

Salisbury Cathedral Choir USA Tour 2017



In March 2017, Salisbury Cathedral Choir travelled to the USA on a choir tour based around Stanford University, situated a short distance from the lovely city of San Francisco. One of the main reasons for the tour was to strengthen the Cathedral's historical strong links with Stanford, links which had developed primarily from the University's ground breaking and ongoing research into the Sarum Rite. The tour, lasting twelve days, was a mixture of concerts, services, workshops and educational visits and there was time for some sight-seeing too. We sang in the University itself, Carmel, Saratoga, Atherton, Berkeley, Belvedere, Sunnyvale and Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. The tour party consisted of 19 of the older boy and girl choristers, 12 adult singers, 3 organists, chorister chaperones, a tour manager and several members of Chapter. Before boarding the enormous A380 Airbus at Heathrow, a great amount of work had gone into every aspect of the tour, from setting the

budget and arranging the visa applications, to arranging all the chorister safeguarding, accommodation and of course agreeing the musical programmes.

I was immensely proud of the way the choir performed throughout the tour and there were many outstandingly musical moments. As we were performing in Lent, much of the music we took with us had a penitential feel and the two main works in nearly every programme were Allegri's 'Miserere' and Bach's motet, 'Komm, Jesu komm'. We also sang shorter pieces by Byrd, Gibbons, Parsons, Purcell, Stanford and Tallis and in every concert we included some organ solos. The way in which the choristers and the adult singers integrated as a singing unit was impressive but I really appreciated the way the adults contributed to other aspects of the tour, such as packing and unpacking robes and music, looking after the choristers and generally being nice to know.



Photo by Richard Hooper

So what were the musical highlights? Certainly the first concert we sang at Stanford Memorial Church, with an audience of nearly 800, was special; the workshops with other children and other choirs; countless perfect top Cs from the Allegri 'Miserere' team; better and better performances of the Bach motet; a beautiful account of the Agnus Dei from Mozart's 'Coronation' Mass. The tour ended on a real high with our singing at the Sunday Eucharist and then giving our final concert at Grace Cathedral. The afternoon concert, usually (I am told) supported by a small audience, was attended by over 1200 people and the ovation we received at the end was overwhelming.

Other memorable moments during the tour were our first sight of the Golden Gate Bridge, the Museum of Modern Art at Stanford, the Exploratorium science

museum, the Monterey Aquarium, a boat trip around San Francisco bay, frisbee and catching practice, making a human pyramid with members of Chapter and 10 choristers and many, many delicious meals. We even performed a Gibbons motet over water, with the choir divided at either end of a swimming pool (poolside rather than actually in it) and we appeared on national television singing to passengers during our flight home.

The success of the tour could only have been achieved by meticulous organisation and planning and I am deeply grateful to everyone who had any part in it. It was a huge privilege for me to lead the choir and I felt honoured to represent Salisbury Cathedral.

David Halls

Director of Music