

Newsletter No. 2

China Tour from May 29th to June 17th 2013

It was a unique and wonderful trip, discovering the culture of a nation of which we knew little or nothing. As often happens, influenced by the stories of others, we were expecting to meet a cruel population, lacking emotion and culture; but right from the start, we had to completely change our minds! The people were so kindhearted, generous, hospitable, honest, refined, and interested in a culture, like ours, different from theirs; open minded mentally and spiritually, they wanted us to feel at home. During our three weeks there we were treated like princesses, like stars. We were thrilled to be part, even though for such a short time, of Chinese daily life, and not perceived or considered tourists.

We found the Chinese to be extremely well organized and super punctual. The theaters were big and beautiful and most of them had excellent acoustics. There were good pianos nearly everywhere (Steinway D in the richer provinces). Before we went on stage, cleaners were literally polishing the stage floor and stalls. The concert halls were full, most with lots of wriggling and chattering children; we were surprised at our concerts to see so many young people and children (the latter strictly accompanied by their parents). We understood that for the Chinese, educating their children, often a single child, is of vital importance! Parents do and give all to guarantee them the best education.

There is no concept of total silence in the concert halls, you have to get used to this immediately. During the performance there will be a photographer coming on stage taking pictures, children running; this is all part of the performance. People are thrilled if one attempts a few sentences in Mandarin; they adore it if you play some of their traditional melodies, whereas they seem less attracted if you play fantasies of famous operas.

We performed in the province of Hebei (Boading, Handan, Shijiazhuang, Tianjin), then in the province of Beijing, in the province of Anhui (Hefei), Dalian, Nanjing and finally in Shanghai. This was our first tour in China and a huge privilege for us; we tried with all our hearts to transmit and share music. The last four days were quite tough, as we were travelling to another place every day with a concert in the evening, and in fact, the day after our last concert we were completely exhausted (we were almost unable to see much of Shanghai...), but we made it and we are happy and proud that we succeeded!!!

We also discovered the culinary arts that change from one region to another. We can truly confirm that their cuisine is one of the most tasty and delicious that we have ever tried. The Chinese have a cult of good food. Cooking is an art. To them having a meal is not just a matter of filling the stomach, it has a symbolic and cultural meaning: it is a time to meet up, to be able to talk, laugh, drink and toast, and slowly start tempting the palate with unique, delicious food. Guests have place of honor and are almost venerated. Respect both for the aged and for guests is a strict part of the rules governing the different table customs. They may sit for hours around the table (it happened to us too) happily and noisily toasting the health of everyone of the party. In Hefei, where we had a concert, we had an almost gastronomic tour. Origins of Chinese food go far back in time. Not only are there vegetables, beans, noodles, unknown kinds of mushroom, all sorts of meat, fish and crustacean, but also a selection of tofu that we were lucky enough to taste (unforgettable the stinky tofu...).

We have understood that China in all its greatness has a soul!!!

Our life is privileged: to perform music around the globe, meet new people, make new friends, experience, enjoy, delight, be deeply moved, play music, learn....

Our heartfelt thanks to all those who made our unforgettable tour possible!

Ambra and Fiona

18th June 2013























