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SANTA BARBARA CHORAL SOCIETY CONCERT TOUR  
WOWS AUDIENCES IN ITALY AND BAVARIA

(Santa Barbara, July 27) It wasn't the record temperatures in Rome and Florence that contributed to the warm reception of the Santa Barbara Choral Society's Tour d'Italia concerts. Standing ovations for the Society's solid performances of the Haydn *Mass in B-flat* and Morten Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* were the norm in both Italy and Germany. In Italy the group was accompanied by the Nova Amadeus Orchestra under the baton of SBCS Music Director Jo Anne Wasserman in the Chiesa di San Marcello al Corso in Rome, and the Chiesa di Santo Stefano al Ponte Vecchio in Florence. In Germany Ms. Wasserman led the Sddeutsche Kammer Philharmonie in the Choral Society's final performance at the Ehingen Summer Music Festival. Touring with the Choral Society were soloists Tamara Bevard, Catherine Stoltz, Bill Smith and Dennis Rupp. Carol Roberts provided accompaniment for the group's piano concerts in Vicenza and Asiago, Italy. More than 60 singers from the group went on the tour, which included 14 young singers who received tour scholarships that provided them a musical experience of a lifetime.

At each of the seven concerts that were given by the Choral Society, President Mary Dan Eades presented dignitaries with proclamations from the City of Santa Barbara and Mayor Marty Blum as well as the County Board of Supervisors. Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Brooks Firestone and his wife Catherine are both Choral Society members and were along on the tour. Firestone, who has lived in Italy in the past and has a long association with vintners in the region, arranged for an authentic Tuscan feast at the Castello Verrazzano, a premier Chianti vineyard that originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was a welcome break for the group which had an extremely demanding schedule of concerts from July 12-21.

The highlight of the tour for many was the privilege of singing Mass on the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. They repeated this performance at La Chiesa di Santa Croce in Greve. The group also sang several of the Latin motets from the Vatican mass in the Duomo in Florence, St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, the Cathedral in Orvieto and the Singers' Room in the famous Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria.

"We are so grateful for the opportunity we had to be goodwill ambassadors, not only of Santa Barbara, but our country as well, at a time when sentiments abroad are not always very favorable toward the United States," said Eades. "We appreciate all the hard work our committee did in preparation for the tour, the inspired direction of Jo Anne Wasserman, and the dedication and enthusiasm of each and every Santa Barbara Choral Society singer. Without all three elements, this incredible tour would not have been possible."

The Santa Barbara Choral Society is embarking on its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year, and is the oldest community performing arts organization in Santa Barbara.