

MUSICAL BRIDGES
 A Connecticut Yankee in China and Russia

SEPTEMBER 1991 - RUSSIA
 Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Ulan Ude, Chita
 Khabarovsk, Vladivostok

OCTOBER 1991 - CHINA
 Harbin, Shenyang, Shanghai

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PIANIST

July 1, 1991

Dear friends,

So much has happened in the two years since my last newsletter that I have adopted this new format to make enough room for all of it. For many of you this is the first newsletter from me. Welcome!

Let me take you from August 1989, the time of the last newsletter, to the present. At that time, I was about to embark on the second attempt to tour China and Russia, the first trip having been curtailed by the tragic events on Tiananmen Square in June. I traveled from Shanghai to Chita, USSR, and back across the border to Harbin, Shenyang, and Beijing, all in the course of twenty days.

The first performance was in the Shanghai Music Hall on a sweltering August evening to a very large and appreciative audience. Then, a 22-hour train ride from Harbin in northeast China to the Sino-Soviet border crossed great expanses of rolling grassland with little villages clustered along the rail route. Upon arrival at dusk in the border town of Manzhouli, I realized I had no idea how to find my Siberian host, Mr. Zaitsev, who was to meet me there, and having no command of either Chinese or Russian, the situation was either desperate or comical. I opted for comical.

There had been a group of Russians (tractor factory representatives from Kazakhstan) on the train with me, so I found them, and through drawings, a Russian-English dictionary, and a lot of gesturing, we came to understand the situation and they took me under their wing. The Russian train didn't depart until the next day, so I spent a wonderful night with them, eating, joking, singing, toasting--and feeling pretty lousy the next morning (beer and Chinese vodka), at which time they found Mr. Zaitsev and brought me to him.

The Chita visit began with a "russian bath" and picnic with Mr. Zaitsev and friends at a dacha just outside the city. As Zaitsev explained, it was important to take the ceremonial bath first: "It's good to get naked together, then we can trust each other." To make the situation all the more unnerving, a video camera was rolling the whole afternoon...it ends up the cameraman was editing the tape for modesty as he filmed, and the tape was given to me as a souvenir. Phew! We then enjoyed a shish-kabob barbecue followed by many toasts to friendship and music.

Chita is the capital of Chita Region and a major military seat in Siberia. From 1922 until only a few years ago the city had been closed to all foreigners. Historically, it is significant as the place to which the members of the Decembrist movement were exiled following their attempt to overthrow the czar in 1825. (My hosts referred to Chita as "The City of Exiles," ironically implying that they, feeling stuck out in the hinterlands, are "exiles" too.)

In Chita I performed two recitals and a third on television, taught a master class, and answered questions about America in a forum with school teachers.

After the too-short stay in Chita, I traveled by train back across the border to Harbin, where I performed Rhapsody in Blue with the Harbin Opera Orchestra, taught an impromptu lesson, lectured on 20th century American piano music...and drank many toasts to friendship and music.

Please turn to page two

Shenyang, one of China's major industrial cities, was next. Here I was again kept busy with recital and concerto appearances, lectures, master classes--and again, banquets with toasting to friendship and music.

Though I seem to make light of the toasting, in fact the most important aspect of this tour was the vibrant goodwill and the recognition of the opportunities that the tour presented to begin new friendships through music.

The tour ended with a performance at the Beijing Concert Hall, a new building just a few blocks from Tiananmen Square. The hall's manager pointed out that posters put up to announce the June tour "witnessed" the massacre on the Square. The concert was sold out within three days of the release of the tickets: a gratifying end to a wonderful tour.

I was invited back by all my hosts, and in September I will return to Harbin, Shenyang, and six cities in Russia for performing and teaching. This summer, I will perform across Connecticut to promote and raise funds for the trip. The whole project is called "Musical Bridges." I am asking friends of music and those interested in fostering international relations through music to help me raise the money to go. Please see page three of this newsletter for more on the importance of the tour and how you can help.

On my way home from China I stopped in Hawaii and performed a recital on Maui. The perfect way to unwind! From there I went directly to Alaska for the second Augustine's Artists Music Festival in Anchorage.

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During the 1989-90 season I was guest artist with orchestras in Minneapolis, Chicago, New Haven, and London, England, performing concertos by Barber, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and Bartok. I also presented my London recital debut in the Purcell Room, as well as recitals in several venues in the Midwest and Connecticut.

In September 1990 I returned to the third annual Augustine's Artists Festival in Alaska. This January, I passed my doctoral exam at Yale; the D.M.A. degree was conferred in May.

Performances this spring have included: Los Angeles (American Youth Symphony, Mehli Mehta, conductor), Arizona (with Quintessence Wind Quintet), England (Yale Club and Green College, Oxford), and Chicago (Dame Myra Hess Series).

Plans for the end of the year include, besides the tour in China and Russia, a return to London for a reprise of the Yale Club concert, a recital in the Parisian suburb of Asnieres, and a tour with members of Augustine's Artists to the Russian Winter Festival in Moscow during Christmas.

I promise the next newsletter will not take two years to get out! In the meantime, please read the fundraising appeal on the following page and help as you are able. And in any case, please write; I would enjoy hearing from you!

With all best wishes for a world at peace
and alive with music,

Tom Dickinson

MUSICAL BRIDGES

A Connecticut Yankee in China and Russia

The world has changed tremendously in just a few short years. No longer is the Soviet Union "the Evil Empire" or China "the Red Threat." Instead of working against each other, the three super-powers are finding ways to work together, economically, politically, and culturally, to make the world a safer and more harmonious place, enriching all of us.

Throughout history, it has been the cultural contacts--musicians, artists, wayfarers--that have first broken through old prejudices and fears to pave the way for economic and political relations. In 1989, I joined that tradition in my tour of China and Russia, achieving many firsts: first Western artist to cross the Sino-Soviet border in over thirty years, first to perform in the Siberian capital of Chita since 1922, first to lecture on American music in two Chinese provincial capitals, to name a few. In a toast, one of my Chinese hosts said, "With this visit we are building a bridge between our two countries," to which I replied, "We better build it wide, because there is going to be a lot of traffic!"

Now I have the opportunity to strengthen and deepen these ties, to

"widen the bridges," through a second, larger tour this fall, performing and teaching American music in cities across Siberia and staying for several weeks in two Chinese cities for more in-depth teaching and performing. As these contacts grow, so do the opportunities for other cultural exchanges, for greater understanding between our very different world views, and for broader economic relations--for putting those bridges to use.

This tour is unique for being on the "people" level: It is not a government-sponsored tour, but one that exemplifies the American "Can do!" spirit. And if there is one thing that impresses the Chinese and Russians most, it is this American trait.

For this exploratory trip I will be donating my professional services. (Though I will be paid in Russia, it will be in non-convertible rubles [we are using this trip to learn how to turn the rubles into goods and then into dollars] and within China all my expenses will be covered.)

I must find the resources to get to the Orient and cover administrative

costs. The budget is \$7,500.00 and is needed before my departure in September. I am appealing to friends of music and international goodwill to help me make the trip possible. Please give as generously as you can.

Thank you.

No Totebags...

*For donations of \$100-
\$499.99, you will receive a
Musical Bridges tour t-shirt
printed in two colors, featuring
artwork from the poster, a
smaller version of which is on
page four of this newsletter.*

*If you contribute \$500-
\$999.99, I will send you a
postcard from Siberia. (This is
more complicated than it
sounds!)*

*Donate \$1,000 or more
and I will give a command
performance, anywhere in the
United States, to be enjoyed
by you and your friends, to
impress your corporate clients,
or to benefit your favorite
charity.*

Please cut here

I want to help build Musical Bridges. Enclosed is my gift of: