

## Post #3 – Jim Hild

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Well Day 4 (Wednesday) was full, real full. Went were bused to Pretoria: the sites to be visited were Voortrekker, Freedom Trail, Union Station. We had our first rehearsal with the MN Orchestra, the four soloists, and the Gauteng Choristers and 29:11.

It seemed ironic that the first site we explored today was Voortrekker. It is a beautiful "tower" , with a large rotunda. Covering the four walls is a concrete sculpture "mural" which depicts various historical scenes of the white men conquering the black natives. After the tour of the Nelson Mandela Museum and the History of Apartheid, I found it very curious and upsetting. The scene of the Captain being killed was labeled "murder", while the scenes of the natives being killed were labeled "battles". The aura was disturbing, even though the grounds were meticulously groomed with beautiful flowers, scrubs and trees. In spite of its beauty, Voortrekker was painful to experience.

We, then traveled a short distance to the Freedom Walk, the national monument erected to commemorate the struggle for humanity and freedom and the resolution for reconciliation. On the outside of the building on every wall were the names of those people who fought for freedom. It is not a "war memorial" dedicated to all killed in a war: it is dedicated to those people, including international persons who fought against apartheid and for freedom. Our guide, a man who commanded the attention of all of us and to whom most of us could listen to for days, pointed out that the Voortrekker Memorial is in a straight line from the Freedom Walk. He told us that the Freedom Walk was "deliberately" situated on a particular plot of land. The vision is that one day there will be a path from the Voortrekker Memorial to the Freedom Walk to further symbolize the "long walk" to freedom. There are those people who would like to have the Voortrekker Memorial destroyed, espousing the "presentism" prevalent in the United States today. The belief that we should only live with the present value system, judging all past events by today's values and beliefs and removing any historical remembrances of past., is dangerous. This perspective negates the struggle and trauma our nations and people have endured or overcome to arrive at the present day "freedoms". As painful as the past has been, I believe we must never forget the atrocities.

Before we had our first rehearsal with the MN Orchestra and the soloists, we had an outdoor dinner which was a 'traditional ' South African cuisine. It was delicious. I wanted more but refrained out of courtesy. The rehearsal was once again amazing: the sound of the three chorale groups touched most of the members of the MN Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä.

On Day 5 which required that we depart the hotel at 9:00, (too early for a run for the "Running Singers" because we needed to eat and shower) for the KlipTown Youth Program. It is located on the outskirts of Flip Town, a squatters' city populated by thousands of families. It "borrows" electricity from the surrounding communities and it draws only enough power for lights and small appliances. Kliptown has a limited supply of water to be used sparingly. though the water fountains are a gathering place for the people but unlike European piazzas, the water is not unlimited. The KlipTown Youth Program goal is to give every child an education, to feed the children, to instill in them hope, to find ways to leave the "squatters town" and to live a life of freedom. The children are adorable, with smiles are their faces, friendly and outgoing. My heart was touched when a 3-year-old boy, walked out of his classroom, took my hand and walked me to the only indoor toilet. He was so excited! I was graced.

Between seeing the Kliptown Youth Program and eating lunch we visited the Nelson Mandela house in Soweto. It was "under whelming" and, in my opinion "touristy".

Our buffet lunch of native African foods at Wandie's Place in Soweto consisted of some of the spiciest and the best international food which I have ever eaten, we returned to the University of Pretoria to "surprise" the students participating in the Annual Spring Music Festival. We heard the top choir of the University singing complex chorale music and a choir of native black Africans who performed "traditional" music with movement and incredible dance. As we watched them some of us thought: oh no, we are in over our head. However, our director Kathy Romey had selected the "perfect" repertoire and introduced us as "the generation preceding you". She described us, as musicians who like them sang in college choirs and continue that passion for singing even though most of us are non-professional musicians. We sang four songs of various 'American' genre by which they were mesmerized. Their eyes were glued to us: they gave us a gifted eye

Thursday night was a "free night". The members of the MN Chorale "descended upon" Johannesburg in various directions for dinner. I had the pleasure of dining with Barbara, Deb, her sister Carole, Patrick, Bob and John. We ate at The Butcher Shop and Grill, a steak house and we chose South African meat, including sausage, beef ribeye, ostrich IMO I kudu filets. They were delicious and only slightly gamey. I'd have them, again!!

I will post about Days 6 and 7, the concert in Soweto (8/17) and the one in Johannesburg (8/18).

Buona giornata!