

The Story:

In December of 1997, Sam Force, age 16, was selected to be a Rotary Exchange Student for the 1998/99 school year, representing Port Townsend, Washington, USA in Rajamaki, Finland. Sitting around and discussing ways to raise part of the money for the year-long study abroad he came up with the idea-- "Hey, since you guys (mom and dad) are musicians and we have a lot of friends who are too, why don't we have concert?" Then began the proverbial (and wonderful!) magic: Sam had grown up among a group of friends scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest most of whom who have been touring and recording artists for over thirty years. To Sam, they were just people he knew and, "Hey, doesn't everybody do that-- you, know: sing, play instruments, do gigs and that sort of thing, I mean?"

Everyone he asked said yes. Not only that, they reached into their own extended families of musicians and invited along people to sing and play with them. Before long, 23 musicians (including Sam) were rearranging their schedules and marking May 30th-- Memorial Day-- for a *Hands Across the Sea*, send Sam to Finland concert. Sam's extended family got extended again. Over the next several months, Port Townsend became a focal point for not only rehearsals of the "getting-ready-for-a-performance" type, but also a place for the excitement of great musicians discovering each other and making room in their on-stage sets for these new friends. An amazing time. I wish I could also share with you those months of laughter and all the tunes that were tried out to be songs for the performance night. But you have the CD-- and that's a lot of it.

The night came; Sam put on his tuxedo. People showed up. Specially color-sorted, m&m's® graced the backstage table along with real food munchables... (Janette feels you have to feed the musicians good food-- for some that's tofu, for others it's Twinkies®). The sorted m&m's®, well, you know--it's fun to have fun, but you have to know how. A word about setting up: we lost half of the mixing board's capacity just prior to the show and our engineer, Chris Martin, had to go up on stage every set change (there were six!) to relead and replug the cords for everyone. Then, he had to run back and get the ADAT sync'd and running-- not to mention balance the auditorium sound as well. He was a blur. Try it sometime-- no, actually, don't!

Sometimes things go right despite everything. This was one of those times. The audience's appreciation of the music was so warm and genuine that it didn't matter that extra setups were necessary. Sometimes, to gain a little more time, Chris would speak to those onstage through the onstage monitors and ask them to tell a joke while he was frantically (out of sight!) plugging things together in the control booth.

This by itself gave the evening a relaxed, family-sharing-with-family feeling-- which in turn was reflected in the musical performances. All of this, as well as everyone knowing they were playing together in the cause of friendship, contributed to an evening of some of the most relaxed, competent and confident music I have heard in my thirty years of being both a performer and a producer. I doubt there were a dozen misplaced notes in the hundreds of thousands that were played. I know so. Together with Chris, I mixed the final cuts.

That's about it, except for the liner note routine: There were six "acts", but so much trading off and walking on and off stage to add a part or a back up went on, that *Who's Who on What* was almost too formidable to list.... The acts went something like this:

Baila Dworsky --guitar, vocals, dulcimer. With her were Alex Fowler, acoustic bass, and Janette Force, vocals. Karolynn Flynn also came on for some sweet, vocal back up, as did Steve Lalor with his guitar and Dave Meis with the dobro.

Larry Johnson-- guitar and vocals. With him were Bud Brewer on pedal steel and Dave Meis on dobro. Both also sang backup.

Gary Romjue played guitar and sang. Accompanying him were Steve Prescott on electric bass; Janette, Karolynn and sometimes Baila on backup vocals; Dave sat in with his dobro occasionally.

Kate Power and Steve Einhorn played guitars and sang both leads and backups with each other.

Joe Breskin played guitar. In differing combinations he also brought on Steve Lalor, guitar (who also sang lead on one tune); Doug Nelsen, guitar and lead on one tune; Heather Williams, piano; with Gary, Janette, Karolynn and Baila as backup singers.

Robert Force-- dulcimer and vocal. With me were, at times: my brother, Steve Prescott on electric bass; my son, Dakota Force on digeridoo and congas; son, Sam Force on Tibetan prayer bowl; brother-in-law, Doug Banner (now outlaw!) on Celtic drums; Baila Dworsky on dulcimer; Rich Finn on bells and percussion; Heather Williams on piano; Gary Romjue on mandolin, Joe Breskin on guitar and, of course, Janette, Baila and Karolynn on backup vocals.

Finally, at the end, we brought on everybody who had been on stage and Gary Romjue sang Van Morrison's, *Brown Eyed Girl* while we all played and sang along. Sam was there to play the full kit trap drum set and we also added a horn section with Chris Cox, cornet; Ben Gonzales, saxophone; and Hans Daubenberger, trumpet. There was no way that Chris Martin could adequately mike the finale for the CD, so it's not on here. But over 70 minutes of the rest of the concert is.

A word about the final mix: It seemed to be a good idea to mix the tunes together for the purpose of cutting the CD. Remember, you can always hit "random play" if you prefer a different song order! Note the high number of original tunes and arrangements on this CD performed by the people who wrote them. As it said on the poster, (see the pix files) these musicians have more than 50 album-length recordings between them on which they've either written, performed or produced. Tell your friends. This is a good one.

This is a multi-media CD and contains concert photos of the evening's event which can be read by either Mac® or IBM® based computers with any web-based browser program

Robert Force

Port Townsend. Dec. 10, 1998