

# Oakland Youth Orchestra captures hearts in Italy

Text and photos by Barbara Stack

## BACKGROUND

From June 25 to July 8 an entourage of 70 high school musicians in the Oakland Youth Orchestra performed and toured in Northern Italy under the direction of Scott Parkman. They performed six concerts, all well attended and well received by the audiences and the press. Orchestra members toured the historical and cultural sites of Rome and the Vatican, Assisi, Florence, Montecatini, Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Bologna, Mantua, Cremona, Crema, Venice, and Verona.

Piedmont musicians were Pam Bajada, Sunny Chan, Adelaide Cheng, Leonard Cheng, Vanessa Huang, Ian Jones, Malinda Lee, Jesse Miller and Albert Roh.

OYO Executive Director Barbara Stack, in addition to being the official journalist and photographer, oversaw the two-week tour.

## FINAL PART OF TWO-PART SERIES

### JULY 2 (MONDAY): PISA & THE TOWER

Pisa greeted us with a very hot day. Visited the famous Leaning Tower and Cathedral housing Galileo's lamp. Then on to Lucca, Puccini's house, and dinner in Pistoia: Pesto lasagna and tomato penne, plus good fruit dessert with ice cream.

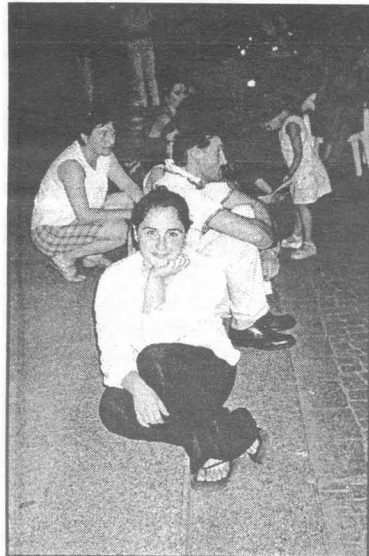


Photo by Barbara Stack  
Percussionist Pam Bajada, a recent Piedmont High School graduate, cools off during intermission at Oakland Youth Orchestra's July 6 concert in Crema, Italy.

5 p.m. warmup. 9 p.m. Concert II at Pistoia Piazza del Duomo. It was the weakest concert – noisy and a sparse audience of about 200. The kids were quite tired from heavy touring in the heat, still, they did a pretty good performance. Afterward, they were disappointed in themselves.

In the audience: Magda & Marta Borzuchowski, Peggy Green and Tom Tighe.

### JULY 3 (TUESDAY): FLORENCE

Our visit to Florence included: Ruth's Sephardic Vegetarian Restaurant & Sephardic Synagogue; the Duomo Cathedral with an outside guide; the cathedral is pink & green marble; some of our kids climbed to the dome; the famous gold doors of the Baptistry were made by Ghiberti.

For academics, we saw the statue of David (The David), and the Ponte Vecchio over the river Arno. Dinner was penne with peas and carrots, fish, salad, then dessert: chocolate and vanilla ice cream.

Took a long walk after dinner along the river at sunset to our buses. A student collapsed from heat and dehydration, leading us to discover that we did indeed have a doctor in our party, Stephen Ho, who explained that the cure in this case was Gatorade.

### JULY 4 (WEDNESDAY): BOLOGNA TO MANTUA

Tour of Bologna with its covered arcades, union posters and great cuisine. Our weakened student with a bad knee uses the wheelchair we had rented for the Operations Manager to get around. In the afternoon we continue on to Mantua, a 1-1/2 hour drive. The kids and the tour managers and younger chaperones had a hot time at Disco Mascara that night.

### JULY 5 (THURSDAY): MANTUA TO CARPI

Tour of Mantua included Mozart's Theater, two churches, and the Ducal Palace with a market and garden, where we had lunch. An hour's drive to Carpi, where, upon arrival, we enjoyed some free time before rehearsal.

Had dinner in a large country vineyard dining place. It was Carla's birthday. Dinner was risotto, ravioli, chicken, potatoes, salad, and a rum cake. Sven sang Happy Birthday to Carla in Swedish.

Warmup at 5 p.m., then a 9 p.m.

concert in Carpi's Piazzale Re Astolfo populated by about 300 people and ten times as many mosquitoes (or gnats). In the audience: Rick & Karen Fenchel.

### JULY 6 (FRIDAY): MANTUA TO CREMONA; CONCERT IN CREMA

A 45-minute bus trip to Cremona, the home of Stradivarius, for a visit and demonstration of the Stradivarius violin collection. A beautiful town. In an unscheduled performance, our string section played the Barber Adagio at Santa Maria Brassanoro, a Greek-cross-based church built initially in the 1450s, a gift of the Sforza and Visconti families.

It was a very beautiful and very moving performance.

5 p.m. rehearsal and a concert at 9 p.m. in the town of Crema.

We played outside the Teatro San Domenico

to an audience of about 600, including parents Faye Keogh and Vaughan Jones.

A presentation was made by city officials. Many encores were played for a very appreciative audience.

"Our last concert was the best. I didn't think it would be that good, but a lot of people came to hear us in Crema," said Piedmont cellist Ian Jones. "I've been to Italy a few times, but this was the first time playing with the orchestra. Three years ago we went to Cuba, Mexico and Costa Rica. Our tour of Italy was a great trip; it was a lot of fun," he said.

Commenting on the cuisine, world traveler Jones admitted, "the same penne and tomatoes got kind of old after a while. But it was a good tour."

**JULY 7 (SATURDAY):  
MANTUA TO VENICE,  
VERONA AND MILAN**

Arrived in Venice's Tronchetto bus terminal after a two hour ride, then took vaporetto to see the Doge's Palace, gondolas and do some shopping. A small rain storm occurred – just another summer day in Italy. Dinner in Verona (penne pasta and tomato and fried chicken patties) was not so good.

A knapsack containing CD players and two passports was snatched from bus #2. Anna took the entire busload to the police station and made a police report. She later convinced Alitalia to take the two passport-less students onboard with their passport copies only.

We continued to Milan, a 4-hour drive, and check in at the Holiday Inn for our last night in Italy.

**JULY 8 (SUNDAY):  
RETURN TO SAN FRANCISCO**

After our flight back home from Milan, everyone went through customs without a problem. Families were waiting, happy to see their kids after two weeks overseas.

Victor and Shanee Martin took me to Alitalia's cargo area to start the paperwork to collect the instruments we shipped. But as they had no copy of the airway bill or the bill number, and neither did I, we had to abandon Plan A which was to bring the instruments home that night.



*Photo by Barbara Stack*  
**Scott Parkman conducts the Oakland Youth Orchestra on July 5 at the Piazzale Re Astolfo in Carpi. Ian Jones is at the left.**

way bill existed, leading some people to comment, "Oh, those Italians!"

On Tuesday, both Alitalia and U.S. Customs were kind enough to sign off on the paperwork. We took possession of the instruments and brought them back to Oakland. The percussion instruments will be stored in the Alice Arts Center for a couple of months.

I called the U.S. Counsel for International Business, who prepared the carnet, and was told that the carnet Re-exportation Counterfoil would not be a problem; there was nothing more we had to do.

The instruments arrived on 2 pallets in fine condition, except for a cello, whose case (not a travel case) had been slightly crushed in the rear. The rear of the cello seemed undamaged, but the front showed a vertical crack over the soundpost. Ted photographed it and I

We were advised to abandon Plan B, as well, and just fetch the instruments Monday. We left messages for ACIS asking after the missing airway bill. On the way home Victor extended the rented truck, a 24-footer with lift gate, through Tuesday.

In making many phone calls on Monday, I learned that no airbill had been issued and that the shipment had been sent as baggage rather than as cargo; therefore the tags I had been given with the carnet were baggage tags rather than cargo tags. No air-

wrote a letter documenting the damage which was also signed by a supervisor at the Cargo Service Center. I gave the letter to the cellist's dad. ACIS said that they would approach Alitalia about compensation for the damage.

And thus, better than two weeks from the time we left, musicians and instruments were back where they belonged, and the Oakland Youth Orchestra could savor the many memories and accomplishments of its highly successful tour to Italy.

**OYO CONCERT SCHEDULE – ITALY**

- June 30, Montepulciano: Piazza Grande
- July 1, Montecatini: Terme Tettuccio
- July 2, Pistoia: Piazza del Duomo
- July 5, Carpi: Piazzale Re Astolfo
- July 6, Brassanoro: Church of Santa Maria
- July 6 Crema: Teatro San Domenico

**PROGRAM I**

- Overture to Candide, Leonard Bernstein
- Adagio for Strings, Samuel Barber
- Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo, Aaron Copland

**—INTERMISSION—**

- Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Ludwig van Beethoven

**—ENCORES—**

- Intermezzo, from Manon Lescaut, Giacomo Puccini
- Stars and Stripes Forever, John Philip Sousa

**PROGRAM II**

- Rodeo by Copland
- Romeo and Juliet Fantasy-Overture, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**—INTERMISSION—**

- Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Ludwig van Beethoven

**—ENCORES—**

- Overture to Candide, Bernstein
- Stars and Stripes Forever, Sousa