

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOTE: THERE WILL BE GOOD INTERVIEW AND VIDEO OPPORTUNITIES AT THE BAND'S REHEARSAL ON WED., AUG. 27 AT 6:30PM AT MULTNOMAH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 7555 SW 45TH AVE. IN PORTLAND.

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Band Primed for Chinese Odyssey

It's nearly "Go time" for Portland's Ambassadors of Fun, **The Beat Goes On Marching Band (TBGO)**. After 10 months of planning, numerous rehearsals and two dozen public performances, the band flies to China on Sep. 10 to represent the United States at the Shanghai Tourism Festival.



Many in the all-adult band feel like dance team member Sue Marietta (near left, performing TBGO's Thriller routine), who calls the trip "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I think it'll be a good 'girls' trip!"

The band's members – whether "girls" or "boys," though they range in age from 20 to 82 – have traveled to perform in parades for years. Some of TBGO's previous trips include The Bahamas, the Calgary Stampede

and, just a few weeks ago, New England for the Fourth of July.

Flag spinner Audrey Perino (right, foreground) is "anxious to see the reaction of the Chinese people to a bunch of old folks marching down the parade route.



We'll see if they can be as enthusiastic as the crowd in New Orleans was when we marched for Mardi Gras!"



TBGO director Steve Tolopka (near left) sounds like a football coach when talking about his band. "We're peaking at just the right time. After a summer full of performances, we're at the top of our game," he says. "We're going to look and sound great in China. We're going to charm the pants off the people in Shanghai!"

Terri Cone (far left) is a TBGO flute player and is the one band member among the 121 marchers whose heritage is Chinese. She's visited Shanghai on several occasions. "TBGO is pretty unique – the audience really will not have a frame of reference as to what to expect. I'm sure that they will like the fact that there are so many different age groups represented, especially the amount of older people in the band."

There are others in the band who also have experienced China. Mellophone player Jan Clark lived in Asia for 15 years and has traveled around the Middle Kingdom (the name the Chinese use to refer to their country).

(more)

She's amazed at the band's impending opportunity. "I still can't believe they invited us! China is so 'spit and polish.' When it comes to our band, the Chinese are not going to know what hit 'em!"

Bells player Marie Wachlin and her husband, support team member Norm (right), have taught in China each summer for over 20 years. Marie will be focused more on her fellow band members' reactions than those of parade watchers: "I want our people see the *laobaixing* or "regular people"—not just tourist sites. Get up early in the morning to experience the city as it wakes up – vendors at the street market carefully arranging their colorful fresh vegetables and cooks deep frying Norm's favorite breakfast treat, *you tiao* (oily stick)."



The main reason to go to China is to meet the people," adds Norm Wachlin. "I want our band members to learn how to say "*ni-hao*," which means 'hello' and to smile. If you do that, 99 percent of the people will be your friends."



Whether it's oily stick or other gastronomical "opportunities," Jan Clark (left) is encouraging her fellow band members to have open minds and open mouths: "Try *everything*! It's only for a week – don't rely on hamburgers and don't eat cold cereal for breakfast!"

On Sep. 13 the band will march in the festival's Grand Parade, through the largest city in the world. Several other performances are also planned, including a chance to play alongside Shanghai's Kongjiang High School marching band, and a concert in Portland's sister city of Suzhou.

Cone suggests her bandmates be both prepared and adaptable: "Shanghai is like New York City on steroids – it's amazingly crowded! We'll have to realize that it'll be even more crowded at this special event. It'll be important to just relax and not worry a lot about things you can't control. "



Details of the trip, including some performance venues and times, are still to be determined. Tom Higham (right), a TBGO clarinetist and the band's travel agent, is already dipping into his font of flexibility.

"Normally I control everything, but in this case I'm at a disadvantage because the ground operations are being handled by the Chinese. So, I am at the mercy of waiting for them to do things," says Higham, who's traveled to China many times. Then he remembers Clark's advice. "I know everything is going to come together," he says, "So, maybe on second thought it's better that I don't have to worry about it."

In other words, "Keep calm and play on!"

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PHOTO CREDITS:

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THE BEAT GOES ON MARCHING BAND: More smiles per mile!

Want to come out and play?

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