

Canadian Girls Choir - The Voices of Light - April 8

The FCCC hosted a wonderful concert by Les Voix Boreales from Laval, Quebec on April 8. Our choristers and families enjoyed their program, after which the 52 girls from Canada stayed overnight with some of our families who opened their homes to our guests. Traveling in this manner not only saves money but also is a great opportunity for a rewarding cultural experience. The host families were invited to share a few words about their time together. We can not thank them enough for their willingness to open their homes to our guests!

At the end we have also included some comments from our Chorus conductor, Ashley Zadavec.

What a wonderful evening we had Wednesday! We enjoyed the concert very much, BUT the highlight for our family was having Ariel and Bianca with us overnight. They were lovely young women, very kind and polite, and just a pleasure to have with us. This experience has prompted us to think about other ways to broaden ourselves and open our home to others. Thank you for yet another great experience through FCCC!

We really enjoyed our girls, Eve and Marie. It was fun getting to know them, learn a little about life in Montreal, and speak a few words in French. They were very nice and appreciative. We would be happy to do it again in the future.

We had hosted 3 girls from the Princeton Girl Choir a few years ago and had such a terrific experience that we didn't hesitate to host again! We really enjoyed our short time with the 3 girls from the Canadian choir. They were very charming, and we had a great time getting to know them. We learned a lot about their choir, and we watched some of the videos of their choir (they sang with Celine Dion last year) and showed them some of the videos of our choir. They told us that they enjoy staying with families on their choir trips as they get exposure to different cultures, they get to know teens from other countries and cultures, and it saves money! They were very polite, well-mannered and so appreciative of our hospitality. It was our pleasure to welcome them to our home. We were so touched by their thoughtful gifts as well. Between facebook, instagram, snapchat and email, we will be keeping in touch!

We had a very nice time with our three choristers, although the actual time they spent with us was very short. (We would have liked to have had a day more with them.) They were very charming girls, well mannered and a pleasure to have. We talked a lot with them and it was interesting to hear and learn about their family life, choir life, hobbies, school, etc.. They couldn't have been nicer and easier to have in the house. I can only hope that my daughters would be the same in a strangers house! I believe it is a good thing for our children to see us sharing our home and food and providing a warm welcome with people we don't know. Any contact with people from other walks of life from our own is valuable and an enriching experience, even though of course French speaking Canada is not so different from here. Plus, I believe in, "What goes around, comes around." If in the future the choir wants to go on tour and be hosted in people's homes then we also need to do the hosting!!

The three girls, Sandrine, Stephanie & Flecka, that we had over night could not have been more lovely. They were friendly, outgoing, incredibly sweet and polite. We all felt very comfortable right from the beginning and had a very nice night hanging out with them. They even brought us small gifts as thanks. It was a wonderful experience for us and I hope for them. Please pass along our positive comments to their choir director.

We loved having Camille and Elodie come to stay with us. They were lovely, polite and delightful. We had very interesting conversations (even about medical problems as we are both doctors who specialize in some areas that were of particular importance to the girls). They were excited to have an opportunity to play our baby grand piano (inherited from my grandmother. A wonderfully restored 1924 Knabe and played it beautifully. Sadly although Alexandra loves to sing, no one in our family really plays. It was a pleasure to have that piano playing in our home. Overall it was a wonderful visit and we were all glad that they stayed with us. I even got to speak French with them (remnants of junior year abroad in Paris). A fantastic experience.

We had a great time with Annetta and Paulina! They hit it off immediately with Brooklyn and Kennedy and really enjoyed playing with the girls' baby sister and our puppy. They had a surprising amount in common and all loved talking to each other about their plans for the future. It was an evening of singing, guitar playing, piano playing, lots of silly games, girl talk, sharing future dreams and goals ... pretty much anything but sleeping! It reinforced for me how music is a common language and bond that can tie people together in an instant -- regardless of how long they've known each other.

So, honestly, we were kind of nervous beforehand, especially since it was a work and school night -- but we wanted you to know that we had 4 girls stay with us from the Canadian choir last night -- and we so enjoyed having them! I was feeling bad that we were stuffing them 2 to a (double) bed upstairs, but they were most gracious about it! We gave them some hot chocolate when we got home last night, and we chatted late -their English was good, thank goodness - about Canada, the choir, their experiences singing, etc. (We were amused to hear that Celine Dion was every bit as annoying as we

might have imagined.) Our big dog and floppy cat were the real ambassadors -- the girls loved them, and that broke the ice. The girls were totally disciplined, setting their alarms and appearing promptly this morning. I gave them pastries and juice for breakfast, and was almost embarrassed when they presented thank-you gifts, formally and one at a time, that they had clearly taken some time to think about. I think we got more back in Canadian maple syrup, chocolates and jam than we gave them! I zipped them back to Fairfield this morning and it was over in a flash, easy and fun. Definitely count us in for the next exchange - it was a really nice experience.

It was a wonderful experience and we would not hesitate to host again! The girls we had were young - only 13 - and this was their first tour. They were grateful and polite and so sweet. All you really need to know is the small feedback I heard from the girls myself. One of our guests, Sophie, said on the ride to the hotel: "I really wish could have spent two days here in Fairfield instead of just a fast overnight!" My daughter Charlotte and I chatted after we said goodbye to our two new friends, and she said: "Mom, that was really fun, we should do that again!" And we will! The concert was terrific too.

We were happy to host Aurelie and Marjorie. They were wonderful guests (however brief their stay), and even left us a lovely gift as a remembrance of Quebec. They hit it off well with Alex and chatted well into the night. Thankfully, their English was much better than any French we could muster. We heard of their singing and bowling adventures in New Haven, and got to learn about their school life and Montreal.

We had a wonderful time hosting our two girls - they were delightful, and it was so easy. They really just wanted some down time, so we chatted over dinner, got them settled into their room and left them to relax and watch a little tv. Anika got to practice a little of her French with them while we ate, which was fun. Being a veteran of many of these tours as a singer myself, I know that for these one-night stays all the participants really want or need is a clean, quiet bed and a nice meal. It's fun to chat with your hosts, but a night of being completely entertained is not expected. It's a different story if you stay with a family for a few days, but for one night that's all they need.

We really loved hosting the Canadian girls and would definitely do something like that again. They were lovely and it was certainly not a long time commitment. Maggie enjoyed spending some time with them that evening too! Thanks for the opportunity.

From ASHLEY ZADRAVECZ:

I thought the event last night was very nice and definitely worth it. While I was looking out into the audience as the choir was performing, our kids seemed interested and excited. It's not very often that the kids (especially the younger ones) get to see how other choirs perform and sound, and see what is similar to their group and what is different. I remember when I was a chorister and traveled with FCCC, I saw other community choirs perform in Canada and I remember it giving me a lot of perspective of how other choirs sound and perform, and it also gave me a chance to hear other great repertoire. I was thankful for that. I think the repertoire that the Canadian group performed was very good too, such a variety. At the end after Siyahamba and Jubilate Deo as the kids were being dismissed, they were happy and many of them told me that they had a lot of fun singing with them. I also think that the home-stay is a great way for our kids to get to know the girls in the choir and talk to them about their passion for singing.