

Estonia exchange program enriches both lands

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Feature Editor

You'd never know it from looking at her. Her blond hair, mannerisms, quick and easy speech, and carefree spirit all seem to mark her as American as apple pie. But truth be told, Kairi Raud is not from around here. She is Estonian.

You can tell, on the other hand, by looking at Christopher Chan, that he isn't Estonian. He may live in Estonia, study in Estonia, eat, sleep, and breathe Estonia, and even speak a little Estonian, but the former Clackamas student is a Hong Kong native.

This unlikely pair forms the vanguard of a daring and innovative new international venture—an exchange program between Clackamas and Tallinn, Estonia's Georg Ots Music School. Orchestrated by Clackamas' Lonnie Cline and Georg Ots' Hirvo Lonnie Cline and Georg Ots' Hirvo Raud, this fledgling program has brought first Chan to Estonia, then Raud to America to study in the Clackamas music department.

This endeavor was born when Surva was born when composer Veljo Tormis visited Clackamas in May of '97 and invited Chan to study in Estonia. Thrilled at the concept, Chan eagerly accepted, and events were thus set in motion. The next fall Chan began to jump through the various hoops to gain access to the Baltic State, finally arriving in December. Raud similarly was approached with the prospect of going to America, and arrived at last in January of 1998.

As both students attest, the journey is not without its difficulties. Chan, who is not a US or even British citizen, but rather (after Hong Kong's re-assimilation) Chinese, had a doubly hard time attaining his visa, and was subjected to a battery of frustrating tests. To top it off, there is no Estonian embassy anywhere near here, and all applications had to go through Washington DC.

Meanwhile, Raud experienced numerous false starts and stops, and though she had agreed in the spring to go, she heard nothing about it all

summer, then was approached again by Surva in the fall, who wondered why she wasn't in America yet.

"So the whole thing started again," Raud relates. "I had about seven different goodbye parties with my friends, because it was, like, on and off."

In fact, it wasn't until Cline arrived in Estonia in January for his month of jazz clinician work that Raud finally was able to come to Clackamas. She came with Cline on his flight back, but was unable to study right away. Unfortunately, because Chan was not a US citizen, and because he had already graduated Clackamas, an exchange of classes was not so simple. So Raud was unable to enroll in classes here, and found herself simply singing in the chamber choir.

Eventually this was straightened out, however, when College President John Keyser was contacted. Now Raud is able to sit in on music classes for the remainder of Spring

"It's just another way to get people deeper into the culture [of Estonia]," explains Cline, pointing out that students will be able to "understand music from an Eastern European standpoint." Cline's love Estonia's music and culture is no secret, of course, and he is firmly convinced of its value to students.

Besides exposure to a unique culture, American musicians can expect to benefit for the great intensity of Estonian study as well. Music schools in Estonia start from an early age and at the college level students are immersed in singing, voice lessons, conducting lessons, instrumental lessons, and music theory.

"Studying is about just like the United States, but the only difference is that here you can study more intensely than the U.S.," Chan says. "I can focus on music pretty much 100% every day. Students may choose to go to two or more schools at the same time as long as they have time for them. The young people see education as a very valuable thing."

Estonia has much to benefit from as well, says Cline. "Hopefully it will be beneficial to students [from Estonia] who can't get instruction in certain areas such as jazz, and also I think our Theory program is a direct benefit."

Jazz is significant to Estonians, for as a uniquely American form of music, its study was not allowed under Soviet rule. Since Estonia's indepen-

dence in 1991, musicians are hungry for instruction in this area, which happily is something that Cline and Clackamas can provide.

This exchange is about more than music, however: it is about culture. Raud and Chan are both receiving a crash course in a way of thinking different from their own.

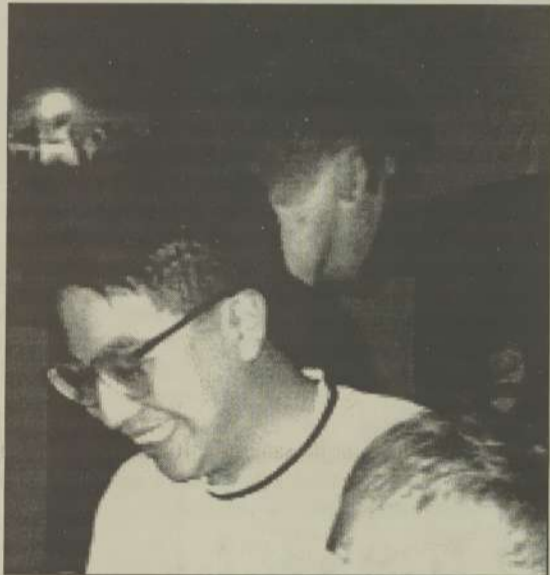
"The people love parties," relates Chan of Estonian life. "They enjoy friends. They may not talk to you if you are a stranger, but once they know you, they are very open."

The bottom line is that both countries have a lot to offer each other's students, both as musicians and as people. This exchange then, given Cline's Estonian passion, is as he says "the most logical thing to do. It's just another opportunity for student success, now on an international, global level."



JOEL P. SHEMPERT / Clackamas Print

Estonian Kairi Raud (right) rehearses with fellow jazz singer and Clackamas student Micah McCool. Kairi has persevered through many obstacles to study American music at Clackamas.



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Christopher Chan, graduate of Clackamas' music program, is continuing his quest for excellence at Estonia's Georg Ots Music School.

Term, and next year will begin enrollment. She is finally involved in her main purpose in coming here, the study of jazz.

"Lonnie did everything he could," affirms Raud. "I'm sure the music department did everything they could. There was not anything they could do about it; there had to be someone higher to make the decisions."

Though the ride may have been a rocky one, it is to be expected when forging an academic bond between to schools of differing nationality, to say nothing of differing governments. Still and all, through the walls of red tape there is a real treasure to be gleaned from the exchange.

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Not exactly. ASG President Jacob Boenisch (left) and presidential candidate David LeDoux belted one out last Thursday at ASG and Coyote Circle's karaoke benefit. Free pizza and a, um, wide range of musical entertainment were available to all.