

= Forbidden City =

The Forbidden City was the Chinese imperial palace from the Ming dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty ? the years 1420 to 1912 . It is located in the centre of Beijing , China , and now houses the Palace Museum . It served as the home of emperors and their households as well as the ceremonial and political centre of Chinese government for almost 500 years .

Constructed from 1406 to 1420 , the complex consists of 980 buildings and covers 72 ha ( 180 acres ) . The palace complex exemplifies traditional Chinese palatial architecture , and has influenced cultural and architectural developments in East Asia and elsewhere . The Forbidden City was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987 , and is listed by UNESCO as the largest collection of preserved ancient wooden structures in the world .

Since 1925 , the Forbidden City has been under the charge of the Palace Museum , whose extensive collection of artwork and artifacts were built upon the imperial collections of the Ming and Qing dynasties . Part of the museum 's former collection is now located in the National Palace Museum in Taipei . Both museums descend from the same institution , but were split after the Chinese Civil War . With over 14 million annual visitors , the Palace Museum is the most visited Museum in the world .

= = Name = =

The common English name , " the Forbidden City " , is a translation of the Chinese name Zijin Cheng ( Chinese : 紫禁城 ; pinyin : Zǐjīnchéng ; literally : " Forbidden City " ) . The name Zijin Cheng first formally appeared in 1576 . Another English name of similar origin is " Forbidden Palace " .

The name " Zijin Cheng " is a name with significance on many levels . Zi , or " Purple " , refers to the North Star , which in ancient China was called the Ziwei Star , and in traditional Chinese astrology was the heavenly abode of the Celestial Emperor . The surrounding celestial region , the Ziwei Enclosure ( Chinese : 紫微垣 ; pinyin : Zǐwēiyuán ) , was the realm of the Celestial Emperor and his family . The Forbidden City , as the residence of the terrestrial emperor , was its earthly counterpart . Jin , or " Forbidden " , referred to the fact that no one could enter or leave the palace without the emperor 's permission . Cheng means a city .

Today , the site is most commonly known in Chinese as Gùgōng ( 故宫 ) , which means the " Former Palace " . The museum which is based in these buildings is known as the " Palace Museum " ( Chinese : 故宫博物院 ; pinyin : Gùgōng Bówùyùàn ) .

= = History = =

When Hongwu Emperor 's son Zhu Di became the Yongle Emperor , he moved the capital from Nanjing to Beijing , and construction began in 1406 on what would become the Forbidden City .

Construction lasted 14 years and required more than a million workers . Material used include whole logs of precious Phoebe zhennan wood ( Chinese : 楠木 ; pinyin : nánmù ) found in the jungles of south @-@ western China , and large blocks of marble from quarries near Beijing . The floors of major halls were paved with " golden bricks " ( Chinese : 金砖 ; pinyin : jīnzhūn ) , specially baked paving bricks from Suzhou .

From 1420 to 1644 , the Forbidden City was the seat of the Ming dynasty . In April 1644 , it was captured by rebel forces led by Li Zicheng , who proclaimed himself emperor of the Shun dynasty . He soon fled before the combined armies of former Ming general Wu Sangui and Manchu forces , setting fire to parts of the Forbidden City in the process .

By October , the Manchus had achieved supremacy in northern China , and a ceremony was held at the Forbidden City to proclaim the young Shunzhi Emperor as ruler of all China under the Qing dynasty . The Qing rulers changed the names on some of the principal buildings , to emphasise " Harmony " rather than " Supremacy " , made the name plates bilingual ( Chinese and Manchu ) , and introduced Shamanist elements to the palace .

In 1860 , during the Second Opium War , Anglo @-@ French forces took control of the Forbidden

City and occupied it until the end of the war . In 1900 Empress Dowager Cixi fled from the Forbidden City during the Boxer Rebellion , leaving it to be occupied by forces of the treaty powers until the following year .

After being the home of 24 emperors ? 14 of the Ming dynasty and 10 of the Qing dynasty ? the Forbidden City ceased being the political centre of China in 1912 with the abdication of Puyi , the last Emperor of China . Under an agreement with the new Republic of China government , Puyi remained in the Inner Court , while the Outer Court was given over to public use , until he was evicted after a coup in 1924 . The Palace Museum was then established in the Forbidden City in 1925 . In 1933 , the Japanese invasion of China forced the evacuation of the national treasures in the Forbidden City . Part of the collection was returned at the end of World War II , but the other part was evacuated to Taiwan in 1948 under orders by Chiang Kai @-@ shek , whose Kuomintang was losing the Chinese Civil War . This relatively small but high quality collection was kept in storage until 1965 , when it again became public , as the core of the National Palace Museum in Taipei .

After the establishment of the People 's Republic of China in 1949 , some damage was done to the Forbidden City as the country was swept up in revolutionary zeal . During the Cultural Revolution , however , further destruction was prevented when Premier Zhou Enlai sent an army battalion to guard the city .

The Forbidden City was declared a World Heritage Site in 1987 by UNESCO as the " Imperial Palace of the Ming and Qing Dynasties " , due to its significant place in the development of Chinese architecture and culture . It is currently administered by the Palace Museum , which is carrying out a sixteen @-@ year restoration project to repair and restore all buildings in the Forbidden City to their pre @-@ 1912 state .

In recent years , the presence of commercial enterprises in the Forbidden City has become controversial . A Starbucks store that opened in 2000 sparked objections and eventually closed on 13 July 2007 . Chinese media also took notice of a pair of souvenir shops that refused to admit Chinese citizens in order to price @-@ gouge foreign customers in 2006 .

= = Description = =

The Forbidden City is a rectangle , with 961 metres ( 3 @,@ 153 ft ) from north to south and 753 metres ( 2 @,@ 470 ft ) from east to west . It consists of 980 surviving buildings with 8 @,@ 886 bays of rooms . A common myth states that there are 9 @,@ 999 rooms including antechambers , based on oral tradition , and it is not supported by survey evidence . The Forbidden City was designed to be the centre of the ancient , walled city of Beijing . It is enclosed in a larger , walled area called the Imperial City . The Imperial City is , in turn , enclosed by the Inner City ; to its south lies the Outer City .

The Forbidden City remains important in the civic scheme of Beijing . The central north ? south axis remains the central axis of Beijing . This axis extends to the south through Tiananmen gate to Tiananmen Square , the ceremonial centre of the People 's Republic of China , and on to Yongdingmen . To the north , it extends through Jingshan Hill to the Bell and Drum Towers . This axis is not exactly aligned north ? south , but is tilted by slightly more than two degrees . Researchers now believe that the axis was designed in the Yuan dynasty to be aligned with Xanadu , the other capital of their empire .

= = = Walls and gates = = =

The Forbidden City is surrounded by a 7 @.@ 9 metres ( 26 ft ) high city wall and a 6 metres ( 20 ft ) deep by 52 metres ( 171 ft ) wide moat . The walls are 8 @.@ 62 metres ( 28 @.@ 3 ft ) wide at the base , tapering to 6 @.@ 66 metres ( 21 @.@ 9 ft ) at the top . These walls served as both defensive walls and retaining walls for the palace . They were constructed with a rammed earth core , and surfaced with three layers of specially baked bricks on both sides , with the interstices filled with mortar .

At the four corners of the wall sit towers ( E ) with intricate roofs boasting 72 ridges , reproducing

the Pavilion of Prince Teng and the Yellow Crane Pavilion as they appeared in Song dynasty paintings . These towers are the most visible parts of the palace to commoners outside the walls , and much folklore is attached to them . According to one legend , artisans could not put a corner tower back together after it was dismantled for renovations in the early Qing dynasty , and it was only rebuilt after the intervention of carpenter @-@ immortal Lu Ban .

The wall is pierced by a gate on each side . At the southern end is the main Meridian Gate ( A ) . To the north is the Gate of Divine Might ( B ) , which faces Jingshan Park . The east and west gates are called the " East Glorious Gate " ( D ) and " West Glorious Gate " ( C ) . All gates in the Forbidden City are decorated with a nine @-@ by @-@ nine array of golden door nails , except for the East Glorious Gate , which has only eight rows .

The Meridian Gate has two protruding wings forming three sides of a square ( Wumen , or Meridian Gate , Square ) before it . The gate has five gateways . The central gateway is part of the Imperial Way , a stone flagged path that forms the central axis of the Forbidden City and the ancient city of Beijing itself , and leads all the way from the Gate of China in the south to Jingshan in the north . Only the Emperor may walk or ride on the Imperial Way , except for the Empress on the occasion of her wedding , and successful students after the Imperial Examination .

= = = Outer Court or the Southern Section = = =

Traditionally , the Forbidden City is divided into two parts . The Outer Court ( ?? ) or Front Court ( ?? ) includes the southern sections , and was used for ceremonial purposes . The Inner Court ( ?? ) or Back Palace ( ?? ) includes the northern sections , and was the residence of the Emperor and his family , and was used for day @-@ to @-@ day affairs of state . ( The approximate dividing line shown as red dash in the plan above . ) Generally , the Forbidden City has three vertical axes . The most important buildings are situated on the central north ? south axis .

Entering from the Meridian Gate , one encounters a large square , pierced by the meandering Inner Golden Water River , which is crossed by five bridges . Beyond the square stands the Gate of Supreme Harmony ( F ) . Behind that is the Hall of Supreme Harmony Square . A three @-@ tiered white marble terrace rises from this square . Three halls stand on top of this terrace , the focus of the palace complex . From the south , these are the Hall of Supreme Harmony ( ??? ) , the Hall of Central Harmony ( ??? ) , and the Hall of Preserving Harmony ( ??? ) .

The Hall of Supreme Harmony ( G ) is the largest , and rises some 30 metres ( 98 ft ) above the level of the surrounding square . It is the ceremonial centre of imperial power , and the largest surviving wooden structure in China . It is nine bays wide and five bays deep , the numbers 9 and 5 being symbolically connected to the majesty of the Emperor . Set into the ceiling at the centre of the hall is an intricate caisson decorated with a coiled dragon , from the mouth of which issues a chandelier @-@ like set of metal balls , called the " Xuanyuan Mirror " . In the Ming dynasty , the Emperor held court here to discuss affairs of state . During the Qing dynasty , as Emperors held court far more frequently , a less ceremonious location was used instead , and the Hall of Supreme Harmony was only used for ceremonial purposes , such as coronations , investitures , and imperial weddings .

The Hall of Central Harmony is a smaller , square hall , used by the Emperor to prepare and rest before and during ceremonies . Behind it , the Hall of Preserving Harmony , was used for rehearsing ceremonies , and was also the site of the final stage of the Imperial examination . All three halls feature imperial thrones , the largest and most elaborate one being that in the Hall of Supreme Harmony .

At the centre of the ramps leading up to the terraces from the northern and southern sides are ceremonial ramps , part of the Imperial Way , featuring elaborate and symbolic bas @-@ relief carvings . The northern ramp , behind the Hall of Preserving Harmony , is carved from a single piece of stone 16 @. 57 metres ( 54 @. 4 ft ) long , 3 @. 07 metres ( 10 @. 1 ft ) wide , and 1 @. 7 metres ( 5 @. 6 ft ) thick . It weighs some 200 tonnes and is the largest such carving in China . The southern ramp , in front of the Hall of Supreme Harmony , is even longer , but is made from two stone slabs joined together ? the joint was ingeniously hidden using overlapping bas @-@

relief carvings , and was only discovered when weathering widened the gap in the 20th century .

In the south west and south east of the Outer Court are the halls of Military Eminence ( H ) and Literary Glory ( J ) . The former was used at various times for the Emperor to receive ministers and hold court , and later housed the Palace 's own printing house . The latter was used for ceremonial lectures by highly regarded Confucian scholars , and later became the office of the Grand Secretariat . A copy of the Siku Quanshu was stored there . To the north @-@ east are the Southern Three Places ( ??? ) ( K ) , which was the residence of the Crown Prince .

= = = Inner Court or the Northern Section = = =

The Inner Court is separated from the Outer Court by an oblong courtyard lying orthogonal to the City 's main axis . It was the home of the Emperor and his family . In the Qing dynasty , the Emperor lived and worked almost exclusively in the Inner Court , with the Outer Court used only for ceremonial purposes .

At the centre of the Inner Court is another set of three halls ( L ) . From the south , these are the Palace of Heavenly Purity ( ??? ) , Hall of Union , and the Palace of Earthly Tranquility . Smaller than the Outer Court halls , the three halls of the Inner Court were the official residences of the Emperor and the Empress . The Emperor , representing Yang and the Heavens , would occupy the Palace of Heavenly Purity . The Empress , representing Yin and the Earth , would occupy the Palace of Earthly Tranquility . In between them was the Hall of Union , where the Yin and Yang mixed to produce harmony .

The Palace of Heavenly Purity is a double @-@ eaved building , and set on a single @-@ level white marble platform . It is connected to the Gate of Heavenly Purity to its south by a raised walkway . In the Ming dynasty , it was the residence of the Emperor . However , beginning from the Yongzheng Emperor of the Qing dynasty , the Emperor lived instead at the smaller Hall of Mental Cultivation ( N ) to the west , out of respect to the memory of the Kangxi Emperor . The Palace of Heavenly Purity then became the Emperor 's audience hall . A caisson is set into the roof , featuring a coiled dragon . Above the throne hangs a tablet reading " Justice and Honour " ( Chinese : ????? ; pinyin : zhèngdàguāngmíng ) .

The Palace of Earthly Tranquility ( ??? ) is a double @-@ eaved building , 9 bays wide and 3 bays deep . In the Ming dynasty , it was the residence of the Empress . In the Qing dynasty , large portions of the Palace were converted for Shamanist worship by the new Manchu rulers . From the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor , the Empress moved out of the Palace . However , two rooms in the Palace of Earthly Tranquility were retained for use on the Emperor 's wedding night .

Between these two palaces is the Hall of Union , which is square in shape with a pyramidal roof . Stored here are the 25 Imperial Seals of the Qing dynasty , as well as other ceremonial items .

Behind these three halls lies the Imperial Garden ( M ) . Relatively small , and compact in design , the garden nevertheless contains several elaborate landscaping features . To the north of the garden is the Gate of Divine Might .

Directly to the west is the Hall of Mental Cultivation ( N ) . Originally a minor palace , this became the de facto residence and office of the Emperor starting from Yongzheng . In the last decades of the Qing dynasty , empresses dowager , including Cixi , held court from the eastern partition of the hall . Located around the Hall of Mental Cultivation are the offices of the Grand Council and other key government bodies .

The north @-@ eastern section of the Inner Court is taken up by the Palace of Tranquil Longevity ( ??? ) ( O ) , a complex built by the Qianlong Emperor in anticipation of his retirement . It mirrors the set @-@ up of the Forbidden City proper and features an " outer court " , an " inner court " , and gardens and temples . The entrance to the Palace of Tranquil Longevity is marked by a glazed @-@ tile Nine Dragons Screen . This section of the Forbidden City is being restored in a partnership between the Palace Museum and the World Monuments Fund , a long @-@ term project expected to finish in 2017 .

= = = Religion = = =

Religion was an important part of life for the imperial court . In the Qing dynasty , the Palace of Earthly Harmony became a place of Manchu Shamanist ceremony . At the same time , the native Chinese Taoist religion continued to have an important role throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties . There were two Taoist shrines , one in the imperial garden and another in the central area of the Inner Court .

Another prevalent form of religion in the Qing dynasty palace was Buddhism . A number of temples and shrines were scattered throughout the Inner Court , including that of Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism . Buddhist iconography also proliferated in the interior decorations of many buildings . Of these , the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers is one of the most important . It housed a large number of Buddhist statues , icons , and mandalas , placed in ritualistic arrangements .

#### = = = Surroundings = = =

The Forbidden City is surrounded on three sides by imperial gardens . To the north is Jingshan Park , also known as Prospect Hill , an artificial hill created from the soil excavated to build the moat and from nearby lakes .

To the west lies Zhongnanhai , a former royal garden centred on two connected lakes , which now serves as the central headquarters for the Communist Party of China and the State Council of the People 's Republic of China . To the north @-@ west lies Beihai Park , also centred on a lake connected to the southern two , and a popular royal park .

To the south of the Forbidden City were two important shrines ? the Imperial Shrine of Family or the Imperial Ancestral Temple ( Chinese : 宗庙 ; pinyin : Tàimiào ) and the Imperial Shrine of State ( Chinese : 社稷 ; pinyin : Tàishèjì ) , where the Emperor would venerate the spirits of his ancestors and the spirit of the nation , respectively . Today , these are the Beijing Labouring People 's Cultural Hall and Zhongshan Park ( commemorating Sun Yat @-@ sen ) respectively .

To the south , two nearly identical gatehouses stand along the main axis . They are the Upright Gate ( Chinese : 午门 ; pinyin : Dǔnmén ) and the more famous Tiananmen Gate , which is decorated with a portrait of Mao Zedong in the centre and two placards to the left and right : " Long Live the People 's Republic of China " and " Long live the Great Unity of the World 's Peoples " . The Tiananmen Gate connects the Forbidden City precinct with the modern , symbolic centre of the Chinese state , Tiananmen Square .

While development is now tightly controlled in the vicinity of the Forbidden City , throughout the past century uncontrolled and sometimes politically motivated demolition and reconstruction has changed the character of the areas surrounding the Forbidden City . Since 2000 , the Beijing municipal government has worked to evict governmental and military institutions occupying some historical buildings , and has established a park around the remaining parts of the Imperial City wall . In 2004 , an ordinance relating to building height and planning restriction was renewed to establish the Imperial City area and the northern city area as a buffer zone for the Forbidden City . In 2005 , the Imperial City and Beihai ( as an extension item to the Summer Palace ) were included in the shortlist for the next World Heritage Site in Beijing .

#### = = = Symbolism = = =

The design of the Forbidden City , from its overall layout to the smallest detail , was meticulously planned to reflect philosophical and religious principles , and above all to symbolise the majesty of Imperial power . Some noted examples of symbolic designs include :

Yellow is the color of the Emperor . Thus almost all roofs in the Forbidden City bear yellow glazed tiles . There are only two exceptions . The library at the Pavilion of Literary Profundity ( 文渊阁 ) had black tiles because black was associated with water , and thus fire @-@ prevention . Similarly , the Crown Prince 's residences have green tiles because green was associated with wood , and thus growth .

The main halls of the Outer and Inner courts are all arranged in groups of three ? the shape of the

Qian trigram , representing Heaven . The residences of the Inner Court on the other hand are arranged in groups of six ? the shape of the Kun trigram , representing the Earth .

The sloping ridges of building roofs are decorated with a line of statuettes led by a man riding a phoenix and followed by an imperial dragon . The number of statuettes represents the status of the building ? a minor building might have 3 or 5 . The Hall of Supreme Harmony has 10 , the only building in the country to be permitted this in Imperial times . As a result , its 10th statuette , called a " Hangshi " , or " ranked tenth " ( Chinese : 悬峙 ; pinyin : Hángshí ) , is also unique in the Forbidden City .

The layout of buildings follows ancient customs laid down in the Classic of Rites . Thus , ancestral temples are in front of the palace . Storage areas are placed in the front part of the palace complex , and residences in the back .

= = Collections = =

The collections of the Palace Museum are based on the Qing imperial collection . According to the results of a 1925 audit , some 1 @. @ 17 million pieces of art were stored in the Forbidden City . In addition , the imperial libraries housed a large collection of rare books and historical documents , including government documents of the Ming and Qing dynasties .

From 1933 , the threat of Japanese invasion forced the evacuation of the most important parts of the Museum 's collection . After the end of World War II , this collection was returned to Nanjing . However , with the Communists ' victory imminent in the Chinese Civil War , the Nationalist government decided to ship the pick of this collection to Taiwan . Of the 13 @, @ 491 boxes of evacuated artifacts , 2 @, @ 972 boxes are now housed in the National Palace Museum in Taipei . More than 8 @, @ 000 boxes were returned to Beijing , but 2 @, @ 221 boxes remain today in storage under the charge of the Nanjing Museum .

After 1949 , the Museum conducted a new audit as well as a thorough search of the Forbidden City , uncovering a number of important items . In addition , the government moved items from other museums around the country to replenish the Palace Museum 's collection . It also purchased and received donations from the public .

Today , there are over a million rare and valuable works of art in the permanent collection of the Palace Museum , including paintings , ceramics , seals , steles , sculptures , inscribed wares , bronze wares , enamel objects , etc . According to an inventory of the Museum 's collection conducted between 2004 and 2010 , the Palace Museum holds a total of 1 @, @ 807 @, @ 558 artifacts and includes 1 @, @ 684 @, @ 490 items designated as nationally protected " valuable cultural relics . "

#### Ceramics

The Palace Museum holds 340 @, @ 000 pieces of ceramics and porcelain . These include imperial collections from the Tang dynasty and the Song dynasty , as well as pieces commissioned by the Palace , and , sometimes , by the Emperor personally . The Palace Museum holds about 320 @, @ 000 pieces of porcelain from the imperial collection . The rest are almost all held in the National Palace Museum in Taipei and the Nanjing Museum .

#### Painting

The Palace Museum holds close to 50 @, @ 000 paintings . Of these , more than 400 date from before the Yuan dynasty ( 1271 ? 1368 ) . This is the largest such collection in China . The collection is based on the palace collection in the Ming and Qing dynasties . The personal interest of Emperors such as Qianlong meant that the palace held one of the most important collections of paintings in Chinese history . However , a significant portion of this collection was lost over the years . After his abdication , Puyi transferred paintings out of the palace , and many of these were subsequently lost or destroyed . In 1948 , many of the works were moved to Taiwan . The collection has subsequently been replenished , through donations , purchases , and transfers from other museums .

#### Bronzeware

The Palace Museum 's bronze collection dates from the early Shang dynasty . Of the almost 10

@, @ 000 pieces held , about 1 @, @ 600 are inscribed items from the pre @-@ Qin period ( to 221 BC ) . A significant part of the collection is ceremonial bronzeware from the imperial court .

#### Timepieces

The Palace Museum has one of the largest collections of mechanical timepieces of the 18th and 19th centuries in the world , with more than 1 @, @ 000 pieces . The collection contains both Chinese- and foreign @-@ made pieces . Chinese pieces came from the palace 's own workshops , Guangzhou ( Canton ) and Suzhou ( Suchow ) . Foreign pieces came from countries including Britain , France , Switzerland , the United States and Japan . Of these , the largest portion come from Britain .

#### Jade

Jade has a unique place in Chinese culture . The Museum 's collection , mostly derived from the imperial collection , includes some 30 @, @ 000 pieces . The pre @-@ Yuan dynasty part of the collection includes several pieces famed throughout history , as well as artifacts from more recent archaeological discoveries . The earliest pieces date from the Neolithic period . Ming dynasty and Qing dynasty pieces , on the other hand , include both items for palace use , as well as tribute items from around the Empire and beyond .

#### Palace artifacts

In addition to works of art , a large proportion of the Museum 's collection consists of the artefacts of the imperial court . This includes items used by the imperial family and the palace in daily life , as well as various ceremonial and bureaucratic items important to government administration . This comprehensive collection preserves the daily life and ceremonial protocols of the imperial era .

= = Influence = =

The Forbidden City , the culmination of the two @-@ thousand @-@ year development of classical Chinese and East Asian architecture , has been influential in the subsequent development of Chinese architecture , as well as providing inspiration for many artistic works . Some specific examples include :

#### Depiction in art , film , literature and popular culture

The Forbidden City has served as the scene to many works of fiction . In recent years , it has been depicted in films and television series . Some notable examples include :

The Forbidden City ( 1918 ) , a fiction film about a Chinese emperor and an American .

The Last Emperor ( 1987 ) , a biographical film about Puyi , was the first feature film ever authorised by the government of the People 's Republic of China to be filmed in the Forbidden City .

Marco Polo a joint NBC and RAI TV miniseries broadcast in the early 1980s , was filmed inside the Forbidden City . Note , however , that the present Forbidden City did not exist in the Yuan dynasty , when Marco Polo met Kublai Khan .

= = Live Performance concert venue = =

The Forbidden City has also served as a performance venue . However , its use for this purpose is strictly limited , due to the heavy impact of equipment and performance on the ancient structures . Almost all performances said to be " in the Forbidden City " are held outside the palace walls .

Giacomo Puccini 's opera , Turandot , the story of a Chinese princess , was performed at the Imperial Shrine just outside the Forbidden City for the first time in 1998 .

In 1997 , Greek @-@ born composer and keyboardist Yanni performed a live concert in front of the Forbidden City . The concert was recorded and later released as part of the Tribute album .

In 2001 , the Three Tenors , Plácido Domingo and José Carreras and Luciano Pavarotti sang in front of Forbidden City main gate as one of their performances .

In 2004 , the French musician Jean Michel Jarre performed a live concert in front of the Forbidden City , accompanied by 260 musicians , as part of the " Year of France in China " festivities .