

Nicholas Keone Lee  
Pembroke College

### **Hansen Music Travel Scholarship – Report on Tour to Austria with St. John’s Voices**

I joined St. John's Voices, the mixed-voice choir of St. John's College, on its tour to Vienna from 5 December 2015 to 9 December 2015. The trip was a significant opportunity for both the choir and myself. This tour was the first international tour for St. John’s Voices since its inception three years ago. The choir’s execution of the tour represents its growth from a college choir singing only one Choral Evensong per week in the college Chapel to a fully-fledged performing choir of high musical standards, capable of giving concerts in domestic and international venues of reputation.

In Vienna, the choir performed in a number of well-regarded public venues, in addition to participating in other aspects of Viennese musical life. Highlights include performing at the well-known Stephansdom (St. Stephen’s Cathedral) and participating in an international choral concert at Melk Abbey. The choir also performed at multiple Christmas markets around Vienna, increasing the range of audiences that we were able to reach. The choir was also broadcast over a Viennese radio station, Österreich 1, which provided an opportunity to increase the reputation of the group, as well as to present to a foreign audience an example of the rich English choral tradition.

In addition to enhancing the reputation of St. John’s Voices, the tour also fostered musical cohesion between members of the group. This musical standard has laid the foundation for other engagements, including singing Evensong at Ely Cathedral and giving a full-length performance in the Brandenburg Choral Festival in London. The success of our Austria tour has also paved the way for future regular tours – plans are now underway for performances in the Far East in December 2016 and Colombia in 2017/2018.

This trip to Austria was my first time visiting the Continent, and the opportunity to sing in well-known European locations has expanded my musical horizons. Participating in this tour as one of only two tenor choir members also developed my confidence and has allowed me to take more responsibility for the musical direction of the tenor section. Through repeated performances, I have also learned from the musicians in St. John’s Voices as well as from our director, Graham Walker. I have then been able to apply my increased musical confidence I gained from the tour to my singing in Cambridge; for example, for both a concert and an Evensong during Lent Term 2016, I served comfortably as the only tenor in the choir. Through the performances on our Vienna tour, away from the University, I feel more equipped to become more involved in other parts of the musical life in Cambridge, including in Pembroke College. I hope to carry this confidence forward and both continue my participation in College choirs as well as join other musical ensembles in coming terms.