

## PAST MUSIC MISSION TRIP TESTIMONIALS

HUNGARY, 1996

"My trip to Hungary and Austria in 1996 was a significant experience in my life. It was an amazing experience to be a part of the beginning of the Nazarene Church in the country of Hungary. The purpose and significance of our trip was emphasized before, during and after we went. Those two weeks stretched and developed me musically and increased my awareness and sensitivity to other cultures. We were able to perform in multiple and varied venues and adapted our program as needed to fit the opportunity presented to us. My eyes were opened to how God can use any gift he gives us to communicate the gospel to another culture."

James Smith - Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management - MVNU

ITALY, BULGARIA - 2003

Dear Bob,

How are you? I am very sorry if I answer you with a little delay. I have been so busy in the past few weeks that you can't even imagine. Last night we had the Verdi's Requiem and it was really a very beautiful concert. Concerning your concert in Rome, I personally think it was one of the best concert we had. Basically I have talked to the priest and he told me again that he was very glad for you to be there. Well, the priest took a poem by Eugenio Montale, an Italian poet of the XX century (when I have a chance to see the priest, I will write it down exactly to you the poem) and adapted to your music: he basically said: "you can survive with art, poems, colors, etc, but you can't live without the music which is the best expression of the humanity. This wonderful choir tonight is the expression of the magnificence of the music and it is a gift of God. This young people are singing not only with their voice but also with their heart and their beautiful music arrives not only to our ears but also to our heart. Tonight there is a special connection between them and us through their songs. Thank you for coming here and give us in Rome, the Eternal City, your gift. It is such a special occasion to see all of you here, so young, so enthusiastic, so well prepared."

The priest meant that it was not only music but also a very important message of sound principles. He said that the students were very polite and nice, with a lot of respect for the church where they were singing (which is not always like this, I can tell you.) and through their voices they testified their faith and values. As soon as I see the priest, I will report you exactly the poem. Bob, I would like to report you also the comments I heard in the church. I saw people crying, I saw people so happy to be there. Some people even called in the office the day after to congratulate for this concert. Basically, what I told to the President of the University as well is that we have a lot of music in Rome. Every night there is a concert somewhere but, special as you were, there is nothing. You gave a special present to Rome with your concert and I would be very

glad if you could come again another time, maybe in the following years. I would be honored to organize for you another concert maybe in a bigger church so that more people can attend your concert. We'll keep in touch and please, give me some information about the Nazarene Community possibly in Italy. I look forward to hearing from you soon,

Ciao

Vittoria Assettati, (Vittoria was the tour agency representative who helped me on the set-up trip and introduced the Rome cathedral concert)

Italy, Bulgaria - 2003

Hey Bob, Good to hear from you. We still have wonderful memories from the MVNU choir tour to Bulgaria in 2003. I would say that the MVNU choir concert in Montana was a real turning point for our work there. Montana is a very Communist place and the concert was in the pioneer hall (will Communist banners and pictures on the walls). To hear the choir sing the beautiful song "Only Jesus" in Bulgarian in that setting was amazing. The people were overwhelmed to hear that song. Pastor Valeri said that after the concert people in the city began to see them in a new light. They were amazed that this evangelical church group was connected in some way with a choir of that professional level. Instead of being suspicious of the church, the city leaders began to accept and respect them. It truly was wonderful. Thank you again Bob for bringing the choir to Bulgaria. We would love for you to come again!! Blessings. Jay Sunberg Bulgarian Church of the Nazarene

(Jay and Teanna were the primary missionaries and Nazarene church leaders in Bulgaria and now Field Directors for the Central Europe Field, working from Budapest)

2006 – PORTUGAL, SPAIN, FRANCE

Hey Dr. Bob!!

What I most remember about the trip to Portugal, Spain and France (besides the bonding that happened within the choir) is how grateful and thankful people were after our concerts. I was always overwhelmed at how many people thanked us for the music we shared with them, even though they probably didn't understand most of what we sang. They thought we were blessing them-- but to see them enjoying what we were singing blessed me just as much as I'm sure it blessed them. - Anna Thomas (2008 alum; singer on the 2010 mission trip; accompanist on the 2013 trip)

Portugal, Spain, France - 2006

One of the things that I gained was just the impact of meeting, "fellowshipping", and worshipping with people from another culture. Sometimes we can get narrow minded about how people are supposed to worship and we think everyone is like us, it is nice to be refreshed with others of the same faith, worshipping the same God, in different ways. It is also a really great time to experience different cultures in general, all of the history and impact that any of the particular areas visited have. Some of these places have had direct and or indirect impact on our own lives. Austin Lamos (2009 alum)

Portugal, Spain, France - 2006

The Portugal, Spain, and France trip helped me to see things in a different light. It was my first time to that part of the world. I had gone to England, but the culture was somewhat similar to ours. The trip to Spain and Portugal gave me an opportunity to experience the rich culture of these countries and minister through music as well. Not to mention that the food was great. I've been trying to get back ever since. Justen Seay (2008 alum)

Portugal, Spain, France - 2006

The Collegians trip to Portugal, Spain, and France in 2006 truly was a life-changing experience. Since I had only been in Collegians for one semester prior to taking the trip, I did not know some of the members of the choir very well; however, this trip helped to cement relationships that I still have today. Moreover, having the chance to sing in various theaters and to meet people from the church international helped me to focus on the global impact of the gospel. One God-story is that we sang in several churches in Portugal, and some individuals liked hearing us sing so much that they followed us to the various cities. I actually met some of the same people at a conference that I attended in South Africa, and they remembered that I was part of the choir that came from the United States. They told me how much the songs had meant to them and how amazing it was for them to meet Christians from America who truly worshipped God. This story reminded me of the power of God. Finally, the Lord strengthened my desire to possibly teach overseas after I graduate. Thus, not only did I witness the life-changing power of the gospel message through song and the culture of the Old World through this trip, but I also experienced how people who speak different languages can communicate because they worship the same God.

Becky Pennington (2009 alum)

Portugal, Spain, France - 2006

Dear Bob,

I just wanted to jot down a quick note letting you know the impact that your tour of Portugal, Spain, and France made on our field. Our time together with you was a tremendous blessing for both Sandra and I. The ministry of the choir was one that we still talk about to this day. When I think about the choir's trip a couple of things come to mind. Our trip to Elvas in Southeastern Portugal was one of the stand out moments for me, not only because of the great hotel that we ended up staying in (which I used again on a couple of different occasions after you left) but far more for the impact that you had on the community. To have the concert in the town theater and to have many people who would never have come to the church listen to the gospel being proclaimed was terrific. It is one of those things that we as a church on the field could never have done for ourselves, but through your ministry we had an impact far beyond our reach. Not long after the concert I had occasion to go back to the town and a person who had been at the concert came up to me and told me what a blessing it had been to him. Now he may never come into our church, but he heard the gospel and God spoke to him. To God be the glory.

The other event that stood out to me was when we were in Zaragoza. To see the encouragement that you gave to this poor struggling pastoral couple was beyond words. The trials that they face in such a difficult situation are really great, but your coming to their little church and then just spending time with that little congregation enjoying them and fellowshiping with them, and of course your singing, was really a blessing to my heart. We were so thrilled to spend those days together with you and they will always stand out as a highlight of our time on the field. May God richly bless you on your next trip.

Blessings, John Brickley (John was the Mediterranean field director in 2006 who helped us organize the trip)

Portugal, Spain, France - 2006

Bob: I would like to take this opportunity to tell you again how much we appreciated the visit of your choir to Montpellier. Not only was it musically a wonderful experience, but on the relational level, we had a great time with all the young people. Carolita and I have often thought back on your time here. During the 30 years that we served in this country, we have hosted a huge number of choirs, bands and youth teams. Yours has to be at the top both in music and in the quality of the young people. And I'm only saying that because it is true!!! I can still remember the faces of the people as your group sang. The classical numbers were a rich experience that showed the outstanding musicality of the group. The Gospel and contemporary music brought the people alive, and there was an instant rapport established between the choir and the audience. At the

same time, there was a beautiful sense of God's presence in all that you did. I hope that it will be possible for your group to return some time to either Montpellier or Paris. I know that our the people would love to hear you again. Please give our greetings to your wife and to your choir. Our best to you and have a wonderful Christmas season. Yours, Dave and Carolita Fraley - France District Superintendent (former) Church of the Nazarene

Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy - 2010

Dr. Bob

..... I feel like after the trip, my bucket was filled to overflowing. I was touched in a different way by almost every one of our concerts. At times, I would get so emotional that I didn't know if I could sing (and that's not me). I could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit working in me and through our music and our concerts.

When I went back to work two weeks ago, I had a fresh attitude. The trip, the people, the music, the testimonies reminded how much God cares about me. Since then, I have been trying to embrace every situation that is thrown at me at work and have been working to 110 percent of my abilities. I know this trip was a missionary trip for the people in Venice, Florence, Germany and Austria, but it also changed something in me for the better. So, I can't thank you enough for including me and opening up the trip to alumni. (Beth Wagner, sharing about the 2010 trip as an alum; also went on our 2006 trip as a student)

Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy – 2010

(Rev. Daniel Fink, Pastor of the Florence, Italy Church of the Nazarene listed ways we assisted his church in 2010): “1. An example of young people serving the Lord. Our youth were encouraged and motivated to be involved in mission projects. You have made us feel part of something much bigger than the local family. 2. Humbleness, passion and professionalism... difficult things to put together but you've mixed them perfectly and all our people, young and old, can testify of this unanimously. 3. Excellence of music, voices, testimonies and messages. The leaders of the Christian organization: "Christ is the Answer" said that "In 35 years of ministry in Italy they never had such good quality of music". 4. Joining in worship together with the choir and the orchestra was a unique experience for our local worship team and for the whole congregation. 5. The time of fellowship for lunch after the Sunday service was particularly appreciated on the part of our young people. 6. My family and particularly my children were blessed by the musical talents and the friendship that they were able to create with the students.”

Pastor Daniel Fink

Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy - 2010

As Pastor, I was also glad, that our people in all three churches made very good use of this opportunity to invite guests and friends to the service. I have received several comments about the liveliness and joyful experience in our worship service that in our culture is a high compliment, because generally people have quite negative experience in the state churches.

As you maybe know, the Nazarene Church as a free church, in contrast to the state church, is always looked at with a certain suspicion and apprehension. Your presence and performance has shown to the people in the village, what kind of believers we are, and you have contributed to an excellent reputation. Even the Hotel manager Mrs. Petra Stier from the Hotel Kranz commented on your behavior, cleanliness and gentleness”

(Ludwig Duncker, Pastor of the Gottmadingen, Germany Church of the Nazarene shared this from our 2010 trip where we ministered at three churches under his direction:

Croatia, Austria, Hungary - 2013

Dr. Bob, Also, words cannot express the blessings and memories I gained from the Collegians trip to Croatia, Austria, and Hungary. I visited Beethoven's grave, sang in Haydn's chapel, touched the Adriatic Sea, and ministered to countless strangers. But more importantly, I learned to trust God with finances. Friends come in all shapes, sizes, and nationalities, and everything tastes better in Europe. A huge THANK YOU to all who supported me. You'll never fully know the impact of your generosity in my life.

Denae Lawrence, 2015 alum