

It was a bright Thursday afternoon when Mr. Robson told me, along with my fellow choir comrades, that the choir would go on tour to sing in one of the most distinguished and acclaimed concert venues in the world, the Carnegie Hall, in New York. For some of us that was a dream come true, a miracle, a new opportunity to broaden our view of the world, to meet new people., to see a new place (and what a place!)

A lot has changed since then; we have definitely all grown, some in body, all in spirit. Some are now wiser, some more determined to achieve their goals and others may have discovered new talents in the year that passed from that bright May afternoon, but there is one thing that did not change: our excitement. We were all buzzing with joy, thrilled by every day that passed, knowing that it was one day closer to our departure. We all had a thrilling occasion to look forwards to...

When we finally arrived at the Big Apple we were greeted by an extraordinary sight. The view of Times Square dazzled us, for nothing could be compared to its dense array of colours and lights. During our few excursions in between rehearsals, we discovered that the grand welcome that was Times Square was just the beginning of our tour in the city that never sleeps.

Our visit to Staten Island could be described as one of the most reflective and engaging excursions, firstly because of viewing with our own eyes one of the most renowned landmarks in New York, the statue of liberty, known for its symbolism of friendship between nations and the freedom of oppression. Furthermore a time of reflection was offered to us when presented with the Twin Tower memorial, a splendid sculpture of true symbolic meaning in the sadness of the memory. Of course there was picture taking, for who could refrain from taking some memoirs of the magnificent landscape of tranquil water and light reflecting sky scrapers framing roads leading your eyes straight to the horizon. I am sure that none of us will ever forget that one remarkable excursion.

Central Park was, of course, one of the venues we were most impatient to see, with its long undulating paths and woven tree branches and its marvellous view of the dark glass of the sky scrapers towering over us... the perfect time to relax after our long rehearsals... and what rehearsals they were! The perfect occasions to meet new people and to make new friendships with people of all ages and nationalities, but with one thing in common, their love for singing. Meeting conductors Bob Chilcott and Simon Carrington was an honour for all of us, and possibly even allowed a small sense of pride to enter our hearts because of what we had managed to achieve through hard work determination and maybe a little bit of help.

This pinch of pride carried itself with us throughout our stay, and it thrived in our hearts during the grand performance, where the King's Singers sang divinely and women and girls forgot about that pain in their foot caused by their shoes, and the men and boys overcame the struggle of fixing their bow-tie perfectly straight and we all sang as one.

Although our thrilling experience has unfortunately ended, I am certain that none of the members of the Holland Park School Choir who attended are going to forget this breath-taking, mind-blowing experience and opportunity which we experienced in New York City.

FRANCESCA