

## Building Bridges with Music

by Pam Besel

As a young girl growing up in Karamay City in Xinjiang, China, Ohio Wesleyan's part-time assistant professor of music **Gulimina Mahamuti** began playing the piano at age 8. At age 15, she was admitted as a piano major to the affiliated high school music program for gifted students at Northwest University for Nationalities, where she continued her B.M. degree in Piano Performance. A year into her study, she was one of five students selected to study at the prestigious Jilin Conservatory of Music, where she doubled majored in piano and music composition and earned her B.M. What followed were years of hard work and study to obtain her Masters of Music in Piano Performance and Piano Pedagogy at Harbin Normal University in China, followed by an opportunity to further her study at Pittsburg State University, where she received her second M.M. degree in Piano Performance with *Graduate Dean Academic Honors*. After three additional years of hard work at University of Missouri-Kansas City, she obtained her Doctorate of Musical Arts in Piano Performance. Having reached her goal of receiving a doctorate in the U.S., Mahamuti focused on sharing music, especially the music of her childhood, with the world.

"I love performing," says Mahamuti, whose Carnegie Hall recital took place in January 2012, where she played piano music of western China from her

hometown in Xinjiang. Her first performance abroad after receiving a DMA from the U.S. was in China in 2010. She gave concerts in Beijing, Lanzhou, and her hometown Karamay City, where she was honored as the first Uyghur in China to receive a Doctorate of Musical Arts in piano performance from an American university. "There were lots of media attention and a live television broadcast of my concert," she says. Mahamuti's performances usually are complemented by lectures and master classes. Earlier this year, she performed in Budapest, Hungary, at the invitation of the Turkish Ambassador in Hungary, and in Istanbul under the auspices of the Turkish State



Gulimina Mahamuti recently completed a month-long concert tour in China. Her tour included stops at several music schools and cities, including the prestigious China Conservatory of Music in Beijing. (Photo by John Holliger)

Conservatory of Music; her performance was broadcast by Istanbul Technical University Radio. Mahamuti has appeared as guest pianist with the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra, performing Benjamin Britten's Piano Concert, op. 13 in April.

Most recently, Mahamuti did a month-long invited concert tour in China, where she performed and gave master classes and lectures at the invitations of several music schools and cities across China, including the prestigious China Conservatory of Music in Beijing (the first all Steinway School in China), the Conservatory of Music at Northwest University, Karamay City, Yili Normal University, Changji College, and Xinjiang Institute of Education.

"Everyone there is interested in the U.S. teaching system," explains Mahamuti, who teaches applied piano at OWU and previously taught piano pedagogy at Capital University before coming to Ohio Wesleyan. While touring in China, she performed repertoire selections and talked about classical piano, applied piano teaching, stylistic periods, and performance issues. She also brought with her the recently translated work by music historian, teacher, and recitalist Nancy Bachus.

"Piano literature is a field less developed in China and Nancy's literature helps children to understand more about the piano's history," says Mahamuti. She has been asked by Bachus to write an article for *Clavier Companion*, a premiere magazine for pianists, comparing piano teaching in China to the United States. In addition, Mahamuti's nationwide research on how the economic downturn has affected private music teaching resulted in an invitation to present her work at the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) conference in Atlanta while she was a doctoral student. Just this past May, Mahamuti released her first CD recording, *Xinjiang Piano Music from Western China*; the second CD recording is in post-production.

"I play pieces from different eras reflecting classical and contemporary repertoires," she says. The pieces she plays are selected to promote beautiful music that is not often performed or heard. Mahamuti's students vary in age, from those at OWU to young children she teaches privately in her Mansfield, Ohio studio. Two of those children recently won first place in the elementary division of OhioMTA competition. Most important to Mahamuti is her teaching, performing, and decoding of the message of music through research.

"I'd also like to think I am building bridges between western China and Ohio Wesleyan," she says.

To learn more about Dr. Mahamuti, visit [www.gulimina.com](http://www.gulimina.com).