

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Beat Goes On Marching Band

Portland, Oregon

The Beat Went On Across China, Through Downpours and Outpourings of Friendship

PORTLAND – Over mountains and valleys, despite a monsoon and the ever-present language barrier, **The Beat Goes On Marching Band** (TBGO) charmed thousands of Chinese from Shanghai to The Great Wall earlier this month. The all-adult marching band, based in Portland, has just returned from a 12-day tour which included stops in Shanghai, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Beijing.



“We never sounded so good; and maybe we were never appreciated so much by so many,” says TBGO Music Director Steve Tolopka (left, background saxophonist). “We spent the better part of a year preparing for this opportunity and all the hard work paid off. The trip proved that music truly is *the* universal language!”

There were many highlights, including a giant electronic billboard welcome to Suzhou (right), Portland’s sister city; an illuminated nighttime parade through the world’s largest city (below); and concerts in front of architectural wonders and inside China’s biggest shopping mall. But perhaps the beginning and end of the trip provided the most lasting memories.

The band’s first night in China called for a full dress rehearsal for the following evening’s Shanghai Tourism Festival Grand Parade. Bands representing 24 countries jammed late into the night, despite a monsoonal storm which drenched everyone to the bone. TBGO had



paraded through Hurricane Arthur in Rhode Island back in July, so the rain didn’t faze the players. But the impromptu, international battle of the bands which ensued will long be remembered.

“The storm brought the rehearsal to a dead stop, but did nothing to dampen our spirits,” says Tolopka. “To pass the time, we’d play, then a Swiss band would take up their

(more)



instruments, then a Taiwanese band, then bagpipers from Canada, then a troupe of Chilean dancers. Sometimes the bands would play together. It was a remarkable experience. Eventually the rehearsal started back up ... and went on until 1:30am. Even then there were hundreds of people on the street cheering us on – and this just for a rain-soaked *rehearsal!*”

Wherever it performed, the sight and sound of more than 100 Americans playing music ranging from Lady Gaga’s *Poker Face* to *Over Mountains and Valleys* (the theme song of a Chinese television series) stopped passersby in their tracks. For a

populace which venerates its elders, encountering middle-aged and senior citizens from across the Pacific jamming down the street was unexpected and fun. The band was photographed by and with enthusiastic locals thousands of times.



The band’s schedule originally included two parades and three concerts, including one in front of Shanghai’s Oriental Pearl Tower (below right). But TBGO’s final afternoon in China was spent at Juyong Pass along The Great Wall, about 90 minutes from Beijing. What better place for one final concert?

“So, we climbed up the Wall with our instruments and played for 20 minutes [below left], surrounded by trekkers. It was a surreal ending to an amazing trip,” says Tolopka. “A moment and an odyssey we’ll never, ever forget.”
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PHOTO CREDITS:
Nighttime photos by Rose Zhao. Other photos by Ken Kane. Photo files available upon request.

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

Want to come out and play?

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