



First concert 23 May 2010

Shanghai International String Quartet in Concert for Mifan Mama.

A dream, a challenge, an achievement.

by Angela & Simone

How to help Mifan Mama?



Answering this question is sometimes easier than expected. Our suggestion is to focus on what you (and your family members, your friends, your acquaintances, your *Guanxi*) are able to do, on your personal or professional skills and try to figure out how to contribute. Of course, it is clear that a doctor or a nurse or a teacher can help an orphanage but even abilities apparently so far from the basic issue experienced by those kids and their assistants can be useful.

ANGELA: When I met Julie and my friend Angelique promoting Mifan Mama at the Shanghai Community International School Christmas Bazaar last November, I immediately felt that finally I had found what and, most important, who I was looking for since long time. Julie & Tony's dedication to the orphans of Lao Wang's touched me so deeply and gave me such strong motivation for getting involved.

At the beginning I didn't know how to help, how to contribute with my personal skills, with my background; in fact I didn't even think I had any useful skills, but I was determined to do something. The first step was to attend every Mifan Mama meeting I was able to. Listening to volunteers' experiences, suggestions and work in progress reports gave me the key to find my way to act.

My brain started bringing out ideas, I shared some of them with Simone, my husband, and he not only gave me all his support and suggestions, but started thinking how to help too. He loves music and playing cello, it was such a good chance to start playing with Christophe, Cecile and Lucia. Listening to their music during rehearsal sessions at our place, I thought that they should play for a bigger audience. I believe that Simone read my thoughts, as often happens between us.

The string quartet got the opportunity to perform during a music event at SCIS; it was the first time in public for them. I think that after this short performance they felt more confident in their selves and anxious to play again. The time had come and Simone shared his thoughts with me and proposed to give a concert for Mifan Mama: I was so excited about the amazing matching between live music and social commitment.

SIMONE: While I got the agreement of the Shanghai International String Quartet friends and identified the musical program, Angela involved the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra Foundation - where, by chance, her friend Sunny works. She explained to the managers the goals of Mifan Mama and the necessity to find a suitable place to hold a charity concert, without wasting money. SSO managers' response was prompt; a further meeting was arranged, this time involving Julie and Diane too. One week later we obtained official consent to use the SSO Recital Hall. Then, discussing with the Mifan Mama members and supporters, we elaborated the details of the project, identifying the people able to help.

The home designed flyers distributed before the concert were double-checked by professional interpreters and printed by a photo studio (kindly paid by the interpreters company). The buffet provided by Intercontinental Hotel Pudong, the wine by Jenny Chen, the flowers by our volunteer Nathalie, the external posters provided and put in place by our supporters from SAP, different persons (including a Shanghai Italian Cultural Institute officer) diffused the news on different websites. Even our daughter (due her almost perfect English accent) acted as presenter of the evening and managed the photo show during the performance. Summarizing: everyone gave a contribution simply using his or her own tools and skills.

Organizing such events is not easy (ask Angela) but you should always be supported by the awareness of working for a right ideal. The result was not only collecting money but also involving new people and informing them about Mifan Mama and its needs. On the night of the concert, Mifan Mama established useful relationships with the Shanghai United Family Hospital (some Chinese doctors and the pharmacy supervisors already visited the orphanage on June 6th), and with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra sponsors and managers. The representatives of the two institutions were impressed by the job done by the organisation and by the level of involvement reached by Mifan Mama. Thanks to this good start, more and more ideas for new projects are coming out from both sides and the commitment is increasing considerably.

