

**Every four years, Symphony Orchestra maintains an intensive January-term residency in Vienna, Austria.**

*The feature article below, by Kate Frentzel, describes the 2015 experience from the perspective of conductor Dan Baldwin and members of the Symphony Orchestra. The ensemble travels again to Vienna in January 2019.*

Vienna, Austria, is a city of exquisite architecture, major art museums, storied coffee houses, and, of course, world-class orchestras. It's where Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Strauss, and Schubert lived, and where 10,000 people continue to take in live classical music each night. And it was where 80 Luther students would live, practice, and perform for three weeks in January 2015, just as Luther musicians have every four years since 1977.

Between practices there were sights to see and concerts to hear. With a subway stop right under their hotel, students could be at an opera house in less than 10 minutes. And for three Euros, they could take in a five-hour top-tier performance of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at the Staatsoper, the Vienna State Opera House. Conductor Dan Baldwin, who saw eight or nine operas with students over the course of the trip, says, "You can hear great opera in lots of places, but to hear the Vienna Philharmonic play in the pit really sets it apart. It helps students become aware of the highest standard in the world, of what world-class means when it comes to music-making."

The waiting list for subscription tickets to the Vienna Philharmonic is 13 years long, but the Luther group was able to snag standing-room tickets for only five Euros. Flautist Emily Green '18 says, "I was in awe the whole time. I always see these things on TV or listen to them on Spotify. It felt completely surreal."

But while music was the heart and soul of the residency, students took advantage of other sightseeing opportunities as well. Some took side trips to Prague, Budapest, or Bratislava, or to Salzburg, for a Sound of Music tour. Others went hiking in Alpine mountain villages. Some attended a Viennese ball at the Hofburg Imperial Palace, which required black-tie attire and had nine separate rooms dedicated to dancing.

Says violinist Jeremy Maas '16, "Coming from Luther, where every day tends to be structured, to be thrown into a huge city where there are tons of people and unlimited opportunities, to be set free to learn this new world without knowing the language was such an adventure."

Part of this new world was, of course, the food. Students describe the street fare as incredible, the schnitzel as magical, and the hot dogs as genius (street vendors grab a baguette, core out the center, then insert the dog and condiments inside—no mess!).

But the highlight of the residency was Luther's performance in Vienna's historic Konzerthaus, where a few nights earlier students had heard the London Symphony Orchestra, one of the best in the world. The night of the students' big show, they rode the subway with their instruments to the Konzerthaus. Conductor Baldwin was preparing in the same room where Toscanini and Leonard Bernstein, two of his musical heroes, had dressed.

Violinist Emily Alcock '16 admits, "Performing in a culture where everyone values music so much—it's definitely a high-pressure situation. You feel like this is your one chance in this beautiful concert hall, and you have to make the most of it."

Baldwin knew that it could be daunting for an American college orchestra—less than half of whom are music majors—to perform on such an iconic stage, in a city that holds music in such high esteem. But the group had been practicing during their residency for almost five hours a day, so before they took the stage, he told his students, "We know how much we've been preparing, and when we go on that stage, not one of us goes out alone. Ensemble is a French word that means us, together. We trust each other. None of us is alone."

They performed for a packed house and to thunderous applause that night, and according to Baldwin, their orchestra never played better. But students left with more than a sense of a job well done. After a cross-continental journey, dozens of cultural excursions, thrilling weekend side trips, nearly three weeks of rigorous practice, and a triumphant performance, students were leaving Vienna with new friends, new memories, and even a new home.

Maas says, "Vienna is now kind of like when you drive past your grandmother's house, and you relive your whole childhood. It has so many memories for me, and even though it's on the opposite side of the globe, it's really become a second home."