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Fred Knubel, Director

The first systematic program of exchange in the arts between the People's Republic of China and the United States was announced yesterday (Saturday) by Columbia University.

Describing it as an "historic move with far-ranging impact," University officials announced the creation of the Center for United States-People's Republic of China Arts Exchange at Columbia's School of the Arts.

They said the program signaled "a new major thrust in the arts" by the Chinese similar to ones already under way in science and technology.

"It will allow both Americans and Chinese to become acquainted with developments in the arts from which they have been isolated for more than 20 years," said Schuyler Chapin, dean of the School of the Arts.

The Center will serve as the central agency in the United States for the exchange of materials, initially in the fields of music, the performing arts and the visual arts. Eventually an exchange of people

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is planned. The Central Institute of Music in Peking will act as the Center's counterpart in China.

Initial funding has been provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and other foundations, it was announced.

"Given the long and rich tradition of China in the arts," said Columbia President William J. McGill, "it is highly significant that the Chinese people today are embarking on a new phase of development in which they will participate as never before in a process of cultural exchange with other peoples. We are now establishing a solid basis for serious study and regular exchanges worthy of the historic friendship of the American and Chinese people."

Chou Wen-chung, professor of music at Columbia, will be the first director of the new Center. He is director of international programs at the School of the Arts and was the principal American negotiator with the Chinese in the establishment of the Center. He said:

"This substantive exchange project may well prove to be historic in the sense that exchange in the arts on this level has never before been undertaken. I believe this program will do more than promote friendship and better understanding between the peoples of the two countries. It is my understanding that the Chinese are on the verge of initiating a new major thrust in the arts similar to those already under way in science and technology and in higher education. If a major movement in the arts, designed for the consumption of more than a quarter of the world's population, is indeed undertaken and brought to some level of fruition, its impact on the rest of the world, particularly the Third World, is bound to be far-reaching."

The Center will begin operations this fall by negotiating an exchange of materials for reference, research and teaching, including music scores, recordings, publications and art works. In following months, exchange programs for teachers, scholars and performers will be developed. Eventually the Center's scope will be broadened to literature, and beyond the performing and creative arts to musicology and art history.

A panel of specialists will be appointed for each category of materials to be sent to China. Materials from China will be duplicated at Columbia, translated when necessary and distributed to other interested institutions in the United States. The Center will negotiate with the Chinese for particular materials especially desired by scholars here.

Beyond the initial funding, a number of other foundations and organizations in the arts are interested in supporting specific exchanges, Professor Chou reported. The National Committee on United States-China Relations, of which Professor Chou is a board member, is also supporting the project.

The Columbia music professor noted that the Chinese are exploring exchanges with European countries and that a few informal, personal arrangements for arts exchange with the United States have begun to emerge. But the new Center, he said, will fill the need for "coordinated and planned exchanges that will lead to a broadly based and on-going development rather than isolated and momentary events."

"The new mood in arts development in the People's Republic of

China," said Professor Chou, "represents a revival of the more liberal and less monolithic spirit in the arts of the 1950s -- the Hundred Flowers movement."

Dean Chapin said the project would give both countries access to materials and concepts never available to either before. "It will allow Chinese and American scholars and professionals to become reacquainted with each other's national artistic heritage, opening a door that has been closed for 20 years," he said.

Efforts toward creation of the new Center began last October (1977) when Professor Chou made an extended visit to Peking and met with more than 30 leaders in the arts. Many were the foremost figures in their fields: the heads of the Central Institute of Music in Peking, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Central Institute of Visual Arts; the major orchestra conductors, and principal composers, musicians, musicologists, painters, singers and dancers.

"It was clear that the Chinese rejoiced in their new freedom in the arts and were determined to quickly recoup their artistic losses of the past ten years. They were concerned with the serious problems facing them and hopeful of gaining knowledge of Western advances," said Professor Chou.

The Chinese gave two special concerts for Professor Chou and asked him to lecture at the Central Institute of Music. His proposal was discussed by an audience of professionals. The exchange agreement was formally accepted on a people-to-people basis and arranged through Wang Ping-nan, chairman of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

Dean Chapin said it was appropriate that the Chinese establish their first formalized exchange in an art capital like New York City and "particularly appropriate that it should be at Columbia, where there is a long tradition of scholarship and encouragement in the arts."

Columbia's School of the Arts has divisions in musical composition, visual arts, theater arts, film and writing. It also has a Translation Center. The University's departments of music, art history, and archaeology and East Asian languages and cultures are also expected to contribute to the project.

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