

Gondwana Chorale Tour and Elder Conservatorium Study Tour Report
Gondwana Chorale Baltics Tour
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Wow! What an incredible 2 months overseas it's been! Words cannot describe how much I have learnt and grown as an artist whilst overseas and I have been blown away by the endless opportunities that are available to me following my undergraduate degree.

After a two week intensive rehearsal period in NSW, I travelled with Gondwana Chorale to London where we began our tour of Northern Europe. Apart from sightseeing in London, the group performed at Trinity College, Cambridge and we were lucky enough to have a masterclass with world renowned choral conductor, Stephen Layton. In just two hours, he taught us an incredible amount about working together as an ensemble and the importance of listening to one another and in turn, our sound as an ensemble improved. We were all inspired by his advice and approach to choral conducting. In addition to this, Gondwana Chorale were asked to film a promotional Australia Day video for the Australian Embassy in London. Although the halls of the embassy were freezing cold, the patriotism in the air couldn't be brought down- we were representing Australia in the best way we could, by singing!

Following London, we flew to Estonia where we combined with local choir E STudio. We were treated to a gorgeous performance of traditional Estonian choral music and even joined the choir in a combined piece for a local audience who loved our poor Estonian language abilities!

Next stop was Riga, Latvia where we met and collaborated with Koris Maska, a local youth choir. Thick snow covered the ground but that didn't seem to stop us from being fully immersed in the culture of Latvia thanks to our host choir! In between our performances and rehearsals, our generous hosts showed us around their gorgeous city and taught us so much about food, traditions and of course, music! Our performance venue was a tiny little church hidden between industrial buildings and at first we believed nobody would come along to our concert but boy were we wrong- the church was packed full of choral music lovers who had come to hear the 'Aussie's' sing!

Our final stop on the first tour was Vilnius, Lithuania. I was really looking forward to this part of the trip and it did not disappoint! One of my favourite tour performance pieces was Dumedium Silentium by Vytautas Miskinis and Gondwana Chorale were lucky enough to have Miskinis run a masterclass with us of his piece. It was a truly humbling experience to have such an incredible composer workshop his composition with us! Following this masterclass, we collaborated with Azuliukas Boys Choir and Sonoros women's choir and taught them a few things about the English language. The next two evenings were spent with our host families in their homes. We ate a lot of food, shared stories of our home and in particular the difference in weather, explored the neighbourhood and most importantly, talked about music, our shared interest.

My favourite moment on the Gondwana Chorale tour was our final performance in Vilnius. We were expecting to perform to maybe 40 to 50 locals and were humbled to have received a standing ovation of over 500 audience members- all of them cheering 'GONDWANA! GONDWANA!'

Elder Conservatorium Musical Horizons Tour:

Heading back to London was a nice warm change for me! However, I didn't get a chance to relax in the sun because the Elder Conservatorium Musical Horizon's Tour kicked off and didn't stop for the entirety of the two weeks we spent in London.

This part of my overseas experience was most inspiring and helpful in my studies as I learnt from some of the top professionals in the music industry. I was able to gauge the standard and expectations of studies in music overseas which was both a humbling and motivating experience.

Our tour director, Professor Carl Crossin OAM, organised an incredible two weeks of intensive workshops, rehearsals, masterclasses and performances at a range of tertiary music institutions. It was interesting to just sit in on everyday masterclasses of students at institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music, Trinity Laban College, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal College of Music and get a feel for the way classes run and the way in which teachers interacted with their students. I was surprised that it wasn't dissimilar to our practices here in Australia.

I particularly enjoyed my time at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. I was lucky enough to have been given the opportunity to sing in a masterclass with the deputy head of vocal studies, Samantha Malk. Although the masterclass was a mere 20 minutes, I learnt an incredible amount about my voice and the way in which I perform. It was similarly, very helpful to sit in on the masterclasses of my classmates and see them all have differences in the way they produced their vocal sound.

We had the chance to sit in on a repertoire class at the Royal Academy of Music with esteemed French music expert, Roy Howatt, which gave me a deeper understanding and passion for French music and truly inspired me for my work in French this year! The class ran similarly to a workshop where the student would play a piece and then both the student and the teacher would deconstruct the elements of the work.

We watched a number of incredible performances over the duration of the tour but for me, the highlight by far was Schwanengesang at Guildhall. Schubert's Swansong was stunningly presented by Guildhall's vocal and drama department. Upon entering the auditorium, the audience's attention has already been captured as the first actor in the production is already onstage and in character. The atmosphere in the room felt very sombre and comfortable and frankly, a nice pre-performance experience. The performance ran in the order of monologue and then performance which broke up the intensity and story of Schubert from the perspective of some of his closest friends and colleagues. At the commencement of the show, Ivor Gurney's scene began and the audience were on the edge of their seats. Louis Landau played this character beautifully and really captured what life in a mental asylum would be like. This heart-warming introduction was then followed by a gorgeous piece from the suite 'Liebesbotschaft'.

Similarly, one after the other, actors and musicians moved audiences with their sensitive approaches to this moving story of life, love and death. Interestingly, the set and concept was extremely minimalistic and immersive. There was a simple wooden chair and table for the actors with their own spotlight and then a grand piano surrounded by seats for the

musicians. As one monologue finished, a song from the cycle began and the subtle interaction between musician and actor was both heart-warming and heartbreaking- sometimes a quick glance and other times a longing stare. Baritone, Jonathan De Garis, was a stand out performer for me with his gorgeous and controlled tone- as soon as he began to sing I had shivers all over. The way he placed his words in the phrases had a sense of delicacy and emotion that really fit the sombre tone of the performance. The singers sat behind the piano in all black outfits and moved forward when it was their turn to sing which was quite informal but totally fit with the mood of the pieces and it made the singer's feel like a normal part to the performance rather than sticking out at the side. It was also lovely to see some quality acting after experiencing some interesting acting at the previous opera scenes performance! The students on stage were incredibly engaging and moving in their interpretations of their role- a refreshing take on some old characters. The professionalism and beauty of this performance was second to none and it has really inspired me to consider Guildhall as a place of study for the future.

I feel this international choir and study tour has inspired me to become the best artist I can be. The IAF grant assisted me in reaching the financial requirements of both these tours and provided me with the experience of a lifetime. I have attached some photos of the tours below.



(Left) Gondwana Chorale visiting Australia House in London (we filmed a rendition of Advance Australia Fair on Australia Day)

(Right) Gondwana chorale participating in a masterclass at Cambridge with Stephen Layton.





(Left) Gondwana Chorale performing in Estonia

(Middle) Musical Horizon's Study Tour attending a London Symphony Orchestra performance at the Barbican Theatre



(Below) Musical Horizon's Study Tour group meeting vocal students at Guildhall after their incredible performance of Schwanengesang.

