

On the road... by Asgerdur Sigurdardottir

We here at Barrueco.com have been quite busy lately! We've received numerous emails asking to continue to share some stories from the road. Here is a recent one.

In April and May Manuel toured with the Cuarteto Latinoamericano. Because it is often difficult to find a period when they are all free, the tour was booked with back-to-back concerts. During the first half of the tour, they went to Mexico; Houston, USA; Parma, Italy; Ankara, Turkey; Lohne, Germany; and Baltimore, USA—all in just 9 days! It was hectic with lots of traveling and performing on the same day.

The tour was going well, despite a few very early morning flights. Parma is where our trouble began. The morning after the concert there we had to get up at 4 am to drive to Milan to catch our flight from Milan to Ankara, via Vienna. Everything was OK until we arrived in Vienna and tried to check in for our flights to Ankara, Turkey. Austrian Airlines told us we couldn't go to Ankara because holders of Mexican passports, which three of the CL have, need a visa! This is something that had been overlooked.

So there we were in Vienna, trying to get on a flight that arrived in Ankara at 2:30 pm for an 8:30 pm concert! To make a long story—a very long story—short, we didn't get on the 2:30 flight!

I immediately called the organizer in Ankara, Ibrahim Barisik, who, in turn, called the Turkish Foreign Ministry to see what could be done. In a few minutes, I got a call from Ibrahim saying, "No problem, we'll fix it." The next couple of hours were agonizing. There were many calls back and forth with my hero Ibrahim in Ankara. Finally, 10 minutes before the last flight that would get us into Turkey in time for the concert, Austrian Airlines received a telex from the Ankara Foreign Ministry allowing us to board the plane. The time was going to be tight. We would hopefully arrive in Istanbul at 5 pm, clear customs and connect to a 6 pm flight, which would arrive in Ankara at 7 pm, and be at the hall just in time for the 8:30 concert.

We arrived in Istanbul at 5 pm as planned, but our problems were not over. Immigration needed to find the telex from the Foreign Ministry to let us in. After waiting for what seemed like hours, the customs officers finally found the famous telex and v e r y slowly wrote up tons of receipts to finally let us in—only for us to miss the 6 pm flight from Istanbul to Ankara.

We ran to change the tickets to the 7 pm flight, but the check-in agent informed us that there were no available seats on the 7 pm flight! We were booked on the 8 pm flight instead, which got into Ankara at 9:00 pm, (concert at 8:30 pm!) I called Ibrahim to tell him what was going on. He said, "No problem, we'll get you on the 7 pm flight!" After many more phone calls back and forth, eight free seats mysteriously appeared on the 7 pm flight!

Unfortunately, the 7 pm flight was going to leave 40 minutes late! I wanted to throw in the towel and offered to cancel the concert. At this point, I just wanted to try to get the artists to Lohne, Germany, where they had a concert the following day! But Ibrahim said, "We've gotten you so far, get on the 7:40 flight, and I'll explain to the audience. They will wait."

"Yeah, right," I thought. We got on the 7:40 pm flight and arrived in Ankara at 8:45 pm, where there was a bus waiting for us and a person in charge of claiming our luggage and filing the missing baggage reports. Our luggage and amplification were still in Vienna!

We were rushed to the concert hall in Ankara where the public was still waiting—one and a half hours after the concert was supposed to start. Everyone cheered when the artists arrived. We did

a one-minute sound check with the amplification they had arranged while we were on our way, and then the artists played a beautiful concert in jeans, sneakers, and polo shirts, despite missing the cello pin and having to use a wooden one instead. (see photo below) The concert was over at about midnight and the audience still asked for two encores. Unbelievable audience!

After another night with less than three hours of sleep, we got on a 6:20 am flight out of Ankara to Lohne, Germany. Everything from there on went well. The concert in Lohne was terrific, but everyone was still sleep deprived. The next day we got on our way to Baltimore, where there was a concert the following day. That night we were able to sleep for the first time in five days without having to get up at 3 or 4 am—a welcome change!

I don't know how the artists kept it together throughout the Ankara ordeal. To be able to get on stage at 10 pm and play a terrific concert, after having been up since 4 am traveling, coupled with these kinds of intense problems, absolutely amazed me.

As for my hero Ibrahim Barisik, the Turkish presenter, he deserves the **“Presenter of the Year”** Award.

Best,

Asgerdur



During the concert in Ankara, Turkey, April 16, 2008
From left: Saúl Bitrán, Arón Bitrán, Manuel Barrueco, Javier Montiel, Álvaro Bitrán