

TNL in Germany — WOW!

By Sharon Towner (a wife's perspective)

WOW! As exciting as the prospect of going to Germany and attending the BinG Barbershop Musikfestival 2006 had been to look forward to, we never would have guessed that it would turn out to be a barbershop experience of a lifetime!

From the moment we arrived at the Mercure Hotel in downtown Dortmund, we were made to feel like very special guests. We know that they have had others and I am sure the BinG convention team meet and greet all of their guests with the same enthusiasm but that week we were the special ones.

Manfred Adams (President of BinG) had covered all of the bases. There were greeters at the airports, greeters at the hotel and two very enthusiastic young sisters who sing in the *Ladies First Chorus* and are female BinG members [ED: who according to the BinG web page are six-time BinG champions] who assured *Toronto Northern Lights* that whatever their wishes were was their command.

There was a little consternation over several lost bags, ours and others. Barry was happy because, although he had no other clothing, he did have his uniforms. Me on the other hand, I set out to see in what shops I might be able to buy a replacement wardrobe!

With assurance that all bags would arrive later that night or early the next day, we were escorted out to a great German restaurant for a hearty dinner. We discovered in our walk in the beautiful large Bavarian (we were not in Bavaria, I was told, but they looked Bavarian) snowflakes, lots of shops, lovely old churches, a great square, pubs and restaurants and a chocolate shop within a shouting distance of the hotel and the Concert Hall! How perfect is that?

After a good nights sleep, we spent the day exploring. Then back to the hotel to prepare for the judges and other dignitaries reception, where we were again welcomed and made some new German friends.

The *Buzz* (*SAI Queens*) arrived straight from the plane and graced those of us at the reception (invitation only) with one of their musical masterpieces. The guys (**Barry Towner, Ken Fisher, Dave McEachern** and **Steve Armstrong**) left to take their front row seats in the judging area and we eagerly anticipated our venture into the state of the art Konzerthaus Dortmund mit Reinoldikirche.

And, state of the art it certainly was, a marvelous 1,400 plus seat, acoustically wonderful hall. After feeling a little dismay at the fact that our seats were in the top balcony and there were a

lot of stairs (or you could cheat and take the elevator) we settled in to witness the JOY OF BARBERSHOPPING, BinG style.

The emcee did not cater to us non-German-speaking types, but after a while we actually started to think we could understand him. It did help that two of our best friends from our old coaching in BABS days, now living in the south of France, had made the two day journey to Dortmund to be with us and see the chorus live (they have all the CDs) and Robin speaks German very well, so some translation was available.

Of course we had been building The Toronto Northern Lights up and I was only hoping that our friends would not be disappointed, let alone the 1,000 German and other Barbershoppers and non-Barbershoppers that packed the lower floor of the hall.

Second last on the program that night, the emcee finally announced "The Toronto Northern Lights." Forty-two guys marched through the backstage doors taking their stance on the stage to a very warm welcome. The minute they opened their mouths, jet lag and all, I new they had brought the best of the best with them!

The BinG audience ate them up, standing ovations, shouting and cheering. They wanted more and more! But of course TNL still had ahead of them three more shows on that stage. They always say in show business, "Leave them wanting more" and that audience sure did. There was great camaraderie after the show

in the hall and back at our hotel where the beer seemed to run all night.

Happy smiles through bleary eyes greeted us the next morning at breakfast. True to form, TNL mustered up the stamina for two great shows that day. Their part in the afternoon show brought more standing ovations, shouting and cheering.

I have no idea what time it was when TNL hit the stage for their part of the show that night but after they finished their package the crowd was not letting them off the stage without several encores. The chorus had gone prepared to sing a total of 19 different songs in the four shows.

I lost count of the number of standing ovations that they received and encores that they performed, but those nosebleed seats turned out to be the best seats I could have had. I was allowed to observe the phenomenon occurring below — the Germans outpouring of genuine love and respect for the quality performances that the Toronto Northern Lights had given in each and every song that they sang reduced the TNL to tears on several occasions and the plastic wrap finally came off.

The more the German audience responded, the more TNL turned on their charm. It was a love-in beyond anything that



Photo — BinG website
Toronto Northern Lights WOWing them in Germany ♣