

2005 Mt. Anthems Wrap Up

Southern Trip

The normal winter break that the Mt. Anthems enjoy was considerably shortened this year, since the 2005 tour schedule started with an eleven-day trip to Florida and back beginning on February 3. It is very difficult for some of the chorus members to get that much time off from their jobs, but approximately forty of them were able to make the trip.

We are very blessed to be able to afford to travel in our own private motor coach. Martin Schrock, Gerald Tice, and Arlin Yoder are outstanding bus drivers, and the senior driver, Martin, spends a lot of time to maintain it in excellent condition. When a group this size is traveling thirty-three hundred miles through eleven states in eleven days, traveling in your own bus can greatly reduce the stress you experience. The generous hospitality of our hosts each evening remains a warm memory.

We gave ten concerts during those eleven days to audiences both large and small. The largest audience was around seven hundred people. Time and again the Lord proved faithful, providing the energy that we needed to sing and ministering by His Spirit to the people who came to listen. Sometimes we struggled with the sound equipment; sometimes chorus members couldn't sing because of throat problems or colds; we might be weary because our day began at 4:30 AM so that we would have time to make the long trip to the next concert, but God blessed in spite of these difficulties, and we are thankful for each person who listened and went away encouraged and strengthened.

Praise God also for no serious sickness, no accidents, no mechanical problems that delayed us.

The Summer Concerts

Every other weekend from February through the end of October, we traveled and sang. Sometimes it was both Saturday and Sunday, sometimes just on Sunday. Here are a few highlights, but many more details are available in the monthly newsletters for those who are interested.

- Three years ago the Mt. Anthems traveled to Canada for several concerts. We had to pay a tax on every piece of music (tapes and CDs) that we took across the border. We didn't sell it all, and we were supposed to get a tax refund on the music that we didn't sell. This summer we finally got the refund check.
- The April 3 concerts were canceled because of a severe winter storm. Concert cancellations are very, very rare. They were rescheduled for later in the summer.
- Wooster, OH, in June; 97 degrees Fahrenheit, and singing in a building with no air conditioning! Every concert is important, and we try to give our best for every one, but sometimes one doesn't go well at all, and today was one of those days. It's a good reminder that the blessing dare not depend on our efforts. Some people had driven three hours to attend this concert. We can only cry out to God to give a blessing to all those who attended in spite of our imperfections.
- A good example of the dedication that many of the chorus members have for this ministry: A group of them had been in Canada to teach Summer Bible School at a reservation there. They traveled home non-stop, arriving around 3:00 AM in order to be able to travel with the chorus at 7:00.
- In August we sang at a large church in Virginia that had very poor acoustics on stage. On one solo number (being sung by Menno, the director) as the chorus was doing backup, the men in the back couldn't hear the ladies in the front, so they were singing at different tempos. What a disaster!

- One special evening, during the service a boy with Down's Syndrome requested the song "Hallelujah Square," a song about our life in Heaven, living forever with perfect bodies and minds. As we prepared to sing it, the boy came up to the front, and the pastor had him sit on the front bench with him as we sang the song. God bless you, Matthew.
- All this summer for a number of reasons, the chorus has had very few Altos singing. This is a real switch for us, because often in the past we've had a strong Alto section, and we depended on them to do special parts in the music. The Altos we have this year are very good, but few in number, so it requires some readjusting of parts. This is one of those little details that we try to deal with in such a way that those sitting in the concert never notice. Hopefully we succeeded!
- We sang at a Rest Home in October, and those older people were one of the most responsive and appreciative audiences we sang to all summer. We really enjoyed it. There are a number of retirement villages and similar places that we sing at fairly regularly, and we look forward to those.

Recording

It has been several years since we made a recording, and the last one was a Christmas recording. We had a lot of songs that had never been recorded, and this summer was the time to make it happen.

We installed a committee to spearhead the project, and they began the process of song selection, getting copyright approval, deciding on cover art and text for the CD and cassette inserts, and all the other myriad details that are involved in the process.

Michael, the new Music Director, took the songs that the committee told him were going on the recording and began working with the chorus on those songs, polishing and refining them. We spent most of every rehearsal working on those songs. On Saturday, October 10, we traveled to Alive Studios in Harrisonburg, Virginia, to make the recording.

Despite difficulties at the beginning of the day, we were able to get all the songs recorded that needed to be done (a men's quartet and a soloist recorded later). Approximately nine hours after arriving, we climbed back aboard the bus, traveled to a nearby restaurant for a delicious meal, and headed home again. We are looking forward to hearing the finished product and hope that it will be a blessing to those who listen to it.

Winding Down

Looking forward to next year, the Mt. Anthems hope to host a reunion for all former and present chorus members. Among other things, we are going to try to do an alumni recording. In preparation for that, the chorus spent the last month of rehearsals recording a practice CD to send out to all alumni. (We just set up some microphones in our rehearsal building and recorded ourselves there; very rough quality.)

By the end of this, the chorus was really tired; it's been a very long year. To honor their hard work and sacrifices, the Mt. Anthems board treated all the personnel and their families (who often need to do extra work when the chorus is traveling) to a beef dinner. Afterwards, John Schmid, minister and singer from Ohio, sang some of his Gospel and German songs for us. Then he ended with several Christmas songs, telling us that he needed to start rehearsing them. It was a wonderful, relaxing evening of enjoyable fellowship, and we enjoyed it immensely.

The 2006 itinerary is posted on our web site for you to check out if you are interested, but for right now, the Mt. Anthems are enjoying their short winter break. See you next year!