



enthusiastic audience to sit and listen intently.

After the Mendelssohn, young violinists besieged Nicola Benedetti, desperate to show her they too could play the concerto. Nicola spent the second half giving an impromptu master-class to twenty-five clamouring young students. During the interval I spoke to some ordinary young parents who explained how much they valued western culture, especially classical music, and how they wanted their son to learn the violin and play western music. The enthusiasm was refreshing and made us slightly depressed about the apathy towards quality concert performance we see from many in the UK.

The players were very surprised that Peter and I wanted to attend all three concerts but that was why we were there and we wanted to show our support. But fortunately we did have free time to see some of the sites. I was worried half way along the portion of the Great Wall we chose to "walk" that the Master might peg out on me. It is a taxing climb and no two steps are the same, you have to watch where you are putting your feet every step of the way. This was after a terrifying cable car ride to the top in a contraption that had clearly never received a Health and Safety certificate. We were both scared stiff but didn't admit it until later in the bar! Peter gamely finished the assault course and we celebrated by purchasing tacky souvenir mugs with our picture against the backdrop of the Great Wall printed on either side.

The Master's finest hour, though, came in Hangzhou as we toured the Lingyin Temple, the must-see site. It was very obvious that within minutes of our entering the grounds Peter was the sole attraction. His portly and stately perambulation appeared to have a remarkable resemblance to the laughing Buddha with a huge belly who is said to be able to "endure all intolerance and laugh at every laughable person in the world." Young girls giggled or hid their faces and several young men requested photographs. All were in awe of him and it took all my efforts to stop him signing for a mini series on Chinese TV.

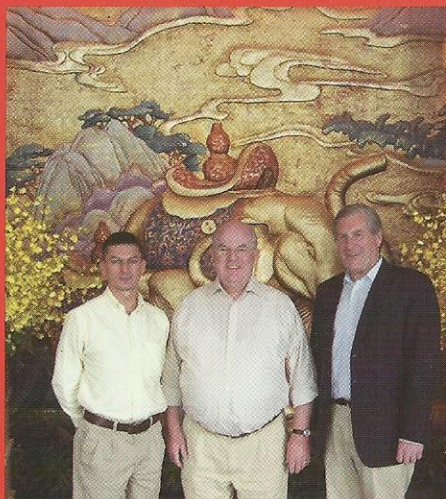
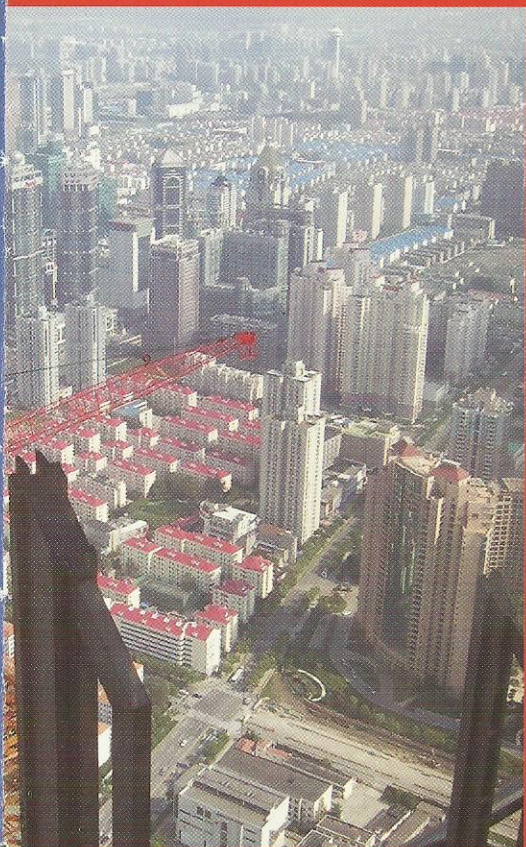
Sadly there was no time to visit the countryside or meet the peasant community that might have been the real culture shock for us, but as cities go Shanghai was an astonishing way to end the tour. Within 20 minutes of checking in at the hotel we were en route to the highest observation tower to see the impressive city sprawl that should make Manhattan look to its laurels. In true

WCM style we celebrated our fellowship with a glass of Champagne in the Sky Bar on the 39<sup>th</sup> floor. Next we took a stroll along the famous Bund, one of the most recognisable architectural symbols of Shanghai. We even found time to take a ferry back across the river to return to our hotel for the final concert, which took place at the Shanghai Oriental Art Hall, a modern building resembling five petals of a flower. This very good hall was the most western in atmosphere and audience and the concert was very well received.

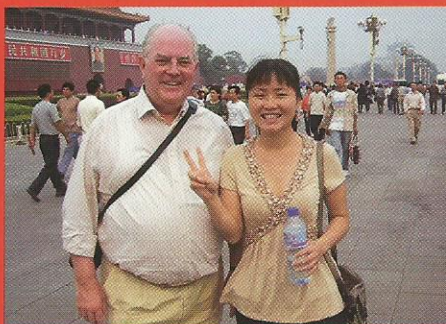
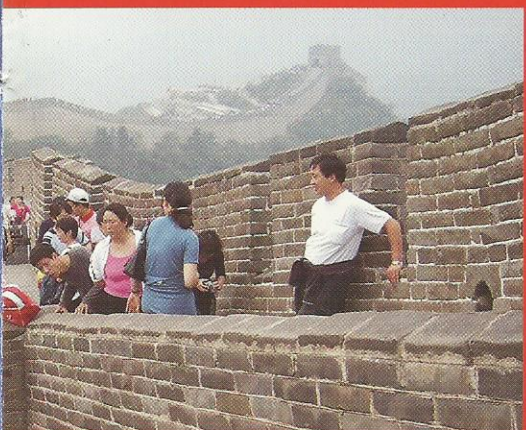
Our tour concluded with a riverside dinner and then to the famous Peace Hotel (where Noel Coward wrote *Private Lives*) before Declan Daly, one of the most colourful members of the CLS, teamed up with a local jazz band for an impromptu jam session.

I didn't make it to bed that night; there was too much going on and the coach to the airport was at 5.00am. As we flew home from China we reflected on how welcome we had been made by Stephen Carpenter, Michael Waggett, the Chairman of the CLS, and all the musicians. We were part of the team and it was our privilege to be there to witness the diversity, excellence and sheer brio of a British orchestra. I'm sold on the place and know where I am spending my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday! Oh, and CLS, can I come on the return trip please?

Liveryman Russell Jones



Left to right; The Author & the Master with Michael Waggett, Chairman of the CLS



Cementing Anglo-Sino relations

Top to bottom: Oriental Hall – Shanghai. Bird's eye view of Shanghai. A pause along the Great Wall

Russell Jones