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Los Angeles Salutes 2008 Beijing Olympics

By Katherine Whitman



A special souvenir for 2008 Beijing Olympics was unveiled at the press conference

On August 7, 2008, Los Angeles City Councilmembers Tom LaBonge and Bernard Parks held a press conference at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to officially salute the 2008 Olympic Games that are to take place in Beijing, China.

"Los Angeles has hosted two wonderful Olympic Games before, in 1932 and 1984, and we know all about the hard work that goes into making the games a success," said Councilmember LaBonge. "We hope this year's Olympics in China are just as successful."

Added Councilmember Parks, "The Olympic Games is are every four-year life-changing event, whether for the spectator or for the participant. Many Angelenos remember 1984 and the glow that the Olympic Games brought to the City. I am encouraged by the accommodations provided by Beijing, China and I send all my good wishes to the US athletes who are in China to bring home the gold."

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LAGSCA Donated for Earthquake Relief

By Jeffrey Cheung

On May 12, the world was shocked by the news of the earthquake in Sichuan Province, China. Over seventy thousand people lost their lives and millions lost their homes.

LAGSCA launched a donation program for earthquake relief, and within two weeks received many donations from our members and friends. On May 28 LAGSCA Chairman Irving Karp and President Jeffrey Cheung presented a check of \$5,000 to Ambassador Zhang Yun, the Chinese Consul General. Amb. Zhang briefed the guests on the progress of earthquake relief work and expressed his sincere thanks to donations the Consulate has received from various communities in Los Angeles area.



From left: Ruth & Irving Karp, Amb. Zhang Yun, and Jeffrey Cheung

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Charles Stapleton Awarded Member of 2007

By Jeffrey Cheung

On February 24, at the LAGSCA's New Year Banquet, Charles Stapleton was awarded Member of 2007. Charles received the award from LAGSCA Chairman Irving Karp and President Jeffrey Cheung. Los Angeles City Councilmen Tom Labonge and Dennis Zine jointly presented to Charles a Certificate of Appreciation issued by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

As a professor at Los Angeles Community College and a retired LAPD officer, Charles Stapleton has been actively involved in various exchange programs between Los Angeles and Guangzhou. In the last two years, he has given lectures to the Guangzhou Public Management Training Delegations, and was instrumental in the arranging an internship at LAPD for visiting scholars from Guangzhou Police Department.

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Second from left, Charles Stapleton received the award from LAGSCA Officers

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Councilmember LaBonge and Parks were joined in this expression of good will by Jin Fan of the Chinese Consulate, runner Louis Zamperini of the 1936 U.S.A. Olympic team, and Jeffrey Cheung, President of Los Angeles -- Guangzhou Sister City Association.

Consul Jin Fan, on behalf of the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles, gave her heartfelt thanks to the citizens of Los Angeles for the support for 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Jeffrey Cheung, on behalf of LAGSCA, expressed the best wishes for the success of Beijing Olympics that were to begin on the following day.

Opera---The Soul of Rural China?

By Nancy Pine

My first evening in a Chinese village, I listened to the high-pitched sounds of the two-stringed erhu as they accompanied the tight strains of rural opera sung by local residents. I struggled to comprehend what I was hearing and to understand why it was so appealing to many Chinese.

Growing up I heard bits of Chinese opera. To my non-Chinese ears it sounded screechy and discordant. Then in 1989 I began traveling to China. I heard fragments of traditional music, including opera, in the parks. Although they were still strange to my western ears, the tones seemed more at home in a Chinese context. Walking through a city park I came across a lone erhu player. He leaned against the stonewall of a pavilion seated on a tiny stool. The tall, thin erhu rested on his thigh, and he seemed lost in the sounds his bow drew from its strings. His melody suggested an aloneness, a way to imagine a walk in mountain forests or a rest along an isolated river. During my next trip a friend treated me to dinner in his favorite Nanjing restaurant. Traditional dishes were accompanied by an orchestra of ancient instruments. The music jarred my senses, yet I knew my friend was showing me something he loved. The next day he brought me CDs of similar music. In the following months as I crisscrossed Los Angeles freeways, I listened to those CDs and realized he had helped me draw closer to the pulse of China.



with their feet and hands. The melodies

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After several decades traveling to urban China, I joined a Global Volunteers project to learn about rural life while teaching spoken English in a village on the edge of the great Loess Plateau. My first evening there we volunteers and our students (high school teachers from surrounding areas) were welcomed at a celebration. As we entered a family courtyard, villagers were already seated on wooden benches facing a performance area with a portable audio system.

Several musicians tuned their instruments, and after children scurried back and forth adjusting costumes, the elementary school classes performed. Next, Mr. Feng, a village leader, sang. Others then pulled his wife forward to sing some local opera, and her strong voice penetrated the courtyard. The tones stretched across the Chinese pentatonic scale, built on five notes to an octave instead of the more familiar seven notes of the west. I tried to settle into the strange sounds. Six or so musicians, arranged along the brick courtyard wall, slid into the rhythm of her song, and a shiver ran through me as I watched her serene assurance. Gazing up at the stars, I felt frozen in time in this makeshift performance hall, squash vines dangling from the second story of the homestead. I realized I was surrounded by traditions that date back thousands of years.

Everyone packed into the courtyard seemed to know the music. A two-year old near me with dark sparkling eyes tapped her fingers and moved her body to the rhythms. Young children squatting on the floor nearby kept time and harmony, so strange to me, were as much a part of their lives as the breezes that lifted the leaves on the vines.



Erhu player

In Memory of Dr. Jordan M. Phillips

By Jeffrey Cheung



Jordan M. Phillips, M.D., with his loving wife Mary

Jordan M. Phillips, M.D., a long time board member of LAGSCA, passed away on July 29, 2008 at the age of 85. He died in his sleep with his loving wife Mary at his side.

Graduated from California College of Medicine, Dr. Phillips in his early career delivered thousands of babies in Downey, California, and taught obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California, Irvine. In 1971, inspired by the possible applications for gynecology, Phillips founded the American Assn. of Gynecologic Laparoscopies, to teach the fundamentals of the procedure to practicing doctors. He invited three other gynecologists to join him as founding members and today there are almost 4,000 members.

In late 1970s, on a trip to China with his wife Mary, Dr. Phillips discovered that most of the medical books in China had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, leaving an educational gap that had devastated the health care of the huge country. In 1977 he and Mary founded Medical Books for China International. The charity collects used medical books from all over the world, ships them to China and works with medical educators and government officials to improve health care. In the past 30 years, the organization has shipped over 1 million books to China where they have been distributed to more than 1,000 medical libraries in hospitals and medical schools through-

out the country.

Dr. Phillips and his wife have visited Guangzhou and many other cities in China numerous times, conducting exchange programs with medical educators and professionals on regular basis. He has received several distinguished awards from China's Ministry of Public Health for his outstanding contributions. He was also nominated four times by the Chinese government for a Nobel Peace Prize in the 1980s and 1990s.

Dr. Phillips joined LAGSCA in 1980s and was elected a board member and Chairman of LAGSCA Medical Committee. He was awarded the Member of the Year in 2003, and received a Certificate of Appreciation from Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn.

Charles Stapleton Awarded Member of 2007

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Over one hundred LAGSCA members and guests joined the celebration of the Chinese New Year at the Empress Pavilion Restaurant in Chinatown. Our distinguished guests included Chinese Consul General Zhang Yun, LA City Councilmen Tom LaBonge and Dennis Zine, Norma Vega, Representative of Mayor Villaraigosa, Mayor Christy Weir and City Councilman Neal Andrews of Ventura. A group of LAPD officers led by 1st Assistant Chief Jim McDonnell were also invited as special guests.

Dr. Wang Fang, Deputy Director of Guangzhou Museum of Nan Yue King Moseleum of the West Han Dynasty, and the 2007 Laurance Liu Scholar, gave a presentation on her six month study in Los Angeles. Sponsored by LAGSCA, Dr. Wang has taken classes at Cal State University, Northridge and visited museums and art galleries. She was grateful to the opportunity to build up direct contact with her American counterparts.

Highlight of the New Year celebration was the raffle of special gifts -- 2008 Beijing Olympics souvenirs and two round trip tickets to Guangzhou graciously donated by China Southern Airlines.



From left: Chief McDonnell, Chief Diaz, Councilman Tom LaBonge, Councilman Dennis Zine, Charles Stapleton,



Los Angeles - Guangzhou Sister City Association

800 North Broadway, Suite L
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: 213-626-8368
Fax: 213-626-8361
E-mail: info@lagsca.org
<http://www.lagsca.org>

We're on the Web!
www.lagsca.org

Opera---The Soul of Rural China?

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One after the other, villagers and then visiting teachers sang, each more passionate than the one before. I looked at the musicians more carefully. Dressed in assorted dark jackets and neat shirts they sat upright on wooden stools. Their instruments were erhus, a bamboo flute, wood blocks, rhythm sticks, and a small skin drum. As each singer began, the erhus picked up the melodic line, found the right pitch, and joined in unison while the other instruments shaped the tempo. As another performer took the floor the musicians switched instruments, now this one taking an erhu and that one the rhythm sticks. An Ke Jiang, our host, was among them, eyes closed, foot tapping.

A middle-aged farmer in a tan wool sweater gripped the mic. His face tensed as he poured every fiber of his body into the dissonant tones. Piercing, his voice rose to pitches I had never before heard. I sank into my exhaustion as I listened, yet exhilaration crept through me as I glimpsed the soul of China.

I knew nothing about Chinese opera, but here, sitting in Feng's courtyard surrounded by farmers and their families, I imagined the voices spanning millennia. For the singers and listeners, the songs appeared a cathartic release, telling the history of passions and of the brutal labor exacted by the land. For me, it was as though they were rent from deep within the singers, from the days, not so far off, when farmers bent to the dried up soil and it yielded little.

We volunteers needed to prepare to teach the next day and had to leave early. The villagers and visiting teachers remained. As we walked along the dark road toward our new home, the moon and a few stars resting above us in the clear October night, strains of local opera followed us partway, then slowly drifted into the night, replaced by the dense stillness of the fields.

Excerpt of China Images, 5(1). Contact npine111@aol.com for the entire piece.



A Tradition Continues With Our New Visiting Scholar

By Katherine Whitman

Over twenty years ago the Los Angeles Guangzhou Sister City Association established a scholarship in the name of our first president, Laurance Liu. Our first scholar, Jennifer Ren, was a translator in the Guangzhou Foreign Affairs Office and she came to study at California St. University Northridge and Mt. St. Mary's College in 1987..

This year our visiting scholar will be Mr. Yang Yong a program coordinator with the Foreign Affairs Office. The Foreign Affairs Office is our counterpart in Guangzhou and handle all the sister city relationships. Mr. Yang has a BA from Beijing International Studies University and a master's degree from Ji Nan University in Guangzhou. He will be studying at Cal State University Northridge under the tutelage of Dr. Paul Chow, a long time member of our Board of Directors. Paul will be making the arrangements for Mr. Yang's stay in Los Angeles and would appreciate any help you can offer to our visiting scholar especially offers of weekend visits or day trips to points of interest in the Southern California area. Paul can be reached at 818 368 0210.

Mr. Yang will continue a long line of Laurance Liu scholars and we hope you take the opportunity to meet this fine representative of Guangzhou and our sister city program.