



## **2018 Concert Tour to Germany and Switzerland Information**

### **Background**

The Pittsburgh Youth Philharmonic Orchestra has organized a European concert tour every three years since 2007. The upcoming 2018 tour will be the 5th concert tour.

### **Tour Dates and Rehearsals**

The Tour will be July 13-22, 2018. Tour rehearsals will be held in June and July with a Bon Voyage concert held for family and friends prior to our departure.

### **Tour Itinerary**

The tour orchestra will fly from Pittsburgh to Frankfurt, Germany on July 13, 2018. The tour will include Heidelberg, Baden Baden, Offenburg, Strassburg, The Black Forest, Schaffhausen, Lucerne, Mt. Pilatus, Oberammergau, Neuschwanstein, and Berchtesgaden, as our main destinations. There are three rehearsals followed by performances scheduled during this time. Our final destination will be Munich, Germany and will board our flight back to Pittsburgh on July 22, 2018.

### **Registration Process**

Online registration for orchestra members are available on the PYPO.org webpage. Please click on the "Tour" tab and following the link to Register for Tour. All of the registration takes place online, with the exception of the tour contract. Your Tour Contract will be attached to the confirmation email you receive after you register. It can also be found on the PYPO Tour portion of the webpage.

### **Eligibility**

Members of the PYPO Philharmonic and the PYPO Prelude Ensembles will have first priority. We also accept members from outside of PYPO by audition only. To audition, please contact our Executive Director, Erika Pierce at [staff@pypo.org](mailto:staff@pypo.org) for more information on auditioning.

### **Timeline for applying**

Registrations will be open starting in April, 2017, and will remain open over the next several months, including fall of 2017. Some orchestra sections may fill early, so there is no guarantee that all sections will remain open into fall 2017. Once a section is filled, we will no longer be able to accept students into that section/instrument.

## **Cost**

\$3,609.00 per participant. Once you are registered, you will have the option to pay by credit card in installments or by mailing us a check. Credit card payments will incur a % 3.59 fee.

## **How is the tour organized?**

The focus of the tour will be the three concerts scheduled. These will include a rehearsal at each concert venue, typically right before the performance. We balance the focused work of performing with guided local historical tours as well as some flexible time for exploring local points of interest.

## **What is included in the tour costs?**

- Round trip airfare
- Hotels (typically two to three people to a room, separate beds). A single room option is available for an additional \$364.00.
- Breakfast and dinners
- Guided local tours, including entry fees to local museums associated with the guided tours
- Tour bus

## **What is not included in the tour costs?**

- Lunches, snacks
- Cost of passport (visas typically not required, there may be exceptions for those who are not U.S. Citizens)
- Travel insurance (recommended but not required) – more information is included below
- Instrument insurance
- Fees for oversize/overweight luggage (large instruments will be addressed below under "Instruments")

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## **Other cost considerations**

A common question asked is, "How much money should a person have for daily expenses?" Other than lunches, there is no other expense other than discretionary ones. These might include souvenirs, snacks, local events (such concerts, entry fees or other events that a person might be interested in beyond the regular Tour activities).

Local grocery stores, markets, food stands and restaurants offer an array of choices for lunch. We can also assist with locating local cafes and restaurants. My recommendation is to consider roughly \$10 to \$15 for daily lunch and snack items.

Souvenirs are often something that all of us like to bring home with us. Considerations include the size, weight and fragility of the items when packing them for home. Many items can be mailed or shipped, but it can be quite costly to do so. All items purchased must pass U.S. Customs requirements.

### **Insurance**

Travel/trip insurance is recommended, but not required. Travel/trip insurance can include such things as trip cancellation, health issues, and other details. More on travel insurance below.

Instruments should be insured through your homeowner's or renter's insurance. Instrument insurance is not required, but PYPO will not be responsible for damaged or stolen instruments. The good news is that for the past three tours, I do not recall any instruments being damaged during tour, or by the airlines. Some students opt to purchase less expensive instruments to take with them on tour and then use as a backup instrument when they get home.

### **Money handling**

Germany and Switzerland both use Euros. There are various ways of handling money while traveling in these countries. My personal preference is to take some cash in the currency we will be using—Euros. If more cash is needed, I use a debit card (AAA has Travel Card available that is a pre-paid debit card which is helpful for budgeting). I also carry one or two other credit cards—one would be recommended, but I have to be prepared to cover any and all unanticipated expenses for the tour. I use the prepaid debit card to withdraw cash at ATMs and I use a credit card for purchases in stores or restaurants.

Make certain that for any and all debit or credit cards used on tour, that a PIN has been established BEFORE leaving the United States, and that the bank and or credit card company has been notified you will be traveling to Europe to avoid the risk of them suspending your account for potentially fraudulent charges overseas.

I strongly recommend NOT using Travelers Checks. We have experienced situations where many businesses refuse to accept them, and locating a bank that is convenient in terms of location and hours can be a challenge on tour.

Check with your local bank in regard to whether they can access Euros. There typically will be an exchange fee, so you might want to shop a bit by checking AAA, the banks, and [www.Travelex.com](http://www.Travelex.com) as some options. Exchanging currency at the airport is possible, but the exchange rate will be more expensive.

### **Passport/Visa**

Each member of the PYPO Tour will be required to have a current passport. It must be valid for at least 6 months past our return date. With our return date being July 22, 2018, your passport must be valid at least through January 22, 2019. The countries we will visit on this

tour do not currently require a visa for U.S. Citizens due to the short time that we will be there. We STRONGLY encourage you to apply for your passports in the summer BEFORE the tour- in July of 2017, so that you have your passports in plenty of time.

### **American Classic Tours**

American Classic Tours (ACT) is the USA-based tour company that we have used for all but one of our tours. They have been in business for decades and specialize in tours for musical groups. We believe that they are the best music tour company available.

As a feature of our tour, ACT provides Tour Guides for each of our busses. These Tour Guides are employees of ACT, and will meet us when we land in Europe and travel with us until we depart for the return trip to Pittsburgh. The Tour Guides typically speaks all of the languages in the countries in which we tour.

The Tour Guides make certain that all arrangements are in order. This includes such things as assisting with hotel check in, morning and evening meals, tour bus, instrument transport, venue logistics, rehearsal details and a multitude of other areas. There are times when we encounter unanticipated situations or request to alter the schedule or minor parts of the itinerary. The Tour Guides provides knowledgeable guidance and support in these circumstances.

For more on ACT, please visit [amclass.com](http://amclass.com)

### **Instruments**

Cellos, Basses, harp, and some large brass instruments will need to be rented on-site in Europe. The cost of these rental fees are the responsibility of the student and ranged from \$300-\$500 each last tour.

All other musicians are expected to bring their own instrument on tour. The instrument must be in a case that is substantial enough to withstand air travel and baggage handlers. For our tours so far, we have been able to take smaller instruments on board the airplane as carry-on. This would include violins, some violas, trumpets, flutes, clarinets and similar sizes of instruments, but it there is always a possibility that they may need to be checked. It is strongly recommended that you have your instrument insured.

### **Travel Insurance/Trip Insurance**

Travel insurance, also known as trip insurance, is recommended, but not required. You may have coverage through your homeowner's policy, credit-card company or other options.

Should you want to purchase Travel Insurance, ACT has recommended Group Tour Insurance from Travelex. Please visit the [pypo.org](http://pypo.org) website for more information. Insurance is not required and is an additional cost above and beyond that of the tour.

## **Safety**

We do frequent daily checks to make certain that all tour members are healthy, present and on schedule. Every time we leave a location, we check in all tour members- adult and children. During periods of flexible time, such as when we are in a city or community during the day, we require that unaccompanied minors are required to be in a group with an adult. In the evening, we typically require that all orchestra members remain in the hotel, unless there is a special event or other situation that we monitor. At night, we have bed checks and have a scheduled lights-out time for all unaccompanied minors. All unaccompanied minors are required to remain in their rooms until morning.

Parents will be assigned to help with bus check-in, bed checks and wakeup calls in the morning.

A PA regulation which came into effect on July 1, 2015 requires adults travelling with students other than your own to pass certain clearances. Many of you who volunteer in your children's classrooms will already have these clearances. **All adults travelling with the tour, including grandparents, aunts, uncles and grown up siblings, must complete these clearances and turn in copies of the approved clearance.**

There are 3 clearances needed (if you have been a PA resident continuously for the past 10 years you need only the first 2):

- Pennsylvania State Police \$10
- Child Abuse Clearance \$10
- FBI clearance through the Department of Human Services (not needed IF you have been a PA resident continuously for the past 10 years) \$27.50

All three of these forms can be found at:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm>

Along with the tour company, we monitor the safety of our travel by either viewing or receiving email updates from the federal website at the following link--  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html>

## **Food allergies, medical conditions and other health-related support**

On all of our tours we have had individuals with life-threatening and other allergies, specific dietary needs, and other health needs. We have experience supporting these individuals to create a successful tour. All Medical and related details are kept confidential.

For people with specific dietary requirements, we work with ACT and the Tour Guides to make specific requests with the airline and the restaurants. The Tour Guides also assist with this

while we are in Europe.

### **Expectations for Tour Members**

We anticipate our tour group to be approximately 140 people. Everyone in our tour group is expected to be on time, and will take responsibility to keep their areas in good shape (on the airplane, in the hotels, in rehearsals, in the dressing rooms). Individuals will be responsible for their luggage, instrument, music stand and music, and being a respectful roommate and tour participant.

Alcohol and illegal drugs are not allowed for any accompanied or unaccompanied minors. This is in effect even in countries where the orchestra member may be of legal age, as we follow the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Bullying, harassment, intimidation, or discrimination of any kind will not be accepted or tolerated. We are guests of the hotels, concert venues and countries where we tour, and we expect that each one of us will represent PYPO, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States in a manner that demonstrates respect and appropriate manners.

### **Future topics:**

- Luggage
- Wardrobe recommendations
- Concert dress requirements
- Music stands
- Instrument packing
- Instruments Rental

The above information was assembled by Erika Pierce, Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Philharmonic Orchestra. If you have questions, please contact me at [staff@pypo.org](mailto:staff@pypo.org).