

Postcards from Spain: San Sebastian

Friday, November 02, 2007

10:39pm - on the road from San Sebastian

Before anything, I must proclaim to the world the good news of Rose Ensemble bass Mark Dietrich's 40th birthday. I have had the good fortune of spending the last 13 years as Mark's friend and I very much look forward to the next 13. Congrats, Mark!

The last few days seem like a complete blur; we have been going and going. The competition has begun (although we haven't actually competed yet) and we've had the opportunity to hear some fine groups. Of course, we are still rehearsing and performing evening concerts, so things are pretty darn busy. But it has also been a wonderful time of sharing music with people from all over the world. The other night after the competition, we were being fed dinner (in what could only be described as an air hangar) and the choirs that competed that evening started their own "choral duel." First the Swedish choir sang, then the Slovenian choir, and back and forth. Within no time, The Rose Ensemble got involved. That particular evening ended with hearing the Slovenians sing Rachmaninoff in the parking lot. WOW! What a lovely memory to take home.

Tonight we performed in the beautiful ocean-side town of San Sebastian, where we had the good fortune of being presented in a church (19th century, I believe) with exceptionally good acoustics. The basses sounded ultra-deep, the sopranos soared and the crowd of 200+ (not bad for this smallish city) was incredibly attentive and enthusiastic. Our post-concert dinner was served in a local restaurant. The fare was typical: lots of cold red wine with plenty of French fries and fried meat. Yet the group is used to this by now and we're all quite satisfied. If something doesn't work out quite right we just say, "We're in Spain." In other words, we are fortunate to be able to be here and there's hardly a reason not to see the good side of just about any situation.

Well, tomorrow is the big day - the international choral competition in Tolosa. The groups in our category (16 voices or fewer) will compete with programs of sacred and secular music, and it all starts at 11:00am. We'll sing later in the afternoon and then there will be a special dinner, followed by the announcement of the winners at midnight. There are five other groups before us in each section of the competition, so we'll be waiting around a fair amount each time before we sing. But that will give us time to breathe and go over any tricky spots (we're also going to be doing several pieces memorized). I think we're ready. We've rehearsed this repertoire a lot, and even though much of it is outside our typical fare of early music (and our comfort zone), it's good for us to challenge ourselves.

Driving home from the concert this evening, the bus is eerily quiet. I don't think anyone is necessarily nervous, they just want to sing well tomorrow. I appreciate that so much. There's no real focus on winning, just wanting to do well (that's a big and important difference). Wish us luck!!

Fond regards to all,

Jordan