

Concert in Roman amphitheater, Ammon, Jordan.

Reflections on a Musical Adventure

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Part II: The Near East

FOLLOWING EIGHT WEEKS and forty-three concerts in ten principal cities and six republics of the Soviet Union, with all travel by train, the University of Michigan Symphony Band party of 110 persons again took the air via two Russian jets and flew from the oil-rich city of Baku to Moscow for our farewell Soviet appearance. The concert was performed in historic and beautiful Tschaikovsky Hall before a tremendously enthusiastic, capacity audience which demanded and received many encores.

In the audience were many of the world's top diplomats, including American Ambassador and Mrs. Llewellyn E. Thompson, whose many kindnesses will forever be appreciated by every member of our party. Certainly every American citizen would have been pleased and proud could he have witnessed the assistance, cooperation, and hospitality shown us by Ambassador Thompson, Mrs. Thompson, and the entire embassy staff, who, not only during our stay in Moscow but throughout our tour of the Soviet Union, did everything possible for us.

Every member of the band and I were extremely proud and elated to learn of the Ambassador's communication which was addressed to the Department of State and

Harlan Hatcher, president of the University of Michigan. It reads, in part, as follows: "They [the members of the University of Michigan Symphony Band] made a success of every single concert throughout their trip in the Soviet Union. No other American performing group has ever visited so many Soviet cities, so that their impact on local audiences was wider than ever before; and since they were exemplary in their discipline and general comportment they illustrated admirably the America of which we are all most proud. Dr. Revelli and those who assist him deserve much praise, for this demonstration of American taste, talent, and accomplishment. But much of their success must also go back to the University which encourages them and supports them."

Before concluding my reflections on our two-month tour of the Soviet Union, I wish to express deep appreciation and thanks to the four representatives of *Goskoncert* and our four interpreters from Moscow University, all of whom accompanied us on our entire journey through the Soviet Union, for their constant interest, cooperation, and assistance. All tour arrangements pertaining to hotel accommodations, meals, transportation, concert halls, rehearsals, movement of equipment, luggage, travel accommodations, itinerary, sightseeing, visits to conservatories, universities, art galleries, schools, factories, palaces of culture, collective farms, concerts, ballets, recitals, operas, museums, boat trips, mountain picnics, journeys to the countryside, the circus, and nu-

[For Part I, which is concerned with the University of Michigan Band's tour of the Soviet Union, refer to the September-October 1961 issue of the *Music Educators Journal*.]

merous other events and sights were all arranged with efficiency and guided most effectively by these fine people with the cooperation and support of the office of the Soviet Ministry of Culture.

Finally, we are greatly indebted to Harry Barnes, of the U. S. Department of State, who also accompanied us throughout our Russian journey. Mr. Barnes proved to be a most valuable representative; since he had previously spent considerable time in the Soviet Union, speaks Russian most fluently, and, in addition, possesses a keen interest and appreciation for music, his assistance in the success of our Soviet tour proved invaluable.

THE MORNING following our final concert, we traveled via Soviet jets to Cairo, Egypt, with a refuelling stop at Tirana, Albania. "Who hath not seen Cairo hath not seen the world" states an old Arabian text. This most populous city in Africa, and the ancient capital of Egypt, is truly a bridge between two civilizations, a meeting place of the Western spirit of progress and the mysticism of the East. The streets present scenes of picturesque and vivid coloring, for among the city's inhabitants are Egyptians, Arabs, Nubians, Negroes, Turks, Greeks, and representatives of every race in Europe.

The old portion of the city shows no trace of the advance of Western influences. Crooked, narrow, and dirty streets are lined by high stone houses with barred windows. Rearing their domes and minarets above the surrounding dirt and squalor are numerous mosques, some of which are strikingly beautiful and are considered fine examples of the best Arabian architecture.

The modern portion of Cairo rivals European centers, with broad, well-lighted boulevards, and modern stores and offices. Although chiefly noted as a social center, sometimes called an "Oriental Paris," Cairo is even more important as an industrial city. The chief handicrafts are textiles, metal articles, gold and silver work, and essence of flowers. Its countless markets receive ostrich feathers,

ivory, and hides from the Sudan, shawls from India, and tobacco from Turkey. One of the world's oldest and most fascinating cities, Cairo proved to be one of the most valued experiences of our entire tour.

Our concerts in this busy and colorful city were performed in the American exhibit at the International Agricultural Fair, which, incidentally, directly faced the exhibit of the Soviet Union. It was obvious from our first concert that music as a culture lags behind in Egypt; nevertheless, large and enthusiastic audiences greeted us and grew in number with each succeeding performance.

Among the highlights of our Cairo engagement was the presence of Aram Khachaturian, the eminent Armenian composer, who attended our final concert. Mr. Khachaturian evinced great interest and enthusiasm for our performance of works by Wagner and Bach; William Schuman, Vincent Persichetti, Paul Creston, and other contemporary American composers; as well as great satisfaction and joy in our readings of his own compositions.

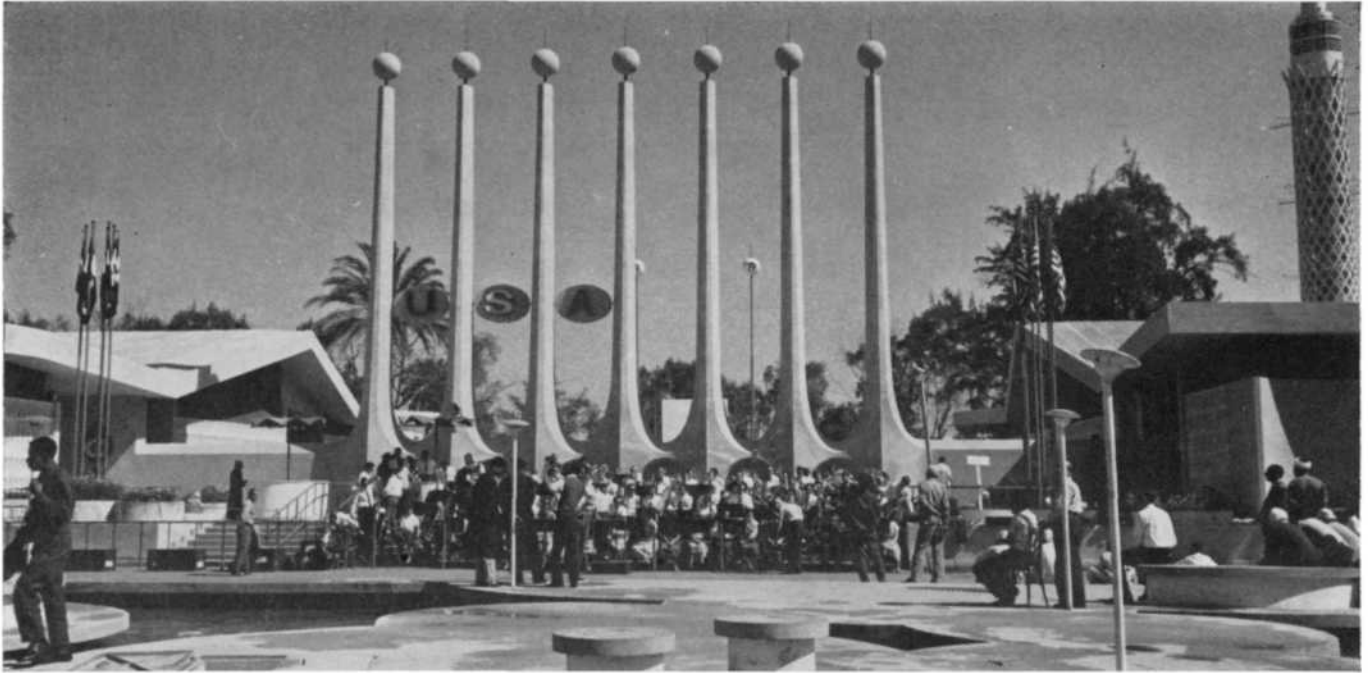
A second high point of our stay in Cairo was our nightly visit to the snack bar of the Cairo Hilton Hotel following each evening concert, where, for the first time since departing from New York City two months before, we could enjoy jumbo hamburgers, French-fried potatoes, and pasteurized milk. What a morale booster those "snacks" proved to be.

During our free moments in Cairo, we visited many of the historical and enchanting sites of this ancient and wondrous city, among which are the mosques and museums containing the ornaments collected several centuries ago from the tombs of the Pharaohs. Other interesting excursions included bazaars and the fun of "bidding" for Egyptian coins, camel saddles, jewelry, and other native merchandise.

Another highlight of Cairo was an afternoon visit to the great sphinx of Giza and the pyramids, a ride on a camel, and an unsuccessful attempt to climb one of the pyramids. If you have never attempted this feat, don't!



The University of Michigan Symphony Band in Cairo, Egypt.



The University of Michigan Band play at the entrance of the International Fair in Cairo, Egypt.

The climax of our "extracurricular" Cairo experiences was an evening "safari" into the desert, where more than 100 camels and horses awaited us. Following camel rides into the desert under Egyptian stars and a full, golden moon, we returned to a huge tent bedecked in the flamboyant Egyptian style, where we enjoyed a variety of native foods to the strains of an Egyptian stringed orchestra and entertained, of course, by the inevitable performances of several Egyptian "belly dancers."

FROM CAIRO, we traveled via air to Amman, Jordan, one of the oldest and most colorful cities of our tour. Amman, the capital of Jordan, is built chiefly on four high hills. Our concert in Amman was presented in a Roman amphitheater made of stone and set into one of the four hills in the heart of the city and which faced directly onto "main street." The theater was filled to capacity with more than 4,000 Jordanians showing unbounded enthusiasm for every selection of the concert, and especially prolonged was the applause for the conductor of the Jordan Army Band, who had graciously presented his bands in review and concert for us, and in return was invited to conduct the Michigan Band in Sousa's immortal "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Following our concert in Amman, we drove to Jerusalem by "caravan" through the mountains which Christ traveled as a boy on his way from Bethlehem to Cairo. The soul-stirring scenes as one nears Jerusalem are beyond description. The approach to the famed city is through rugged terrain, around sharp curves, and over steep hills; and, through it all, one is filled with an indescribable excitement and wonder.

Our first few hours in the Holy City were spent in touring the shops via narrow streets which remain almost in duplicate as they were in the early days of Christ. Later we were to visit the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Old Wall of Jerusalem, the Church of All Nations, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

It is interesting to note that ours was the first concert group to perform in Jerusalem in twenty years, and never shall we forget the appreciation shown by our large and receptive audiences. Although our stay in Jerusalem was not as extensive as in other points of our schedule, it nevertheless remains as one of the most cherished and memorable experiences of the entire tour.

From Jerusalem, we drove via "caravan" to Bethlehem. En route we passed the Dead Sea, where several bandsmen took time to swim and relax, while others visited the ancient village of Jericho. In Bethlehem, we visited the Church of the Nativity, where once stood the old Inn in the cellar of which Christ was born.

Our concert in Bethlehem was the first public concert (so far as records exist) ever presented in this village.

Throughout Jordan, we encountered great poverty, with large numbers of the population living in worn-out tents, caves, sandstone huts, and with insufficient food, clothing, and other of life's bare necessities.

FROM BETHLEHEM, we returned to Amman and again via our "caravan" of cars drove to Petra, an ancient city ruins, which has been called "a rose-red city, half as old as time," because of the color of the walls of rock which enclose it on all sides. Since its re-discovery in 1807, Petra has been a source of great interest to students of ancient history, for its remarkable rock ruins tell of a former great power and culture. The walls of the gorge leading to Petra are of red sandstone and rise 200 to 300 feet, and along their sides are seen rows of cave tombs hewn out of solid stone and ornamented with facades.

Between the second and third centuries, this marvelous rock city was in the hands of a mysterious Arabian race, the Nabateans, who held in their power the important caravan trade route between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea. In 106 A.D., Emperor Trajan reduced Petra to the rank of a Roman province, and during the Roman supremacy numerous fine buildings were erected. It was

conquered by the Moslems in the seventh century and gradually fell into decline.

The most beautiful of the ruins of temple tombs are the Temple of Isis (the Treasury), an amphitheater capable of seating 5000, and the Deir or Convent, hewn out of the side of a cliff. All are in a comparatively fine state of preservation. On the face of nearby cliffs are carvings of entrances to temples and tombs, the interiors of which are now only rock caves. It was in such caves that the majority of our party was housed for the night.

Entrance to Petra from the highway, a distance of approximately four miles, was made via horseback or on foot. Our equipment was taken in by burro; what strength, balance, and endurance these small animals have. Petra was another of those fascinating, interesting, and unforgettable experiences of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

From Petra, we returned to Amman for our flight via Air Jordan to Beirut, Lebanon, one of the most beautiful and cosmopolitan cities of our tour. Beirut was welcomed with open arms by every member of the band and staff, since former restrictions on salads, greens, fruits, and milk could now be lifted. What a holiday we enjoyed, and what appreciation was shown by all for the return to the "American way of life."

BEIRUT lies on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and beautiful beaches are to be found everywhere. Since our hotel faced the bay and was located only a few yards from the beach, swimming was the pleasure of the day.

Concerts in Beirut were presented before capacity audiences at the International College and at the American University of Beirut, with television programs also being sponsored by the National Lebanese Television Company.

From Beirut, our next hop was by air to Nicosia, Cyprus. Like all lands of the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus has a story with many chapters. Egypt conquered its Greek and Phoenician colonists 3,500 years ago, to be followed by Assyria, and still later Persia. It formed part of the empires of Alexander and the Ptolemies, of Rome, Byzantium, and Baghdad. During the Crusades, it fell to Richard the Lion-Hearted and for three centuries was a feudal kingdom. In 1914, England annexed it soon after the beginning of World War I. Consequently, many of its customs and culture follow the English pattern.

Our first concert was performed in the municipal stadium. Although rain was descending in torrents at 8:00 p.m. and not a person was in the audience, I was assured that all would be clear at 8:30 and the moon and stars would join our audience in a "festival of music." What prophets! At 8:30, the concert began, with a million stars twinkling brightly and the moon shining down upon a capacity audience, including the president and vice-president and other diplomatic heads of Cyprus.

Our next concert was presented in an ancient Greek amphitheater located near Limassol. No concert had been presented in the theater for several centuries. Although it was located several miles from any community and no visible roads or highways could be found leading to the theater, nevertheless, hundreds of buses, passenger cars, and trucks arrived loaded with music lovers—more than



George Cavender, assistant conductor, at left, and William D. Revelli, conductor of the Michigan Symphony Band, apparently found camel riding exhilarating. The picture was taken during the international tour made by the Band, beginning February 19, 1961 and ending with a triumphant homecoming concert in Carnegie Hall June 2, 1961.

4,000 of them—who filled every nook, rock, and cranny of this long-forgotten theater facing the Mediterranean Sea.

In recalling this particular concert, I am reminded of one moment during the performance when my eyes wandered toward the sea and thence upward toward the stars, when, behold, my gaze was fastened upon a rather buxom lady perched high upon a rock, fanning herself! What I would give to have a photograph of that scene.

From Cyprus, our next journey was by plane to Istanbul, Turkey, formerly known as Constantinople but renamed in 1929 by the Turkish Government after bearing the older name for 1,600 years. Istanbul is one of the oldest cities in the world, a city of many cities. Constantinople for centuries was a backward and unsanitary city, although its many picturesque features lifted it above the commonplace. Not until 1913 were electric cars introduced; during the next year, telephones were used for the first time. Electric lighting superseded gas illumination, and fireproof cement buildings were erected to replace the old wooden structures.

Through all of the changes wrought by time, Istanbul has remained a city of mosques, monuments of the power of Mohammed and the faith of his followers. The Blue Mosque or Church of Santa Sophia (now a museum) was erected by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century as a Christian temple. The four minarets and lofty dome of the Mosque of Suleiman, built between 1550 and 1566, give added distinction to this minareted city.

Our four concerts in Istanbul were tremendously successful. Capacity audiences voiced great enthusiasm and

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Reflections on a Musical Adventure

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response for every program. Although Istanbul is at present seriously lacking in its cultural activities, it is making progress and, with sufficient encouragement and assistance, has the potential for developing a worthy artistic program.

FROM ISTANBUL, our itinerary took us to Athens, Greece, one of the world's greatest historic cities, where the skies seem more blue and beautiful than anywhere else in the world. Clustered about the foot of the Acropolis lies the so-called old city, a remnant left from the dreary days before the revival of Athens in 1835; and in a great crescent about it spreads the new city, with its broad boulevards radiating from the central Square of Harmony and its elaborate, handsome buildings.

Of these structures, the most magnificent is the Royal Palace, built of Pentelic marble, which stands somewhat apart from the city in a beautiful, well-kept park. The National Archaeological Museum, which houses an unsurpassed collection of antiquities; the House of Parliament; the National Library; and the National University also have noteworthy buildings; while the Stadium, restored through the generosity of an Alexandrian Greek, has attracted the interest of the entire athletic world.

Though Athens has excellent schools and two universities, the National University and the Capodistria University, with more than 12,000 students, ancient Athens so far outshines the modern city in public interest that it is for its archaeological schools that the city is universally noted. These include the American School of Classical Studies, maintained and supported by the universities of the United States and held in very high repute by the Athenians; the French and British schools; and the German Archaeological Institute; all of which combine instruction with investigation and which have made discoveries and restorations of great importance.

The Acropolis originally was a fortress. Just within its entrance was the great statue of Athene, the goddess and protector of the city. To the center rose the crowning glory of Athens, the Parthenon, an exquisitely beautiful temple dedicated in 438 B.C.; and to the left stood the Erechtheum, a beautiful temple, of which the remarkable Porch of the Maidens is the most famous.

Athens, the Western world's "cradle of culture," was deeply appreciated and revered by all. Our Athens concert was performed in the city's largest and most modern cinema. The concert again was a great triumph, with a capacity audience demanding encore after encore.

The following morning (Sunday), we journeyed to Piraeus, situated approximately five miles from Athens. Piraeus, originally known as the port of Athens, was famed in ancient times as one of the masterworks of the age of Pericles. Built in 493 B.C., Piraeus was connected with Athens by the famous long walls and was destroyed in 86 B.C. At present it is a port of call for steamship lines and is in peacetime communication with the major cities of many nations.

Our Piraeus performance was presented at 11:00 a.m. to a SRO audience. The theater is a miniature "La Scala," and possesses the most perfect acoustics I have ever experienced on a podium. Although bombed heavily



Members of the University of Michigan Band held their Easter 1961 services at Sukhumi, U.S.S.R.

during World War II, and not since restored, it was a joy in which to project the voice of our band.

As we were concluding the concert, I noticed several sailors standing in the wings—the only standing room available in the hall—and closer observation made it evident that these young seamen belonged to our own United States Navy. Upon inquiry, I learned that our Sixth Fleet was anchored in the harbor. Needless to say, an encore was performed and dedicated to our "backstage" audience.

OUR NEXT STOP was Salonika (modern-day name: Thessaloniki), a port on the Gulf of Salonika, an arm of the Aegean Sea. It is a picturesque and ancient city, with white houses surrounded by white walls, clustering elms and cypresses and mulberry trees, with broad streets paved with lava, the slender minarets and towers of its mosques piercing the skyline.

The most interesting feature about Thessaloniki is its turbulent history. Since its founding in 315 B.C., it has been the scene of successive invasions, conquests, and massacres by hostile peoples and has, at one time or another, been under the rule of almost every adjacent country and nation. Today, it belongs to Greece and is one of the most modern cities of the Near East.

While the women of our party were housed in a hotel, all male personnel were the guests of the American Farm School, which was located several miles from Thessaloniki, and what an interesting experience this proved to be! The Farm was originally founded by John Henry House, a Congregational missionary, and is presently maintained and operated by members of the family. Only Greek orphan boys are eligible for admission to the Farm School. Here they receive a first-class education, are taught various trades and farming. All vegetables, fruits, milk, beef, veal, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, are raised by the boys under the supervision of a highly skilled staff, and all under the guidance of Americans.

Charles House succeeded his father as head of the Farm School. A civil engineer by training, the younger Mr. House had real need for the many fine qualities he inherited from his father because all of Greece suffered

a terrible period of civil war just after the close of World War II.

Communist guerrillas came to the school one winter night in 1949, corralled the senior class, and kidnapped 43 of the youngsters. Charles House was desolate, but before sunrise several of the young Greeks had escaped and were back at school. Before the end of the week all of the others returned—tired but happy for having made good their escape.

The story was told round the world, and the fame of the Farm School grew. Mr. House received messages of congratulations from the United States Ambassador in Greece and from the American Secretary of State. King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece attended the fiftieth anniversary celebrations, when Bruce Langsdale was made director.

FROM GREECE, two Czechoslovakian jets flew our party to Bucharest, which at one time had acquired the popular title of "petit Paris" and was one of the gayest of European capitals, famous for its Bohemian atmosphere and its fashions. To our disappointment, Communist influence had depressed the happiness and gaiety of this once-joyful city, and only a shell of the past remains. Nevertheless, Bucharest is a most interesting and unusual city; there are a few sections which still retain their oriental appearance, with narrow, crooked, and somewhat dirty streets. The city is, for the most part, modern and well-planned.

Our concerts were performed in the most beautiful and modern concert hall of our entire tour. The theater is spacious, the appointments are in elegant taste, and the main auditorium, as well as the foyer, is a feast for anyone's eyes. The acoustics are superb and project the faintest *pianissimo* to every point of the theater; yet the most powerful *fortissimo* is absorbed with perfect clarity. Behind each seat is an individual speaker, and more than one hundred amplifiers are installed in the ceiling and walls, with the over-all result being somewhat akin to our concept of stereophonic sound. Never have I experienced such gradations of dynamics, with clarity and balance in all dynamic levels.

Bucharest audiences are highly appreciative and possess a deep understanding of the arts; hence, it afforded us distinct pleasure and satisfaction to play for them.

Our concerts in Brasov were presented in a new theater, which in design was similar to many of the opera houses of western Europe, and, although its seating capacity accommodated only 1,200, it proved to be a concert hall of fine acoustics and taste.

FROM BRASOV, we returned to Bucharest, and thence via air to Warsaw, Poland, for our final week of concerts, with performances in Zabrze, Krakow, Wroclaw, Lodz, and Warsaw. Our travel in Poland was entirely via bus and automobile; hence, it was possible to see much of Poland's countryside.

The people are great lovers of music and dancing. Unfortunately, Communist influence has left and is presently leaving its mark upon the Poles. The once happy, carefree spirit is no longer prevalent, and one is certain to note the depressed attitude of this unfortunate people.

Our final concert in Poland was presented to a capacity audience in Warsaw's Philharmonic Hall, a large and excellent concert hall, home of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, which we had the pleasure of hearing and meeting its conductors and personnel during their concert in Ann Arbor before we left for the Soviet Union.

From Warsaw, we flew to Frankfurt, Germany, on one of the most exciting trips I have ever experienced. Every member of our party suddenly realized we were homeward bound; joy and enthusiasm reigned unrestrained, and in our hearts we were saying, "God Bless America, now and forevermore."

Upon arrival in Frankfurt, we were immediately impressed with its similarity to any large, exciting American city. Here was the familiar lively tempo with which we are so familiar. Here were the enthusiasm, spirit, and determination that can only be found in the hearts and on the faces of people who are truly free.

FROM FRANKFURT, our 707 Air India jet winged across the Atlantic, non-stop to New York in eight hours; but the big climax was yet to come. Following a day of relaxation and leisure, plus the pleasure of attending a Broadway show, we prepared for our final concert in Carnegie Hall.

What a fitting climax to our unforgettable adventure. The Hall was packed; mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers, cousins, all the family relatives, had come via plane, train, car, bus, and subway to be present for this gala affair. Representatives from the State Department in Washington and from the American National Theatre and Academy, University of Michigan Regents, administrative officers, and faculty, composers, conductors, teachers, the great city's critics, students, publishers, instrument manufacturers, music lovers, former Michigan bandmen with their families, and our own executive secretary of the MENC, Vanett Lawler, were in the audience. From cities and towns, villages and farms, came our loyal and wonderful friends. Here was the true picture of America and the spirit of its people.

We had been on tour since February 19 and had appeared in ten countries, traveled more than 30,000 miles, performed in person to thousands of music lovers and millions via radio and television. We had experienced the pleasure and privilege of meeting countless Russians, Egyptians, Arabs, Jews, Greeks, Turks, Lebanese, Poles, British, Rumanians, French, Italians, Bohemians, Germans, Hungarians, Austrians, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Swedes, and Americans.

It is my firm conviction that people, regardless of their race, color, creed, political views, religion, or philosophy, are fundamentally *good*, and whatever differences they may possess in their basic concepts of a way of life and pursuit of happiness are merely reflections of their environment, habits, leadership, education, and opportunities. Yet, the soul of man or woman will remain unchanged, and no nation can now or ever influence the spirit or internal feelings of a human being. If this tour and its experiences did nothing else, I would forever be grateful to all who made it possible for me to realize this truth.