

FORUM



WINSTON-SALEM Youth Chorus

# Winston-Salem Youth Chorus gets education in Vienna, Austria

BY LORI PRESCOTT  
SPECIAL TO  
THE CHRONICLE

How many children ages 10-18 have the opportunity to sing major choral musical works with full orchestra and other adults in a foreign country?

Thirty-one members of the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus (WSYC) just had that once in a lifetime



experience this past June when they

performed Vivaldi's "Magnificat," Shubert's "Mass in G," Haydn's "Te Deum," Beethoven's "Choral Fantasia" and Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" in Vienna, Austria.

Dr. Sonja Sepulveda, Artistic Director, had the honor of conducting a few of the pieces in addition to other renown guest conductors as a part of the Vienna music festival performed in the historic St. Peter's Church and Minoriten Church.

"A performing tour of Europe really bonds a group together. It is an opportunity for shared experiences, musical and spiritual growth, learning, exploring, fun and fellowship," Dr. Sepulveda said. "It was indeed an experience of a lifetime for these students of diverse backgrounds and ages. It also fulfills one of our missions as ambassadors for Winston-Salem, North Carolina and America. We represent all that is good and best in American young people and from this area of the country."

Dr. Sepulveda reflected on the trip, saying, "The majestic churches where we sang, the orchestras, the musical works, the artists, the choirs and historic places where we stood, created sounds and feelings that were almost too much to take in."

Each singer that participated from the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus not only grew musically, but each had their own personal or spiritual growth that will stay with them forever. Here are some of their



Photo provided by Winston-Salem Youth Chorus

Some members of the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus take a break in Vienna, Austria. They are (left to right): Sophia Espenilla, Tyler Zickmund, Dr. Sonja Sepulveda, Sierra Davis, Adria Faulkner, Kim Faulkner, Sarah Hair, Hannah Hair and John Tahtinen.

reflections on their experiences.

Hannah:

"My dream is to travel the world and sing and perform, and I was able to live that dream at 15 years old.

[It is] A privilege I know that many will never know. How is it that people from all over the world can create music together and bring such light into this dark world? One of our coordinators said, 'When words and music come together, it turns darkness into light' and that is exactly what we did, every day, every time we opened our mouth and every time the sound rose when we sang, so hard our bodies shook with the effort, we made the darkness turn into light."

Tyler:

"This trip has been especially fantastic! I enjoyed all of the repertoire that we sang and enjoyed the ability to sing these works in the beautiful cathedrals that they were meant to be performed in. This and an appreciation for this type of choral music are the two things that are difficult to find in the U.S. The comrades of our chorus just shows that music can bring together people from all walks of life."

Carmen:

"This trip did amazing things for me, more than I expected it to do. I found my connection. I found once again the reason I started to sing and the reason my love for music was so strong. This trip also helped me step out of my comfort zone and create friendships that will last a lifetime. One of my favorite things that Dr. Sonja said during the trip was 'It's not just about the music, it's about the life lessons you will learn and the long lasting friendships you will make.' We all came from different places but we came together as one big group and bonded through our love or music."

Lori Prescott is executive director of The Winston-Salem Youth Chorus, which starts its new season on Aug. 29. For more information about how to be a part of the Winston-Salem Youth Chorus, call 336-703-0001 or visit the website at [www.wsyouthchorus.org](http://www.wsyouthchorus.org).

# Biles and Manuel showed their skills and talents at the Olympics



James B. Ewers Jr.  
Guest Columnist

The 2016 Summer Olympics recently concluded and they did not disappoint.

While much was said and rightfully so about the health hazards and infrastructure issues, the city of Rio de Janeiro was a magnificent host. Kudos and congratulations to them for pulling off an event that some months ago seemed almost impossible.

If you believe in diversity like I do, the Olympic Games set a really high bar. Men and women of all colors and shades gave us their very best and performed with great athleticism and passion.

Just watching the opening ceremony made me realize that the color of a person's skin doesn't matter nearly as much as some of us think it does.

Thank you International Olympic Committee for giving our minds, our eyes and our ears a brief respite from social justice issues.

Thank you International Olympic Committee for not posting security guards at the bathroom doors to determine the sex of those who used them. This issue seems to be especially troubling to the state of North Carolina, which is my home state.

The Olympic Games were designed to showcase superior prowess in a sport and they gave us enough highlights to last us

for a long time.

Give Michael Phelps a standing ovation, as he could be the greatest Olympian of all time. His swimming skills are just incredible! He's a bad man as he has won twenty-three gold medals in his Olympic career. By any barometer or scale, Phelps has produced at levels most of us thought were impossible.

I am proud to have Jamaican roots, so when the announcers said the name Usain Bolt, I paid particular attention. He is again the fastest man in the world in the hundred meters and won three gold medals at the Rio Olympic Games. Every time Bolt races, he carries an entire country on his shoulders. He loves the competition and responds to the pressure each time.

There were a lot of Olympic champions and they represented their individual countries well. Refugees who performed under the Olympic flag were represented and performed admirably.

As I watched each night, two athletes gave me some of the most thrilling and jaw dropping moments. First, Simone Manuel, an African-American swimmer who attends Stanford University was the first African-American female to win an individual gold medal. That was simply outstanding as she brought home a total of four medals.

Simone Biles, an African-American gymnast is being called the greatest gymnast of all time. She collected four gold medals, three of them individual gold medals. Biles is 19 years old so her future



Simone Biles

is bright in whatever she wants to do when her career is over.

Manuel and Biles have carved out a permanent place in the Olympic record books.

In my opinion, what is so compelling about their Olympic run is the sports they competed in to win their gold medals.

If you are a parent, especially a parent of a child of color, don't stop at the basketball court or the football field; go to a swimming pool, a tennis court or a gymnastics center. Manuel, Biles and the Williams sisters are showing us that success in these sports is possible.

Not only is it possible, you can become a star and rich, too. "The Simone Biles net worth total of \$2.1 million has grown 1000% in 2016 from gigantic endorsement deals built on her gymnastics fame and excellence." Money Nation explained to readers earlier last week. The publication added, "Just three years ago in 2013, Biles had a net worth of \$60,000."

I am sure that neither Simone thought about medals and money when they started out. Like most of us who started out playing any sport, it was just to have fun.

Their fun has obviously turned into fame and fortune. Their desire to compete increased at every level, so now here they are being beloved by millions of people.

A lot of boys and girls are involved in sports. Some of them will want to continue. As parents and grandparents, we will



Simone Manuel

be involved in that decision-making process.

Sports, in my opinion, should always be fun. Learn to laugh at yourself, be a good teammate and don't get too depressed when you lose. You noticed I said when you lose, not if you lose.

Now the Summer Olympics of 2016 are over and Simone Biles was selected to carry the American flag at the closing ceremonies. The next Summer Olympic Games will be held in Tokyo in 2020. You know someone at this very moment is in a gymnasium, on a court or in a swimming pool practicing to get ready.

That is the beauty of sports. The practices are what you do when the cameras aren't rolling and the reporters are writing.

Let us wish all of those who are chasing the Olympic dream good luck. Who knows as they may be standing on the podium in 2020.

James B. Ewers Jr. Ed.D. is a former tennis champion at Atkins High School in Winston-Salem and played college tennis at Johnson C Smith University where he was all-conference for four years. He is the President Emeritus of The Teen Mentoring Committee of Ohio and a retired college administrator. He can be reached at [ewersjr56@yahoo.com](mailto:ewersjr56@yahoo.com).

## Curry

From page A1

"Working with NNPA interns was one of his pleasures. He wanted our young people to develop a zeal for getting the facts right and putting the story together with depth and clear understanding. Our profession will forever miss George Curry."

The publisher of the Wilmington Journal, another NNPA member paper, also remembers Curry fondly.

"George Curry was a part of NNPA's effort to gain pardons for the Wilmington Ten," recalled publisher Mary Alice Jervay Thatch, who is also president of the N.C. Black Publishers Association. "On the day NNPA announced at the National Press Club our intent to secure those par-

dons, George interviewed Wilmington Ten leader Dr. Ben Chavis on stage. It brought tears to our eyes, including Ben's. Later, Ben had to admit that this was the most emotional interview he had experienced and the first time he had cried in public!

"Once we placed the request for pardons on [then] Governor Perdue's desk a year later," Thatch continued, "George was there to ensure that our story was being told through NNPA's newswire service."

North Carolina U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield (D-NC-1), chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), was one of those elected black leaders who appreciated Curry's devotion to the truth, and commitment to shining a light on important issues.

"The Congressional Black Caucus joins with

members of the press from around the country to mourn the loss of George E. Curry, a pioneer in civil rights and journalism," Butterfield wrote.

"George E. Curry was a giant in journalism and he stood on the front lines of the Civil Rights era and used his voice to tell our stories when others would not. The CBC offers our sympathies and condolences to his friends and family, his readers from around the country, and to the countless number of individuals he mentored in the art of reporting and journalistic writing until his untimely death."

Irving Joyner, law professor at North Carolina Central University's School of Law in Durham, and chairman of the N.C. NAACP's Legal Redress Committee, expressed his respect for a civil rights veteran who built bridges

by chronicling history.

"I was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the transitioning of this giant in our journalistic world," Joyner said. "As a committed African-American journalist, George presented the truth and nothing but the truth in the many articles and news analysis which he authored. He was very committed to his craft and possessed a keen knowledge of the African-American community and never ducked an opportunity to better explain our position and view of things which impacted us and our community."

Even former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took time from her run for president

to pay tribute to the veteran black journalist.

"I am saddened by the loss of an outstanding journalist and supportive

friend," Hillary Clinton said. "George E. Curry was a pioneering journalist, a tireless crusader for justice, and a true agent of change. With quality reporting, creativity, and skillful persuasion, he influenced countless people, including me, to think beyond their narrow experience and expand their understanding. George may be gone, but he will not be forgotten. My thoughts and prayers are with his loved ones."

George Edward Curry, a media pioneer and long-time advocate for the black press and civil rights, will be laid to rest Saturday, Aug. 27, in his hometown of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with the Rev. Al Sharpton, founder and president of the National Action Network, delivering the eulogy at Weeping Mary Baptist Church, 2701 20th St., Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401.

Dr. Charles Steele, president and CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and lifelong friend of George Curry, announced the arrangements. The two leaders grew up in the segregated South at a time when Jim Crow laws were the order of the day. They made a pact early in life to never forget their upbringing and to work to help lift others, Steele said.

"We wanted to tell our stories, because we knew it could inspire and impact others," Steele said. "We were two fellas from impoverished backgrounds, where African-Americans endured second-class citizenship. We were able to overcome and find success. We will celebrate that success in remembering the life of George Curry this weekend."