



Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the time of writing this report, the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard is commencing a six day high-level visit to China which is said to rank in importance with past visits by Bob Hawke and Malcolm Fraser.

Ms Gillard will meet with the new Chinese President Xi Jinping and it has been announced in the mass media that discussions will take place on Chinese investment in Australia and joint venture partnerships in China, progress on a proposed free-trade agreement between Australia and China and other matters related to the Australian government's "Asia Century" strategy. It has also been reported that Ms Gillard will raise "human rights" concerns with the new Chinese President.

This visit by our Prime Minister needs to be seen in the light of Australia's role in assisting the U.S. in its "Asian Pivot" strategy. This assistance is in the form of permanent bases of U.S. marines in Darwin, making available port facilities in Western Australia for U.S. warships and the possible basing of U.S. drones on Australian territory. Is the real purpose of our Prime Minister's visit to soothe China's justified indignation to the aggressive U.S. "Asian Pivot" policy and our nation's role in this? It is difficult to come to any other conclusion.

Australia's subservient relationship to the U.S. does us no credit in our government's attempts to improve our relationship with the P.R.C, when the U.S. openly declares that the Asian Pacific region (from east to west) is to be its "backyard".

Our position in the ACFS is that it is only through on-going people to people relationships between Australia and the P.R.C and an independent Australian foreign policy concerning our Asian neighbours (and particularly with our most important Asian neighbour, the P.R.C.), we will see a future of peace and stability in our region. Of course the issue of "human rights" is

very important. I'm thinking here of the human rights of the citizens of the Asian Pacific region. These are the people who will pay the price for superpower hegemony, aggressive western military adventurism and interference in our area.

On a local note, I would like to thank all members and supporters who attended our successful luncheon in February this year.

Yours in Friendship

John D Breheny
President



MAKE A DATE

"Nixon in China" the week that changed the world, Opera. 16-23 May, Her Majesty theatre Melbourne. Victorian Opera re-imagine an historic turning point in American- Chinese relations



Australian-China Friendship Society in Association with Travman Tours



25 August to 8 September 2013. **Culture and Minorities of Southern China** Guiyang - Anshun - Kaili - Kunming - Dali - Lijiang. Detail please see last issue of the ACFS Victorian Branch's Newsletter



6 -17 September 2013 **Ancient Silk Road by Private China Orient Express.** Beijing Luoyang Xian Tianshui Jiayuguan Dunhuang Turpan Urumqi Detail please see last issue of the ACFS Victorian Branch's Newsletter

NEW YEAR 'S DAY CONCERT (Sunday, 10/02/2013)



It was an excited crowd that gathered for the Chinese New Year's Day Concert at the Melbourne Recital Centre's acoustically brilliant Elizabeth Murdoch Hall. Many families came straight from Chinatown's celebrations and Yum Cha gatherings of the day bringing their children with them. The concert, featuring artists from the "15th China -Shanghai International Arts Festival (CSIAF)" promised to be a real treat and the bubbly atmosphere of friends greeting each other and catching up in lively Chinese voices finally settled down when Orchestra Victoria, ably led by young female conductor Zhu Man, intoned the beginning notes of Mozart's Overture of "Le Nozze di Figaro".

The concert program, designed to highlight the voices of the singers, consisted of 2 parts: the first, devoted to well known arias from operas by Mozart, Rossini, Puccini, Donizetti and Guonod, plus a selection of Neapolitan folk songs made famous in China by the "three tenors" (Pavarotti, Carreras, and Domingo) who visited China sometime after the Barcelona Olympics and wowed the crowds with

their consecutive singing performances on a stage especially set up in the "Palace Museum" (known best as the "Forbidden City" to foreigners)). "O Sole Mio" is a song especially loved in China. I recall singing duets of this song with a slightly inebriated gent at the "Summer Palace" one sunny afternoon (he in mandarin, me in Italian) much to the delight of the crowd that gathered. In Beijing this was the song people think of when the word Italian is mentioned so I often sang it at Karaoke evenings with my students and with taxi drivers (once they found out my background) during interminable traffic chocked trips to and from work in that crowded city.

As an opera buff, I sang along mouthing the words "sottovoce" with the tenors and noted that their pronunciation both in Italian and French, was mostly very good indeed! I had a fabulous time during the first part of the concert because the songs were well known to me but the Chinese people sitting around me got restless wanting to know if there was ever going to be any Chinese singing during this Chinese New Year concert!



There was Chinese singing at last in part two after the Interval but regretfully some people, especially some with young and restless children, had left by this time. The Chinese Folk Songs that followed, all well known ones, were beautifully performed by the four tenors Gu Xin, Xue Haoyin, (stalwarts that I had heard sing at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing (NCPA), plus Chi Liming (another well known performer) and new young tenor Yang Yang who should have a rewarding career ahead of him in Western opera with such a pure, lyrical voice.

When Australian Soprano Greta Bradman joined in with Chi Liming to sing (in Mandarin) the exquisite love song "In a Far Away Place", the crowd clapped enthusiastically. The elderly lady sitting next to me who had asked in which language they were singing during the first part of the program, now joined in to sing softly with a faraway look in her eyes and when the notes of "Wo Ai Ni Zhong Guo" (I love you China) started, she took my hand and squeezed it and we both joined in joyfully in the chorus. Great fun!

This was a lovely concert however I have one criticism. If there are going to be other concerts in the future for Chinese New Year here in Melbourne, I would recommend to the organizers that the emphasis be on Chinese songs. We all know that the singers can sing or they would not be artists of the CSIAF, so, rather than them demonstrating their virtuosity as opera singers in a foreign language (which indeed they are), it would be more appreciated by Chinese expats if the program was geared more towards nostalgic memories of their past homeland.

Lia cross

The Peony Pavilion

(Performed at Palais Theatre, St. Kilda on 26/04/13)

The fun began on Tram 96 on the way to the Palais. An unusual number of Chinese people got on the tram speaking excitedly, so it wasn't hard to figure out where everyone was headed. As the stop on the St. Kilda Esplanade approached everyone got ready to get off and the whole crowd crossed the road together stopping the traffic. The theatre was ready with cordons set up to order people into line so we didn't all rush in at once. It took a while for

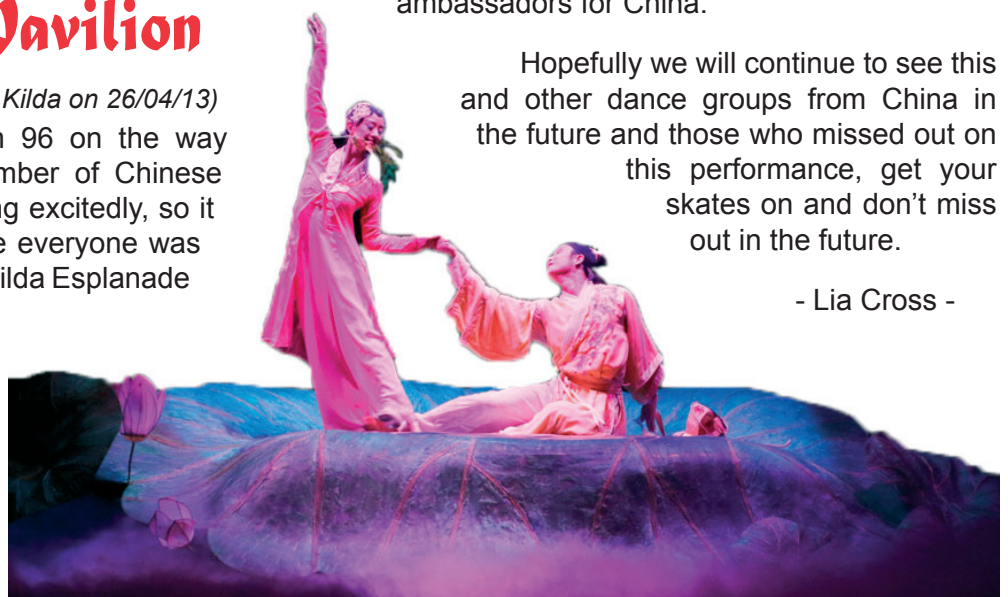
everyone to be seated and the show began slightly late but no one cared because we knew it was going to be spectacular!

And so it was! From the opening scene everyone was enchanted. The artists of the China Jinling Dance Company are exciting performers to watch. The dancing is a blending of Chinese traditional folk and opera with modern ballet so the dancers require not only superb artistry, but great physical fitness and athleticism. The mostly young dancers of the company achieved this superbly seemingly flowing effortlessly and fluidly onto the stage giving the impression that they were floating on air. Brilliant!

The timeless love story of Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei dating from the early days of the Southern Song Dynasty is dearly loved by Chinese audiences be it as an opera or in dance form. In this production with simple yet authentic stage settings, the story unfolded with one wonderful dance scene after the other. The love scene on a giant lotus flower was just exquisite as was the final scene with the young couple ascending to a new life. The simulated version of Liniang's ordeal in the Netherworld, populated by terrifyingly athletic demons in carefully designed costumes resembling skeletons was just magnificent. Those of us lucky enough to be invited onto the stage after the performance were able to see for ourselves the heavy make-up and intricate detail of the costumes that achieved the memorable results. The illustrations herein are but a tiny sample of the real, live stage performance. The China Arts and Entertainment Group who sponsored the production to be presented overseas as part of their cultural exchange program should be rightfully proud of the Jinling Dance Company- they are great ambassadors for China.

Hopefully we will continue to see this and other dance groups from China in the future and those who missed out on this performance, get your skates on and don't miss out in the future.

- Lia Cross -





Transition in state leadership

BEIJING, March 16 (Xinhua) -- China has completed the largest transition of state leadership to take place in the last decade, ushering in a new era.



PRESIDENT XI JINPING

Xi Jinping, head of the Communist Party of China (CPC), was elected state president and chairman of the country's Central Military Commission (CMC) Thursday at the annual parliamentary session held in Beijing.

Xi's nomination of Li Keqiang as the premier of the State Council, China's cabinet, was approved one day later by nearly 3,000 deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC).

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body, has also elected its new leadership.

Cheng Li, director of research at the John L. Thornton China Centre of the Brookings Institution, said the formation of a new state leadership concludes a once-a-decade power transfer that was initiated at the CPC national congress held on November.

According to Li, the new leadership is diverse. They come from different political parties with different academic backgrounds, some with overseas experience.

The CPC abolished lifetime tenures in the 1980s. The constitution imposes a limit of two consecutive terms for the posts of state president, premier and top legislator.

The new leadership will run a central government streamlined at the legislative session. Under a previously approved Cabinet restructuring plan, the number of ministries will fall from 27 to 25, while several departments and agencies will be reorganized.

Dr Sun Xianzhong, a NPC deputy and legal scholar who cast ballots at the session, described the leadership change as "steady and transparent."

"China faces a complex domestic and external situation and challenges are in no short supply ... But the introspective leaders have been crystal-clear about these problems," said Sun. "I believe they are capable of ... achieving economic and social development goals."

<http://www.xinhuanet.com>

Chinese premier, Australian PM to meet annually

BEIJING, April 9 (Xinhua) -- Chinese premier and Australian prime minister will from now on meet annually, Li Keqiang and Julia Gillard announced on Tuesday, following their hour-long talk in Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

"China would like to work with Australia to maintain high-level visits, enhance strategic trust and establish and substantiate a strategic partnership based on mutual trust and common prosperity," Li said.

The Chinese premier and Gillard also decided to establish diplomatic and strategic dialogue, strategic economic dialogue and other mechanisms to promote communication and cooperation in multilateral ways.

On the economic front, Li proposed stronger finance and currency cooperation, citing a new agreement to allow the Chinese and Australian



currencies to trade directly.

The premier called for multiple means of cooperation in minerals and husbandry and expanded collaboration in rail, ports and telecoms.

Li also urged quickened negotiations on a China-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

On people-to-people exchanges, he proposed deepening exchanges in culture, education, science and technology, tourism and other sectors, while encouraging study exchanges among young people of the two countries.

China and Australia should enhance communication and coordination in multilateral organizations like the United Nations, G-20 and APEC, according to Li.

Gillard said the establishment of an Australia-China strategic partnership marked the upgrade of bilateral relations.

She said Australia would like to work with China to implement dialogue mechanisms, step up macro policy coordination, promote mutual trust and make contributions to peace, stability and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific.

After the talks, Li and Gillard witnessed the signing of a series of agreements covering recyclable energy, financing, drug control and development aid.

Before her stop in Beijing, the Australian PM also attended the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2013, which took place from Saturday to Monday in south China's island province of Hainan.

from: <http://www.xinhuanet.com>

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BSB: 063-019, Account number: 10040625, put your name in the subject line and email acfs.vic@gmail.com

We are always looking for interesting stories and articles to share with our members. Any members who have great stories to tell please contact ACFS office or e-mail to: acfs.vic@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter do not always reflect those of the ACFS and its policies. Reliance upon information in this Newsletter requires independent verification of its accuracy or completeness

V A L E

It is with great sadness that I announce to our members and supporters the passing on the 9th February 2013 of former Victorian Committee Member Sean Murtagh.

Sean served on our State Committee for almost 3 years until 2012 and he contributed greatly to our Society's activities and aims. Sean brought to the position a unique capacity to "get to the point" and "cut the crap" which, as anyone who has been involved in a management committee will know, is an all-too-rare and valuable talent.

I have known Sean for more than 35 years and have valued his clear headedness and advice on many occasions. Sean's support for the great cause of friendship between the Australian and Chinese people was a manifestation of his life-long striving for a better, fairer and more just society and world and a deeply committed belief that it is ordinary people that matter the most.

On behalf of the Victorian management committee and the National Council of the Australia China Friendship Society, I offer my sincere condolences to Sean's partner Penny and his sons Conor and Jack.

John D. Breheny
Victorian State & National President ACFS

THE AUSTRALIA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY'S AIMS

Cultivate friendly relations with the people of China by fostering the study of China's history, language, culture, social and political structure.

Promote mutual understanding through friendly exchanges between the people of China and Australia. Strengthening ties with travel, the exchange of ideas, information and trade between the two countries.

To seek to clarify misunderstandings between the peoples of China and Australia, which may arise from the misrepresentation of information.

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VICTORIAN MEMBERSHIP RATES

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Single \$30.00

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Corporate on Application

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I/We enclose the sum of \$ for my/our membership subscription.

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