

The San Diego

YOUTH SYMPHONY

goes to China

A 13-HOUR FLIGHT ACROSS THE PACIFIC, 86 INSTRUMENTS, 82 STUDENTS, 25 ALUMNI, 10 CHAPERONES, AND ONE CONDUCTOR—AND THAT’S JUST THE BEGINNING. THE SAN DIEGO YOUTH SYMPHONY’S LATEST VENTURE TO THE FORBIDDEN CITY AND BEYOND CELEBRATES THE ORGANIZATION’S 70TH ANNIVERSARY AND UPHOLDS A LONG-HELD TRADITION OF MUSIC WITHOUT BORDERS

CAPTIONS BY LAURA ANN GILMORE, SOFIA HASHEMI-ASASI, AND MEGAN MATTHEW

06.27.15 | 9:30 a.m.
HISTORIC HUTONG, BEIJING

We got to take a rickshaw ride through the old Hutong area of Beijing. The streets smelled slightly smoky from air pollution, and we could often hear the street vendors bartering with customers.



06.27.15 | 11 a.m.
QIANAMEN STREET, BEIJING

We went “treasure hunting” by taking pictures of specific objects throughout the area. We tried green tea-flavored ice cream. Later, we saw scorpions on sticks, starfish, sea horses, various meats and fruits... it was a smorgasbord of food and trinkets.





06.25.15 | 3:30 p.m.
THE FORBIDDEN CITY, BEIJING

I loved it when our tour guide showed and explained what purposes the different buildings served hundreds of years ago. In the grand scheme of things, what is considered "old" in American history is really nothing compared to the history of other countries such as China.

06.26.15 | 10 a.m.
GREAT WALL OF CHINA, BEIJING

Right before we started climbing! The wall stretched as far as the eye could see. We climbed so many stairs we lost count, and were drenched in sweat and exhausted by the end. But it was worth it.



06.27.15 | 8 p.m.
FORBIDDEN CITY CONCERT HALL, BEIJING

Performing in the Forbidden City Concert Hall was amazing. The stage was beautiful and the acoustics were great. The energy we had in the hall that night is something I will never forget.



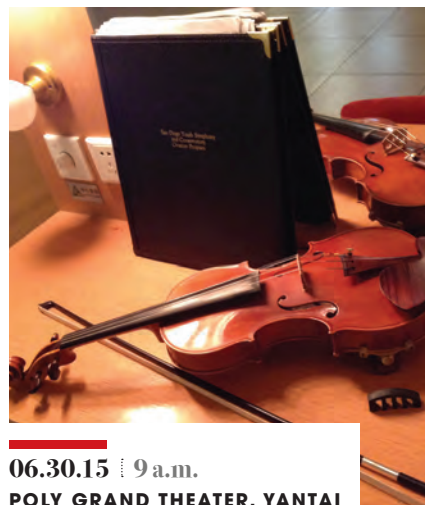
06.29.15 | 11 a.m.
YANGMA ISLAND, YANTAI

More stairs and more climbing! Here, we took a break and took in the view. We will never forget the memories and friendships that we made there.

06.29.15 | Noon

YANGMA ISLAND, YANTAI

The so-called horse-breeding island. It was an almost familiar place; it reminded us so much of the beaches in California.



06.30.15 | 9 a.m.

POLY GRAND THEATER, YANTAI

Backstage before our dress rehearsal. We string players could not take our bows with us to China because of laws about bringing ivory and certain types of wood in and out of the country. We were given carbon-fiber bows to play for the trip.



06.30.15 | 11 a.m.

CHILDREN'S PALACE, YANTAI

Performers from a traditional Peking opera. The costumes were vibrant, the music exotic, and the acrobatics impressive. We loved every minute.

06.30.15 | 2 p.m.

YANTAI CULTURAL CENTER, YANTAI

Having the opportunity to watch Chinese musicians playing their traditional instruments was incredible. They had completely different instruments and tonalities, yet their performances still resonated with us through the power of music.



07.02.15 | 10:30 a.m.

EN ROUTE TO SHANGHAI

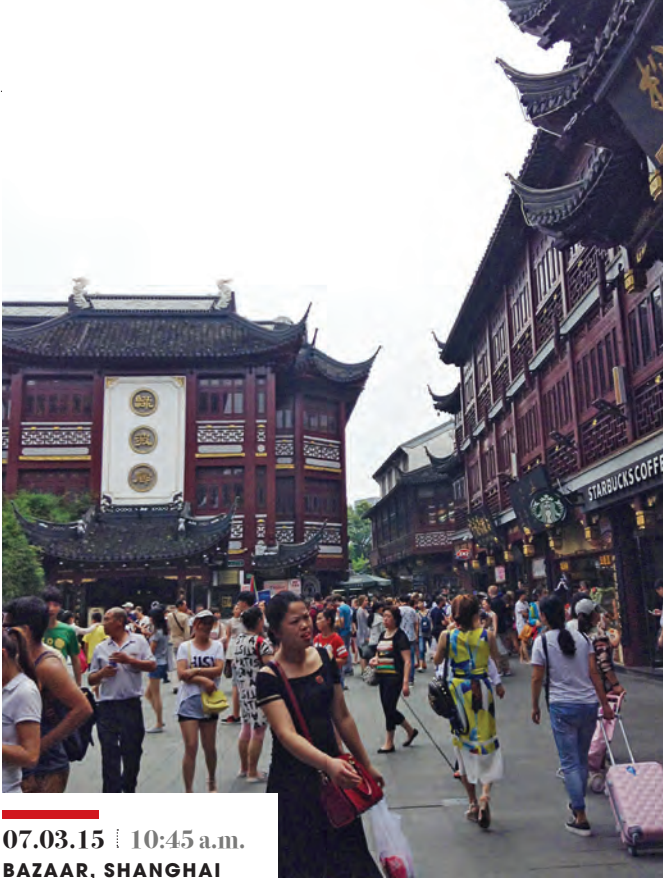
Riding on a Chinese airplane was great. They served us Chinese food, but no chopsticks on the airplanes!

07.02.15 | 2 p.m.

JADE BUDDHA TEMPLE, SHANGHAI

This is an altar where people could pray or meditate. The statues in this room were huge!





07.03.15 | 10:45 a.m.
BAZAAR, SHANGHAI

A beautiful old part of town that housed lovely shops and food vendors. And a Starbucks! We brought home traditional Chinese green teas and watercolor fans for our families.



07.03.15 | 8:30 p.m.
HUANGPU RIVER CRUISE, SHANGHAI

The lights of Shanghai. The tall pointy building is named the Oriental Pearl TV Tower. It was constantly changing colors!



07.04.15 | 10:30 a.m.
PUDONG NEW AREA, SHANGHAI

We took a tour of Shanghai's Pudong New Area. We could see a lot of the skyline, even though it was a very cloudy afternoon.



07.04.15 | 10:30 p.m.
HAI DI LAO HOTPOT, SHANGHAI

After our last concert, the orchestra ate dinner at Hai Di Lao Hotpot in Shanghai—definitely a new experience! We were greeted by a smiling group of staff members who were all waving American flags. You cook your food in a boiling pot of broth by dipping in thin slices of meat and other pieces of food with chopsticks. It was an awesome way to end the trip.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHERS



LAURA ANN GILMORE
Age: 17
Home: Encinitas
Instrument: Oboe

Practice?
Twelve hours a week.

Why classical music?
My parents encouraged piano in elementary school. I fell in love with it. I was introduced to the oboe in 7th grade.

Non-classical faves?
Two Door Cinema Club, Paper Kites, Death Cab for Cutie

Music in three words...
Universal, expressive, human

China was...
An incredible opportunity to make music with amazing people in a beautiful country.



SOFIA HASHEMI-ASASI
Age: 17
Home: San Marcos
Instrument: Violin

Music is...
Everything. A way to express myself and connect with others. I can't imagine my life without music.

Why classical?
When I was four, I found my mother's old violin and wanted to learn to play it.

Practice?
Two hours per day.

Why China?
To share our music, and to connect with our audiences through the universal language of music.



MEGAN MATTHEW
Age: 32 (alumna)
Home: North Park
Instrument: Violin

Music is...
A way to express emotions that have no words.

Why violin?
It just speaks to me. A part of me wishes I played cello because it's way more kick-ass.

Non-classical faves?
Trio Gadjó, Little Hurricane, Billie Holiday

China was...
Before the trip I felt I was blasting off to Mars. But after meeting the wonderful, kind people, I realized they weren't so different from me at all.