



## Symphonia Vienna in China

We are at the beginning of March, already 7 weeks since the journey to China took place. It's time to review this tour!

The orchestra was composed of 60 players from 18 different countries (e.g. Rob from New Zealand, Juan from Costa Rica, Nica from Israel, further members from Spain, Hungary, Switzerland, Croatia, Serbia, Greece, ...)! So, we were a "colourful crowd", but we all got on really well!



The journey itself was quite strenuous especially in the first half because a different city was on the agenda almost every day. Mostly, a bus journey or flight was scheduled during the day, and in the evening a concert. Hence, there was not much time left for sightseeing (which I hadn't expected anyway!).



The concert halls could not have been more diverse: the absolutely biggest hall was certainly the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, whereas I want to make a correction to my last article: this hall does not only accommodate my predicted 6,000 spectators, but there is room for up to 12,000 people. And since the concert was very well-frequented, I estimate that about 10,000 people attended our concert!

The other venues ranged from the really hypermodern concert hall (Shanghai) to the ice-cold sports hall, where the orchestra was even allowed to perform in thick jackets, since the risk of freezing to death was a little too high!!

And my stage table required partly acrobatic performances. The "table" (piano stools, parts of the stage or scenery, masked wooden things) often was only knee-high which is absolutely manageable with trousers, but poses difficulties when wearing a tight, long evening dress!



But I always mastered this situation as well, and had great success with the Chinese audience.



As you can see on the picture to the left: even the youngest were fascinated by the zither!

In Nanjing, former capital of China, we were given a unique honour: a new district will be named after the orchestra - we felt very much honoured!

The second part of the journey became more relaxed regarding the number of concerts. Notably the whole last week we had off, and since we had returned to Beijing at the end of our tour, we now had plenty of time to catch up on some sightseeing. Fortunately, a trip to the Great Wall had been organised for us, and it was absolutely stunning!

Although, you need to be fit for this trip since the climb onto the Wall, with the steps of different heights and the extreme inclines, proved to be considerably strenuous. Besides, an unpleasant wind was blowing, so the already predominant cold temperatures seemed even a lot colder. But I was not cold for long - as I mentioned, many steps ...!



In spite of it all, the Wall is a breath-taking and fascinating construction! It's a pity that a large part of it is condemned to decay, and only a few sections are preserved for tourist purposes.



Another essential point on our list of sights was, of course, the "Forbidden City". Luckily, a few members of the orchestra always joined up to explore the area together because, unfortunately, in China you don't get very far without any knowledge of Chinese. Even the taxi drivers are only able to read their own characters, and so our trips were always quite exciting!

Summing up, I can say that China is worth a visit, but under specific conditions: one should not choose winter as the ideal holiday period (everything seems much more pleasant in spring), and have enough time to also visit the rural parts of China. For we unfortunately only got to see the large cities, and they were all in a way quite alike (Shanghai is the big exception of course: an enormous city which apparently looks different every year, since an immense amount is being built!).

By all means, this journey was a little "taster" of a completely different cultural environment, and interesting for that reason alone.