



A one-year study abroad program in beautiful Freiburg, Germany, at the foot of the Black Forest.
Program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin, University of Iowa, University of Michigan, and Michigan State University.

Academic Year in Freiburg

2015

Spring

History Matters

Helmut Puff, Resident Director 2014-15

Wherever we live history surrounds us. And one can learn to read the world we inhabit through a historical lens. Places such as Freiburg remind us powerfully that our own existence resonates with the past. The city's streets preserve the layout its founders created in medieval times. Today as for many centuries, the cathedral towers over its bustling streets. There are many stories to discover – stories both small and grand. Some street names convey information about a city that is no longer. Elevations within Freiburg's center, for instance, are the remnants of a vast system of fortifications that once engulfed the city. The scars wrought by war-time devastations are never far. In fact, the questions raised by the city's post-WW II reconstructions continue to shape urban planning.

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Stained glass window in the Freiburger Münster.



Prof. Puff giving a tour to AYF students.



Freiburg is an appealing place to study how to experience cities on historical terms. It is replete with reminders of a past that stretches back almost a thousand years. Yet because of its size, one can get to know its buildings, fountains, rivulets, markets, monuments, and museums intimately. In “Focus Freiburg,” one of the AYF seminars this year, students did just that. We connected texts and images from or about the past with the city of today. Site visits deepened our ability to appreciate the urban environment with its historical layers. The more one approaches a place with a historically trained eye the more it will reveal. Thus viewed, history matters profoundly.

Troubadour in Freiburg

Mitchell Widmer, AYF 2014-15, University of Iowa

Being a student of Vocal Performance, the Germanic countries of Europe have a connotation of prospect, a place to begin. Much like the pilgrims, I set forth to Germany with hopes of new beginnings and experiences, musical and just for my life. I have been pleasantly surprised with what has come to be. In early November I auditioned at the Stadttheater Freiburg, the local theater, singing for the Chormeister and other members of the

musical staff. I recall how nervous and green I was. I sang ‘*Breit über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar*’ by Richard Strauss and *Bella Siccome un Angelo* from Gaetano Donizetti’s opera *Don Pasquale*. Directly after my audition I

was offered a contract to sing in the opera chorus for two productions this year, Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* and Karl Goldmark’s *Königin von Saba*.

How incredibly lucky I have been! The experiences that I have been given in terms of musical preparation, staging processes, and theater etiquette in German could give me an advantage later down the road in an opera singing career. Being able to be on the same stage as professional opera singers on a weekly basis has been richly rewarding. The amount I have learned from just watching singers is incredible. I have also been able to see the other side of the business, the non-singing and less glamorous part. Getting a candid look at this part of the music business has helped me decide if I really want to seriously pursue a career in opera. I have realized that my passion for this art form outweighs the sacrifice that this career demands. I hope that at some point in the not too distant future you will hear me sing for you. Better yet, that you will hear of me in another context and then come to hear me sing. Nothing would give me more pleasure than having fellow Freiburg alumni in the audience who understand just how pivotal a moment the year in Freiburg can be!



Mitchell Widmer in make-up and costume for the Freiburg staging of “Troubadour”.



AYF Takes Berlin!

Molly Reitman, AYF 2014-15 University of Michigan

Franz von Suppé once famously said, “Du bist verrückt mein Kind, du mußt nach Berlin” (“You are crazy, my child, you must go to Berlin”). If this is the case, then the AYF students must be going mad, considering 22 AYFers participated in a five day excursion to Berlin this January in order to get a glimpse of Germany’s historically and culturally rich capital.

The trip included several city tours and visits to museums, including the Neues Museum, where students were able to see the famous ancient Egyptian bust of Nefertiti, and the Jewish Museum, which features the striking architecture of Daniel Libeskind and, among many remarkable objects, an art installation by Menashe Kadishman titled *Shalekhet* (Fallen Leaves).

It is a collection of metal faces piled up on the floor that visitors are free to walk across. AYFer Sofia Linsenmeyer remembers, “This was a really striking exhibit. The guide said that some older Jewish visitors don’t want to step on the metal faces, because they feel like they are symbolically stepping on their ancestors.”

Students also visited the Reichstag building, which serves as the meeting place of the German parliament.

This includes the *Plenarsaal*, or assembly room, where political representatives gather. “Most interesting to me was when we learned about the history of the room, its architecture, and that the room was not used at all during the time period when Germany was divided,” AYFer Ryan Blake said.

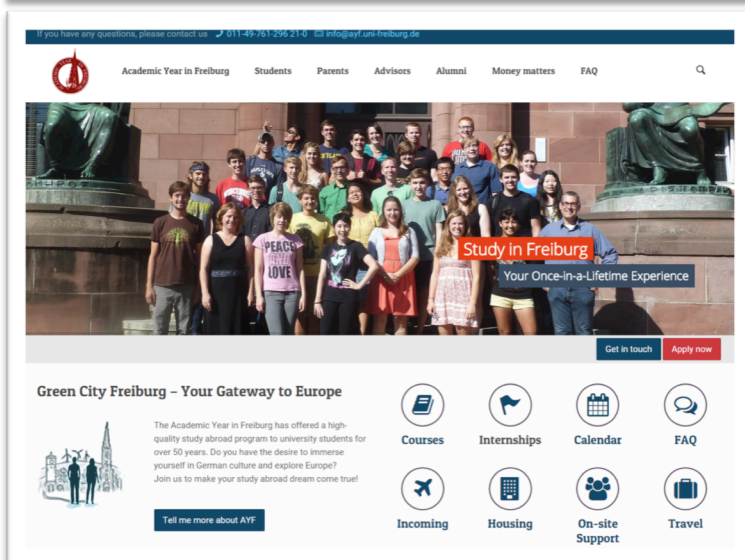
While the group only got to spend a couple of days in this amazing city, the impressions it left—the haunting beauty of the Berlin Wall memorial, the calculated insanity of German



theater as exemplified by a riveting “Woyzeck,” the sense of centuries of history living all around you—will not soon leave us. But, you know what they say: If you’re crazy, you go to Berlin—and if you’re smart, you go back to Freiburg!



New AYF Website Launching Soon!



We are pleased to announce that we have begun to develop a new AYF website!

AYF alum Shaun Williams (02-03) designed the current website, and it has served us very well for over a decade. But with the advent of tablet computers and smart phones, a new look and feel and a “tablet friendly” design became a must. We are planning to go live this fall.

Among other things, the new site will feature a special Alumni section, offering photo galleries, a contact form, and an archive of Newsletters.

We are hoping to expand this section with reunion planning information and networking options. If you have specific suggestions about what to include, we’d love to hear from you!

Ulrich (Ulli) Struve, Associate Director



NOTE: The AYF Alumni Newsletter is published two to three times a year for all Freiburg alumni who studied at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität under the auspices of the Junior Year in Freiburg or the Academic Year in Freiburg.

Please forward the Newsletter to other JYF and AYF Alumni with whom you are in contact. Thank you! To update your contact in-formation, please go to <http://www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de/alumni-form.html>.

For more information about the Academic Year in Freiburg, visit our web site at <http://www.ayf.uni-freiburg.de>