

China Trip Information Meeting, Sept. 14, 2009

Purpose of this meeting is to make sure you are comfortable with our arrangements for making this a safe and memorable trip. We want our students to be true emissaries, sharing our music and culture with another part of the world. And we want them to learn as much as possible about the culture of the people we will visit. In order to ensure that the trip is as smooth as we can make it, there will be several deadlines that must be met relative to paper work, payments, etc. We will be doing several extra things along the way to help us be sure we are prepared to deal with the added responsibilities of international travel.

If you are not absolutely sure that you and your student have a **Current passport** and other necessary travel documents (Green Cards, etc) necessary for leaving and re-entering the country you need to secure these immediately, as this sometimes takes a while. Later in the year, probably January, we will be collecting all these documents so that we can make the necessary copies and take them to the embassy in order to obtain the travel visas for everyone. Please take the **visa application form and the required immunization information and documentation** and have it completed so we can **collect it in November**. In addition to the shots listed, we will need all travelers to acquire **documentation that they have had the H1N1 vaccination**. We will be distributing additional health forms at a later date and will carry these forms with us. Additionally, we will be preparing-in Chinese-a laminated card for each traveler that will include a **list of all food and medicine allergies** as well as hotel address and emergency phone numbers. We will supply information on food allergies to Dr. Song Yang who will see that travelers with allergies get appropriate meals.

The payment schedule is important. The **first \$200.00 is due and the second \$500 due by the end of September**. If you have concerns with meeting the payment schedule, please see Mr. Holder.

We will be flying United Airlines. At this point they are not charging for the second bag on this type trip. There is a good chance this could change before we leave, as most everyone else is doing this. Currently each piece of luggage must

be ***under 50 pounds***. The reality of this is that people with large instruments will ***take one suitcase*** and their instrument (plus the carryon backpack) and people with small instruments will carry their instrument in their luggage or carryon and be assigned to check another piece of necessary equipment-a drum or tuner, etc. We will need adults to help with some of this equipment as well. With only two people per room and extra help from the hotel we do not expect equipment storage to be a problem.(All traveling adults will be called on to help in some way-equipment, uniforms, chaperoning, etc. We have several people traveling so no one will need to a tremendous amount while we are gone.)

With a group this large, we will travel on two separate flights-one on Thursday and one on Friday. I do not yet know if it will be necessary for all the students to go on the first flight due to performance times. ***Please be thinking as to what helps you***. Some people may prefer to go on the later flight due to work or other concerns. I will be asking for information on this issue as soon as we know our performance situation. Obviously we will have to divide the group. Your input will help, though I cannot guarantee the final division.

The tentative schedule and a separate document containing travel tips and packing information are available. This is just starting information with more to follow. We are sure the schedule will change a bit as performances are finalized.

We are currently working on a rehearsal schedule. Symphonic Band selections for formal concerts will be prepared in class and in normal section rehearsals. Full ensemble selections will require outside rehearsals. Students will be assigned music to learn and we will refine it together. We plan to rehearse during some of the Bruin Black sessions, on a few Saturday mornings, during one day each of the end of the quarter work days, and during the regularly scheduled section rehearsal times. We are Very aware of busy student schedules and will minimize this as much as possible. An exact schedule will be printed as soon as we know for sure exactly what performance venues we will use. (Arena shows would require a bit more preparation time than outdoor concerts for example.)

Dress for this trip will be carefully evaluated. To this end we are reviewing possibilities concerning shirts, backpacks and other identifying items that will help

us function as guests in another country and keep groups of people together in crowded areas. ***Travelers will be given information regarding the dress for each day and event—T-shirt/pants/jacket; polo shirt; concert uniform complete; informal uniform, etc. Shorts are permissible in some situations but not others. However, short shorts, t-shirts with slogans, hats indoors, etc. will not be acceptable. We are guests in another country, funded by our hosts and other sponsors, and representatives of our school, community and those sponsors and must deport ourselves accordingly. (This is a school sponsored trip and all rules relative to FCPS will be in effect at all times. Students and adults will need to adjust their behavior to meet the expectations of FCPS and our hosts.)*** We are currently working on the details of performance attire and the reality of transporting uniforms and possibly a second set of equipment around the world.

Our efforts to help fund this huge undertaking will focus in several areas. First, we hope to raise the money to fund the travel visas for all travelers-currently \$110.00 per person. Second, we plan to add the Chinese Acrobatic Show \$25.00 and the Hutong sightseeing tour \$20.00 to the tour. (The Hutong tour includes a bicycle rickshaw city tour and a visit and meal in the home of a local family-small student groups with an adult per group.) Third, we plan to purchase shirts to be worn at various times for identification purposes and matching small backpacks for identification, carryon luggage, and storage of daily needs and lanyard type passport pouches. (We are looking into the possibility of sponsors for some of this.) We may also incur significant expenses in either airport fees or drop shipping of large equipment. Additional funds raised will be used to further reduce the cost of the trip.

Our planned fundraising activities include: 1) a dinner/dance/silent auction-bring all your adult neighbors (We still need more items to auction.) 2) An alumni concert-buy tickets, it will be spectacular. 3) Letters to businesses and arts groups-if you know any company or group that might be willing to donate in return for advertising please let us know. 4) An alumni donation web site. ***Last, we still have a few key students in need of scholarships. Several people have expressed an interest in helping in this way. If you or your company is interested in helping individual students please inform me by e-mail the extent of your offer.***