

## Cornerstone University Chorale Europe 2017 Student Reflections

*Each paragraph is a separate, personal story of the way God worked in a student's life.*

If I had not gone on this tour, I wouldn't have tasted the sweet nectar of God's presence that saturated every day. I wouldn't have grown in understanding the joy of loving, giving and receiving. I wouldn't have new life goals and a fiery appreciation for travelling and meeting new people from different cultures.

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I saw God in the generous hearts of the Hungarian people. I saw God living and breathing through the hospitality of new friends in Slovakia. I saw God glorified within the walls of St. Stephan's Cathedral in Vienna. I met with God in the echoes of our songs in the mausoleum in Bückeberg.

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I am extremely humbled by the generosity, hospitality, enthusiastic applause and instant friendships we received. I'm returning to America with a humbled spirit ready to work and serve others, ready to be much more generous with my time and resources, and filled with the desire to be more like the generous, gracious, hospitable people we encountered on this trip.

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Spiritual focus is a problem for me. Often I can fake it, but it seems that I have a hard time allowing the Holy Spirit to encounter my heart, particularly when I'm performing. It's hard to find a posture of humility necessary to meet with God in liminal space. I think I found it tonight though. Looking across the audience, I realized the unique privilege to see God blessing them through our music. At the same time, I felt so incredibly blessed by them. This mutual blessing and loving by the grace of God was a spectacular picture of the church. An overwhelming sense of humility centered my focus in a new way. I wasn't performing anymore, I was worshipping.

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If I hadn't gone on this trip I would have missed out on the hospitality, love, joy and beauty that I experienced in each country. I learned about living a life that is more simple and sacrificial. My comfort is not as important as serving others.

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I was told that the man I talked with after one of our concerts was a very talented musician and composer who is very hard to impress. He began to share his experience during the concert. He lifted his hand and placed it on his heart and he said that we had touched him. He said that you can impress someone and they can enjoy the way you perform, but to touch someone's heart is a completely different and much deeper thing. To touch someone is to speak into them and reach their soul. He said that we had impressed him, but we had also done something greater. I felt honored and humbled.



Chorale is the most intimate and loving ensemble I have ever seen or been a part of. This ensemble has shaped significantly the way I view performance, both in terms of community but also in how I try to reflect *Soli deo Gloria*.

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After the concert one night, an elderly man came and shook my hand. He had a friendly face with bright eyes and a smile full of metal teeth. His face was inches from mine as he smiled and said something in German. I had no idea what he was saying. It felt important. It felt like he needed to tell me. I stumbled with a simple, "Danke," one of the three words I know in German. I found Petra to translate and I brought her to the man. He looked me in the eyes again and spoke with the same sincere tone. With Petra translating, he said that we are of the same heart and same love, even though language separates us. He pointed to his heart and then to mine and said that we are connected through the love of Jesus. Then he put his hand on my shoulder and waived his hand over my head. This was important. Petra paused. She said there's not a translation for what he said. The closest statement we have to it is "the Lord be with you." Petra told me that this was more than a blessing. He said, "Gott befehlen." The closest translation is a direct commandment of God to be with you in everything you do. He didn't just bless in God's name, he commanded my presence and God's presence to be within each other. Then he embraced me with in a hug, smiled once more while looking me in the eyes, and walked away.



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Today before the concert I heard from the Lord, and for the first time in my life he spoke in clear words: "I'm going to work in hearts tonight." At the time, I didn't know how to respond, but I decided to focus all the more to live up to the work God was going to do. The next day, our host shared the story about her troubled friend heard us singing as she was passing the church. She came in and during the concert the Lord met her and answered all her concerns. I knew that was what the Lord was talking about, and I am humbled that he used us to reach that soul so desperately in need of God's loving embrace.



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If I hadn't gone on this trip, I would have missed a lifetime of lessons and experiences. On this trip I learned to trust God despite what the outcome of the situation looks like. For me, this trip was the equivalent of Peter walking on water, and we walked on water for three weeks.



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If I hadn't gone on this trip I wouldn't have experienced the true power and providence of the Lord. I had to raise all the money for this trip and God provided every last cent. I even had money left over to give to other students for their tour costs.



Before one concert Dr. Walters told us that he wanted us to focus on the poetry rather than the music. I had mostly focused on sounding as good as possible, but I switched my focus for this concert. The Lord taught me something new in every song and I experienced them in a new way, especially the “Prayer of St. Patrick.” I began to believe and proclaim what the words were saying. I was becoming a vessel for Christ. No longer was I just singing the words, I was believing them and turning them into action. The Lord worked in my heart that night.

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In Brettheim, Germany, we were transported to a dark time of injustice in the town’s history. In the last days of World War II, several Nazi youths were disarmed by residents in the village. Three men were accused, sentenced to death and hung on a tree by the cemetery on April 10, 1945. Their



corpses were left hanging for several days as a warning to others. We dedicated the song “Let My Love Be Heard” to those men who sacrificed their lives for the town. While we sang, the church bells began to chime. We paused our singing between musical phrases and the tolling became a solemn moment of remembrance and healing.

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I sat at Wartburg Castle, an ancient bastion where Martin Luther changed the world by translating the New Testament into German so the common people could come face-to-face with God. I looked out over endless forest, imagining Luther doing the same thing hundreds of years before. And I heard the still, small voice of God: “Be a Luther.” Like Moses, I responded incredulously, “How, God? I’m one person. Luther literally changed the world. How could the things I do today change the world 500 years from now?” On a quiet perch in the middle of a foreign country, my life changed. I underestimated the power of God, and He proved me wrong.





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