

PROMOTION IN MOTION

PROMOTING FRENCH THROUGH MUSIC

When your band or orchestra or chorus takes a field trip, where do they go? New York City? Washington? Orlando? Why not meet with your musical director and plan a trip to France? Sound complicated? Not anymore! Most educational travel companies who regularly schedule student trips to Europe now have performing arts departments and will gladly prepare a specialized itinerary for your musical group. You give them the dates and your budget requirements, and they handle the rest, scouting out locales for your group to perform, transporting instruments, and advertising concerts. Obviously, the trip will be more oriented toward music than language proficiency, but you will find that both students (most of whom are not studying French) and parents (who have come along to videotape little Suzie playing the violin at a 16th-century *château*) are very receptive to the language and the culture and are very impressed with your linguistic skills as an informal guide/translator. Add to this a custom-designed Web site for the trip with daily pictures and commentary, and you'll have the whole community logging on to virtually travel to France with you. You can't get much better PR for French than that!

Our middle- and high-school orchestra in Wilmington, MA, "Strings Attached," trav-

eled to England in 1996 and Italy in 1998. When "France 2000" was announced over a year ago, I immediately signed on. In our group, there were 80 students, parents, and grandparents and 10 chaperones (teachers and administrators). The first day and a half in Paris consisted of typical tourist sight-seeing, but by the second afternoon, the focus shifted to music. We boarded a private riverboat "La Belle Louisiane," and spent the afternoon cruising the Seine while the students practiced their program for their two upcoming concerts. The next day, the group left for a weekend in the Loire Valley. Our first performance took place in a magnificent salon in the Château de Blois. Since the concert had been publicized and was free, quite a few locals attended. The students played brilliantly and were very proud. The parents and grandparents filmed from every angle of the room and gave a standing ovation at the end, much to the surprise of the French who are not accustomed to such demonstrations!

Back in Paris, the *pièce de résistance* was a concert at the posh Hôtel du Louvre performed for the mayor of the 2nd district. The concert opened with the singing of "La Marseillaise." Later, *Madame le Maire* remarked how pleased she was that American students knew the words to the

French national anthem when she was certain that many students from her own district did not. During the concert, gifts were presented to the mayor, including letters from Senators Kennedy and Kerry, Boston's Mayor Menino, and local state representatives. Again, the concert was superb, and flash bulbs popped from start to finish. Afterward, the mayor led the group on a walking tour through the gardens of the Palais Royal to the *Mairie du 2^e Arrondissement* where we were treated to champagne and *jus d'orange*, followed by the traditional ceremonial speeches. By this time, everyone had at least mastered "bonjour," "s'il vous plaît," and "merci!"

During our seven-day stay in France, we had over 1,800 hits on our Web site which we kept active until the close of school. The result: more middle school students chose French than in previous years, and high school students taking other languages signed up for beginning French courses in the fall so that they could participate in our Exchange Program to Reims in February 2001 and return to "La Belle France!" For more information and contacts, e-mail Joyce at [MmeJoyb@aol.com].

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