

09/28/94  
HONORING VAN CLIBURN  
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
HONORING VAN CLIBURN  
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON D.C.

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much. It is a delight for me to be here among so many who for so many years have promoted cooperation and friendship between our countries. And I am very hopeful that the changes that have been taking place and that have resulted in the warm partnership between the United States and Russia will lead to even more cooperative efforts such as this foundation.

It was a particular delight for the President and me to see Russian students at the Library of Congress this morning. And it has always been a thrill for me to see American students who have recently been in Russia to study. So I am very hopeful that educational, cultural, and economic as well as other ties will continue to grow and deepen.

And I think one person among us has always served as a symbol of our country's appreciation of the arts and of the potential for many years that we could be brought together.

In 1958, when a young Texan won the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition, that not only came as a surprise in Moscow, it probably also came as a surprise in New York, because all of a sudden onto the international cultural scene came an artist whose talent would absolutely revolutionize not only piano playing and concert performances, but also the way we thought about the role that music has played in our lives and the universal language that it is, which transcends geography and politics.

Van Cliburn became beloved in Russia, in the United States, and around the world. He has been and continues to be a treasure that peoples of all nations can share. He has been an ambassador of good will during some very difficult days. And he has demonstrated in a quiet, persistent way the contributions that each of us can make with whatever talents and skills we are able to have and develop.

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He has shown us the greatest tool of diplomacy is often the simple magic of an artistic encounter and particularly the shared emotions that music conveys. We can all appreciate now, more than three decades later, the impact of his performance in Moscow in 1958. Thanks to his music, that door between our countries was cracked open a little wider and has stayed open during the decades until now it is wide open and we are here this evening.

On behalf of all lovers of music, on behalf of all Americans, and on behalf of our distinguished guests from Russia, we want to thank Van Cliburn for his humanity and his great talent and to salute him for making our lives and our world so much richer, and also to hope that the inspiration that he gave to many young Russians and Americans, not only those of musical talent but those with an ear to appreciate it, not only those who are artists, but those who dreamed of a better political and economic relationship between our countries, will continue to build a more deep and lasting friendship that will stand the test of time and in a way bring music to all of our ears that we can celebrate as we move forward together. Thank you, Van Cliburn.

(End of speech.)

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