

## Letters from 2011 Participants

**24 July, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

If ever the statement “Words cannot express...” should be applied, it would be in the context of the superlative musical experience of the Festival of the Aegean. Having spent two beautiful weeks conducting in this unique Festival, I have nothing but unqualified enthusiasm for this musical environment and experience.

The facts are, nothing is missing from this unique event: the music making is world-class; the Greek island setting is paradise; the venues in the city of Hermopoulis are wonderful; the audience is at capacity and enthusiastic; and the convergence of all of these factors are without peer in the world of choral music making. In addition, the Festival staff attends to every detail of a traveler’s needs and concern.

My personal experience as a conductor is augmented by the experience of my own choir, as well as my own family. Within the first week of this two-week festival, everyone was asking me “when can we return”, and that was before we performed our first concert! At the end of the event, no one wanted to leave.

I am already planning my return to the Festival of the Aegean, and I recommend this stellar musical experience without qualification. In a word, “go”.

Sincerely,

Tim Sharp

[Note: Tim Sharp is Executive Director of the American Choral Directors Association, and Conductor/Artistic Director of the Tulsa Oratorio Chorus. He has appeared on MidAmerica’s Carnegie Hall Series on several occasions, as well as the Festival of the Aegean.]

**From Earl Rivers:**

28 July, 2011

I wish to tell singers and conductors who are considering participation in the Festival in July 2012 that they will have a rewarding musical experience and unique opportunities to experience Greek culture – friendly people, magnificent views and scenery, tasty food, and day trips to other islands and historical sites in Athens. Syros's performance venues of the Apollo Opera Theater and historic St. Nicholas Church rival any such venues in Europe.

Earl Rivers

[Note: Earl Rivers is the Director of Choral Studies and Division Head of Ensembles/Conducting at the University of Cincinnati: College Conservatory of Music.]

**05 August, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am still basking in the sunlight from the beautiful island of Syros. Two weeks of great music, a beautiful setting, an appreciative audience, a superb orchestra, and wonderful music colleagues.

The Aegean Festival is a gift from Peter Tiboris to the picturesque island of Syros. As one lady in the audience said to a children's choir chaperone, "this festival is the most important thing in my life." Audiences were huge and appreciative. Hotels were wonderful with stunning views, a wonderful pool, and a great beach. The schedule allowed for good musical preparation balanced with immersion into the local culture and time to enjoy the island. The rehearsal space for the children's chorus was excellent, and the staff was attentive and delightfully accommodating.

The individual choirs had the opportunity to perform in the historic Cathedral of St. Nicholas, an incredibly beautiful space. Every director felt great about this concert.

The conductors of the various choirs worked with me (the guest conductor) as a team to provide a great experience for the young people. The young people were thrilled to perform as individual choirs, as a mass choir, and with all choirs and orchestra.

They also loved seeing a dress rehearsal of the professional opera performance.

The tour ended with a beautiful tour of the Parthenon and a dinner with Greek music and dancing. As a conductor who has taken my own choir on many tours, I highly recommend this tour for any youth choir.

Janet Galvan

[Note: Dr. Janet Galván, professor of music at Ithaca College, conducts the Women's Chorale, the Ithaca College Chorus, and is Artistic Director for the Ithaca Children's Choir.]

**04 August, 2011**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Durango Choral Society has just returned from the 2011 Festival of the Aegean after performing the John Rutter *Requiem* and *Carmina Burana*. We were thrilled to take part in an amazing musical adventure that included two memorable venues, inspiring soloists, and a top notch orchestra. The spectacle of singing *Carmina* with a cast of more than 400 while watching the full moon rise over the Aegean Sea was an experience that none of us will ever forget.

I would highly recommend the Festival of the Aegean to any and all performing organizations. Thank you to MAP for a unique and wonderful experience.

Sincerely, Linda Mack Berven  
Artistic Director  
Durango Choral Society  
Durango, CO

**31 August, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

It is now almost two months since the Sanctuary Choir of Sardis Presbyterian Church departed Charlotte, North Carolina to begin the momentous experience of the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Aegean International Music Festival in Syros, Greece.

What a wonderful and rewarding musical trip experience this was! Not only did we see a beautiful part of the world and taste the culture of Greece and especially the Greek Isles, but the musical portion was a high point that we will not quickly forget.

From the beauty of performing the “Requiem” by John Rutter to the experience of singing to the very large crowd that gathered in the town square to hear the Carl Orff masterwork, “Carmina Burana” to the elegance of the performance of “La Traviata” and the other musical experiences of the two weeks, I know that my people grew musically in ways that would be hard to duplicate.

Peter Tiboris is to be congratulated for his fine work in bringing the forces together that made such a large festival possible. Peter’s staff from Mid-America did everything in their power to make our trip comfortable and rewarding. I can only imagine the headaches that they endured so that we did not have any headaches but only great memories.

In addition to the festival experiences I must also compliment Peter and his staff for the fine counter point of the trip in the form of the island hops that allowed us to experience the Greek culture on Mykonos, Delos and Paros as well as Athens and of course the beauty and comfort of our home away from home, Syros. We were treated so well by the open, friendly and generous Greek people.

I would recommend this festival to anyone who is seeking a rewarding musical experience combined with wonderful international exposure.

Sincerely,  
Kenneth A. DeBoer  
Director of Music Ministries  
Sardis Presbyterian Church  
Charlotte, North Carolina

# Letters from 2010 Participants

8/2/10

Dear Peter: I greet you with sincere hopes that your anticipated surgery has gone well and that you are recovering according to schedule (the doctor's schedule, not yours).

I don't know where to begin to thank you for including King College in the 2010 Festival of the Aegean. I, and my students, had a wonderful 2-week experience that words are simply inadequate to describe. I am still overwhelmed by the care and professionalism of your staff. Betsy, Irene, Dennis, and Shawn were always on task and always gracious with their positive attitudes of assistance and concern. They make this festival and all of its many parts (transportation, rehearsals, meals, lodging, communication, etc.) work smoothly. Having done some of that in another career long ago, I know how difficult that can be.

Most of the students at King College come from southern Appalachia. They have traveled very little outside these mountains. Most had never been on a plane before this trip, much less traveled abroad. Their world was rather small and their world views were rather provincial. That was before this trip. Now, they feel empowered in a new way that only happens when your life experiences have been stretched and your pre-conceived attitudes have been challenged. I asked each of them to write a short paper for me: "For me, Greece Was ..." Below are a few samples that I received.

*Greece was more than I expected. Before the trip, all I knew about Greece was its olive oil, beautiful waters, and Ancient history. I learned in my two weeks trip that there is always something more to admire about the place and the people who live there. I admire the people who live there.*

*The main part of the trip was our concert and preparing for it. This was special in a couple different ways. We got to sing a piece of music that was new to me and meet many new people in the process. Each and every day we rehearsed the music and the correct way to perform with others from different parts of the United States, along with groups from Athens and Canada, and this process brought us together. It was a building of camaraderie that made the trip even better than expected. This does not even include getting to know the others from my own group from King College.*

*The two weeks spent in Greece reminded me of much that my education attempted to inculcate in my mind. The sights were breathtaking. The experience of meeting Greeks and being part of a music festival, the Festival of the Aegean, was more than memorable. Experiencing a different language and alphabet was exciting and intriguing. All I can say is that if I ever have the opportunity to return to Greece, I will consider myself more than blessed.*

*For me, Greece was about new beginnings and doing what I love. For the past 11 years, choir has been a huge part of my life. It is what helped me choose King College and has provided many opportunities for me over the years. Having the opportunity to go to a foreign country with such rich history to do what I love was the opportunity of a lifetime.*

I think the students, even in their naïveté, are able to articulate better than I of the life-changing experiences that they were privileged to because of this trip. For me, as well. Greece will never again be just a place on a map. It will now forever be that place where Mrs. Bardot led us in a wonderful concert of the Faure Requiem, or where Tassos rescued my student who lost his passport and, thus, demonstrated the spirit of Greek people to many Americans. Greece will now be the place where I was so warmly greeted every day by Kostas and Francoise, or that place where Betsy and Irene met us at 3:45 a.m. to take us to our hotel, etc.

Of course, I must mention the quality of the music and the performances that we were privileged to hear and to be a part of. I was truly amazed at the production of Carmen and the singers and dancers who made up the cast. And I was especially blessed to sing under Francis Bardot and to be given another perspective of Faure's great choral work.

I have traveled with the King College Choir abroad on other occasions but the quality of the Festival of the Aegean will always be the benchmark as I look at future opportunities.

My very best to you, Peter, and the future of the Festival of the Aegean.

Pat

Dr. Pat Flannagan, Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities  
King College Performing and Visual Arts Department  
1350 King College Road  
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Maestro PETER TIBORIS  
MidAmerica Productions, Inc.  
Festival of the Aegean  
General Director and Artistic Director  
132 West 36th Street, Fourth Floor  
New York, New York 10018 USA

Dear Maestro

I will not let you wait any longer to thank you for the great musical moments we went through thanks to you during the 2010 edition of the Festival of the Aegean .

First of all the overall musical quality which you are directly responsible for, was that of a great festival. Having myself taken part in the Aix and Orange festivals or the Herodus Atticus in Athens and after being the choir master of the Paris Opera children's choir for twenty three years, I was able to appreciate the international level of the cast you managed to have in Syros as far as the orchestra, singers, dancers, stage director and lighting engineer were concerned. They were all of international level.

I have realized that all that was possible thanks to the team of great professionals you have federated around you. They all know their jobs perfectly well, they are efficient, available at any time and always cheerful. And first and foremost they are happy to work for you !

The children of the Chœur d' Enfants d'Ile de France were very happy to share this opportunity under your direction and to be surrounded by high level artists who were all very friendly with them.  
On their behalf, I would like to thank you very much .

As guest conductor, I was able to appreciate the quality of the chorists who sang under my direction, the collaboration of the choir masters who took part in Fauré's Requiem, the flexibility and musicality of the orchestra , the great talent of the soloists and especially Mrs Lappalainen's musical intelligence

We will be very happy to be with you again in 2012  
My wife and myself are planning to come and visit you in New York to talk with you about this project as well as other projects with the Unesco and the Unicef

We are looking forward to this and once again, Dear Maestro, I would like to thank you and express my high consideration to you .

Prof. Francis BARDOT  
Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur  
Conductor - Choirmaster  
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Birmingham Concert Chorale  
Birmingham, Alabama

August 3, 2010

Peter Tiboris  
MidAmerica Productions

Dear Peter,

On behalf of the members of the Birmingham Concert Chorale, I write to thank you for our rich experience in Greece as participants in the 2010 Festival of the Aegean.

Since our return to Birmingham, our members have struggled to adequately describe their experience:

About Syros they have remarked, "Imagine a place where in every direction you see a view as beautiful as a postcard."

When describing the festival, they have said, "Francis Bardot was a wonderful conductor who enlarged our understanding of the Fauré Requiem and brought out the best in us." Their comments have also included raves about the production of "Carmen," and the opportunity to share the stage with Stanley and Naomi Drucker.

As they have reflected on the staff of MidAmerica Productions, they have remarked, "Never have we seen such hard-working people. They accepted every challenge related to the organization of hundreds of people and multiple hotels, buses, ferries, and concert venues with confidence and competence."

In short, it was a great pleasure to be part of the Festival of the Aegean, and we look forward to any future opportunity to participate again.

Sincerely yours,

Terre Johnson

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2600 Vestavia Drive  
Birmingham, AL 35216  
Email: soeamus@yahoo.com

July 30, 2010

To whom it may concern,

I have been asked to write a letter describing my reaction to the Festival of the Aegean that was held on the Greek Island of Syros in July, 2008, under the auspicious of Mid America Productions. Firstly, let me say that I do this with great enthusiasm and pleasure as the time spent at the Festival will long be remembered with delight. My choir, the Columbia Collegiate Chorale, along with members of a male choir from Poland, provided the choral sound for the occasion, while the orchestra was made up of mostly members from the New England Symphonic Ensemble, many of whom were personal friends of the members of my choir.

Mid America Productions were remarkably well organized and prepared for every contingency, a fact that was clearly evident from the time we stepped off the plane in Athens to the time of our departure from Syros. We were met at the airport with buses waiting to take us to the Syros Ferry then, upon arrival at Syros, we found buses waiting to take us to our hotels. This attention to detail is what marked the success of the Syros adventure. Not only were these organizational skills evident in busing and housing, they were equally evident in the entire running of the Festival from rehearsal schedule and spaces to the performances. Everything was extremely well organized and efficiently handled to the delight of all participants.

What made the Festival very enjoyable was the fact that there was time for enjoying the Island as well as the hard work of preparing for performances. Syros is especially beautiful and the setting easily pleases the land lover as well as those who love the ocean. The location of our beachside hotels, with excellent Greek food readily available, made the down time a dream, while the balmy evenings made all that the tourist brochures advertized a reality. I cannot think of any way that the setting could have been bettered.

The concerts were equally enjoyable. The Opera House came to life at all performances and the local community was extremely supportive with capacity crowds attending all performances. The professional soloists, selected by Mr. Tiboris, were not only highly skilled singers but they were also people that made themselves easily available off-stage. They stayed with us in the same hotels, eat meals with us and readily made friends with the younger set. The concerts were musically very satisfying and it was a joy to make music under the leadership of Maestro Tiboris.

I cannot say enough good about the experience and I would encourage anyone who as the opportunity to be a part of the Festival to embrace it with all their enthusiasm as I can promise that it will be a summer event that will be hard to better and one that will long remain in the memory.

Very sincerely,

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