



CURTIS HALLS

AS CURTIS ON TOUR SHIFTS INTO OVERDRIVE, STUDENTS EXPERIENCE ACCELERATED GROWTH.

Once upon a time—in 2008, that is—Curtis On Tour was launched with two annual trips. One small group of students, faculty, and alumni would travel to United States venues during spring break; another would tour to Europe in the summer.

What a difference a few years can make! In the last six months alone there have been six tours to five countries, involving dozens of students. The coming season is no less ambitious, with separate string groups touring to Asia and across the U.S., and a spring chamber orchestra tour led by alumnus Robert Spano. Curtis On Tour has hit the accelerator, becoming integral to the school's visibility around the globe and its connections with alumni, audiences, presenters, and supporters worldwide.

But the most important payoff is undoubtedly educational. There's nothing quite like a multi-city tour to focus the energy and artistry of an ensemble. For students to have this experience together would, in itself, be a valuable preparation for professional life. Adding seasoned faculty and alumni to the mix multiplies the learning, as students absorb on-the-spot artistic guidance from their mentors, forge lasting connections, and pick up precious practical tips for the touring life. They also work directly with composers, as nearly every tour includes a new work commissioned from an alumnus or faculty composer.

Lauren Eberwein, Shannon Lee, and Corbin Stair experienced joys, challenges, and epiphanies that are typical for Curtis students who travel with Curtis On Tour. Turn the page to share in their insights.



Top: Souvenirs of spring and summer touring (clockwise from top left): Nantucket; Teulada, Spain; Seattle; San José, Costa Rica.

Above: A quick tour to Berlin featured Roberto Díaz, Shannon Lee, and alumna Angela Park. PHOTO: ANNETTE HORNISCHER

CURTIS COAST TO COAST

BY CORBIN STAIR



Last spring oboist Corbin Stair toured a wind-and-piano program to Costa Rica and across the United States with four fellow students and alumna pianist Di Wu. Corbin is the Emily W. Sunstein Annual Fellow at Curtis. PHOTO: PETE CHECCHIA



Corbin Stair with Costa Rican oboe students

The Curtis On Tour woodwind quintet expedition of 2014 was an amazing adventure stretching from Costa Rica to Seattle. Our journey with alumna pianist Di Wu began in Costa Rica where, in addition to playing a concert, we gave two-hour master classes, coaching some of the country's most talented young wind players. While it was thrilling to perform, it was even more rewarding to work with fellow oboists. I had the opportunity to share some of the techniques my teacher, Mr. Woodhams, had taught me, and I also enjoyed some local Costa Rican cuisine with my new friends following the class.

By the time we reached Boston, our ensemble began to connect on a different level musically as well as personally, as we played works by Barber, Higdon, Mozart, and Poulenc and a new work by recent alumna Katerina Kramarchuk. The momentum we developed carried over to Santa Fe. There, despite the huge elevation change and New Mexico's dry air, we managed to get some good working reeds, which translated into a great concert!

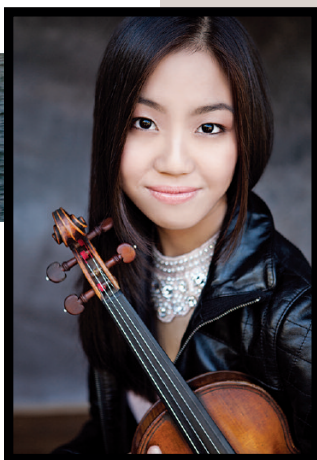
In California we gained new skills doing presentations for elementary and middle school students, and were featured as soloists at a recital for donors in the splendid Jackson Hall at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts in Davis. The following evening we returned as audience members to hear the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields perform under Joshua Bell. While in Davis, we played a special concert at a retirement home to probably the most receptive and appreciative audience I've ever seen! I vividly recall one lady in particular who moved to the music throughout the performance and thanked us all individually after the concert.

We concluded the trip in Seattle, one of my favorite cities. Here we were delighted to meet Laila Storch, the first female oboist ever accepted at Curtis, at a reception after our final concert. At 93 she was sharp and lively, entertaining us for an hour with stories about the intensity of lessons and wind classes with the legendary Marcel Tabuteau. Ms. Storch recalled that all the students were terrified of making a mistake in his presence!

This experience was one of the most enriching I have had while at Curtis. In addition to playing several staples of the wind chamber music repertoire numerous times along with some great new pieces, I developed much closer friendships with my wind colleagues and with Di Wu. Truly, it was a pleasure to be an ambassador for the school, and I am grateful and humbled to have been given this chance.

EVOLVING SEASONS

BY SHANNON LEE



In July violinist Shannon Lee was concertmaster for the Four Seasons tour to New England, which juxtaposed Vivaldi's Four Seasons with Piazzolla's Four Seasons of Buenos Aires. On the same tour she played in a Schumann chamber music program. Earlier in the summer, she toured to Berlin with a string trio program. Shannon is the John H. McFadden and Lisa D. Kabnick Annual Fellow at Curtis.

How many seasons can a person live through in a week or two? After a summer sojourn to New England with Curtis On Tour, our small ensemble of students, alumni, and faculty members had the answer; and experiencing several years of *Seasons* as the group's concertmaster taught me a lot about leading.

We played (and enjoyed) a lot of *Seasons*. At some point in the middle of our ten-day adventure, a routine began to emerge: Wake up in a beautiful town, eat, take a ferry or bus to a new vacation destination, eat, sound check, eat, concert, reception (eat), sleep, repeat.

A dozen of us were performing Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* nearly every night. Even though we had a tight rehearsal schedule, we grew instinctively with the pieces, little by little, as we repeated the program in different places. I was happy to be part of such a strong and receptive group of musicians.

Mr. Díaz, who was traveling with us, generously set aside time to listen and let us know generally how it sounded in the room, but it was up to us to do more detailed work. Since we were playing without a conductor, I was largely responsible as concertmaster for cuing, setting tempi, and leading rehearsals.

When choosing spots to go over with the group, I passed along the soloists' requests and offered my own suggestions, but I always wondered if there was something I missed. I felt

like I was trying to focus on everything at once: how to show the mood and timing of the upcoming phrase, when to lead versus when to follow the soloist, and mentally earmarking sections to revisit. Sometimes my stand partner, Marié Rossano, would quietly ask a question or relay someone else's idea. After shuffling through all that information, there wasn't much time to stand around and discuss it. Mr. Díaz would announce from the back of the hall that we had an hour left until downbeat—and we still had to change clothes and eat dinner.

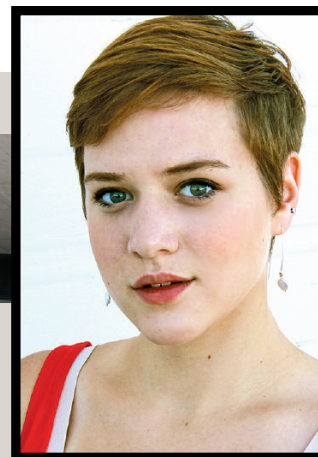
A few concerts and towns down the road, we started to relax, visiting the beach scarps and being treated to homemade waffles with freshly picked raspberries. We knew the program well by this time—though we itched to keep experimenting. Mr. Díaz suggested that we layer the icy effects in Vivaldi's "Winter" and put more grit into the annoying flies in "Summer." Our principal violist, Ren Martin-Doike, pointed out a tricky rhythm in the Piazzolla that we had been misreading.

When we got a day or two off from performing—after catching up on some rest and stuffing ourselves with Maine lobster—we talked casually, away from our instruments and without time pressures, about the music that we'd been playing for the past week. Our solo cellist, Andres Sanchez, wanted to give each of the tango movements more personality with different tempi. Our bassist, Tim Dilenschneider, encouraged us to sink more into the groove.

We played our final concert that night with extra verve. The next day, after a long bus ride, we arrived in Philadelphia on a hot summer evening, exhausted but happy, excited to hear the recordings, and hoping for many more touring adventures ahead!



A break at the beach for *Seasons* musicians Timothy Dilenschneider, Shannon Lee, Jung Min Choi, John-Henry Crawford, Steven Lin, and Andres Sanchez



In May mezzo-soprano Lauren Eberwein toured to Paris, Berlin, and three Spanish venues with tenor Spencer Lang and Mikael Eliassen, artistic director of the Curtis Opera Theatre and the Hirsig Family Head-of-Department Chair in Vocal Studies. Lauren is the Carol S. and Howard L. Lidz Fellow at Curtis.

A TOUR OF FIRSTS

BY LAUREN EBERWEIN

My Curtis On Tour experience was a whirlwind that certainly surpassed my hopes and expectations. The tour consisted of five concerts in five cities, spanning three different European countries. The cast and creative team included tenor Spencer Lang, Mikael Eliassen, and myself—along with tour director extraordinaire Andrew Lane. Our concert program was a potpourri of operatic and song repertoire, and was a joy to perform.

We began in Paris, which was particularly exciting for me because my older sister lives there! I rarely get to see her and she hadn't heard me perform in ages. We performed on the Parisian Columbia University campus in one of the most acoustically live rooms I've ever encountered, and it went swimmingly. Our time there was much too brief—and soon we were on to Spain!

We performed three consecutive concerts in Spain in different towns. My favorite was at the Auditori Teulada Moraira, an absolutely astounding piece of architecture by Francisco Mangado. Built on a large hill, it overlooks the Mediterranean and the cities of Teulada and Moraira. Its angles and edges of cement and glass resemble a gemstone, with carefully controlled views creating the illusion that the building is one with the sea and land. The hall holds nearly 1,000 people; it was by far the largest audience we performed for, in a gloriously exhilarating evening of music. From there we were on to Berlin! We performed at the American Academy, whose windows offer a vista of lush green foliage and a small lake.

This trip marked many firsts for me. It was my first time performing in any kind of concert tour, which challenged me to maintain a new level of vocal consistency—hard enough on its own, now add a flight every three days in varying climates and altitudes! I learned to more aptly recognize my specific needs, both personal and vocal, and when and how to honor them while traveling with companions.

The program demanded a lot from all three of us, and each performance was a little bit different. I learned to be comfortable with imperfections and variability: a high note might sparkle more or less; our harmonies might not lock in quite as well one night as another; we might even flub some words—but that's the beauty of live performing. The most poignant of all my discoveries on this tour was the lesson that it is always my responsibility as an artist to be present and vulnerable, and to strive to take risks. I am incredibly thankful to have had this opportunity to perform and grow, as an artist and as a human being. ♦



Lauren Eberwein and Spencer Lang rehearse with Mikael Eliassen in Berlin. PHOTO: ANNETTE HORNISCHER