

The school orchestra arrived in Austria to the emotionally draining sound of Free Willy, which was being shown on the tiny screen at the front of our coach as we drove through the Salzburg region to our hotel. It was already clear we were in for a whale of a time...

But there was work to do, and our first full day was spent rehearsing our diverse concert programme - the main piece was Haydn's London Symphony, but our repertoire for the week was made particularly special by the inclusion of the first movement of a new symphony by one of our Year 11 students, a work which reached iconic status within the group due to its dangerously catchy opening motif. The tour also saw orchestral conducting debuts for two other students, who led us in works by Schubert and Delibes respectively.

The following day we had a chance to explore the beautiful city of Salzburg, visiting the magnificent fortress and Cathedral, looking around the birth house of Mozart, and even coming across some filming locations from 'The Sound Of Music'. It was then to the nearby town of Bad Hofgastein for our first concert. Our nerves soon disappeared and our performance was met with enthusiastic applause from our Austrian audience, prompting a superb encore in the form of Mozart's Divertimento in D.

The next morning, we set off for the Salzwelten salt mine, a fascinating collection of tunnels and slides, home to the famous salt of the region. For many of us this visit will remain long in our memory thanks to our Italian tour guide, whose collection of zany remarks were a source of great entertainment.

That afternoon we did our second concert, this time in a beautiful hall in Bad Reichenhall, across the border in Germany - two concerts in two days in two different countries.

It was back to Austria for our final concert, but not before a visit to the spectacular Liechtensteinklamm waterfall, a stunning setting in front of which an ungodly quantity of unnecessary group photos were taken.

Our last performance, which took place in a large church in the town of Thalgau, proved a fantastic conclusion to our tour. All that was left to do was to spend the final day at a water park, as has become a tradition of music tours. Of course it was only a matter of time before the general behaviour of the group spiralled out of control to the point where our Director of Music was leading about twenty of us up to the top of a slide as we busted out an a Capella remix of our student's symphony, much to the dismay of the surrounding Austrian children.

All in all a brilliant tour, made possible thanks to several Westminster staff members, our tour manager and tour company!