

# The Friends of the Kroks Newsletter

Winter 2005-2006

A publication for the friends of the Harvard Krokodiloes ©2005 The Friends of the Kroks, Inc.

Volume 3, Issue 1

## In This Issue:

- The Kroks' World Tour 2005** 2  
Alex Stokes, Krok of 2005, recounts the highlights of the recent Summer Tour
- Helping the Kroks Share their Music with the World** 2  
Krok Friends lend support to the charitable aspect of the Kroks' mission
- Introducing the Kroks of 2006** 3  
Krokodiloe Matthew Christian offers an inside look at this years Krok group
- Letter from the General Manager** 4  
Clayton Thomas reviews the Krok year thus far, and gives a preview of what's to come
- Through Song, the Kroks Form Emotional Connection with Children with Cancer** 5  
A letter of thanks from the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a pediatric oncology ward in Santiago
- Letter from the Tour Manager** 6  
Rex Baker outlines his ideas for World Tour 2006, and invites you to get involved
- The Friends of the Kroks Mission** 6  
Find out what the Friends of the Kroks are all about
- Friends of the Kroks Website** \*  
Take a look at the Friends' expanded webpage at:  
[www.kroks.com/krokfriends](http://www.kroks.com/krokfriends)

## THE FRIENDS OF THE KROKS

22 EAST 67TH STREET

NEW YORK, NY 10021

E-MAIL: [friends@kroks.com](mailto:friends@kroks.com)

WEB: [www.kroks.com/krokfriends](http://www.kroks.com/krokfriends)

## Greetings from the President of the Friends

Dear Friends of the Kroks,

Seasons greetings and welcome to the latest edition of the *Friends of the Kroks Newsletter!*

First and foremost, the Board of the Friends of the Kroks and I, on behalf of the Krokodiloes, are pleased to invite you and Krok Friends from around the world to join us at Harvard from March 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 to celebrate the Kroks' much anticipated 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The weekend will include a variety of activities and events, the highlight of which will be a major concert not only showcasing the Krokodiloes of 2006, but also featuring three groups of "old boys" representing the Kroks of the 70's, 80's, and 90's. The concert and the events surrounding it will surely be as historic as the anniversary itself.

If you would like to join us for the anniversary celebrations or would simply like more information, please email us at [friends@kroks.com](mailto:friends@kroks.com). We hope very much to see you in Cambridge this spring.

Faithful readers of this newsletter will surely have noticed an ever growing emphasis on charitable performances and events. This very important component of the Kroks' activities is in part due to the generous support of

our friends from around the world.

One such friend is Mrs. Noel L. Baucom, who over the past few years has made possible the Kroks' performances for the children of the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a pediatric oncology ward in Santiago, Chile. For enabling the Kroks to bring their particular brand of humor and joy to an audience surely in need of a lift, the Friends of the Kroks, the Krokodiloes

and the Fundación are especially grateful to Mrs. Baucom.

On page 5 of this newsletter, you will find a letter of appreciation from Bernardo Gutierrez, the Fundación's

Coordinator of Cultural Activities. I fully expect that you'll be as moved as I was in reading about the powerful effect of the Kroks' "strong voices and giant hearts."

You will also be able to read about the other tour destinations, which this year included the exciting new destinations of Beijing, Buenos Aires, and Lisbon.

To give you an idea of what you can expect from this year's group, please read on for introductions to the newest members of the Krokodiloes and reintroductions to some old friends. In addition, you will find greetings from General Manager

*Continued on Page 6*



*After a show in Japan, Jacob Aptekar gets to know some of the younger members of the audience.*

# Krokodiloes Complete 2005 Summer World Tour

By Alex Stokes, Krok of 2005.

On August 24<sup>th</sup>, my fellow Kroks and I concluded our 20<sup>th</sup> annual world tour, exhausted from three months of travel but also proud of our achievements and grateful for a summer full of transformative experiences. While our classmates worked or relaxed at home, the Kroks traversed six continents and fourteen countries, bringing our unique mix of impeccable charm, dashing good looks, and polished harmonies to audiences around the world.

This year, the Kroks were graciously welcomed back to Tokyo, Taipei, Santiago de Chile, Sydney, Cape Town and Prague. We were also pleased to branch out to such exciting locations as Beijing, Buenos Aires and Lisbon. The Kroks' full schedule included performances for consulates, political receptions, intimate private parties, secondary schools, numerous hospitals, and mobs of enthusiastic university students.

But our enthusiasm to perform often extended beyond our formal performance schedule, leading us to serene restaurants, tour guides, and even



Swift Edgar leads the Kroks of 2005 in song on the Champs-Élysées in Paris.

a crowd of pedestrians on the Champs-Élysées.

Wherever we went, we were treated with warmth and generosity by our hosts. Perhaps the best part of the summer was getting to connect with so many fascinating and diverse people. In Germany, Italy, Japan, and Australia, we sang for and caught up with families who have welcomed the Kroks into their lives year after year. We were also warmly received by longstanding friends at hotels, restaurants, Harvard Clubs, private companies, and schools.

At every stop, the Kroks made friendships with hosts, audience members, and local residents that will last far beyond the short duration of the summer. Even more than performing or sightseeing, it is these relationships that really make the Krok tour experience special.

The Krokodiloes enjoy every opportunity to perform, but we especially enjoy those opportunities to share our music with children and those less fortunate than we. Some highlights from the Krokodiloes World Tour of 2005:

- Performing for the Kanzawa School for the Disabled, a school and hospital for mentally and physically challenged children in Kanazawa, Japan. After the concert, the children put on their own show, treating the Kroks to a special musical performance.

- Rehearsing and performing with the students of Beijing, Meiji, Tunghai and Hong Kong Universities.

- Bridging political divides while practicing our Chinese as we sang “Mo Li Hua” (“Jasmine”) for equally enthusiastic audiences in China and Taiwan.

- Singing and conversing with young, underprivileged cancer patients at the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a pediatric oncology ward in Santiago.

The Krokodiloes of 2005 would

*Continued on Page 6*

## Friends Help the Kroks Share Their Music with the World

*The Friends of the Kroks depend on support to be able to aid the Krokodiloes in pursuing the charitable aspect of their mission. Thanks especially to the following friends for their recent generous support of the Kroks:*

**Mrs. Noel L. Baucom** for her support of the Kroks' third annual performance at the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a pediatric oncology ward in Santiago, Chile. (See Page 5.)

**Mrs. M. C. Fleming** for her gift to further the charitable mission of the Friends of the Kroks and support the Kroks in their roles as goodwill ambassadors for America. Mrs. Fleming also welcomed the Kroks to her villa

in the Tuscan Hills for five days this past summer during their tour to Italy.

**Mr. Todd Fletcher** for general operating expenses.

**Mrs. Amalia Fortabat** for supporting the Kroks' tour to South America.

**Madame Taeko Matsuda** for continued annual support of the Kroks' tour to Japan. She also coordinated performances and cultural exchange opportunities for the group in Tokyo and the Ishikawa Prefecture.

**PluralArts International, Inc.** for underwriting a portion of the Kroks' summer travel expenses.

# Introducing the Krokodiloes of 2006

*A special "view from within" of the 60<sup>th</sup> Krok group, by Matt Christian.*

## First Tenors

This past September, **Matthew Christian** surprised the group with his decision to return to the Kroks for a second year. Early on, Matt secured the coveted "brings-mothers-and-daughters-to-tears" solos, including "Loch Lomond" and "Sally Gardens," helping him fill the role of Krok "ladies man." As the group's resident artist, he creates posters and sketches much to the Kroks' amusement. Matt is a senior majoring in Social Studies. He's from Winchester, MA.

Freshman **Frank DeSimone** is incredibly enthusiastic, a trait that has earned him the nickname "Coach Frank" in the group. True to form, Coach Frank often graces the group with impromptu pep talks. And, during solo auditions, he's known to say Little-League-baseball-coach-esque things like "I really liked it. I felt you gave it your 110%" or "I really think you hit it out of the park," and even (when he is unimpressed) "Good hustle." Frank hails from Rosemont, PA.

Freshman **Jon Weigel** carries on a proud Krok legacy, being the son of former Krok Lynn Weigel '70. Having gone to Krok concerts since as long as he can remember, Jon already knew most of the songs and choreography before joining the group. Jon sings the solo for "Jerusalem," which he says is his favorite Krok song (be it known that he said this *before* he got the solo). Jon is from Lincoln, MA, and doesn't know yet what his major

will be.

## Second Tenors

**James Fisher** will have bookended his Harvard experience with the Krokodiloes, having sung as a freshman and now returning to the group in his senior year. Always quick-witted and eager to perform, James makes sure there is never a dull moment during rehearsals. James has racked up a number of solos this year—singing "House of Blue Lights," "A-Train," and "They Can't Take That Away from Me." James is an English major, writing a screenplay for his thesis.



*The Harvard Kroks of 2006 (left to right): Traverso, Weigel, Thomas, Baker, Padgett, Denman, DeSimone, Fisher, Christian, Colson, Wionzek, Gandhi.*

Freshman **Steve Traverso** went to high school with Jon Weigel, and the two had always planned on trying out for the Kroks together. And now, here they are—both of them Kroks. Steve keeps a very busy schedule, juggling the Kroks with theatrical pursuits on campus. He took a year off between high school and Harvard, and, as a result, is more mature than any of us could ever hope to be. Steve sings the solo for "Runaway" this year. He hails from Dracut, MA.

Sophomore **Tom Wionzek** returns to the group for his second year, taking on the role of Music Director. The only problem with having Tom as Music Director is the fact that he is from

Canada, which means that many of his vowels don't match standard pronunciation. But enough about that. Tom's extreme attention to detail ensures that K06 will be in tip-top shape in this, the Kroks' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Tom majors in both Computer Science and Economics and hails from Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

## Baritones

Senior **Rex Baker IV** returns for his third year in the group, and his second stint as the Kroks' Tour Manager. After singing with the Krokodiloes during his freshman and sophomore years, Rex took a year off from Harvard to work in Iraq with the US Department of Defense. As a result of his recent travels in the Middle East, he hopes to plan some tour stops in new places this year. Rex sings the solo "Runaround Sue" and is from Dripping Springs, TX.

Sharing a bunk with Frank in Grays Hall is fellow freshman **Christian Denman**. According to his mother, Christian had heretofore displayed his vocal talents only in the shower. The Krokodiloes is thus his first step out of the tub and onto the stage. Christian is an impressive gymnast, and, lucky for us, he is always willing to do a back hand-spring or two whenever rehearsals get dull. Christian is a Biochemical Sciences major from Pearland, Texas.

Veteran Krok and former tour manager **Clayton Thomas** is in the Kroks once again in his senior year, in the position of General Manager. A former Krok once remarked that

*Continued on Page 4*

# Letter from the Kroks' 2006 General Manager

Dear Friends,

Shoes polished, bowties tight, cummerbunds fastened, pocket squares in place, we waited in the wings for our cue. With a thousand voices screaming from the audience, we took the stage for our first performance of the year. After a grueling audition process and a mere two weeks of rehearsal, we—six new and six returning members of the Kroks—found ourselves in front of a wildly enthusiastic crowd.

After we had sung perennial favorite Loch Lomond to a rousing ovation, it was clear that the neophytes had passed this first test with flying colors, setting the tone for the two most important themes of the year: celebration and thanks.

With the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the

horizon, it is time for us and all of our friends to celebrate sixty years of camaraderie and song. Preparations are underway for the festivities in March that will unite Kroks and friends from around the world.

While we look forward to celebrating the history of the Kroks, we also look forward to expressing thanks to our friends who, over the years, have helped us share our music with others. Indeed, our first performance of the year—the performance described above—was a charity concert that raised thousands of dollars for the



victims of Hurricane Katrina.

I look forward to embracing that vision of service and thanks over the course of the rest of the year.

In addition to our charity performances and the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festivities, the Krokodiloes of 2006 can already look back on a host of exciting experiences while looking forward to many, many more to come in the months ahead.

On November 17, the Kroks performed at William F. Buckley's highly publicized retirement event. Two days later, we joined the Whiffenpoofs in our annual Harvard-Yale Football Concert. And, on December 9th, we hosted "Underneath the Mistletoe," our first major performance this year for the Harvard community. We are also pleased to announce that we are putting the finishing touches on our newest CD release, *The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album*.

Currently, Tour Manager Rex Baker '05-'06 is busy planning an exciting world tour for the group. If you would be interested in bringing the Kroks to your area of the world this year, please do let us know. In the meantime, I encourage you to make plans to join us from March 16<sup>th</sup> to March 19<sup>th</sup> for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert and related festivities.

As the General Manager of the  
*Continued on Page 5*

## Introducing the Krokodiloes of 2006

*Continued from Page 3*

"Clayton has the face of a boy on Christmas morning." Although the nickname "Christmas" has not stuck, his boyish charms are here to stay, so much so that women young and old melt when Clayton sings to them the Krok classic "What's your Name?" Clayton, a senior, is a History and Literature major and is from Philadelphia.

### Basses

This is senior **Mikel Colson's** fourth year with the Kroks, and Mikel plays the role of the "old guy" extremely well. He knows all the old Krok stories and jokes, and so has been able to enlighten the "new guys" on Krok lore. Mikel sings the solos for "Masochism Tango" and "I've Got You Under My Skin." In addition to being a talented musician, Mikel probably knows more about Astrology than any other member of the group—just ask, and he will tell you all about it for the next three hours and forty-seven minutes. Mikel is an English

major from Montclair, NJ.

The Kroks are lucky to have snagged senior **Niyum Gandhi** from the Harvard Glee Club and Collegium Musicum this year. Niyum's dedication and commitment to the group are truly unparalleled, and although he is a new member, Niyum is already very much a leader and role model in the group. Maybe it's all in the name. I don't know... Niyum, an economics major, hails from State College, PA.

**Mike Padgett** enters the group this year as a junior. A saxophone player, Mike played for the past two years in the Hasty Pudding Theatricals' orchestra. So, this year in Bermuda, Mike will find himself on the other side of the net in the annual Krok-Pudding volleyball match. (The *correct* side of the net, I may note!) Since Mike is a tall guy, this will be a crippling blow to the Pudding squad. Mike is an English major from Los Angeles.

# Kroks Share “Strong Voices and Giant Hearts” with a Pediatric Oncology Ward in Santiago, Chile

Since 2003, the Kroks have performed for the children and families of the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a pediatric oncology ward in Santiago, Chile. In appreciation, Mr. Bernardo Gutierrez has written on behalf of the volunteers and members of the Fundación to express his gratitude to the Kroks and those who have made the annual visit possible. What follows is a translation of that letter.

Dear Friends of the Kroks,

In 2003, I was invited to see the Krokodiloes perform at the Teatro Oriente in Santiago and was immediately struck by the talent, joy, and charm of those young gentlemen from the North. Without hesitation, I spoke with their Tour Manager to extend them an invitation to share their talent and song with La Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara, a home for children with cancer. Without a second thought, these young men accepted the invitation.

During the visit and performance, the children laughed and enjoyed themselves, as the Kroks lifted spirits and formed an emotional connection not only with the children, but also with the children’s families. Even with a language barrier the Kroks

were able to share love and affection with the children—through their songs, but also through their companionship. It was an unforgettable afternoon for everyone.

To my surprise, what I had originally thought would be a one-time occurrence was repeated the following August when the Krokodiloes, on their own initiative, communicated with the Fundación to arrange a visit and once again perform for the children. This surprise was repeated again in 2005, when they visited yet again.

Personally, I feel that the Harvard Krokodiloes through their commitment to the children have established a tradition, a tradition that combines sacrifice, love, and art, rendering the strong voices and giant hearts of this group even more powerful.

If fate allows, and their future tours return them to Chile, we at our small Home will be waiting for them with open arms. Of course, the children are always eager to see the Krokodiloes, for through their love, art, and talent, the Kroks reassure them that they have friends in the United States and that they are, therefore, not alone in bearing the burden of this terrible illness.

From the bottom of our hearts, and from all of the volunteers and members of La Fun-



The Kroks of 2005 with children and their parents at the Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara in Santiago, Chile.

dación Maria Jesus Vergara, we wish to say thank you very, very much.

Best regards,

Bernardo Godoy Gutierrez  
Coordinator of Cultural Activities  
Fundación Maria Jesus Vergara  
Santiago Chile

The Friends of the Kroks would like to thank Krok Friend Mrs. Noel L. Baucom for the continued support that has made these performances possible.

## From the General Manager

Continued from Page 4

Krokodiloes of 2006, I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks for your continued friendship and support. It is through your kindness, loyalty, and generosity that we are able to spread our music from Cambridge to Cape Town, Back Bay to Bombay, and the North End to the South Seas. And for that, each of us will forever be in your debt.

With best wishes and warm regards from all of the Kroks,

Clayton H. Thomas III  
General Manager  
Harvard Krokodiloes of 2006



After the performance, Michael Mitnick enjoyed a little play-time with several kids at Fundación Vergara.

# From the Kroks' Tour Manager 2006

Dear Friends,

Greetings from a terrifically cold Cambridge, Massachusetts! After a two-year hiatus from the Krokodiloes, including a year away from Harvard, I am incredibly pleased to be returning to the group as Tour Manager of the Kroks of 2006. From traditional stops in places like Japan and Germany to new expeditions on safari and in the Middle East, the Krokodiloes' Sixtieth Anniversary Tour promises to sport one of the more involved and ambitious itineraries in recent memory.

Over the decades, the Kroks' penchant for travel has taken the group to a multitude of exotic locales. The Sixtieth Anniversary presents something of a challenge as we strive to incorporate novel destinations into the sturdy foundation laid by hard-working tour

managers and our loyal and generous contacts and fans. In addition, an amplified "service" component will make this year's tour even more rewarding and personally meaningful.

The Middle East has typically been a favorite tour destination of the Kroks, though world events and safety considerations sometimes preclude the group from venturing there. This year the Kroks are committed to visiting the "cradle of civilization" in their capacity as students, entertainers, and goodwill ambassadors. Though we have some tentative destinations penciled in, any input or help from the Friends of the Krokodiloes would be greatly appreciated!

The Kroks have always been made to feel at home in fine hotels, royal palaces, and safari lodges. Similarly,

we would like to continue to bring our gift of song to schools, children's hospitals, NGO fundraising events, and other charitable institutions. Though our tour schedule can sometimes be grueling, please do not hesitate to recommend your favorite charity to the Kroks. There are some performances that, if at all possible, we are always happy to make room for.

Once again, if you have any ideas or suggestions for the Kroks' Sixtieth Anniversary Tour, or would like to bring the Kroks to your locale, please email us at [friends@kroks.com](mailto:friends@kroks.com). Thanks very much for your continued interest and support of the Kroks. We wish you all the happiest of New Years, and safe and successful travels!

Rex G. Baker IV, Tour Manager

## Mission of the Friends of the Kroks

The Friends of the Kroks was established to assist the Harvard Krokodiloes, Harvard University's oldest *a cappella* singing group, in spreading their unique brand of song, humor, and charm throughout the world. A non-profit organization, the Friends of the Kroks is an international community of fans of the Krokodiloes, whose support allows the group to focus on their art and *raison d'être*: making beautiful music and sharing it with the world.

To make this possible, the Friends focus on the following areas:

- Building a global community of the Kroks' worldwide fans and supporters while always reaching out to new "friends;"
- Keeping "Krok friends" abreast of the Kroks' activities and needs through newsletters, email and regular mail updates, a website, etc., involving every Krok friend in realiz-



ing the mission of the Krokodiloes;

- Expanding the Kroks' global reach by subsidizing their ever-mounting travel and production expenses and by organizing special projects and concerts, enabling the Krokodiloes to concentrate less on financial matters and more on sharing their talents and their music with audiences around the world.

By these means, the Friends of the Kroks aid the Krokodiloes in realizing their mission: to spread "song, humor and charm across the globe."

## President of Friends

*Continued from Page 1*

Clayton Thomas and Tour Manager Rex Baker.

In the coming weeks, you will receive specific details on the big events in Cambridge. In the meantime, please contact us if you think you may be interested in attending the festivities. I look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you next March!

Best wishes for a happy new year,  
Todd Fletcher, President

## World Tour 2005

*Continued from Page 2*

like to offer a heartfelt thank you to all the hosts, loyal fans, and friends who made our tour possible and so meaningful. We would also like to thank Dr. and Mrs. Don and Harriet Aptekar for hosting us during our Intersession tour to Colorado, and Mr. and Mrs. Bill and Hilary Midon, who hosted us for the tenth year during our annual spring tour to Bermuda.

We hope to see you all at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary festivities here in Cambridge, and look forward to seeing you next summer!