



International Music Center of America

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Camerata Philadelphia Shines on China tour Soloists Nikolina Pinko & Josip Cajko sing brilliantly

Camerata Philadelphia's remarkable Ambassador Tour to China extended nearly three weeks, included concerts in nine China's mega cities and attracted thousands of cheering audiences. The concerts, presented by a cast of 70 able performers lead by the fiery Croatian/American conductor Zvonimir Hako, simply sizzled. The crowds numbered into thousands night after night extending the otherwise 100-minute concert program to well over two hours. Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania who heartily endorsed the good-will tour must be pleased. The performances left such marked impression on the local leadership that the orchestra was invited back for future engagements by every presenter. The otherwise wide cultural divide between USA and China was simply and triumphantly bridged with the universal language of great classical music.

A visit of a foreign orchestra to China's soil is not news by itself. Every season, dozens of European orchestra visit China performing standard Viennese gala repertoire consisting of works by Johann Strauss family, Lehar, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and others. But Camerata Philadelphia's success is special in that the orchestra was a rare American orchestra to perform in China and that it performed European standards with great understanding and expression. States tour's conductor Maestro Hačko: "It is remarkable how well the orchestra came to understand Viennese classics and how pliable and expressive the ensemble became. It is this great music making that moved the audiences."



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Steve Framil, Camerata Philadelphia's Music and Executive Director was thrilled that the project which cost over \$900,000 and took a year to create was such a success. He worked closely with the International Music Center of America (Washington, DC) - the tour management agency, and ZXCC, the Chinese agency, to make this dream become a reality.

There were many highlights during the busy, intensely scheduled itinerary. The young and up-and-coming Croatian soprano Nikolina Pinko wowed the audiences night after night with her beautiful, flexible voice and impressive, easy-going stage presence. Her countryman Josip Cajko sang the well-known Lehar songs "Wolgalied" and "Mein ist dein ganzes Herz" with full yet lyrical plasticity. A surprise came on the third night when the substitute cast was given the stage: soprano Alison Pohl and Tim Augustin (of Philadelphia) sang with such expression and passion that to all present this was a performance that was to be remembered. Invariably, the choral excerpts from Verdi's *Aida*, *La Traviata*, and Bizet's *Carmen* were powerfully rendered. Hačko molded the long succession of varied repertoire with a masterful hand. The dynamic contrasts between the barely audible pianissimos to the thundering fortissimos were well exploited. Most remarkably, the tone colors, phrasing, complex formal structures and diverse range of musical styles came to life as the passionate maestro led with great authority.

The Chinese proved admirable hosts providing lavish meals of local cuisine, extensive media coverage, fine hotels and generous gifts and flowers. Concerts were regularly followed by face-to-face meetings of performers and audience members who would crowd the stage seeking autographs and requesting to have their photos taken with the performers -- the affairs that often lasted for almost an hour after the concert. Then the Chinese hosts would serve a lavish banquet of exquisite Chinese food. Late into night as their spirits finally settled, the performers turned in for a short night's rest only to begin anew the next day with more travel, settling in a new city, doing the sound-check of the new hall and getting ready for the next performance.

Besides music, the tour also offered precious opportunities for the performers to see special sights including the Forbidden City, the famous Great Wall, a gem factory, tea markets, and a great deal more of local life and activity. Chinese climate is greatly varied, from the frigid north to the tropical south. Consequently, Camerata members experienced both snow and enjoyed tropical fruit on this trip.

This was the second tour to China organized by the International Music Center of America in collaboration with Zhejiang Xianhua Communication co, Ltd. and Chinese Ministry of Culture. As such it marks yet another step in the ongoing efforts to improve Sino-American relations and build cultural bridges between the two nations. Camerata Philadelphia gave nine memorable concerts in cities such as Jian, Zhengzhou, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Quigdao and others.



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IMCA is an international center for production, development, and promotion of classical music. Our mission is to advance the cause of classical music by creating and producing artistic events, by facilitating international collaboration, by providing expertise in creation and development of artistic institutions, and by providing career management for ensembles and individual artists.



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