in May 1990

Betty's Bernese Diary

from Betty Thomas
second soprano



An American college choir had been engaged to sing two performances of Beethoven's Choral Symphony (in German), but had pulled out at the last minute. We jumped at the chance and soon travel arrangements were in place. Our Chorus Master, Neville Creed, and a small group would fly to Berne, as they couldn't commit to a longer time abroad. Most of the rest would travel in two coaches, with a stop en route in France. Victor (my late husband) and I decided to combine this trip with our annual holiday, and would take a caravan, spending a few days in France before arriving in Berne a day before the main group of singers.

*What a good job we did arrive early! Having left our caravan safely in a campsite, we went to the hotel to check accommodation. We discovered that the hotel staff were still expecting college students and, having been given the list of our choir members, they had put them four, or even six to a room. **Shock, horror!** Neville would have been in an attic room with five other members and others had been unceremoniously grouped together. We spent hours re-allocating rooms and organising a meal for that evening.*

A rehearsal with the orchestra was scheduled for late afternoon and we hoped to have a choir by then. First to arrive was Neville with his small group from the airport. As the clock ticked on we started to worry about the missing choir. Neville asked me to phone the hotel in France where they had spent the previous night to ask what time they had left that morning. Remember this was before the use of mobile phones and easy communication, so I had to ask the hotel receptionist (in German) to use their phone, and then had a conversation in French with the hotel in Dijon. Having been told that our two coaches had left early that morning I turned to Neville and relayed the news – but in German!





His surprised expression was a picture but I soon repeated it in English. There was no choice but to wait hopefully for the coaches to arrive. At last they came and we had hurriedly to get everyone to their rooms before reassembling to go to the final rehearsal.

Our Israeli conductor had a name which seemed like the letters left over in a game of scrabble – Eliahu Inbal. Someone irreverently dubbed him “Inbers”! The concert hall was very impressive, not unlike that seen at New Year in Vienna, with two magnificently lit chandeliers dominating the auditorium, gilt chairs for the audience and a good acoustic. I had to be on hand to act as interpreter and often in the next few days found myself trying to keep up with Neville as his long legs flew up the marble staircases when he needed to check arrangements (I could walk in those days).

Between rehearsals we made the most of our two coaches by exploring the Bernese Oberland. Victor went as guide on one coach and I was on the other. We were very lucky with a trip up to Grindelwald in brilliant sunshine with clear blue skies. Another trip was to Lucerne and we visited a cheese factory in Gruyères.

A tour like this is a wonderful opportunity for members to get to know each other and many friendships or, even sometimes, more permanent relationships were formed.

Neville saw to it that choir discipline in concert was of the highest standard. We filed in perfect order and sat as motionless as statues until our cue when we rose to our feet and sang our hearts out! At the end of the first concert we were given a standing ovation of eleven minutes! Some of the members of the audience apparently didn't believe we were an English choir, as our German was so good. There was a full house again for the second concert and we were pleased to see our coach drivers in the audience beaming happily.

Then it was back to the hotel for our final night in Berne. Next day we all went our separate ways, and Victor and I returned to our caravan to set off for a holiday in Italy'.

Betty Thomas

Sue's Viennese Diary



from **Sue Gosling** second soprano

Tuesday June 1st 2010

We arrived at our centrally located hotel in some style in a double decker bus. It was evening and our thoughts turned to a meal. We ate with Gill and Bernard (*first tenor*) Perry after a short walk over a canal bridge towards the Stephansdom (St Stephen's Cathedral) area. We dropped into the Gosser Keller, a very traditional Austrian eatery with excellent beer. Of course, we chose and enjoyed Wiener Schnitzel.



Wednesday June 2nd 2010

Wednesday morning – wet and miserable. Leo and I stayed in the hotel until the rain let up around 11. En route to the city centre, we called at Julius Meinl, the Viennese grocery store par excellence. We admired the Stephansdom from the outside, the Hofsburg palace complex and the Spanish Riding School, and wandered, as tourists do. Rehearsal was scheduled for noon at the Hofburgkapelle, the home of the Vienna Boys' Choir. I was somewhat underwhelmed by the rather homely building that appeared to be less than well maintained. Our rehearsal went well in spite of Chris Dowie being somewhere in the stratosphere in the organ loft. The acoustics were challenging and I found it difficult to hear any of the other voices. Our informal recital started at 1 pm and was attended by our camp followers and a few visitors – there being no notices of the event posted in the vicinity of the Kapelle. Our programme was a pared down version of the main concert to be held in the cathedral with the addition of a couple of secular pieces by Pearsall & Stanford. Gavin seemed pleased and we disbanded. The rest of the day was free and Leo & I spent it with Viennese friends, Karin, Renate & Andreas. They took us to another typically Viennese restaurant in the village of Nussdorf on the outskirts of Vienna.



Thursday June 4th 2010

This was a free day, and, after a detour through Karl Marx Hof, Heiligenstadter Park and Grinzing, we headed for the hills through the Vienna Woods on a local bus, arriving at the top of Kahlenberg. Bathed in glorious sunshine, we walked back down the gentle slope of the Nussberg through vineyards and were rewarded by stunning views over the city and the "Blue Danube". After lunch, again in Nussdorf, we returned to the city by tram and visited the Kunsthistorisches Museum. We were impressed by the quality and quantity of its art collection, particularly its Breughels. Wandering back to the hotel we noticed beer stands and sunbathers on the banks of the canals. We found ourselves a couple of deckchairs and soaked up sun, sand, and beer.



Friday June 5th 2010

Our friends took us to the Naschmarkt, a huge food market with goodies from all over the former Austrian Empire. We bought several interesting comestibles and ate them in a Wine Bar with a glass of white wine. Time to report for a rehearsal in the Stephansdom at 1pm. It is especially at moments like these when we temporarily "possess" an historic, beautiful building and fill it



with marvellous music that I revel in being part of such a fantastic choir. Tassos, our courier, helped to position us halfway along the mighty nave. There were moments of nervous trepidation and even hilarity whilst the portable organ was wheeled into position – will it topple over? Ooh, mind that foot! Our concert at the Stephansdom was scheduled for 8.30, rather late by British standards, especially as it would last at least two hours. Gavin directed an impromptu warm-up outside the cathedral in fading light. Beautiful sounds wafted over the air, all the richer for being sung without music. We handed a ticket to Karin and went inside to find the capacity audience contained within a kind of wrought iron corral in the nave. We had a very warm response at the end of the concert.

A choir dinner had been booked nearby in the very underground cellars of a typical Bierkeller. It was a hot and steamy affair with the weight of food almost equalling some people's hand luggage. Thanks were expressed by Alastair Smith to Gavin Carr and by Gavin to the Chorus and the organisers of the tour. It struck me as a very successful tour with plenty of time to explore the city and just about the right amount of music for a 3 day trip. Gavin was even-tempered and encouraging as he chivvied us with his usual sense of humour. As always, he communicated and shared his love of music with us all.



Programme

Handel: Zadok the Priest
Mozart: Kyrie in D minor, Ave Verum Corpus
(organ solos)

Bruckner: Ave Maria, Christus Factus Est,
Locus Iste, Os Justi

Interval

Handel: The King Shall Rejoice
S S Wesley: Blessed be the God and Father
(organ solo)

Parry: I Was Glad
W H Harris: Bring Us O Lord
Parry: Blest Pair of Sirens



Fly Florida



by **Rosemary Allen** second alto

Holiday-makers helping themselves to crispy bacon, hash browns and scrambled egg must have been a bit startled to hear the strains of **When I'm Sixty Four** arranged for four part chorus, coming from the hotel bar at half past eight in the morning. Well, after all, we were in Florida to sing, and we had to rehearse somewhere.

Eighty-six members of BSC, plus assorted husbands, wives and children took over a good proportion of flight BA237 from Gatwick to Orlando. We were there primarily to sing **African Sanctus** in the Chapel of Rollins College in Winter Park. Purely incidentally, you understand, we were able to "do" Disney World and top up our suntan at the same time. We combined the two activities by giving two half hour performances in the American Gardens Theatre at the Epcot centre as part of their **Rhythms of the World** series - and managed to get a standing ovation!

The regular Wednesday audience in the Wessex Hall, Poole, seeing us less than three weeks later in sombre black, singing Mozart's Requiem wouldn't have recognised us as we hit the theme parks. Respectable sopranos were enquiring which rides had the highest *scream factor*. Normally staid altos shrieked as they plunged down 'Splash Mountain' and shivered at the 'Extra Terrestrial Alien Encounter'. It was even rumoured that our chorus master had been led astray by a couple of basses to sample something called *Humunga Kowabunga* at Typhoon Lagoon, reputedly the longest, and probably the steepest, water slide in the world.





A problem soon became apparent though: what was real and what was 'virtual reality'? At the *Magic Mountain* the snowy egret sitting motionless on a very obviously plastic rock suddenly took off and flew over our heads and I found myself suspiciously fingering the uniformly green turf to see if there was real earth underneath. It did cross my mind that we, too, were only virtually there!

Five years before singers from the Winter Park Bach Choir stayed in Bournemouth with our own Chorus members during a UK tour and we were fortunate to be entertained in their homes for the last two days of our stay. New friendships were made and old ones renewed. I must say that it was something of a relief to return to the 'real' world. Our concert in the packed college chapel, including music by Byrd *Ave Verum Corpus*, Parry *I Was Glad*, Holst *Psalm 148* and Britten *Hymn to the Virgin* as well as *African Sanctus* was a very happy conclusion to our visit.



I think the highlight for me though, was the 'Morse Museum of American Art', containing an absolutely stunningly beautiful display of Tiffany glass - lamps, vases and whole windows. This was most certainly real, and for me was worth all the Disney paraphernalia put together.

The tour was a great success and working with the composer, David Fanshawe, was a stimulating experience which has subsequently led to a TV programme on the making of the *African Sanctus* recording and his later work *Dona Nobis Pacem*. He remained a great champion of the Chorus and a true friend until his premature death in June, 2010.

Chicago! Chicago! May 2012

Early in 2011, Dr Robert Harris, one of the most famous choral directors in America, based at North Western University in Chicago, invited the BSC to visit Chicago and to participate in a performance of *Not in Our Time* with his own NWU Choir and Orchestra. He had been very impressed with the score and had decided with the agreement of the University to mark his retirement with the US premiere of the BSC Centenary Commission.

Originally the timing was perfect, and coincided with half term but the Queen's Jubilee celebrations resulted in the school holidays being moved forward a week. This meant that teachers and others in the Chorus could not go, which was a disappointment to a number of singers who would otherwise have taken part. The Chicago group was 90 of whom 70 were singers and meant that the BSC represented 50% of the choir singing in the concert. The Chorus stayed in the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza which has fabulous views of the city and river.



Thursday and Friday's piano and tutti rehearsals were at the NWU campus a bus ride away. Singers were picked up from the hotel for rehearsals in bright yellow School Buses, which seemed to have little seat padding or suspension. Reactions to this mode of travel were mixed! After the Friday tutti rehearsal the Dean Professor Toni-Marie Gardiner hosted a cookout at NWU for all the performers. The concert was given in the stunning Jay Pritzker Pavilion, designed by Frank Gehry, in Millennium Park on the Sunday evening to an audience of around 5000, to a standing ovation.

In between rehearsals etc Chorus members were busily sightseeing in an unexpectedly beautiful city, with a stunning cityscape from the river, the shore of Lake Michigan, and from the viewing platform of many well-known landmarks. A host of Jazz clubs were on offer as were boat trips and other activities, the best of which was the Segway city safaris. On the evening before returning home, the entire group went out for a meal with Dr Harris and his partner, Catherine, to Dick's Last Resort. During the evening Dr Harris was invited to become a Vice President of the BSC, which he was delighted to accept.

Carolyn Date *Chorus Manager*

It has to have been one of the most memorable weeks of my life. What with looking out from the Millennium Stadium and seeing all the people on the grass listening to this most memorable piece in a amazing setting, to travelling down through the parks of Chicago on a Segway - which was the most fun I can say I've had.

Keith Hunt *second tenor*

What an experience the trip to Chicago was - a fantastic week in an amazing city. My first tour with a choir exceeded all expectation. From whizzing around Grant Park on a Segway to soaking up some rays on the shores of Lake Michigan, it was non-stop fun from the word go.

Once we'd survived the authentic American transport experience (yellow school buses!) the rehearsals at North Western University were well worth the bumpy ride! Singing in Millennium Park was an experience I'm sure none of us will ever forget - what a privilege to perform an important work like Not In Our Time in such a fabulous setting.

In between the rehearsals and the singing, we all managed to squeeze in a bit of culture and enjoy the city - many were impressed by the view from the dizzy heights of the Sears Tower and the John Hancock Observatory, some of us took in the all American experience at Wrigley Field baseball stadium and a visit to the Art Institute of Chicago was also high on the list of things to see. The Segway tour deserves a special mention - ten Bournemouth Symphony Chorus members and the Chorus Master speeding around the city is a sight none of us could forget! **All in all, a week to remember!**

Lizzy Potter *first alto*



View from the stage in Jay Pritzker Stadium in Millennium Park. Gavin Carr and Richard Blackford keep a watching brief.

My final thoughts shared with friends over breakfast on the last day of our trip to Chicago still hold true, I laughed for the entire time and made some wonderful new friendships in the process. This was not only my first choir trip but also my first trip to America and I was lucky enough to share the experience with Lizzy who had joined the chorus a couple of months before. The nights were reserved for sampling some of Chicago's finest jazz venues and cocktails; the days for shopping, sight seeing and of course, singing. It was a real privilege to bring Not In Our Time to America and I'll never forget the moment I set eyes on the Jay Pritzker Pavilion where we would perform a few days later to thousands and get a standing ovation!

Fran Cohen *second soprano*



*The Chicago Mob
Picture taken at dusk by Keith Hunt*



Carolyn Date (centre) with Laura Coyle, a leading singer with the Robert Harris North Western University Choir, and Dr. Robert Harris, who conducted the combined choirs in Millennium Park.

Blues Sisters & Bro.
Keith Hunt, Fran Cohen & Lizzy Potter catch the **Moody Blues**



Italia 1999

by David Russell, first bass

After a day relaxing by Lake Bolsena, we went to Orvieto for our first performance in one of Italy's finest cathedrals. One enters through a richly coloured and decorated facade but inside the cathedral is formed of black and white stone. Concerts were not the order of the day for the priests but they allowed us to sing during Mass. We stood close by a chapel with a ceiling by *Fra Angelico*. Next day we moved on to Assisi for a rehearsal and a **"STRAORDINARIO CONCERTO"**.

We gathered around the altar in the Lower Basilica which is over the crypt which contains the bones of St Francis. The darkened church was filled with enthusiastic people and the atmosphere crackled with expectation whilst the gold glistening on the frescoes made the occasion special. We sang Gabrieli and Vivaldi before being joined by the Ensemble San Felice in a performance of Richard Blackford's **Mirror of Perfection**.

The composer has set seven canticles by St Francis himself, poems dealing with love, the furnace, creatures, birds and peace. Its message is uplifting and our performance was much applauded. We moved on via Montepulciano to Siena for further rehearsal, this time for a proper concert in the Cathedral. Neville Creed led us in an alfresco public warm-up in the piazza in front of the Cathedral, before we gave our demanding and wide-ranging programme of Lotti, Viadana, Monteverdi, Rachmaninov, Wesley, Holst, Barber and Tavener.



Thence to the hill-top town of San Gimignano, so picturesque with its tall towers, fine churches and marvellous views across the rolling Tuscan countryside replete with vineyards. Time for lunch in its piazza before we were whisked off to Florence and our final concert in the church of San Felice, where below an imposing crucifix possibly by *Giotto*, our tour with the **San Felice Ensemble** reached its climax.



Margaret Burdett
Soloist from the Chorus



Christopher Dowie
Organist

Accademia San Felice

I CONCERTI NELLE CHIESE

Straordinario Concerto
per Soli, Coro e Orchestra

BOURNEMOUTH
SYMPHONY CHORUS
&
ENSEMBLE SAN FELICE

Basilica di San Francesco
(Assisi)

lunedì 25 ottobre '99, ore 21

Soprano Margaret Burdett	Musiche di
Baritono James Davis	G. Gabrieli Jubilate Deo
Organista Christopher Dowie	A. Vivaldi Beatus vir
Direttore Neville Creed	R. Blackford Mirror of Perfection

Ingresso libero - Free entrance





Musically I suppose our tour in Tuscany Italy singing in four different cathedrals proved the most satisfying. One outstanding memory was in one Cathedral where the Head Verger decided that at 4.30pm our afternoon rehearsal, prior to our evening concert must end and he must lock the cathedral doors and leave to go home for his tea. The Choir having been turned out on the street, our chorus master Neville Creed decided that the unfinished rehearsal must be completed and we continued with the remainder on the street outside the cathedral, much to the amusement of the passing public.

John Harper, second bass

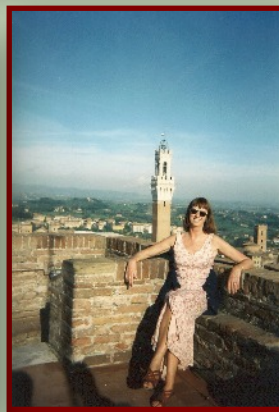


Mind your P's and Queue

by Margaret Shelton

*Who'd be a soprano or alto? Much of our time in concert intervals is spent looking for the loo, and in a strange concert hall, that can be a challenge in itself, then queuing for it accompanied by the sotto voce chorus, **Sorry, it won't flush**, whereas have you ever seen the tenors and basses queuing? **Never. Well, hardly ever.***

*There was one occasion when the whole choir had to queue. When the BSC went to Italy in 1999, we stopped at a service station while on quite a long journey from one town to another, perhaps it was on the way from Orvieto to Assisi. This meant that everyone, apart from a few with exceptional bladders, felt obliged to pay a call, spend a penny or whatever other euphemism you want to come up with, as the arrival time at our destination was uncertain, and.. well... a bird in the hand and all that. There was only one problem – just one toilet for men, and one for women, with around a hundred members of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus patiently waiting, some doubtless with their legs crossed! Hence, I well remember the long queue that snaked its way round half the coach park, with those at the back hoping that the coach drivers wouldn't leave without them. My husband doesn't normally photograph public toilets, thankfully, and happily he mostly concentrated on the more uplifting cultural sights of Italy, but he couldn't resist recording the patience of the BSC in adverse conditions. However, I bet us sops and altos were noticeably more patient than the tenors and basses. **After all, haven't we all had years of experience!***





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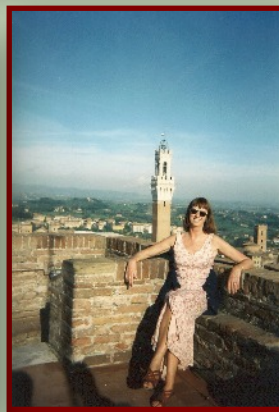


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Tour of Israel, 1997

On the tour to Israel we stayed in Bournemouth's twin town – **Netanya**, a seaside resort north of Tel Aviv. Between concerts we explored the region **ya**– floating in the Dead Sea, seeing baptisms in the River Jordan and visiting a Kibbutz. We sailed in a replica of a biblical sailing boat on the sea of Galilee and as the boat was named Alleluja, what more natural than we should sing the **Hallelujah Chorus** in the middle of the lake!

Betty Thomas, first soprano



The programmes in **Netanya** and **Raanana** included:

Handel - Zadok the Priest
Dyson - Hierusalem
Elgar - Chanson de Matin
Parry - Blest Pair of Sirens
Elgar - Chanson de Nuit
Richard Blackford - Mirror of Perfection

The soloists were Margaret Burdett and Edward Caswell and Neville Creed was the conductor of both the Chorus and the **Raanana Symphonette Orchestra**



Richard Blackford, composer, conductor and friend of the Chorus, seems happy with the progress of the tour



Sandrey Date, relaxing in Israel



Dead Sea Soul Singers ?
Not Drowning but Waving



When I look back on the Israel tour, I wonder if we would think about doing one now? It was such an experience and security was extremely tight on the aircraft and at immigration control. We stayed in **Netanya**, a seaside resort north of Tel Aviv and Bournemouth's twin town in Israel. We gave several concerts - some formal with orchestra in Netanya, Rhan'an'a, and others which were informal, such as in **Caesarea**. The latter concert included the Barber Adagio which when I hear it now, always makes me think of Israel.

We went to Nazareth, Jerusalem and sailed on the Sea of Galilee on a boat called Allelujah. What could be more fitting than doing what we did – a rousing Hallelujah Chorus in the middle of the lake. We visited **Massada** (so hot!) and the Dead Sea where we all bathed in it and covered ourselves in the famous black mud. Neville was floating, reading the Daily Echo and he gave one lucky chorister a hug while covered in the black mud!

On the way to **Jerusalem** we stopped at the beautiful but harrowing memorial to children who lost their lives in the Holocaust, and the tomb of Oskar Schindler. Jerusalem had a feeling of being very much on the edge – a vibrant, buzzing city where everyone seemed to be on their mobile phones which were not as common in the UK then. It was so incredible to be visiting those places with names as familiar as our own, and to walk the Via Dolorosa and to sing with Pilgrims in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We visited the Baptismal Site in the River Jordan of course, and Bethlehem too, as well as a kibbutz.

Many of us spent time in all the restaurants in Netanya which encircled the town square just outside our hotel. Our trips to other towns were generally accompanied by a guide, the most memorable of which was one called Elizabeth! Another abiding memory was Margaret Burdett's beautiful singing as the soloist in Dyson's **Hierusalem**.

*Mary Davis **second soprano***



An informal sing in the Roman Theatre at **Caesarea**, made extra special by the backdrop of the Mediterranean; **Masada**, the Dead Sea and the floating Hallelujah Chorus on the Sea of Galilee, not to mention the unusual traffic hazard from a flash flood.

*Janet Cooper, **Librarian, first alto***





Can you spot Bournemouth Symphony Chorus member, young **Gareth Malone**, before he became a choral animateur, TV star and conductor of the ***Military Wives Choir***



Accompanist Chris Dowie and his wife, soprano Pauline. Maybe, Chris is recalling the spiritual....
Deep river, my home is over Jordan

Neville Creed conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus in the ruins of the ancient Roman city ***Caesarea Philippi***



Prague & Brno 2008, 40 years after the Prague Spring based on notes made by *Howard Dalton*

The idea of a tour to the Czech Republic originated from the successful collaboration between Richard Blackford and the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra. This resulted in an invitation to perform his major choral work *Mirror of Perfection* at the 2008 Spilberk Festival.

So it was, that on Wednesday 20th August the Choir and friends boarded three flights to take us to Prague. Upon arriving we were conveyed to our hotel, the *Corinthia Towers*, an excellent hotel which stands atop one of the hills of Prague and enjoys great views over the city. It is close to Vysehrad and just two stops on the Metro from Wenceslas Square. After breakfast, the Chorus assembled for a short rehearsal with Greg Beardsell and Chris Dowie before most of us took the Metro to the Muzeum stop and walked into Wenceslas Square, which was brimming with people.

A glance at an exhibition of photographs showed us that we'd arrived on an historic day. Forty years earlier, in 1968, Russian tanks rumbled menacingly into Prague smashing the liberal regime of Alexander Dubcek. The exhibition's graphic images clearly moved the local population as memories flooded back. The Czech national flag flew from the Museum with large portraits of political leaders of that period including Dubcek himself.

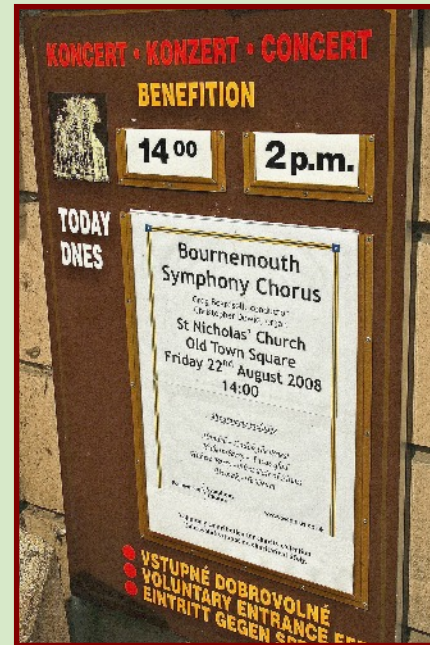


Walking along the banks of the famous river Vltava, some of the choir hummed the tune from Smetana's symphonic poem. We walked on past the Rudolfinum Hall where Dvorak conducted - as his statue reminded us.

In the early evening some of us retraced our steps back into Wenceslas Square. We were amazed by what we saw. There, next to the statue and Museum, stood a tank, a representative of the many that had rolled into the square. On it were locals dressed as Russian soldiers aboard. A tribute had been placed on the memorial to the victims of that fateful time.

Other visits were made to the old quarter of Vysehrad and past the ancient St. Martin's Rotunda. The cemetery there holds the grave of famous musicians including Dvorak, Smetana, Fibich, Jan and Raphael Kubelik, Emmy Destinn and Karel Ancerl.

Reminders of another grim time in Prague's 20th century were illustrated by a visit to the Jewish Quarter and Cemetery. This unique site was "spared" by Hitler for the sole purpose of his warped vision of providing a museum for an "extinct race" in later years. Prague was largely saved from destruction, as he admired the architecture and planned to make it a "capital" in his "new order". The Old Cemetery courtyard of gravestones dating back to the 1600s was accessed through a shrine to the residents of the city who perished in those terrible years of the Second World War. By



great contrast some members were able to enjoy an evening concert in the Rudolfinum of the music of Enescu, Mendelssohn and Dvorak, gloriously played by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Christian Badea.

Our lunchtime concert in the Church of St. Nicholas was heralded by the Chorus standing on the steps of the church singing Parry's *I Was Glad* to bemused passers-by. The concert was a great success, with Margaret Burdett and James Davis singing excellent solos in Dvorak's *Te Deum*. The Chorus enjoyed the experience and Greg was clearly pleased.

Saturday 23rd August: time to bid a fond farewell to Prague and move to Brno. The next day was free giving us time to explore Brno, the second largest city of Czech Republic which has five universities and is dominated by the imposing Spilberk Castle, the venue for our second concert. In the evening, we located Besedni Dum concert hall and held our rehearsal with Richard Blackford and Greg.



The next morning we returned for a tutti rehearsal with the Brno Philharmonic. This concert hall, which is the home of the orchestra, was the place where the composer Leos Janacek once regularly conducted. A Czech television crew was present to advertise our concert and interview Richard. He was to conduct the concert at Spilberk which was to include his *Mirror of Perfection*, the suite from Janacek's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* and Dvorak's *Te Deum*.

Tuesday 26th August, and we set off after breakfast to Spilberk Castle by tram. We arrived and soaked up the atmosphere before clambering on to the restricted stage in the inner courtyard. This time we had Czech soloists and Richard drew excellent playing from the orchestra.

The evening concert, heralded by a stirring fanfare, was a great success and the Dvorak *Te Deum* proved an exhilarating climax with everyone clearly enjoyed themselves. It was a wonderful opportunity for the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus to take part in such an important festival far from home.

The following day was a final chance to explore before Richard kindly came to our hotel to bid us farewell and to make presentations to Carolyn Date and Joan Ingafield for their hard work in organising the tour. We were given individual gifts of the Spilberk concert programme and a CD of Dvorak played by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra. A marvellous tour and great company!

