

Indian River Charter choral students enjoy musical, cultural experiences in trip to Greece for festival once-in-a-lifetime

By Janet Begley

Friday, August 10, 2012

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — The Greek word for happiness is "eudaimonia," and 10 students from the Indian River Charter High School chorus got to experience it firsthand in July.

Along with three adult Choral Union members from the community, students performed at the eighth annual Festival of the Aegean Sea 2012 that took place in Syros, Greece.

"We had a fabulous time," said Ray Adams, assistant director for artistic development at the school, who was one of nine chaperones to make the trip. "We had the expectation that Greece was a mess and it wasn't at all. The Greeks are naturally a hospitable people and they made us feel welcome."

The chorus performed at two major concerts during the festival. During the first performance, the chorus sang Beethoven's famous Ninth Choral Symphony "Ode to Joy" conducted by Carnegie Hall maestro Peter Tiboris. This concert took place in the mini La Scala opera house built on the island in the 1800s.

In the second concert, students performed "Magnificat" by John Rutter, who conducted the piece himself and worked closely with students during rehearsals. The second concert took place under the stars on the city plaza of Ermoupolis.

The students, who paid for the trip, were joined at rehearsals and performances by groups from France, Canada, Greece, Texas and California. This ensemble of 250 singers accompanied the National Symphony of Albania and several renowned opera singers from around the world.

Having the opportunity to meet and perform with so many students from around the world was the highlight of 17-year-old Mariah Jacobs' trip.

"It was just wonderful," said Jacobs, a senior at the charter high school. "There was a time when we were all gathered around a piano singing the Adele song 'Someone Like You' and students from all around the world came and joined in. It really showed that music is the universal language."

Jacobs also loved the small, family-run hotel the group stayed at during their trip to Syros.

"They had such good service and they were such nice people," said Jacobs. "I thought it was just perfect."

Adams said the friendships the students formed during the trip with other young people from other countries are something that will last a lifetime.

"I was so appreciative that the students took advantage of all the cultural activities," said Adams. "They couldn't speak Greek, but they really enjoyed learning about the Greek culture. I was very proud of them."

