

Wayland musicians tour Europe, play seven cities

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PLAINVIEW—[Wayland Baptist University's](#) School of Music took 94 students, faculty and other individuals on a tour of Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria. Groups performed in numerous concert halls and cathedrals along the way.

The Wayland Symphonic Winds and the International Choir, joined by several members of the Wayland Singers, performed seven concerts in seven days in Leipzig, Prague and Vienna.

Wayland student Kris Bransom (left) joins a couple of American street performers in singing "I'll Fly Away" on the streets of Leipzig, Germany, during the WBU School of Music's trip to Europe. (PHOTO/Courtesy Michelle Rollins)

"It was extremely hectic," said Timothy Kelley, director of instrumental studies at Wayland. Kelley planned much of the trip in order to make sure all the instruments needed for concerts would be available. Many of the instruments were shipped, but the group rented some of the larger pieces.

"This is something we started working on early last year and was over a year in the making," Kelley said.

Organizers planned the tour to give students the opportunity to experience the birthplace of classical music and perform in the same venues as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and other renowned composers.

“They hear about the music and take music appreciation classes and music history classes,” Kelley said.

“They study all of these major composers. Basically, where we went was the cradle of music as we know it. Pretty much all classical music as we recognize it developed in these specific areas.”

Michelle Ritter, a senior from Tucson, Ariz., performed with both the band and the choir throughout the trip. She said touring the venues and seeing the homes of composers such as Bach was amazing and increased her interest in their lives.

“It was neat to see where all these people came from,” she said. “And it would have meant even more if I knew everything there is to know about them.”

The group toured the home of Martin Luther, father of the Protestant Reformation, as well as palaces, famous concert halls and churches where major composers had their beginnings.

“This is the Mecca of the world as far as music is concerned,” Kelley said. “The Prague Philharmonic is on one side of the street, and the Prague Symphony performs across the street, and both are world-renowned. Every major cathedral is recognized as a famous concert hall. The ones we performed in were all along that recognized list.”

The band’s concluding concert took place in the Orangerie, a wing of the Schonbrunn palace in Vienna, where Mozart and Antonio Salieri worked. Perform-ing in the venues was an incredible experience, because the acoustics in the concert halls and cathedrals were amazing, adding another dimension to the concerts, Ritter said.

“One of my favorites was when we got to sing in Vienna,” she said. “There was so much energy, and you could hear us echo throughout the whole

place. The church was beautiful. Then we ended up getting a standing ovation, and that just made it better.”