

## Allie Dumas

### Germany

This school year, 2010-2011, I was one of the very few students asked to participate in an abroad trip to Germany. The trip consisted of choir students who wished to collaborate with another school called Stormarnschule. The moment I heard about this trip, I jumped at the opportunity. I had never been able to experience a trip abroad. I learned many new aspects about culture such as the music style, the food, the compassion of the people, the language, and of course the amazing cities. Getting to know about another culture helped me to understand that there are people in different countries who are just like us in the United States.

My first impression of the country was my host family. I was welcomed in as if I was part of their family. I was really surprised how much they made me feel at home. We had many common interests such as our favorite music, siblings, and eating habits. When I sat down to dinner with them, they would ask me how my day went or what I loved most about the country and we would talk for hours about life in America as well as life in Germany. The way the people make you feel is amazing and it was expressed throughout the trip. While learning about another culture, I also got to experience singing with the Stormarnschule choir.

The second day in Germany, we started the day off with a long rehearsal for our upcoming concert. I got to experience the interesting and fun warm-ups of the choir. The practice was very different than our normal one, because we had a different teacher, different songs, and it was mostly in German! As I listened to the choir instructors I was intrigued. They were so full of life and it was easy to see how impressed they were by the collaboration of our choirs. I loved being able to sing with them because it sounded so whole and beautiful. Singing in German was an amazing opportunity because it allowed me to learn about the context of the song as well as the language. Before this trip, I was never able to understand what songs really meant. They show your emotions and your passion for others. Although the choir rehearsals were amazing, so were the cities.

The first city we had a chance to see was Lübeck. In Lübeck, we visited a lot of places. We first went to an old restaurant where we experienced our first schnitzel, which is fried pork, and it was amazing! We then had the chance to go to the biggest church in the city. When we arrived, we sang a song, which sounded beautiful in the open area. The best part was the fact that there was an American journalist from the Boston Globe who heard us and wanted to interview us for a travel piece. Our day in Lübeck was really awesome, but there were many other cities we visited. The second city was Ahrensburg.

In Ahrensburg we took a tour of the Ahrensburg castle. It was amazing to see the architecture and learn about the history of the town. We learned that the castle dates back to 1295. The history of Ahrensburg goes far more back than the city of Cleveland! The third city we went to was Berlin. Berlin seemed like the New York of Germany, but it was so

different. The city had many different buildings for many different cultures. There were many government buildings that dealt not just with Germany, but also with the rest of the world. Berlin was nothing like our New York because it was a lot more diverse and I loved being able to experience the sites.

The final city that we got to see was Hamburg. Hamburg was the most interesting of all because of its intriguing and scary history. While in Hamburg, we went to the Hamburg dungeon. The dungeon tells many stories about the history of Hamburg and is sort of like a haunted house. I loved being able to visit the dungeon and learn about the long history. The most interesting thing about Hamburg's history was the Hamburg fire, which is what we learned about in the dungeon. Visiting these cities was a great experience and allowed me to immerse myself in true German culture.

The German experience I had allowed me to evolve and become more open to different foods, music, and flow of how things work. Being able to experience a diet of mostly bread with meat for every meal was really different than our culture and allowed me to learn about other people. Learning about the German music also allowed me to expand my love for it by singing in different languages. I learned other languages can change the song tremendously. Finally, experiencing the flow of the cities showed me that change is not a bad thing and it is always important to try and immerse oneself in another culture. Going to Germany was an amazing experience and someday I would love to return.