

Actualité en France

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Shanghai in tune with France



Shanghai is taking centre stage this year as host of World Expo 2010. Not surprisingly, the city needed a free, popular, global event to complete the fairytale. The people in charge of the French pavilion at the event came up with the idea of exporting the Festival of Music, which has become the most popular musical event on the planet since its beginnings nearly 30 years ago.

Just imagine! On 21 June, over 110 countries and hundreds of towns and cities celebrate music in all its forms. In France alone, the number of amateur and professional music groups taking part on the night is estimated at 18,000.

First, a brief look at the history of the event: it was Joel Cohen, an American musician working at Radio France, who first had the idea of celebrating the winter and summer solstices with music. Maurice Fleuret, Director of Music and Dance at the Ministry of Culture, took up the idea and put forward a proposal to his Minister, Jack Lang, who launched the first event on 21 June 1982. It was an immediate – and immense – success. From 1985 onwards, its European neighbours began to follow France's example. In less than 15 years, the event had spread to both hemispheres.

The success of the Festival of Music comes from the event's popular appeal: there is music in the street for everyone, and anyone can take part. Amateur musicians rub shoulders with their audience whilst some of the great names perform on stage at major venues as well as giving recitals in clubs and tiny, intimate bars. Children are given permission to go out in the evening even in the middle of the week and to play wrong notes – so what, the audience still applauds! The festival, which is held on the longest day of the year, is also a reminder of the great pagan festivals that took place in Europe long ago, celebrating nature or marking the start of the harvest.



MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES ET EUROPEENNES

From 20 June, the city of Shanghai will be filled with a heady cocktail of sound through promenade concerts at several sites. Open-air stages will be set up to host professional and amateur bands, ensembles and choirs of all nationalities and styles. As official guests of France, the band “Mademoiselle K” and the singer “M” will certainly attract Shanghai’s rock fans. From a more traditional point of view, the festival will no doubt provide an opportunity for the Chinese to recount the legend of the discovery of the chromatic scale under the reign of Emperor Hoang-Ti, 2,500 years ago. The Emperor gave one of the music masters at the Court a difficult task: to unlock the secret of the song of the birds that lived in a remote region and sang as they did nowhere else. The music master set off immediately and returned months later, bringing with him 12 flutes representing the 12 notes of the scale.

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