Dordt Choir Sings in Dordrecht

Lydia Marcus
Dordt University

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Recommended Citation
Marcus, Lydia (2019) "Dordt Choir Sings in Dordrecht," The Voice: Vol. 65 : Iss. 1 , Article 10. Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol65/iss1/10

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IN DORDRECHT

The choir, represented by 14 current students and 29 alumni singers on this tour, gathered on Dordt’s campus on May 21 for three days of intensive rehearsal and a pre-tour concert before flying to Amsterdam on May 24. They were joined by six non-singing spouses and, of course, Director Ryan Smit.

“Meshing as a choir in a short period of time was a learning curve, especially since most of the alumni had never had Professor Smit as a director before,” says Janelle Cammenga (’19). “In the end, our mutual love of making music and our concert choir traditions brought us together.”

“I think I had a conversation with nearly every person on the tour, whether they were 19 or 56,” says Andrea (De Jong, ’07) Van Dyken.

On May 29, the choir sang three songs at the five-hour Synod of Dordt 400th anniversary closing ceremony celebration, which was held in the Grote Kerk—the big church—in Dordrecht. The celebration also included performances by other professional musicians, messages from clergy, speeches from government officials, and a brief message from Dordt University President Dr. Erik Hoekstra about the role of church, family, and Christian education in faith formation.

“The setting was a fascinating mix of old and new,” says Smit. “The Grote Kerk was built in the 11th century and contains a fabulous pipe organ that is hundreds of years old. At the same time, there were TV cameras, projection screens, and a modern sound system for amplification and broadcast.”

“It was an honor for our choir to be part of the event,” says Emily Borger (’16).

The choir gave five additional concerts at churches in the central and southern parts of the Netherlands as well as at the Erasmus Medical Center. When they weren’t performing, the group explored Delft, Gouda, Kinderdijk, Haarlem, Bruges, and other famous cities. On most nights, after a day full of sight-seeing and singing, tour members stayed with Dutch host families, who welcomed them enthusiastically.

“One of our host dads drove us to the beach at Katwijk aan Zee right after a concert, then took pictures like a proud dad when we sprinted into the ocean in full concert dress, pants rolled up to our knees,” recounts Cammenga.

On June 2, the tired but happy choir made their way to Schipol Airport and flew back to the United States. “On the whole, the trip was a wonderful success,” says Smit. “It was a thrill to conduct such a fine gathering of alumni singers from the last 25 years, as well as a few current students.”

“It was a choir experience like none I’ve ever had,” says Cammenga. “Getting to hear stories of Dordt throughout the years was amazing, and it really reminded me of what a special community I got to be a part of for four years at Dordt.”

LYDIA MARCUS (’18)