

CLEVELAND Jewish News

www.clevelandjewishnews.com

Singing Angels China trip proves it's a small world

LISA WAXMAN
Special to the CJN

You can call me a Singing Angels "wannabe." Ever since I was a young girl, I wanted to be a member of The Singing Angels choir. In those days, my parents were under the impression that the choir was affiliated with "the church" and that Jewish children were not welcome. They would not allow me to join.

It was many years later, as a parent myself, that I finally got my Singing Angels experience. I just returned from a ten-day trip to China as a supervisor for The Singing Angels Summer Tour.

I am thankful I had the opportunity to share such an incredible experience with my 16-year-old daughter Allison.

Prior to leaving, I sent an e-mail to (Solon Chabad) Rabbi Zushe Greenberg's brother, Rabbi Shalom Greenberg (see related story, p. 39), requesting that the Angels visit the Shanghai Jewish Center, where Shalom, is the spiritual leader. Although he did not

China / 39



Lisa Waxman, right, pictured with her daughter Allison, tours China with The Singing Angels choir. The emotional trip connected two cultures through music.

Cover



Allison Waxman, left, and the choir received a warm welcome from Chinese schools. Charles Shy, below, touring with the Shaw High School band, was told to deliver a hug to Lisa and Allison.

Singing Angels China trip proves it's a small world

China from 1

receive my e-mail until the day before we were leaving Shanghai to go to Xian, he invited us to stop by and pick up some challah to take with us for Shabbat the following day.

The Singing Angels visited three Chinese schools, where the choir performed and met their Chinese student-counterparts. At a conservatory in Shanghai, the group sang the beautiful Chinese folk song "Mo Li Hua" (Jasmine Flower). The Chinese students were incredibly polite and appreciative, clapping when an Angel began a solo, finished a solo, or even hit a high note.

In Xian, at the relatively new Shaanxi Normal University, the students cheered and gestured to have members of our group come sit with them. The language barrier didn't get in the way of either students adults connecting. I also saw American and Chinese students doing a line dance that, interestingly enough, they all knew.

Beyond the hospitality, what made the experience truly memorable for me was when the two choirs (ours and the Chinese) were on stage singing together "Let There Be Peace on Earth." Although the two countries do not have the best relationship, it is amazing how music breaks all barriers.

As much as I was glad to be there with Allison, I think she was happy to be there with me, too. "I would have been scared had I gone alone," my daughter admitted. "It helped me to appreciate where I live and the life I have."

At Xian's famous Terra-Cotta Warrior Museum, we noticed a group wearing the same colors as us - red and blue. They were none other than Cleveland's Shaw High School Marching Band. These two groups, who didn't know each other at all, were giving high fives and hugging like long lost cousins.

I heard someone behind me say, "Excuse me, but I am supposed to ask for a Lisa Waxman." The



kindly looking African-American threw his arms around me, giving me the most wonderful hug. He then said that he was asked to "deliver" that hug by my Uncle Eddie Silver.

He is Uncle Eddie's mailman and was traveling with the Shaw High School band. Uncle Ed told him that his niece also was going to be there with The Singing Angels, and "if you happen to see her, give her a hug for me." Talk about a small world!!!

The thrill of the China trip surpassed my thrill six years ago, when Allison first auditioned to become a Singing Angel. At her first big concert held at the State Theatre, with my parents sitting beside me, I cried like a baby as they called alumni up on stage to sing the final song. At that moment, my father leaned over and shot me an apologetic smile. He now appreciates the value of this religiously and culturally diverse group.

As for me, I guess I will always remain a "wannabe," but I am proud to be the parent of a Singing Angel!

Lisa Waxman lives in Solon with her husband David and children Matthew "Skippy," 18, and Allison, 16. She teaches special ed in West Geauga and serves on the board of Park Synagogue.

The Angels will be performing the music they sang in China at venues around Cleveland this summer. For performance and audition details, visit www.singingangels.org or call 216-432-5555.