

MHS ORCHESTRA'S RUSSIAN ADVENTURE

By Keith Holliday, Director



Sixty-five MHS orchestra members and twenty-two chaperones had an amazing time during spring break on their journey to St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia. The main events were two standing room only concerts in St. Petersburg. On March 31st, a solo concert was performed by the MHS Symphony Orchestra at the State Cappella Concert Hall named after Glinka, followed by a joint concert involving a side by side performance with Russian students from the Palace Of Creativity at the Grand Philharmonic Hall named after Shostakovich on April 1. Our orchestra was very warmly received with a highlight being the violin solo performance by Erena Lee, who won over the hearts of the audience performing “Legend” by Wieniawski. We were brought back with enthusiastic ovations for two encores of Stars and Stripes Forever at the Cappella Hall concert.



The concerts were a part of an International Music Festival “Meetings On



The Neva River” sponsored by The International Fine Arts Institute in conjunction with the Russian Federal Agency for Culture and Cinematography and the American Consulate. Our appearance was an official invitation from the Russian government and our orchestra was assigned by the Russian agency to these two prestigious venues based on live concert “audition” recordings of past performances. The Grand Philharmonic Hall has been designated as the finest concert hall in all of Russia and is the home of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra. It is uncommon for even Russian youth to perform there. A presentation was made by the U.S. Consul General, Mary Kruger and a Russian representative at the joint concert acknowledging the student’s achievements as “special ambassadors of music”.

While the musical accomplishments and opportunities were outstanding, it was music that served as the vehicle for the main purpose of this event: building bridges between our two glorious nations and people, the United States of America and Russia. In rehearsals, an interpreter was used, however the students were able to communicate and many built what may turn out to be lasting friendships and contacts. In fact the very first evening found Medina students playing games with a group of students from the Ukraine in the hotel. The tour guides provided by IFAI were first class and outstanding in both their personal involvement with the group and the integration of history with all of the events and sightseeing. Our guides Slava, Svetlana and Rita endeared themselves to our group and will be remembered fondly for their warm hospitality.

