

# Speaking the Universal Language

International student finds friendship through music club

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Lixing Huang came to UNH from the other side of the world. He arrived four years ago not knowing a soul. But that didn't last long.

On move-in day 2012, Huang '15 went floor to floor in his dorm, stopping at every open door to introduce himself to fellow Randall Hall residents.

It was a little against his nature but it paid off. In the following days when he'd pass dormmates in the hall, or walking across campus, they'd say hello. Two weeks later, Huang was hanging out with them, playing video games. And strangers became friends.

"I gave myself a little push," the native of Guangzhou, China, says. "I started by telling myself, 'You can't wait for people to find you, you have to go find them.'"

The second way Huang found people was through the UNH Chinese Student Music Association that he started in 2014. The club has between 30 and 40 members, 15 of whom perform on campus. On April 30, that group gave its second "Miles and More" concert in the MUB's Granite State Room. Last year's concert was so well received that it was moved this year to the larger venue.

"Music is a huge part of my life," says Huang, a business major who plays guitar and piano, sings, and writes and produces music. "I made many Chinese friends who have a lot of musical talent. The club provides a platform for us to share music."

The genre is pop and rock. Huang says someone listening would find it recognizable.

"We listen to Western music, too — Adele, Maroon 5. Our music sounds the same, it's just that the lyrics are in Chinese," Huang says. "Some people have a perception that we are all so different. But in so many ways, we are the same."

That sameness is important to Huang. It's what he focuses on when asked what he found most unusual about life in America when he first arrived here. His answer, "Nothing."

Nothing?

"Before I came, I knew it was going to be a completely new environment so how could I think anything was strange?" he says. "I wanted to be open."

And he has been, trying to keep in mind that everyone can have preconceived notions about people who are different.

"When I meet someone, I try to remember that they don't know me and I don't know them. People can have images in their head and that can lead to misunderstandings on both sides," he says. "If I sense that is happening with my friends, I try to influence them. 'Don't judge,' I say."

Huang was among the first group of international students recruited by UNH's Navitas program. This year, he served as a residence hall assistant in the Upper Quad and has worked hard to make connections across campus. Still, there are times when the best of philosophies can let you down. When that happens, Huang has a pretty good "go-to."

"If I see or hear something negative, I listen to 'Imagine' by John Lennon," he says.

And it works. As Hans Christian Andersen wrote: "Where words fail, music speaks."

- WRITTEN BY:

[Jody Record '95](#) | Communications and Public Affairs | [jody.record@unh.edu](mailto:jody.record@unh.edu)

## INCLUSION



University of New Hampshire

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