

Musical Ambassadors Tour Europe

American Music Abroad

GOLD TOUR 2016

During the month of July, six Catonsville High School students were among one hundred high school age musicians from high schools all over the northeast that spent a good part of their summer vacation on a musical tour of six countries in central Europe. American honors music students have been serving as musical ambassadors to Europe for over 41 years with the American Music Abroad program.

The students were nominated by their high school band and choral directors from over 50 different high schools from Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York. The Catonsville High School students were nominated by their music teacher, Mr. Chris Gnagey, who is also one of the Symphonic Band Directors of the American Music Abroad Gold Tour. The Catonsville students that travelled are Vicah Blair, Nicole Gunderson, Chris Kim, Taneen Momeni, Riley Sherwin, and Joey Ward.

The tour was assembled at Millersville University in Pennsylvania on July 8th for three days of intense rehearsals, tour preparation and orientation sessions. This pre-tour event was not only to prepare the music and teach the students many things they would need to know to have a successful tour, but also to bond this group together in a very unique way. Little do they know that the friendships that were forged in those few short days, along with the next 3 weeks of unique shared experiences and once-in-a-lifetime treasured memories, will end up lasting a lifetime for these students.

The American Music Abroad Gold Tour of 2016 consisted of two large performing ensembles, a Concert Band and a Concert Choir. Approximately 50 band members and 50 choral students performed a total of seven concerts in five countries over a three-week European tour, including the "Farewell Concert" for their parents and family members at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. The tour then traveled from the United States to France to begin their European experience!

The Gold Tour experience took them to Normandy, France; Luxembourg; Trier, Koblenz, and Heidelberg, Germany; Strasbourg and the Alsace region of eastern France; Dinkelsbuhl on the Romantic Road in Germany; Munich and a

visit to the Dachau concentration camp; Salzburg and Westendorf in the heart of the Tyrolean region of Austria; and finishing the tour in Stein am Rhein and Winterthur in Switzerland.

For the past forty-one years, American Music Abroad has arranged excellent tour experiences for over 40,000 high school age musicians. We have enjoyed great receptions at concerts, broadened horizons and created wonderful memories for our tour participants. Most returning American Music Abroad students feel that the experience is one of the most enriching and educational of their lives.

Keith Hodgson, Assistant Professor of Music Education at The University of the Arts in Philadelphia and Head Director of the Gold Tour says, *“The students are not only gaining the musical, travel and social experiences of the tour but also helping to promote and share an American message of peace, unity, tolerance and brotherhood through our music and through our youth.”* Hodgson, also commented, *“the students return with a heightened sense of perspective about their world. Perspective is the most remarkable impact I think one can have on this trip; Cultural and historical perspectives as well as personal, musical, and social perspectives.*

Chris Gnagey, one of the Symphonic Band Directors of the Gold Tour and Chairman of the Music Department at Catonsville HS, says “Our European tour changes lives every year. Students get to experience a once in a lifetime opportunity from a musical, cultural, and social perspective. I really enjoy all the sightseeing opportunities and performing concerts in different countries, but the best part is watching the students react and grow throughout the tour – especially my own kids from CHS.”

What the students have to say...

“This trip was an amazing experience that allowed me to visit countries and towns that I would have never thought about visiting in my life. Visiting places like Salzburg and Dachau made an impact on me both historically and culturally. The AMA trip was an amazing experience that enabled me to grow as a musician and a person.

“Every place we visited was new and interesting with cultural quirks that I loved. I would do this trip again and again just to see all the unique destinations each year. Every trip on the bus was a new opportunity to make friends. Every town had a story that I was excited to be a part of. The trip was an unforgettable journey and I hope to travel like that again.”

“This trip has been one of the single most important and influential time periods in my life. I will never forget the places we visited and the friends that I met. This trip has prepared me for the future and has made me more aware of the world.”

“I probably will never look at the world in the same way. Thanks for the opportunities given to us. I will remember this trip for the rest of my life.”

The American Music Abroad “Opportunity of a Lifetime” Gold Tour continues their adventure in 2017, returning to some of our favorite stops in Italy and adding a brand new country to our tour! The beautiful country of Croatia will be among the most fantastic highlights of the 2017 tour! In addition, the eastern European country of Slovenia, along with Italy, Austria, Germany and Switzerland are guaranteed to deliver the best AMA Gold Tour itinerary to date!

Applications for the 2017 Gold Tour are already being received. The 2017 tour will begin in Zurich, Engelberg & Lucerne, Switzerland; Venice Italy; The seaside resorts of Croatia; the eastern European city of Ljubljana, Slovenia; the Tyrolean region of Austria; and the Bavarian region of Germany. Please contact Chris Gnagey with questions and for further information. cgnagey@bcps.org

2017 American Music Abroad Gold Tour **MEETINGS**

There will be an informational meeting on November 9th at 7:00 PM in the Bandroom at Catonsville HS for nominated student musicians. Look for additional meetings at a school near you!

Nominated band & choral students should attend with their parents.

1. PHOTO OF CATONSVILLE HS SCHOOL RECRUITS IN AUSTRIA



2. AMA PROMO 1 – Gold Tour Formal



3. AMA PROMO 2 – AMA POSTER



4. AMA PROMO 3 – Full Tour in concert – Finale



5. PHOTO OF CATONSVILLE HS SCHOOL RECRUITS



6. AMA PROMO 5 – Experience of a Lifetime Card

