



# Performance Tour Endorsements

*"Varna International is a first class organization. The personal touch and friendships that they help to cultivate make touring with them a very rewarding experience. Varna services many areas of the world that are rich with culture and musical opportunity that you might not normally experience with another agency. I would highly recommend them for your choral touring needs."*

**Dr. Scott Glysson**  
**Director of Choral Activities**  
**West Liberty University**

*"Thank you for your wonderful work in organizing the Greenwich Choral Society's tour to Bulgaria and Greece. Your arrangements were outstanding! We enjoyed working with the Bulgarian orchestra you contracted for our performances and appreciated the enormous effort you invested in promoting our performances. It was a joy to learn more about Bulgaria, it's rich musical heritage, history and astounding cuisine!"*

**Dr. Paul F. Mueller, Director of Choral Activities**  
**Hunter College – Music Department – CUNY**  
**Greenwich Choral Society, Music Director**

*"I appreciate everything that you and everyone associate with Varna International did in order to make our tour a success. I think the students experienced a wide variety of wonderful experiences during their time in Bulgaria and Istanbul. This was a rich cultural experience for them. They were introduced to Bulgarian and Turkish history, food, art, architecture and religion. They saw beautiful historic places, met friendly people, collaborated with local music organizations and were able to perform in halls with fine acoustics. I think the highlight for many of the students was the collaboration with Cosmic Voices of Bulgaria and working with Georgi Andreev on the 'Rose Tear' commissioned in Sofia.*

*Sharon and Kalin were the perfect hosts who worked tirelessly to provide all tour participants with a memorable cultural and musical experience. Helpful and knowledgeable guides, comfortable hotels and collaborative concerts with local choirs and orchestras in outstanding performance venues all contributed to a truly positive tour experience. Thank you for sharing the rich history and music traditions of your home country of Bulgaria!"*

**Dr. Edith A. Copley**  
**Director of Choral Studies, Northern Arizona University**  
**Music Director, Master Chorale of Flagstaff**

*"Regarding our recent concert tour to Vienna's Musikverein and Prague's Rudolphinum to perform Dvorak's Stabat Mater with the Plovdiv Philharmonic and the City of Prague Philharmonic: the experience was everything we could have imagined and more...in addition to the world-class performance venues in which our students were able to take full advantage, the arrangements with professional musicians, hotel accommodations and cultural tour opportunities created a lifetime of memories for everyone.*

*The magic of performing Dvorak in these two spaces with world-class orchestras was most rewarding and fulfilling. Thanks to Varna International for all the organization and behind-the-scenes work to make this trip the success that it was."*

**Dr. Bruce Chamberlain**  
**Director of Choral Activities, The University of Arizona**

*"Bringing 300 superb choristers and instrumentalists on stage in what I can only describe as an impeccably organized and magnificently directed performance, sets the highest possible standards for such events."*

**Ambassador Elena Poptodorova**  
**Bulgarian Ambassador to the USA**

*"This tour will serve as a benchmark for future endeavors. Thank you for your attention to detail, your professionalism, and your belief in the power of music to change and shape lives. Most of all, thank you for your belief in our youth and their importance now and to our future."*

**Maestro Gary Nicholson**  
**Colorado Springs Youth Symphony**

*"The magnitude of your effort to achieve such artistic measures was daunting. Your commitment to bringing forward the story of Bulgarian humanity during WWII is admirable. This music should be performed again and again. Georgi Andreev is a world class composer and orchestrator. The sounds of Bulgarian singers and folk instruments in this composer's hands along with traditional orchestration were spine chilling and haunting."*

*The ICC's experience with Varna International was truly top notch. It is gratifying to see a company who cares about the quality of musical experience as much as the nuts and bolts of travel. I would recommend Varna International wholeheartedly to any choir touring in the future."*

*Congratulations and thanks from a grateful conductor...You are first class!"*

**Henry Leck**  
**Founder and Artistic Director**  
**Indianapolis Children's Choir**

*"In 2012, the Northern Kentucky University Chamber Choir was accepted to participate in the May International Choral Festival in Varna, Bulgaria. We turned all our tour arrangements over to Varna International. The tour was first class. We were treated as family with great accommodations, tour assistance, and all we needed to focus on was our task of competing at our highest level. It was like having a family member supporting all our efforts. I recommend them highly. My students and I consider them as our friends - not simply a tour company."*

**Dr. Randy Pennington**  
**Northern Kentucky University**

*"From the start I found my dealings with you both, and with the other members of your staff, to be a remarkable combination of warmth and professionalism. Our tours to the cities of Budapest, Bratislava and Prague, with a side trip to Vienna, exceeded all expectations. The concert venues were excellent. The church in Budapest was remarkable acoustics, and what fun to sing for a full house!"*

*I shall never forget performing in the Rudolphinum in Prague. That was the best acoustics I have ever conducted in, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. The MAV orchestra was excellent. I think leadership starts at the top and clearly you are warm-hearted people that take your roles as musical ambassadors seriously. Your attention to detail and the attention you give to making musical experiences of the highest quality are exemplary."*

**Maestro Bradely Ellingboe  
Director of Choral Activities  
The University of New Mexico**

*"Thank you for organizing the special presentation of Verdi's magnificent Requiem in Perugia this summer! The performance was simply fantastic, with all of the American singers uniting with the Italian choir from Perugia, with the excellent soloists, and with the top caliber Dohnányi Orchestra from Budapest. All of it was of the first order! Performing Verdi's signature choral work in a beautiful historic cathedral in Italy before a standing-room-only audience was a dream come true for us, and a lifetime experience for all!"*

**Stan Engebretson  
Artistic Director, National Philharmonic Chorale  
Director of Choral Studies, George Mason University  
Director of Music, The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church**

*"The opportunity to perform Verdi's Requiem in Italy was outstanding...Not a day has gone by when I don't reflect upon some aspect of our trip--whether it is a phrase from the Requiem, a scene from one of our tours, or a taste sensation from one of our dining experiences."*

**William Powell  
Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities  
Auburn University, Alabama**

*"It was a pleasure to appear as the mezzo-soprano soloist this past summer in performances with Varna International. We performed the Mozart Requiem in Venice, Verona and Vicenza, Italy and the Verdi Requiem in Perugia, Asiago and Salò, Italy. The performances were of an extremely high quality: the conductors, orchestra, chorus and soloists were fully professional and thoroughly prepared for the rigorous demands of these great masterpieces. The houses were packed and the audiences received us very enthusiastically. The commitment of Varna to high production values and engagement of the audience made for a stellar experience."*

**Ms. Shirley Close, Mezzo-Soprano  
Associate Professor of Voice  
College of Music  
Florida State University**

*"Varna International provided a wonderful musical experience combined with a chance to get to know some beautiful European cities. The Varna staff took care of all the details and were a delight to work with. The musicians from the US, as well as the Europeans who performed with us, were excellent. In every way it was a great trip. "*

**Professor Gayle Seaton, Soprano  
Music Theatre  
College of Music  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida**

*"Our summer 2011 experience with the 'Songs of Life' festival in which we helped to perform the world premiere of 'A Melancholy Beauty' was exceptional in many ways. From the combination of top level professional and educational performers from the USA and Bulgaria, passionately lead by Henry Leck, the well written score with its timely story, the individual group performance opportunities at the three world class performances venues - Kennedy Center, Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center and Wang Theater, Boston, and numerous tourist moments along the way, this was an experience my student and community singers will never forget. Add in a private directors reception at the Bulgarian Embassy in D.C., and having "Beauty" composer Georgi Andreev and all of his Bulgarian performers traveling on our bus and you have the most unique of tour experiences. The excellent tour management was provided by knowledgeable, caring musician/managers under the direct personal supervision of the Festival Directors Kalin and Sharon Tchonev. We recommend it highly!"*

**Dr. Thomas E. Miller  
The College Singers, The Master Arts Chorale  
Victor Valley College, California**

*"I have participated in tours of this kind in European venues before, and I can say without reservation that Sharon and Kalin Tchonev's Varna Music Festivals have been the most professional and organized of them all. I would not hesitate to give them my highest recommendation.*

*I had not worked with [Varna Music Festivals] before and they contacted me and asked if I would be interested in performing with them. It was a fabulous trip! We stayed at a brand new 4 star hotel, a block away from the Black Sea, rehearsed and performed in downtown Varna and also participated on three side excursion trips to Nessebar, Balchik, and Varna. All activities were well organized, well executed, and so interesting and informative about Bulgarian culture and history. The musical experience was also very gratifying. The orchestra was excellent. The rehearsals were productive, and important, and yet we had some free time to explore our beautiful surroundings and take in the beach. The Tchonevs had also organized many meals and activities locally and these were highlights of the trip. The Bulgarian culture was fascinating and the people so accepting and warm to us that we felt so "at home" everywhere we went.*

*Because this experience was so positive for everyone in my group, we are returning this year and participating again in what they have to offer. Only this time, not only is every student who went last year [is] coming again this year, but we are bringing a total of 19 people this time. I am already looking forward to next year when we'll be performing Mozart's Die Zauberfloete!"*

**Kathleen Sasnett, Assistant Professor of Voice and Opera  
Sunderman Conservatory of Music, Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania**

*"The tour to Israel that Kalin and Sharon Tchonev put together for us was extraordinary in every way. The venues chosen for the performances were major concert halls. Their marketing efforts drew huge audiences. The professional orchestra they provided was top-notch. The tour guide was a brilliant Biblical scholar, and a great teacher and leader. Mr. and Mrs. Tchonev were with us at all time to make sure everything ran smoothly. My singers were thrilled to join the Israeli choir which was provided to supplement ours. All in all, this tour was a wonderful musical, cultural and religious experience. I have conducted in about 25 choir tours abroad. This certainly ranks with the best of them."*

**Harold Rosenbaum**  
**The New York Virtuoso Singers, New York**

*"My ensemble thoroughly enjoyed our time with the Varna International Choral Orchestral Festival last June. The venues were spectacular, the accommodations were centrally located and very comfortable, and there was plenty of time for sightseeing and taking in the local culture. My choir had an excellent musical experience with the other singers from around the United States and Europe, and with first rate orchestral players. As a guest conductor, I was delighted with the overall musical accomplishments of the ensemble, and I enjoyed working with the performers. Thank you to Varna for a rewarding, exhilarating festival."*

**Dr. Linda Mack**  
**Director of Choral Activities, Fort Lewis College, Colorado**

*"Thank you for your great work in arranging the Concert Choir tour to Italy and Bulgaria. You did a wonderful job. I know that it was not an easy task to arrange so many details for us. However, I have traveled to Europe with a number of tour companies, many of which have multiple staff and a great deal of experience with tour groups. Your arrangements were equal to the best in the business."*

**Dr. Larry Wyatt, Director of Choral Activities**  
**University of South Carolina**

*"My experience in Europe as conductor of Mozart's Requiem -- and the experience of my singers from Maine who traveled with the Varna ensemble -- was rich and deeply rewarding. The orchestra, chorus (from six states and Hungary) and soloists all played and sang well, and the venues that Kalin Tchonev arranged were superb. THIS is the way to see Europe, singing all along the way in an unforgettable experience."*

**Robert Russell**  
**Professor of Music, University of Southern Maine**  
**Music Director, The Choral Art Society, Portland, Maine**

*"I had a wonderful time in Europe and I was very pleased with the concerts, the performers and all of your tour arrangements. Thank you for your professionalism and your friendship... I hope that we can work together again in the very near future."*

**Bruce Rogers, Director of Choral Activities,**  
**Mt San Antonio College, Walnut, California**

*"We are writing to thank you for creating a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Indianapolis Children's Choir. Our son learned about hard work, team work, history, storytelling, and so much more. Your organization gave these children the opportunity to sing in amazing venues..."*

**The Cummings Family  
Indianapolis**

*"Thanks again for the wonderful experience. The opportunity to perform at Spoleto was amazing! I really enjoyed playing with the orchestra from Hungary. They were fantastic! Congratulations!"*

**Prof. Connie Gee  
Viola Professor  
University of South Carolina & member of Varna International Chamber Orchestra**

*"You absolutely worked miracles getting the Spoleto program to happen - that was amazing! The venues were fabulous, as always, the places we visited were fabulous, all of the concerts were extremely well advertised and attended and, of course, our bus driver was fabulous. BRAVO!!!"*

**Cathie Jo Brun  
Cellist, New York member of Varna International Chamber Orchestra**

*"Thank you for organizing such a beautiful memorable trip. The musical experiences were inspiring. The venues, conductors and audiences were amazing."*

**Barbara Brothers  
Violin, New York member of Varna International Chamber Orchestra**

*"I am already missing the skinny streets of Budapest and the rooftop cafes of Prague!"*

**MacKenzie Cooper, Auditor (grandchild of Barbara Brothers)**

*"What a wonderful trip it was for all of the UNM Chorus people that got to go. Thanks for your hard work."*

**Lori Nash  
University Chorus  
University of New Mexico**

*"Just wanted to thank you and Kalin again for everything you did for (Dr.) Randy (Speer) and I and also our group of students. It was such an amazing trip and I hope to return to Bulgaria again. Every time I see pictures from the trip I smile and remember how wonderful it was. I hope your adventures this summer are going well and hope to see you in the future. Just a side note, our son Karl (who was with us on the tour) graduated from Randolph College this year. It made it a special trip that we could have our son participate in the adventure as well."*

**Karen Speer  
Chorister, Randolph College  
Lynchburg, Virginia**

*"I was in one of the participating groups for this adventure. It was so amazing and I hope to return to Bulgaria again. Kalin and Sharon were wonderful and made the whole thing absolutely perfect."*

**Grateful Chorister**

*"My experience was overwhelmingly positive! I give full marks to the pace, the balance of singing/tours/free time, and the accommodations were clean, attractive and comfortable. The added tours were all highlights and I'm glad I signed up for them. Everyone enjoyed the Varna Winery tour, the Plovdiv evening tour with wonderful food and entertainment, and the botanical garden in Balchik. The tour guides were outstanding. Their professionalism, helpfulness and extensive knowledge were a real advantage. Their commentaries added so much to our appreciation and enjoyment of the region.*

*The concert venues were fine, the audiences enthusiastic, there were even programs! The singers of the "Morski Zvutsi" Choir were professional and pleasant. The reception after the final concert in Thessaloniki was a very welcome surprise. The orchestra was excellent as usual.*

**Ms. Claudia Bailey**  
**Chorister**  
**Chorale Bel Canto, California**