

University of Victoria Chamber Singers

Alumni Newsletter

April 1, 2022

News from Bruce & Connie on page 2 →

ALUMNI



Jeff Wegner 1974 - 2010

We are sad to hear of the passing of Jeff, who was a bright spark in the Chamber Singers, singing with us from '93 to '97 and who travelled with us to New Zealand in '95. (Google "Jeffrey Wegner obit")



Carrie-Ann Matheson '97

Congratulations to Carrie-Ann, who has been appointed artistic director of the San Francisco Opera

Center, which supports young artists at an unparalleled level and will inspire generations of young artists, preparing them for careers on the world's greatest stages.



Ivan Marko '08

In November, Connie and I travelled to Haida Gwaii (for a "post-Covid" getaway) and had a delightful visit with Ivan, who is now living happily in Queen Charlotte City.

Memories of Kiev and Odessa

We visited Kyiv (then known as Kiev) in 1991, and Odessa followed by Kiev in 2007. The first visit was only 3 months before Ukraine's independence from Russia. We had arrived from St. Petersburg via Tallinn on May 3 and so had experienced the long "bread lines" of Russia and the hugely de-valued ruble of that time. (I remember Chris Morash coming out of the currency exchange with a stack of ruble notes, at least 6 inches high). Even that early in the exit from the USSR, Kiev seemed much freer and brighter than what we had left behind in Russia. Store and market shelves seemed full by comparison (although nothing like the sense of "plenty" which we experienced later in Krakow). There was barely hidden joy from our newfound friends Alexei and his fellow band members, who hung out with us in Maidan Square later at the hotel. Then there were the enthusiastic audience members who lined up around the Conservatory, waiting to get in, as we arrived for a joint concert with Kiev choirs.

The substance of these people was made even more striking by a contrast to the underlying fear which we sensed in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster 5 years earlier, and only 150 km north of the city. I was struck by the presence of water dispensing machines all over the city and particularly by the heartfelt pleas from the choral conductors I met at the reception following the concert at the conservatory, begging me to help find sponsors in Canada to help get their children out of Kiev.

During the 2007 tour, we experienced the tension and downright criminality of border officials as we left Moldova and Transnistria to enter Ukraine.

It has been truly devastating during the past week, therefore, to hear about the incredible terror and deprivation which is now being inflicted on the beautiful city of Kyiv. The scenes of destruction and mass exodus of families across the Polish border have been extremely graphic and heart breaking to see. These scenes will remind those from the '91 tour of the incident in the very same railway station in Poland, when we took the wrong train from Kiev to take us to Krakow and had to wait several hours by the tracks in Przemyśl for a train that did. As a result, we arrived a mere 10 minutes before our performance to a full audience at a beautiful Baroque basilica, but in our street clothes.

I think of those wonderful conductors I met at the Kiev Conservatory, I think of Alexei and his fellow music students, and I think of those beautiful streets and buildings and wonder, with despair, what will become of them all.... Of course, the beautiful city of Odessa and those wonderful choral singers who sponsored us at the Odessa Conservatory in 2007: what will happen to all those people?



To all my singers, particularly from those tours, I hope that you will give Ukrainians some thought too!

RETURN OF THE SUMMER RETREAT!

July 8-10, 2022

Morehaven, Thetis Island

From Friday Afternoon July 8,
until Sunday Morning July 10

rsvp: e-mail: morebruce@gmail.com