

LIFE AFTER CRYSTAL

2nd Annual CCC Alumni Newsletter · Summer 2009

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear fellow singers,

So, last year, I put together the Class of 07 alumni newsletter, and I decided that it'd be great to include all of crystal choir alumni this year. I know for some of you, Crystal was a long time away, but for many, it was an important part of your life. If colleges and high schools have alumni updates, why shouldn't Crystal? It was, after all, something that for many spanned more than just 4 years of high school.

In this newsletter, you'll find a few articles from members, in addition to updates and one-liners from others. Though not everyone had time to cook up an article, I hope that everyone can take a look and see what some of your fellow alumni have been up to.

As for me, this year has been a rollercoaster ride as well. I haven't lived at home for more than a week since graduating high school, as I spent the summer in Hollywood last year. I'm happy to say I'll be back in the bay area for at least a month this time around. No fancy internship this year, but I'll be working on my fall/winter collection to show in New York come autumn, not to mention—saving a bit on rent.

I've been hanging around Paris, though school got out a month ago. I did a bit of travelling, but for the most part—believe it or not—I was working. The result is I've finished my first feature length film script. Of course, Paris is its own can of worms in itself, so I'll save the ink now and let you ask me about it at Alumni Sing. Which, I will be attending two days after my return...and which, you should too!

Enjoy the newsletter!
Teresa Lee, Class of 2007

LETTER FROM JENNY

My Dearest Children,

Before I could get my first word out for this letter, my eyes decided to temporarily stop working. Every time I thought of you one by one, what came to mind first was not your semblance at graduation. Rather, **it was the first time I met you.**

There are quite a few things I would like to update you on about Crystal:

1. Crystal is 15 years old!! Happy Birthday Crystal!
2. We're going to make our own rehearsal building, Crystal Hall, in the back yard of Union Church of Cupertino. (Hopefully in 2009)
3. We're proud to be invited to perform at ACDA convention in 2010, not through audition. ACDA usually invites groups like professional or foreign world class groups to perform. (In the past, Crystal's performances at ACDA were through audition.)
4. We've opened an Alumni Column at Crystal's new website. (www.crystalchoir.org) Please visit and tell us how we can make good use of it!
5. For the first time, Crystal Choir and Stanford University staff will co-sponsor the International Choral Workshop this summer. (next year, watch out for summer job openings!)
6. Other than Crystal in Taiwan, we will most likely start a new branch in China.

If you are back in Bay Area, please come by to say Hi. Zhang Tuan Zhang, and Lin Lao Shi will always be here as well. Please do come back and show the current members how you've helped write Crystal's history and how they too can create new pages for Crystal.

Much love,
Jenny (Jiang Lao Shi)

REMEMBERING CRYSTAL

I miss Crystal Choir because...

“of the free T-shirts and water bottles and kids.”

–Emily Huang, Class of '08

“Singing in the shower just ain't the same no more.”

–Ernie Hsu, Class of '03

“the people! and the music, that's a given ;)”

--Jen Lee, Class of '07

“Music is a lot less prominent now and I miss the fun times messing around during rehearsal and trips with friends.”

–Kevin Tsao, Class of '08

Caught up with alumni Dean Shaw, class of 2005:

How have you changed since CCC?

“Freshman 10.”

I think it's supposed to be the Freshman 15.

“Hm, I only got 10 pounds. Although, maybe we can ham it up...how about Freshman 35.”

“From boys to men...”

Boys rule, girls drool. It's tried and true. We (Wilmot, Clifford, and I) were the “Young Men” before there was even a “Young Men”. Voice change was difficult. While other children's choruses just threw out their boys like some dirty old rags when their voice changed, Crystal managed to save us and accompanied us through our voice transitions. To me, that is the reason why Crystal, and Karl most specifically, truly feels special to me. It's nice to sing and perform, but it's even nicer to know that you are wanted.

--Ernie Hsu, class of 2003

MUSIC TO YOUR YEARS

Four years ago, I was...

“A student.” –Emily Huang

“Awesome.” –Kevin Tsao

“Probably playing Counter Strike.”

–Ernie Hsu

“Going to prom.”

–Teresa Lee, Class of '07

Four years from now, I will be...

“An older student.” –Emily Huang

“I hope to be in med school!”

–Dennis Hsu, Class of '07

“who knows? traveling the world and getting paid for it hopefully!”

–Jen Lee

“Getting my MBA.”

–Ernie Hsu

“WISHING I WAS STILL SIXTEEN.”

–Teresa Lee

One word to describe the past year:

“Dope.” – Kevin Tsao

“COFFEE.” –Emily Huang

“Whirlwind.” --Jen Lee

“Absolution.” –Dean Shaw

“Employed.” –Ernie Hsu

RECENT RHYTHM

Though we all can bask in the vast and countless memories choir brought us, Crystal Choir alumni continue to be ambitious and driven young men and women, continuing to progress and grow as individuals well after Sundays at Orchard School. Certainly, all of Crystal's numerous alumni have gone on to accomplish many laudable tasks in the past years. In fact, many are so busy they don't even stop to reflect on their proudest achievements. However, just to name a few, recent graduate **Emily Huang** (class of 2008) picked up Ancient Greek, an accomplishment she's proud of. **Ernie Hsu** (class of 2003) takes pride in taking a hip-hop class. For **Jen Lee**, she's proud of having decided to major in Chinese and will study in Taiwan this summer and next spring. Then, **Dennis Hsu** (class of 2007) is proud of finding a good apartment in Los Angeles, since his school no longer offers guaranteed housing for the next year. Of course, we all know Crystal alumni are capable of lots, but sometimes it's important to sit back and share something you've done recently that you're proud of, even if it seems trivial to you. Push yourself, but don't forget to congratulate yourself too!



Pictured: a spontaneous crystal reunion at UCLA winter 2008

BEAT AROUND THE WORLD

Crystal Choir Alumni share their thoughts about travelling and studying abroad:

“Study Abroad, Abridged”

I studied abroad in England, Summer 2005 and visited Japan in Winter of 2005 for a family trip. I studied abroad in Cambridge, England: ANYBODY WHO READS THIS...GO STUDY ABROAD! IT WILL BE THE BEST TIME OF YOUR LIFE!

And as for Japan, it was cool; we saw a lot of temples. That's all.

--Ernie Hsu, class of 2003

“From Travelling with Crystal to Living Abroad”

Crystal Choir was my travel agent for the bulk of my high school career. Perhaps it wasn't always an international trip, but how else would I have graced Salt Lake City twice in one year? In fact, as I've discovered in this past semester abroad, the French love Miami (right up there with New York), and I can proudly say I've been, thanks to Crystal Choir Travel Agency. First and foremost, choir was about music—the amazing unity and harmony of us young and eager (or sometimes not) students coming together every Sunday to express our passion for music (and lightly salted pretzels). But the travelling aspect of Crystal fostered a global awareness in its members early on, which has translated directly into my own wanderlust, a voracious hunger I continue feeding today.

I spent the last six months studying abroad in France, and though I was sans yellow T-shirt and purple sweater, I came to appreciate all the hard work it must have been for all the Lao-shrs and Jia-changs to organize and plan our numerous excursions.

I thought I had already achieved independence in my year and a half in New York, but Paris was the first time I truly lived on my own. In Paris (here, as I'm writing from the City of Lights), I live in my own studio on the fifth floor of a very Parisian apartment several minutes off

of the Champs-Élysées. It's the first time I've truly lived alone—no roommate, no building security guard, no RA, no students down the hall throwing trashy loud parties (that are strangely comforting at the same time). Though I can't exactly deem Paris as a quiet place on the weekends, there's a sense of haunting stillness when you're the only one in the room late at night.

Then, there's dealing with landlords and doing the groceries. And though I did groceries in New York, Paris is a different story—everything's closed on Sundays, and I found out the hard way. There's much more I can say about finding independence in France, but I'll leave it at this: it's not until you have to deal with fleas (imagine, you're the only warm-blooded animal in a small, carpeted studio...), socialist French phone companies that take a month to set up your internet (no email is inconvenient when you write for an online blog—boss wasn't too happy, but thank god for Wifi at McDonalds), or having your Mom visit you as a guest in your house, that you are “independent”. Okay, so maybe you don't have to get fleas, but bonus points if you survive, because I didn't think I would.

One thing about travelling is people always seem to be more open. I've always liked to consider myself a more “adventurous” type, but in all honesty, I was living under a rock. For example, one day, I met a few breakdancers at a studio I was practicing in, and we went and got food together. The next day, I ended up going with them to a gym (actually, it was a basketball court) in the “banlieues” for a free-style jam session. The banlieues are suburbs outside of Paris, and I suppose it would have been like me going with strangers to Queens or Jersey on a whim. Thinking back on it, I doubt I would have been so eager to cross the state line so spontaneously back in New York. Never mind that they were two strong and athletic guys. But, not only did I get a good workout and learn a few tricks, I felt as if I was privileged to be a part of a private community I might never have thought to be a part of. Of course, they asked me about American crews, excited to hear that I

had jammed a bit with Quest (more like I had sat and watched Hok practice, in awe).

Somehow, this reminded me of Crystal Choir. Crystal really encouraged a global perspective in creating music, as our annual (sometimes more) trips around the world indicate. The teachers knew that music was meant to be shared, and instead of confining ourselves to Union Church or Orchard, we brought our voices to places like The Vatican and Taipei National Concert Hall. Artists—for that's what we are—love to hear and learn from each other. Studying abroad is a learning experience on its own—never mind what you're studying. The cultural differences and exchanging of views with youth and adults in another country (babysitting gave me perspective of the *very* young, all the way to my grandparent-aged landlords) will open your eyes wider than you'd have thought possible. And fellow slanty-eyed friends, it *is* possible.

Though, I will now admit, I never quite gave the teachers the credit they deserved for organizing our large (at least by the time I graduated—2007, we were quite large) group trips. Taking a group of 60 to a foreign country in which we don't speak the language can be more unnerving than you might imagine. In fact, as is custom with most people who study in Europe, students jet-setted from country to country almost every weekend, but this time, it was us doing the planning. Because I was tied down for several months with an internship, I wasn't as extreme as some fellow students (it wasn't uncommon for ruffled students in Monday's classes to use “I was in Amsterdam” as an excuse for being late), but I did my share of world travelling as well.

For example, for Spring break, I visited Morocco with a few friends. In planning the trip, we had to nail down details such as hostels, flights, trains, and all sorts of head-ache inducing nuances. Again, I grew to cherish Crystal's nurturing nature: how every meal was planned out and every bus was always right where it needed to be. When my mom paid me a visit, I took her to Venice, remembering how lovely it had been with choir. Again, I realized I was able to play tour guide to her because choir

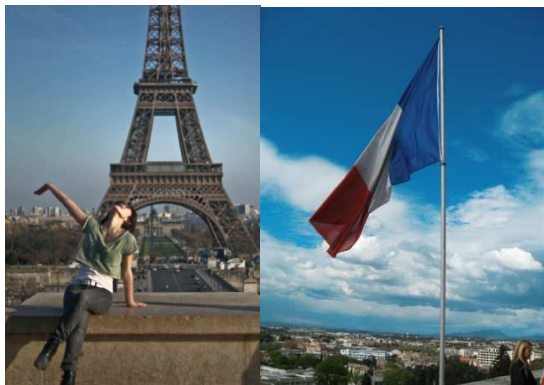
had done such a great job. In fact, I took her to the same glass factory that choir had taken us to two years ago.

Of the many things I've realized in my time across the sea is how strong of an impact Crystal has had in opening our global perspective. This may seem ironic in an all Asian choir, but reflect back a bit. The teachers strived to bring us music from all epochs and countries—and in my college choir, not many singers had sung Slovenian gypsy songs before, but Crystal did. Along with Japanese, Hungarian, Chinese, Italian, French, and Aboriginal music, just to name a few. Travelling with a group of friends is a great way to strengthen love for a new place, and Crystal Choir gave us that precious gift.

I don't know if I'm just born with unquenchable love for travel, but whether it was pre-existing or not, I know that Crystal Choir has turned up that fire, and I thank choir for opening up the door to my independent journey abroad. Though Crystal's door closed along with high school graduation, the beat kept going as I open up a new chapter in a foreign country. It's hard not to think of Crystal Choir when it was such an influential part of my life. Face it, there's no escaping it.

I'll leave you with one more example: I was able to chant the Australian anthem with a friend at a bar in Paris only because I had learned the song in choir. You just never know when those Crystal Choir moments will creep up. But they always do.

--Teresa Lee, Class of 2007



CLASS OF 2008 CORNER

Congratulations class of 2008, you made it through your first year after high school! For most of you, that also meant your first year of college. Needless to say, it's a tough but valuable learning experience. But don't take it from me, here's what a few 08-ers have to say about their first taste of the co-ed days.

Alyssa Wang, UC Berkeley

What's one word to describe college so far?

“Interesting. It's quite an interesting experience. The hobos at Berkeley are interesting. Dormlife is interesting.”

What's something that surprised you about college?

“I don't think anything surprised me. It met my expectations, the workload didn't surprise me. I mean, I kind of knew what it would be, it didn't surpass my expectations.”

Any activities or groups you're involved with?

“Business association.”

Emily Huang, UC Davis

What's one word to describe college so far?

“Moneyleechers.”

What's something that surprised you about college?

“There aren't that many cows running around with the bike traffic between classes in UC Davis.”

Are you still singing?

“I serenade my stuffed lion all the time.”

Any interesting anecdotes that happened this year?

“My boss took me to a store and told me I could get anything I wanted because of how well I did my job that night. I took all that I could carry and more.”

Kevin Tsao, UC San Diego

What's one word to describe college so far?

"Chill."

Are you still singing?

"In the shower."

What's one thing that surprised you about college?

"The different people and countless opportunities offered."

Any groups or activities you're involved with?

"Intramural sports."

KEEPING THE BEAT

As the years go by, Crystal Choir starts to seem farther and farther away. Though just as you might forget your first steps but you'll never forget how to walk (senility doesn't count), the doctrines and experiences of Crystal Choir seem to follow us through the various stages of our adult life. While recent graduates are making the choice of whether they should continue with a choir-like activity in college, others are graduating college and journeying into what some adults like to call "**the real world.**" Though in all fairness, the "real world" has always existed (or never, whichever way you'd like to look at it), and these alumni are only continuing on to a new chapter of their lives. Switching up the time signature, one might say. But keeping the beat, all the same. For Ernie **Hsu** (class of 2003), he keeps the beat going with jam-sessions in his car. *"I've learned that no one really cares if you sing like crap because the radio will cover your horrible voice. There's more to life than just signing in the shower, which honestly, is losing its luster."*

Crystal in the "Real World"

What's one way Crystal has helped you in surviving the "real world"?

"Leadership would be the most obvious answer. Most people, however, are really surprised that I was in choir for 9 (almost 10) years. It's a great conversation starter. I would talk about the places Crystal has been, or the experiences I have gained, or even the good friends I have been able to make."

--Ernie Hsu, class of 2003

"Life after Crystal: Forensic Accounting"

6 years. I graduated from Crystal in 2003. A lot can happen in 6 years – including graduating from college and getting your first job. Graduating high school, I never knew that there was so much more to the world. Instead, I felt like I was already on top of the world. I was like the frog in the well.

I had thought I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I planned on going into international relations and doing something in politics. I had dreams of revealing world changing policies to a sea of cheering supporters. But I quickly realized that I didn't know anything.

For example, coming out of high school you might say to yourself that you're good at economics, so you're going to study economics. What you don't realize is that there are many aspects to economics that you can study: micro, macro, monetary, developmental, agriculture, political, industrialized, financial, health, education, welfare, labor, demographic, law, and economic history - and that only just scratches the surface. It's the same for every major. And at UC Berkeley there were over 200 different majors. I'm sure many of you have felt the same.

I graduated with concurrent degrees in Business Administration and Political Economy of Industrial Societies. I'm very fortunate to have

studied these two disciplines. They balanced each other well. Business was the study on a micro level about how and why businesses function. Political Economy was the study on a macro level about how the political and economic world interact to create the environment in which business and society function. Of course, the crazy liberal kids who wanted to “take down the man” majored in political economy, while the more conservative hopefuls who wanted “to be the man” majored in business. It was this tension between the two that has given me a more balanced perspective.

However, I didn't just chance upon these majors by accident. There were, of course, certain life changing events that guided me. I had to keep my eyes open and be ready to learn life's lessons. In the spring following Hurricane Katrina, I went to New Orleans to participate in the relief effort. It was there that I saw how difficult it is for society to function without business. If you wanted to get your car fixed, there were no car shops open. If you wanted ice cream, there were no ice cream trucks coming by with their cheery tunes. I'll be honest – growing up I had been more of a “take down the man - business is bad” type of person. But walking past closed store after closed store, I became driven to learn about business and change the economic devastation this region had endured. I finally understood why strong economic and business fundamentals are essential in helping people and communities thrive.

While I became exposed to more ideas and perspectives, I had more questions than answers - cliché, but true. It's really a wonderful thing how there is so much to learn and understand every day.

As a business major, I was going to follow the herd into investment banking, but the idea of mergers and acquisitions, initial public offerings, or sales and trading wasn't that appealing to me. In my opinion, these functions of an investment bank did not provide value creation; rather their value added function was being experts in the financial markets. What I mean is that, as an analyst, much of your job is updating prices from the market. Your value is being an

information expert. Instead, I wanted to do something where I created value for an entity organically.

It wasn't until I heard about a restructuring group did I get really excited. Restructuring groups help companies that are in distress either go through or get out of bankruptcy. It's the end game in capitalism. Sort of like “without hell there's no heaven” -- *without bankruptcy there's no capitalism*. Unfortunately restructuring groups required experience that I did not have coming out of college. So I was out of job.

Luckily, the firms that had restructuring groups also had forensic accounting groups. I realized part of the reason I was interested in restructuring was that it was an intersection of finance, accounting, and policy. In the same way, forensic accounting also captured finance, accounting, and policy. I love it. But saying that I'm an accountant still feels weird.

As a forensic accountant, I do valuation of economic loss. I provide simple solutions for complex problems. I just finished one case where there was a video game that was sold for the Xbox 360 and PS3. The company that developed the game wanted to sell the game for the PC, so it gave another company the contract to replicate and distribute the game for the PC market. Unfortunately, one of the employees of this third party company uploaded a version of the game onto the internet. There were over a hundred thousand individual downloads of this game, which were downloaded illegally since the game never should have been uploaded in the first place. However, there was a glitch in the game so that you couldn't finish the game.

So there are a number of possibilities that could have resulted from this event. The two extremes are either a huge marketing benefit or a total market loss. As an economic benefit, we assume that every single one of the downloads were downloads by people who never would have bought the game and after playing, but not being able to finish, they now buy the game. As a result every single download was an additional sale and the glitched game was a great marketing tool. On the opposite extreme, we

assume that every single download was a by an individual who would have paid for the game, but after playing they realize they don't want to buy the game anymore. So the question we answer as forensic accountants is what is the economic value resulting from this event?

There are many different factors that you need to consider when making this calculation. We have to be able to single out the value attributed directly to the event (in this case the uploading of the game) from all the other factors. Some of the factors that we considered were: what were the economic trends during this period, how long was the time between the release of the game on the Xbox 360 and PS3 and the release on the PC, what were the trends of other games that have done this transition, was the game a top ten game or was it fringe game, and how did actual sales track. Thus, our work product to our client will be a set of schedules (excel sheets) that provides a variety of scenarios ranging from the two extreme described above separating more detailed valuation for each factor.

Part of what makes my job so satisfying is that I'll be on a telephone call with our clients and over the course of the conversation the clients will make their decisions about how much to settle or payout based on the numbers that I calculated. In this way, I truly feel like I provided a service that helped our clients.

Each case is vignette of a real world event from which I learn more about the world and gain additional life experience. I've learned about lots of different industries from biopharmaceuticals to semiconductor manufacturing to high-end luxury retail goods to construction to utilities to agriculture. It's a job that has exposed me to the business world. I came upon the realization that the first step to understanding and knowledge is not to reason, but to see.

I consider myself lucky to be working as a forensic accountant at RGL Forensics. But did I really think that I'd be forensic accountant 6 years after graduating from Crystal and love it? No, I never even knew there was such a profession. Did I think I'd graduate with degrees

in political economy and business administration? Well I knew about business, but I definitely didn't know about political economy.

There's so much more to the world. We're lucky to have been a part of Crystal and to go on tour to all these different places in the world. I look back at my experience with Crystal with genuine fondness and remember Crystal as a diamond that has never lost its shine, but it's really just the beginning.

--Jojo Choi, Class of 2003



SUMMER SOUNDS LIKE...

What's in store for summer 2009? For some, like **Jaime Lai** (class of 2006), part of it will be spent in a different country. Though he's attending UC Berkeley, he's currently finishing up his semester in Japan. For **Jennifer Lee** (class of 2007), a Chinese Major at UCLA, she'll be taking classes at a Taipei University. But take notice, singers, summer isn't just a time for alumni to travel, the teachers are jet-setting too! **Jenny Chiang's** childhood choir from Taiwan, GloryStar, is performing at Lincoln Center in New York City this July. This wonderful event is a brilliant opportunity, due to a missed chance 40 years ago, when her choir was invited to perform but was unable to make the trip. Now, years later, the dream is coming true on July 11, 2009 at 8:00 pm in Avery Fisher Hall. If any of you are in the Tri-State area, please try and support our teacher! (Tickets are available at Lincolncenter.org, as are student discounts!) Summer is a ripe time for growth, discovery, and new beginnings, though for some, simplicity is key. **Ernie Hsu's** goal this summer is to just "continue working and try not to lose my job." **What are your plans for summer? How about reconnecting with old friends and teachers from Crystal?**

NOTES OF ADVICE

Here's what a few alumni have to say to current CCC members:

Ernie Hsu says: "High-school sucks. College is way better. **Stay connected to other Crystal members when you're in college.** Those will be the friends who will be there for you: not your fraternity or sorority, not your roommates, and certainly not your teacher/professors. Singing is a beautiful art, especially when used to court prospective significant others."

Jen Lee says: "enjoy everything while it lasts, and **NEVER** give up on music!"

Dean Shaw says: "Crystal Choir will ruin your life. Get out while you still have a soul." (Hm... don't know about that one.)



Pictured above: Alumni members at The Ritards Performance at Santana Row December 2008

AND OF COURSE...

ANNUAL CONCERT!

In addition to coming out for alumni sing, come out and support current CCC members at annual concert this year. The dates and times are as following:

Saturday **6/20**: 7:00 pm

@ Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Fremont, CA

Sunday **6/21**: 2:00pm

@ Saratoga High School
Saratoga, CA

Sunday **6/21**: 7:00pm

@ Saratoga High School
Saratoga, CA*

*alumni performance at this concert

For tickets, please contact Jane Li at 408-725-8328 or, Anna Lin at 408-865-1996

CLOSING WORDS

Thanks so much for everyone who contributed! If you wish to help out or get involved with the Crystal Choir Alumni Newsletter, please email **je.suis.teresa@gmail.com**. In an effort to keep the Crystal connection strong, an alumni directory is available on Google Documents at the following link: **<http://spreadsheets.google.com/cc?key=rPg2rJAjJ9jGLYDzZEbrKEw>**. Please take a moment to update your contact information, or, if you'd like to remove your information, feel free to do so as well. Though hopefully, you'll opt for the first rather than the latter!