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Fred Knubel, Director

The Center for United States-People's Republic of China Arts Exchange at Columbia University's School of the Arts has scheduled the first visit to modern China by a broadly representative group of American artists and leaders in the arts.

Thirty-six American dancers, costume designers, composers, choreographers, producers, educators and others representing various branches of the arts will leave Monday (March 5) on a 16-day visit designed to open channels of professional communication with their counterparts in China.

The Center was created at Columbia in October to serve as the central agency in this country for the exchange of people and materials in the fields of music, the performing arts and the visual arts. The Central Institute of Music in Peking serves the same function in China.

Well-known American artists scheduled to make the trip include: Michael Bennett, the director, co-producer and choreographer of "A Chorus Line"; Robert Brannigan, theater design consultant for

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Lincoln Center; Bernard Jacobs, president of the Shubert Organization; Anna Sokolow, the dancer and choreographer; Ben Stevenson, artistic director of the Houston Ballet, and Louise Svendsen, senior curator of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Chou Wen-Chung, professor of music at the School of the Arts and director of the Center, and Martin Segal, chairman of the Mayor's Planning Committee for the New York International Celebration of the Arts, will be the group's co-leaders.

In commenting on the trip, Professor Chou described it as an "important step forward" in opening up full professional exchanges in the arts.

"This trip is particularly timely," he said, "not only because it is the first organized by the Center, but also because it marks the first time that a representative group in the arts has been sent to China since diplomatic relations have been normalized."

Tour participants will visit art institutes and meet and carry out discussions of mutual interest with artists in Peking, Nanking, Soochow and Shanghai before leaving China by way of Kwangchow on March 23.

Schuyler G. Chapin, dean of the School of the Arts, said: "The opportunity to help the Chinese in terms of their artistic organizations that have been for so long cut off from the West is unique and unusual. We are pleased beyond measure that the Chinese have entrusted this important task to our Center."

Dean Chapin also noted that Professor Chou had met with the highest officials of the Chinese Ministry of Culture while on a visit

to Peking last month to negotiate further procedures for the exchange of both people and materials.

Those meetings have led to a number of important new developments in the program, including preliminary plans to establish a two-phased program to facilitate the placement of advanced Chinese students at American institutions and to assist the Chinese Ministry of Culture in planning educational programs.

On his current visit, Professor Chou said he expects to negotiate further with the Chinese on this program and on another to set up both short- and long-term exchange visits between art teachers and accomplished professionals in the arts.

He also said that his discussions in Peking have led to the establishment of a new "Special Projects" program that will allow prominent American artists to conduct professional activities in China, setting the groundwork for establishing major joint projects in the arts between the two countries.

Professor Chou said that one of the major outcomes of his last visit had been the desire expressed by the Chinese to "expand the Center's exchange programs to include the fields of film and drama." Initially, the program had been designed to facilitate exchanges only in the fields of music, the performing arts and the visual arts.