

Musical Bridges, Inc.

Alina Simone, Executive Director

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Musical Bridges, Inc. is the only cultural exchange organization devoted to helping the remote Siberian capital city of Chita and Chita Region join the world community. Closed during the Soviet era, this region has been hobbled throughout its history by geographical, political and economic isolation. Recognizing the power of person to person contact for positive change, Musical Bridges focuses on educational, social and business support and the arts. Education projects include sending English teachers, promoting relationships between American and Chita institutions, assisting in student and teacher exchange and providing teaching materials. In the arts it promotes exchanges in the performing and visual arts. It also assists in access to resources and developing contacts. By encouraging Chita-initiated projects, matching them with American resources and following them through to completion, Musical Bridges builds lasting bonds of successful cooperation and mutual benefit through which understanding and friendship can grow.

Spring 2001 -- New Leadership!

Message from Tom Dickinson, Founder

A new Chairman with leadership experience and ties to the business community, and a new Executive Director with great new ideas, and a mandate to implement them, are the big news since our last newsletter.



Tom Dickinson

Rick Chapo, an attorney with Sulzner and Associates in San Diego, and one of our 1999-2000 teachers in Chita, took over the Chairmanship in last November, and has brought new effectiveness to our Board meetings. Alina Simone, formerly Director of Special Projects at the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service in Austin, Texas, began as full-time Executive Director in April, and has hit the ground running. Read messages from Rick and Alina later in this newsletter.

Now, Musical Bridges is positioned with the expertise and energy to take our work to a new level through more effective fund-raising and a careful and considered expansion of grassroots level programs that go further to help Chita pull itself out of its isolation and a difficult economic and social situation.

We bid a fond farewell to Beth Merrill, whose work in the transitional position of Administrative Director for the past eight months has been invaluable. She returns to social service work in Central America. We wish her well!

These changes at Musical Bridges are underwritten by a major three-year grant to cover operating expenses from Jean and Charles Dickinson. This grant makes possible our first fully-paid staff member, providing the continuity,

attention and respect within the non-profit world, that will allow us to seek major funding that has not available to us in the past, and to intensify cooperation with our colleagues in Chita. It is a wonderful and broad-minded gift. We are grateful for their initiative, and hope, as do they, that their gift will challenge you to give generously, as well.

As for me, these changes in Musical Bridges free me up to return to the piano. It was a concert tour to Chita that started Musical Bridges, but this labor of love then took all my attention. Musical Bridges is now in the good hands of Rick and Alina, so I can get back to what I do best. But I remain committed to Musical Bridges and stay closely involved--that will never change!

Musical Bridges has come a long way since its founding in 1993. This fall will be the sixth year we've sent teachers, and we now send four teachers a year to two villages in Chita Region and two universities in the city of Chita. We've successfully sent two major shipments of books

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and computer equipment for use by Chita educational institutions. We've developed strong working relationships with organizations and individuals in Chita which make our accomplishments possible. With our new leadership we are poised to take advantage of the solid groundwork laid in the past eight years. This is an exciting time for Musical Bridges!

Message from Rick Chapo, Chairman



Rick Chapo

It is a great honor to chair the Board of Musical Bridges, an organization having a dramatic effect in a remote part of the world. In the past, I have been approached by a number of charitable organizations to join their boards, but have always refused because of a suspicion regarding the actual impact they were having. I have no such concerns about Musical Bridges!

In 1999, I took a sabbatical from my professional life and traveled to Chita as a teacher for Musical Bridges. Knowing little about Russia, much less Chita, I had no preconceptions about what I would find or the impact of the efforts of Musical Bridges. Indeed, as a contributor to a charitable organization, you may often have similar questions regarding the impact of your contributions. However, from the very first day to the last of my ten month stay, I was amazed at the difference Musical Bridges makes in Chita.

People in Chita aggressively pursue the study of English. Through your contributions, Musical Bridges has been able to expand the collection of English language books at the regional library from a small section of one room to a full room and more. And the presence of Musical Bridges' teachers in Chita has also had a profound effect. Although contact with native speakers has an obvious benefit to the English students, the effect of your contributions goes far beyond this.

During my time in Chita, Robert Romano and I offered training in the use of the Internet. Even the most skeptical student was amazed at the information he could find. Using the

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Internet to find employment was particularly interesting. The shock and joy of one class when we located a major airline seeking Russian employees was a sight to behold. As one student said, "You have given us hope!"

Capitalizing on this effort, Musical Bridges has used your contributions to fund Internet access for a Chita non-profit that assists local grassroots organizations.

While we take pride in these accomplishments, the truth is that you should receive all the credit. Without your contributions, Musical Bridges could not make these efforts, and the people of Chita would have little interaction with the outside

world. Help us continue this work by contributing to Musical Bridges. Your contribution makes the difference!

In the last few months, Musical Bridges has made significant advancements in its efforts to assist the people of Chita. These include hiring Alina Simone as a full time Executive Director and the formation of a plan to bring additional sources of assistance to Chita. We are currently working to assist in education on health issues such as AIDS, and also exploring ways to work with local orphanages and develop business exchanges. In a strong statement of belief in our projects, Charles and Jean Dickinson made a major contribution to assist in the effort.

In a long overdue gesture, I would like to thank Tom Dickinson for his immense efforts with Musical Bridges, past, present and future. As the driving force for Musical Bridges, Tom has been instrumental in both building the organization and achieving its goals.

As we move forward, it remains our mission to help Chita in its continued transition. If you should have any questions or comments regarding our efforts, please feel free to contact either Alina [(201) 420-4005] or me [(760) 402-1867]. Furthermore, we are in the process of setting up programs for our contributors to visit Chita for short periods of time to work with various organizations and see the direct impact of Musical Bridges. We would be more than happy to discuss this and any other initiative with you.

Thank you for your continued support of Musical Bridges. Please make a contribution to this worthy and effective cause!

News

- **Jason Armstrong Baker**, a percussionist and world music expert from Columbia, Maryland, is helping put "music" back into Musical Bridges. He will participate in Chita's "Great Source" Music Festival in June 2002 at the end of a year-long visit to Nakhodka, a port city in Russia's Far East, to teach and work at Nakhodka's music college. Musical Bridges is providing a grant and logistical assistance.
- Four outstanding teachers will depart for Chita this fall (see the next page for more information.) One of those is 2000-2001 teacher, **David Balan**, who will return for another year.
- **Dan Kirwan**, 2000 - 2001 teacher at Chita State Technical University, returned home early due to health reasons, after teaching one semester. We thank him for the energy, great enthusiasm and knowledge he poured into the program.
- **Robert Romano**, two-time teacher alumnus, will return to Chita next year as Musical Bridges' in-country staff.
- Working in tandem with the **Sabre Foundation**, a non-profit organization that facilitates large scale donations of written materials to countries in need, Musical Bridges shipped a 2nd container of books to our partners in the Educational Consortium in Chita. These materials arrived in January, and the Consortium is working on distribution.

Message from Alina Simone, Executive Director

I am thrilled to be taking up the Musical Bridges mantle! As a native born Russian raised in the United States, working to enhance cultural understanding between our two countries is a cause close to my heart.

For me, Musical Bridges is now the hyphen in "Russian-American!"



Alina Simone

As Director of Special Projects for an award-winning, statewide housing advocacy organization in Texas, I participated in all aspects of non-profit management from fundraising, to event organizing and community involvement, to developing and managing new programs. My experience working for a tiny organization with a huge agenda and a passionate Board of Directors makes the transition to Musical Bridges easy. I am so impressed with the dedication of the MB Board, as well as the strong networks it has already built in Chita; this labor of love will serve as a strong foundation for our new programs.

Would you like to travel to Siberia? We hope to start offering a diverse array of short-term volunteer and excursion opportunities within Chita Region, perhaps before the summer is out!

Our website re-design will be ready in August. The new and expanded site will serve as a portal to all those who are fascinated by Russia's east, especially the vast and relatively unknown eastern Siberia, providing information about our programs as well as insight into Chita's history and attractions, with pages dedicated to our partnering organizations.

Chita's continued military importance, strategic location and natural isolation leave some to wonder whether the Region might once again become "closed"--sealed off from external and internal travel for the sake of national security interests. The best way to keep Chita open is by strengthen-

ing its sense of self as an international community--as part of the world at large and not just a distant satellite of Moscow--and this is at the heart of Musical Bridges' mission.

Our teachers bring to Chita not only their language and teaching skills, but their history, their optimism and energy, their talents and ideas. What they share with the students and others whose lives they touch truly does bridge the divide between our cultures. In classrooms, in banyas, and over dinner tables at "vyecherenkas," the differences between east and west are enjoyed, and sometimes hotly debated. In these one-on-one situations the work and joy of building bridges between our two countries can shrink to fit within the confines of a single room.

Therefore, we hope that you will support our Teaching Fellowship program with a generous donation. Now that the majority of our funding is earmarked for operations--basically to support my efforts to write grants, expand programs and develop partnerships in Chita--we are relying on supporters like you to fund our programs.

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Your contribution will help ensure that we continue sending outstanding teachers and teaching materials to Chita, continue to encourage grassroots efforts in Chita to improve conditions and contact, and continue to be the reliable American cultural exchange resource for Chita that we've been for the past eight years--in a word, that we continue this great work of building bridges.

Our New Teachers for 2001-2002



David Balan of Olathe, Kansas returns to Dul'durga, 100 km from Chita, for a second year. A veteran of the U.S.

Army, he earned his Master of Arts in East-European and Eurasian Studies from the University of Texas at Austin and has traveled and studied extensively in Russia.



Jennifer Mordes of Sayreville, New Jersey will teach at Chita State Technical University in Chita. She

studied English at Rowan University, graduating with high honors, and has visited Russia independently four times, traveling to many off-the-beaten-path locales.



Kevin Magee of Cleveland, Ohio will take a year off from teaching at Cleveland State University to teach at Zabai-

kalsky State Pedagogical University in Chita. Kevin has a Master's Degree from the Iowa Writers Workshops. He is a published poet, and his work appears in major literary journals in the U.S. and abroad.



Jessica Jacobson of Bloomington, Minnesota is our first teacher in the village of Ugdan, 16 km from Chita. After

working for several international aid organizations, she is currently enrolled at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and Int'l Affairs at Princeton University. Jessica will also consult for non-governmental groups in Chita.

Become a Member of Musical Bridges, Inc.

Membership helps guarantee Musical Bridges' future and entitles you to:

- *Recognition in our twice-yearly mailings*
- *Our bumper sticker: "Do you know where Chita is? I do!"*
- *Periodic e-mail updates on Musical Bridges activities*

Other ways to contribute:

- Donate stock to Musical Bridges
- Include Musical Bridges in your will
- Make Musical Bridges an irrevocable beneficiary of your insurance policy
- Name Musical Bridges as beneficiary of your retirement plan
- Contributions may also be wired directly to Musical Bridges' bank account

For information about these or other creative approaches to supporting Musical Bridges, please check the box on the donation envelope and we will contact you.

Help us send a teacher!

\$5000 covers the entire cost of sending one teacher, including travel, stipend and insurance.

\$2500 covers travel expenses for one teacher.

\$1500 covers the stipend for a teacher in Dul'durga or Ugdan.

\$1200 covers the stipend for a teacher within the city of Chita.

\$500 covers one teacher's medical insurance.

\$100 helps a teacher buy much needed teaching materials.

Do you know someone who might be interested in building cultural bridges between the United States and Russia and would like to hear about the work of Musical Bridges? Please include his/her name and address in the enclosed envelope or send an e-mail to MusicalBridges@yahoo.com

Remember, you can use your credit card by going to www.musicalbridges.org and clicking "Donate Online"

Please give generously!

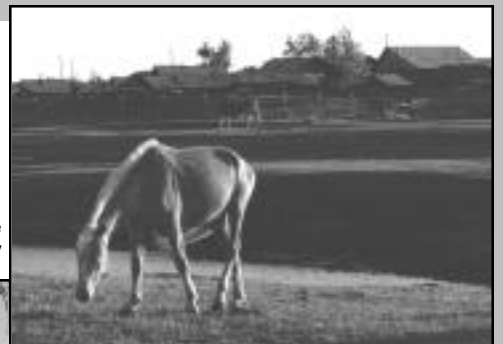
THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

Robert & Marie Anderson
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Heidi Syropoulos, Art Vawter
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AND ALL THE REST OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS!

Images of Chita

Village scene
photo by Aleksandr Lesnansky



Camping in Chita Region
photo by Andrei Kalashnikov



Eating berries in the taiga-photo by Andrei Kalashnikov

Fishing near the dacha
photo by Evgeny Epanchinev

