

The Groupie Diaries



Prima Youth Choir
&
the UVic Chamber Singers
in Southeast Asia
April / May 2002

Saturday, April 27 - Evan Fabri.

Wow! That is all there is to say. I am like a child once again, experiencing new "firsts". Like many of my vocal compadres, today is my first intercontinental flight; my first time off North American Soil; and my first time receiving socks, headphones, and beer at the same time. I think, as I write this, that I am somewhere between the Northern tip of Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands. The flight has been great so far; I just finished alcoholic beverage #1. Too bad there is such a long period of prohibition between servings. I'm definitely ordering the Stir-Fried Beef with Sa Cha sauce... what is Sa Cha Sauce? Ooo... there

do I ever love this in-flight countries-of-the-world hangman game; Sorry to bother you Nina. Wow, Johnny has great taste in techno music.

I guess this is day 2; it is pretty much the same day as yesterday... I mean tomorrow is today... uh... anyway, I can't believe we are still on the same airplane. Japan is behind us now. What an industrialized country! Every possible piece of flat land was developed. I can't wait for Hong Kong, but in the mean time, I can't wait for my miniature airplane dinner. What the heck is bologna konji? Oh well, better give it a shot, I'm not half way around the globe to eat spaghetti.

$T - 4800 = 0$. T = Remaining flight time in seconds. Therefore we are



are some awesome clouds down there (I sure feel like a god being able to say that). The clouds resemble wave after wave of cavalry preparing for an assault on the Coastal Mountain Range, but they are probably 15,000 ft. below me... how high am I!?

Well, I just finished 3 glasses of wine and writing is becoming difficult. The trip is progressing nicely. So much for that Molson Canadian; I gave him a good home. Hmm, the stewardess seems to be avoiding me... I guess this airline doesn't like Canadians - we drink too much. Hey cool! I just discovered the stewardess help button. The prospect of someone bringing refreshments at the touch of a button makes me not care when we arrive.

I think I have been cut off from the beer tray... curses! Well, we're now over Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan. Is this real? Still another 4 _ hours YEESH!

I have come to the conclusion that I have definitely been cut off by the stewardess's. They haven't stopped by to see if I require some sweet amber poison in over an hour. I have needs too (sniff). Oh man,

90% there. I'm writing in pencil now because my pen just exploded all over the plane wall, right over Johnny's sleeping head (I won't tell if you don't). Luckily I have the disposable blanket as a makeshift mop.

The cloud structures are definitely different from those in BC. The ones here resemble cotton mostly. But right now there is a cloud unlike any I have ever seen. It sticks out in the sea of cotton balls like a glacier; in fact, that is what I first mistook it as. Hey! These clouds look like moldy cauliflower... there is now way I would not believe clouds to be solid if I did not know better - what a view!

Holy Jumping Jehosifats! How bored am I talking about clouds! By the way - who are the Jehosifats and why are they always jumping?

YEHAW! HOME STRETCH! We are now starting the decent. What adventures await us? The journey is only beginning. To uncertainty and beyond! I mean infidelity... uhhh - hey look! It's HONG KONG!

Monday, April 29 - Tim Dotchin

My first day in Hong Kong

Woke up, Still felt like I was on a boat, even when I stood still. We made our way to the Hong Kong Institute of Education for our first concert, on the bus we passed the famous Hong Kong Jockey Club, which I was amazed by the size of. We performed for a small audience of teenaged girls, who would giggle at the soloists and were only capable of a smattering of applause at best; they were very polite though and appreciated the concert immensely. Then we had lunch at the school cafeteria, which was awesome, this vast array of food I've never seen before, a real Chinese meal. There was this really cool girl at our table hosting us and helping us order (though I can't remember her name, boooo [ed. note: her name's Jenny]) there was so much we had to take home doggy bags... oh Yeah! I ate tripe, it ruled. Totally stuffed we waddled back to the tour bus and waited for people to finish emailing on these cool open air terminals where you could take a digital picture of yourself and send it. I then remembered that I left my jacket in the concert hall and was afraid I'd be the first major casualty of tour if I didn't find it. Found it though got back to the hotel around five.

Got changed and met Bruce and a large group of people, down in the lobby of the hotel, then made our way to the star ferry which was super cool, inexpensive and very bohemian. Got to the other side where Bruce ditched us p.d.q. to start his own adventure. And everyone else splintered into their own groups, Andrew and hez took off first and I think they were motioning for me to follow them but I decided to stick with Celia, Johnny Popoff and Kristen Birley, which would later prove to be a most interesting blend of personalities. At first we walked around with our heads tilted way back admiring the architecture and occasionally stopping to notice the shrubs and bushes trimmed meticulously to resemble animals in bizarre poses. Suffice to say that pictures were taken and fun was had. We then tried to make our way to what we thought was the "cultural center", via the road closest to the water, which actually turned out to be the "convention center". As we were casually sauntering along the coast we passed the servicemen's club where an upscale affair was taking place and no mistake, there were Officers of the US navy were mingling along side beautiful ladies in fancy dresses and military guards, stoic looking bastards armed with huge shotguns and an intense demeanor, very ritzy, I wished I could have rubbernecked longer, the Ferraris in the parking lot alone were a sight to behold.

Closer now to our destination we were accosted by fortunetellers, myself by one and Kristen by another. Johnny and Celia watched over Kristen's situation with an appropriate amount of incredulity. Lots of number tricks to make you believe you were very lucky and general statements specific enough to be intriguing yet vague enough to be personalized, all very convincing until they asked you for 700 HKD. Preemptively I had mentioned my lack of cash, which allowed making a hasty exit for a mere 80 HKD, Kristen though, was not so lucky. I did not see what followed but somehow Celia was able to pull Kristen away from the guilt vortex laid before her without a tremendous amount of trouble. Then somehow our destination changed, I don't know why really but we found ourselves in the Hong Kong center for performing arts to see if we could catch a show but the box office was closed and we asked the girl if there were any other shows in the city that night we might see, she suggested across the street, which was the Hong Kong Academy for performing arts. Somehow we managed to find a free show, which was a student vocal recital, we were in our element here. During the performance we emitted loud phlegmy coughs reminiscent of tuberculosis, talked obnoxiously about how much better Kristen was than all of them and simply refused to clap. The sopranos were good for the most part save this one who had facial hair and whose tone was as flat as her chest, which is to say that he was a mislabeled baritone. It was a great concert and we even caught a modern dance routine rehearsal in one of the hallways on the way out.

We emerged from the concert feeling energized and adventurous so we began to wander aimlessly, singing as we went, after about an hour it seemed we had found the main strip and went into an Irish pub style place for happy hour. We ordered four Heineken; it was Celia who pointed out the irony of the situation as we were drinking Dutch beer in an Irish pub in China. I think this illustrated a triumph in modern

distribution as much as fact that we could have done the same thing at home. Johnny set the ball rolling when he exclaimed in earnest "I Like Heineken, not because it's green, or even that it's in a green bottle but it's just that it's good beer, you know!?" I think Celia immediately switched her brain to the retain mode at that point and we knew that the night had begun.

The second round of beer came, on which Johnny spent the last of his zip locked HKDollars, now I was really starting to feel it. I went and asked one of the ex-pats for the story on the club scene (to see if there was any TRANCE!) and to hear about what the ex-pats really do here. He set me straight on the fact that the British had never been the big money or owners but rather the professionals employed by the corporations and that the clubs with techno were all gone. After our conversation it seemed that Johnny was taking my lead and starting up another interaction with some locals, I could see the smiles on their faces from quite a ways away. As I approached I noticed the one guy with green octagonal glasses trying not to laugh and looking really intent on what Johnny was saying. I drew closer through my happy drunken haze and started to clue in, Johnny was speaking another language to them. I at first thought it was Russian but when I began to recognize the words I started to laugh out loud. "wir haben ein ge setz" the two German gents were still stifling their laughter to the best of their ability and doing a good job too, until Johnny commented calmly as if they'd just shared a moment of understanding "Tanzen und Springen!" which finally sent the Germans into complete hysterics through the hoots and hollers one of them managed to gasp "oh Yes very trendy!" and then went back to splitting his sides and crying. I too was laughing to the point of crying and managed to catch up with the girls who had the good sense begin leaving before things got completely out of hand.

Johnny and I caught up with them and we went to look for something to eat. Not finding anything too appetizing we ended up in a hip-hop bar just across the street from the Irish pub in a second story location. The place felt like the wings of a performance space, wooden slats painted black, dark with floor track lighting and seemed remotely like legends. There Johnny bought more Heineken due to a promotional incentive, which was a beer bottle shaped mouse if you bought six at a time, we proceeded to get totally smashed. This led to some cool conversations and light hearted moments, we danced to a few tunes and all was going well until we noticed that Johnny had been in the bathroom for more than half an hour, the girls motioned for me to check on him. When I opened the door and I found Johnny face to face with a large u.s. navy sailor engrossed in some intense exchange of which I heard Johnny's first words "But... No... But no seriously man.... If you were looking at an Afghani, and had him all lined up in your sights... I BET you couldn't pull the trigger" Oh Johnny what the hell trouble have you gotten yourself into I thought, so I proceeded to urinate while arbitrating the situation as best I could, and didn't leave until I had them both promise not to kill each other, at which point the sailor grabbed us in a huge hug and boasted

"I'm not going to kill me anyone cept a couple o Afghanis" at which he laughed loudly and thus ended the scenario much to my relief, and unease. Johnny hung out with American navy guys the rest of the night and as we were about to leave to catch the midnight star ferry Celia and Kristen were hit on BRUTALLY by the sailors, some pretty disgusting things came out of their mouths I couldn't believe the cool and calm with which they conducted themselves. One sailor said to Celia "I'll bite somewhere you've never been bitten before" to which she quickly replied "How do you know I've never been bitten there before?" which shut him up in short order. So after running a gauntlet of horny drunk sailors we emerged, Grabbed the best vegetarian burger I've ever in my had and began walking home along the waterfront with an optimism in my heart that was beautiful, as we stumbled past the convention center Johnny had this to say as a reflection of the night "You know, the american military is brainwashed.....I'd like to wash their brains." I had had enough fun and adventure in one night to warrant the whole cost of the trip.





Tuesday, April 30 - Lucas Marchand

Being Johnny Popoff.

In the wee hours on the morning of April 30th, I was exploring the back hallways of the Stanford Hillview Hotel in Kowloon. At the end of one especially long, narrow hallway, I came across a door about three feet tall behind a filing cabinet. A sudden desire came over me to find out what was through that door. Eventually, my imagination got the better of me and I crawled through the small opening. After crawling a few meters, a strange feeling came over me and I was swept into a kind of portal. In seconds, I found myself trapped in an unfamiliar body. I was lying in a small bed, and I had a terrible headache. In my attempt to sit up, the strange body suddenly rolled off the bed and onto the floor. Although I felt as if I was in control of this body, it would often do and say strange things, independent from my will. I decided the best thing to do was to go back to sleep, and see what the morning would bring.

I woke up with a start. A flood of strange memories came. I saw images of the night-life of Hong Kong, about eight or nine Hinekins, and a rowdy group of American sailors. Then, my thoughts turned to hockey and the loaf of garlig bread in my backpack. I found that the strange body I had tried to move in earlier had become more comfortable. I could walk, talk, and think without too much struggle. However, I found that me speech was not reliable and I would blurt out inappropriate statements often.

I began discussing the events that my memory was being fed with my roommates. I told them "You have got to go to Hong Kong; there's like red light districts, and back-ass alleys with strip clubs door to door to door." I also told them about my experiences with the sailors. "I was having an argument about communism with some 19 year old S.S. somthin'." I related that "the sailors were all brainwashed—I'd like to wash their brains." Also, "There was this German guy in the Irish pub and I was on about my third Hinekin. Anyway, I didn't know how to talk to him so I just said 'Tanzen und Springen'." Then I began to pontificate on the subject of alcohol: "I love Hinekin. It's not that it's green beer or that it comes in a green bottle, it's just good beer." Then I spouted off about avoiding the post-drink puke: "I knew I could do it. I just need to stick to my commitment to no hard alcohol—unless I get back to mother Russia. Then I'll get some sweet village moonshine." Then, it hit me; the

love of green, the connection with Russia—my consciousness was inhabiting the body of the infamous Johnny Popoff! Suddenly Johnny turned my thoughts to hockey and I found myself saying "How can I be so entranced by a little black disk?"

My roommates seemed to be trying to divert my attention to going for a run, but Johnny again pulled my thoughts around his roller-coaster of randomness. Now I thought again of the garlic bread in my backpack. How was I going to toast my garlic bread before consumption? I thought about taking it to the kitchen and asking them to toast it. Then, Johnny gave me a better idea. Next thing I knew I was up on the roof looking for a warm place in the sun for my garlicy toasty treat. After a refreshing run along the waterfront. I went back up to the roof to check on my breakfast. To my dismay, Johnny had ruined my place in the sun by sitting the garlic bread directly on an air conditioning vent.

A short time later, I found myself on a crowded bus, headed for the Canadian International School in Aberdeen. Shortly after arriving we were all provided with free internet service, so I sat down and began to write to my parents. The Johnny side remained fairly calm through this period. The first noticeable outburst was singing Bruce's favorite warm-up to the words - Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny NO! The concert, luckily, proceeded without a hitch. Afterwards we all gathered for lunch and some basketball. It was then that the Johnny influence, which had remained fairly dormant, erupted all at once. I began making the most oddball statements I had ever heard myself say.

My lunchtime conversation consisted of comments of the following nature: "My shit always looks like a penis." or "I hope they give me the body cavity search." and then "Do they condone drug use in the military?" The insanity concluded with a question I found myself asking during the basketball game: "Would anyone mind if I take off my pants right now?"

That was the tip of the iceberg. I made a pact with myself that I would not utter a word for as long as I could possibly hold out. Perhaps this could save some of the embarrassment on my part. So, I shut my mouth and we drove back to the hotel. I remained silent for hours. Even through an entire trip to a local swimming pool. Then, finally, at the advent of the fourth hour of silence, I found myself lying in the ditch of a new jersey turnpike, with my own physical self restored.



Wednesday, May 1 - Deborah Addison

Free day in Hong Kong

Eat at Rainbow's Seafood restaurant! (Also called Winstar.) Rainbow's is a wonderful place. The food is magnificent, the service exceptional and it is one place in Hong Kong that will go out of its way to be helpful. The reason for my endorsement will become clear shortly.

As journals generally do, I will start at the beginning. Today began with a choice: Lamma Island (beaches, stores and a hike) or giant Buddha (Very cool). We opted for Lamma for financial and time reasons. We headed straight to the beach and enjoyed glorious sunshine and hot weather. Man people swam and sun-tanned (though I understand some were a little overdone by the end.) We waded and relaxed in the shade.

The hike across the island was also a big success. Bright, sunny (ok, hot) it was still fun. On the other side we stopped for lunch (mostly because we had just missed the ferry and had to wait anyway. Guess where we ate...Rainbow's! Firstly, let's look at lucky event #1: Jamie and Campbell had already bought ferry tickets, so they went to refund them but discovered Jamie's ticket had escaped! It was nowhere to be found so she headed sadly back to the restaurant when,

suddenly, she spotted it! It had made a daring leap from her pocket, but had not gotten far. She retrieved it from where it had fallen, and saved \$15 Hong Kong.

The food, as mentioned above, was delicious and as we paid, we were informed of lucky event #2: a free ferry ride! Rainbow has a private ferry, complimentary to patrons. We rode back to Hong Kong for free.

About half way back (still on the boat), something suddenly dawned on me. "Rachel," I asked, "do you have the backpack?" From her expression, it was clear she did not. Oops! It was still at the restaurant! Granted, it was mostly empty; we had money and passports on us, Diskman and Walkman were at the hotel and Rachel had the camera. Still, I had to get it back so I went and spoke with a crew member. It was then that I became painfully aware of the language barrier.

He seemed to understand what had happened, and called to what I presumed was the restaurant. I gathered from that that they had the bag. He told me, though I understood only bits, to get off at the docks and wait for the next ferry (5:30). So I prepared to return to Lamma alone, in order to save people ferry fare if the trip was not complimentary. The rest of the group agreed to see me onto the ferry, then return to the hotel.

It seemed to take forever for the ferry to arrive. I was worried I had misunderstood the man and had lost Rachel's bag. It didn't help that the 5:30 ferry was late. When it finally arrived, before letting off the passengers, a man stepped out, holding the forgotten bag! Lucky event #3, and thank goodness! Thank you Rainbow's!

Tonight we (a group of 4 or so) went to the night market where I discovered you can barter by accident, simply by considering if you want an item. Think about it for a moment and watch how they drop the price! I think that is all for today.\



Thursday, May 2 - Jenn Ruffell

Performance at Union Church

Such a relaxing day! Deborah Rachel and I woke up as late as we could manage to sleep in for, lazed around, showered, had a breakfast of garlic buns (mmm...fresh garlic buns) and apples and then headed off in search of tea.

My packing skills were put to the test as we crammed three shirts, three skirts, three pairs of shoes, three more shirts and three sets of music into my backpack. ????

After a long, hot walk, we found some tea. Actually, it was quite interesting as the man made us sample mini cups right in front of us in a way I'd never seen tea made before, very hot however.

We then went to Kowloon park. There tends to be random chunks of park in the middle of the city. It's strange (but nice) to look up past the treeline to see skyscrapers. It's a gorgeous park, however. There's a swimming pool complex, numerous fountains, a bird aviary, statues, gondolas and lots and lots of foliage. We spent three or four hours there, just sitting in the shade of various things and talking. At one point I walked under a sprinkler (on purpose!) and I think I terrified people. Oh well.

We had McDonalds for our mid-afternoon meal. Tasted just like home, but they have honeydew milkshakes and twisty cones with green apple, cappuccino or grape flavouring. I also learned Grimace was a taste bud. I'm slightly disturbed, as he's large, purple and has arms and legs.

We're a bit hyper before the concert, and laughed until we cried over a water bottle incident. Damn those 1/2 ???!

So we had a concert scheduled for 8pm, but they had (apparently) publicized it as starting at 7, so we hauled ass and speed walked over there. Uphill.

Bruce informs us we're "winging it." You have now crossed the Prima sanity barrier. Please reset your status mode to "unpredictable." We hope you have a pleasant trip. La!

Bruce was actually taking it rather well. He didn't even bat an eye

when there was a loud theater rehearsal in the next room. He announced we would be going ahead with a shortened program due to the fact that there were *<i>three</i>* people in the audience. However, when a woman dragged a chair across the floor during a drum solo, after walking through our midst to arrange flowers, he stopped us, and ever so distinctly requested she remove herself from the premises.

There was hissing intake of breath by nervous choristers, and across the choir eyes locked. Would the flower lady have enough sense to get the hell out of there? Would Bruce snap? Would Hong Kong feel the wrath of his ????

But the moment passed safely, and we finished our three songs and exited the stage without singing our usual two rounds of Bumba. At this point Bruce exited the building, off to parts unknown Hong Kong. None of us blamed him obviously. But we were there to sing, and sing we did!

Small chorus had to grooving to Cuban and Brazilian treats. We had the house rockin' with a version of "Somethin' got a hold on me" with Lucas at the piano. The rafters sang with us during "Taste and see". We even enjoyed "Maringa Christmas" The men practically conjured up some drunken pirates with "Mulligan's Musketeers". (Although some might argue some of them are drunken pirates themselves.)

We also treated a couple who had heard an ad in the newspaper that advertised the concert at 8pm to "Louez le Seigneur" and "Shweelo". We even sold CDs!

It felt good, though. We put on perhaps not the best sounding, but certainly energetic and impromptu, not to mention entertaining concert of the tour. I might even go so far as to say it was a bonding experience. I mean really...We are GOOD! I was so proud to be in a choir who pulled that off with not professionalism but most definitely panache.

We exited the building to the lovely aroma of maple and a beautiful night. Our trip back to Kowloon was filled with singing as a group of ex-Viva members rehashed old tunes still locked within our noggins (minus a few lyrics, but ???)

All in all, a far more pleasant experience than it appeared at first glance.



Saturday, May 4th - Daniel Hogg

"My Spider-sense is tingling." — Peter Parker

Spider-man opened yesterday around the world, but I had been patiently waiting to see it for about a year. So I woke up this morning with one mission: to see Spider-man today.

But first things first.

"I'll show you something that's tingling." — Sean Connery

Lucas and I got up in early our host Che-yung's fifth floor apartment in "the country" according to Che-yung (i.e. the buildings were shorter), for our paltry half hour subway ride (insert Evan whining about commuting time here) to Hanyang University (or "Hanyang De" as the Koreans like to call it). Little did we know what this epic day held in store for us. Except for the concert.

We did know about the concert.

The concert was at 11am at Hanyang University, and was greeted by an enthusiastic audience, a mojroity of whom were young teenage school girls. Yes, they were in uniform. And yes, we were good. Very good.

"Women, protect your men." — Bruce More

This was likely the first time Evan has had countless women throwing themselves at him. Perhaps it won't be the last. Perhaps. But hey, that's what tour's all about, right? I wisely ducked out to the bathroom immediately following the concert, in part hoping to avoid just such a scene, and in part, hoping to go to the bathroom. Upon returning to the men's dressing room, however, it was still completely filled with the aforementioned teenage school girls, except now they were screaming and asking for our autographs. N*Sync, eats your hearts out. Of course, as youth choir members, we all have considerably smaller bank accounts than N*Sync, but I digress. Two hours later (or something like that), when we escaped the clutches of hormones (ha— we're guys, we never escape the clutches of hormones) we headed for another in a fine series of meals provided by our various hosts. This one, a large buffet on the seventh floor of one of the campus buildings, in what was, I am told, a professional restaurant independent of the university. Cool.

"What's this I'm eating now?" — The number one question NOT to ask in Asia.

The food was, as always, excellent, and highlighted by pig's feet and pumpkin soup for the more adventurous. Still, it didn't hold a candle to the congealed block of cow's blood (looked like a big brick of purple tofu) Lucas and I had devoured in our curried soup the night before. But that's a whole other story.

The really messy part came trying to assemble people to see Spider-man. Co-ordinating hosts, theatres, and plans (Techno-mart anyone?) was a daunting task. Fortunately, Mindy and I were up to it. Mindy was ____'s host, and spoke very good English. At some point, I think it was Tim who mentioned something about the dead people. I freaked out, cause I read about this thing a few months ago and thought I'd never have a chance to see it. Basically, this German doctor (that explains a lot) perfected this technique of gradually replacing all the water molecules in a dead body with a plastic polymer. The result, a perfectly preserved dead body, which he could then manipulate and play with as much as he wanted. More details later. The main exhibit (the thing is called "Body Worlds") was (and still is at time of this writing) in London, England, so I had sent a couple of friends who were there (such as Tristan from the Calmex tour) to go check it out. Never in my wildest dreams did it occur to me the exhibit would pop up in Seoul. This became my secondary objective for the day. In fact, when I had picked May 4th as my journal day, I never guessed it held the two things I wanted to do the most on this trip. Lucky for me, unlucky for you poor sods who wanted to read a short journal entry.

Finally, in the lobby of the lunch building, our plan came together. Well, kinda. At Mindy's prompting, I said, very loudly, "Anyone who's coming to Spider-man, come this way," then Mindy and I left, and gradually, some people followed us: Lucas, Nicole, Bonnie, Lara, Evan, Johnny, JK (Johnny's host) and KD's friend, Lucas and my billet



Today started off like most of the mornings in Hong Kong: while waiting for the bathroom I would touch the glass to the outside and feel how warm it was already. How could it be only 8 in the morning and the window be so hot?

After getting the last of the junk into the already full luggage, Len and I headed down the hill, past the bamboo scaffolding on the Hawaiian Sauna, to the bakery. Already the air conditioners on the towers were working overtime so we had to dodge the continuous barrage of drips attaching from above. With our coconut buns in hand we were ready to meet with the rest of the choir, load the bus and head to the airport.

Hong Kong International Airport is huge. With our luggage checked in, we started our 30 minute trek via walking, escalators and even an underground train so that we could get to the gate. Once in the air, we had our culinary treat of the trip, ice cream, and before we know it we had landed in Korea. All that was left was an hour-long bus ride to Hanyang University and the meeting of our first host families.

This is of course were our stories very. Some of us went with students that live in small apartments, others went with students that live with their families. For me, I was introduced to professor Jeon and before I know it I was with him driving towards his house an hour away from the campus. This was the first time on the tour that we did not travel as a group so I did not know what to expect.

At professor Jeon's house, I was introduced to his wife and two wonderful children. We had a little snack of fruit and toast, and before long it was time for bed. Another day was done.