



April 2014

Australia-China Friendship Society

Victorian Branch (Inc).ABN 39 746 574 225

NEWSLETTER

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ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER - QUANJUDE:

“May you live in interesting times” is a so-called Chinese curse*. But times here *are* interesting with trade, jobs and international relations, especially with China.

We have the honour of ex-Premier of Victoria and now Huawei Board Member, the Hon. John Brumby, address us at our annual dinner. Few are better placed to speak on the intricacies of both trade and international affairs. We are fortunate to have him share his thoughts, speaking on “China and Australia – the Road Ahead”.

The dinner will be on Tuesday 29 April, from 6.30pm, at famed Peking Duck restaurant Quanjude, 299 Queen Street (cnr Latrobe St), Melbourne.

Tickets are limited - \$60 per head plus drinks at bar prices. Hear one of the most senior players speak on global trade and political relations. Don't miss this opportunity!

Booking: acfs.vic@gmail.com or 0469 622 254



From the President



Cultural Riches: This month has been very busy, administratively and culturally. We've had a wealth of concerts courtesy of the Chinese Consulate and the Cultural Consul Ms He Ta. With various touring groups including a concert of younger performers, it is heartening to see talent being given the opportunity to travel, gaining experience and performing to a wider audience. I believe we should try to foster increased exchanges so young musicians can learn more about their art and those of other cultures.

Australian trade: As I write, Tony Abbott is travelling with his band of merry businesspeople to China to talk about a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). All I hope is that the Aust-China FTA is far better in scope and balance to that of the Aust-USA, which is so far in favour of the USA that Australia would have been better off without it. Whilst I am all for liberalised trading relations between nations, a 'winner & loser' FTA is far from satisfactory. I await details on what they may put on the table to trade. If the Japan FTA is any example, Australia may have problems.

Japan's Militarism: Whilst on that topic, we are also witnessing Japan ramping up their military footing, citing Chinese “naval expansionism”. China has never attempted to over-run or invade another country. China has always, however, vigorously defended her borders and territories, as any country has the right and duty to do for its citizens. That a former invader accuses its victim of aggression is laughable, were it not so serious in

terms of Japanese re-armament and encirclement of China by foreign military bases. While I sadly expect no better from the morally bankrupt Japanese government, I hope the truth can be exposed behind their sabre-rattling, the reawakening of their *bushido* ('Way of the warrior').

Malaysian Flight MH370: I should point out too that we all share the hurt and deep concern for the families of those who are presumed lost on Malaysian Flight MH370. Our thoughts are with those who are suffering the anguish and uncertainty of the wait for credible news.

Forward Planning: All Committee members now have a portfolio and they're starting to outline plans they wish to pursue this year and further; I hope to shortly tell you what we will do to further our goals and involve more of you the members at the same time. If you have any suggestions and want to become more involved, please contact us for a chat.

Annual Fundraiser:

Finally, remember to book your tickets to our dinner on Tuesday April 29 at Quanjude Peking Duck Restaurant, 299 Queen St (cnr Latrobe), Melbourne. Tickets are \$60 per person & drinks at bar prices. There will be a raffle with brilliant prizes, courtesy of Huawei, Robert Wang (Travman), China Books and other generous donors. See you there.

Anthony Leong

A very special "Thank You"

In small organisations like ours, we rely on the help and participation of our members. Two of our long-time members (Tony MacGlinchy - *China Books* and Robert Wang - *Travman*) have been extremely generous in providing us with major raffle prizes worth hundreds of dollars for our fundraising dinner. Additionally, our guest speaker the Hon. John Brumby has kindly donated a prize through the company of which he is a Board Member (*Huawei Technologies Co – HTC*).

We thank them for their generosity and helping further the cause of our Society; it is due to them and like-minded people who will enable us to grow and continue our work of fostering respect and understanding between the peoples of China and Australia.

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CHINA BOOKS came to life in a small room upstairs hidden in Melbourne's Chinatown in August 1989. Our Chinese learning section then took up barely one shelf in the store. Over the years, along with the growing interest in China, its language and culture, CHINA BOOKS expanded its range to include several thousand titles and is now the main distributor of Chinese learning books in our region.

We have witnessed a steady increase in the numbers of Australian schools and universities offering Chinese language courses. We pride ourselves on having been able to provide the best available resources for teachers and students over the last twenty years, and look forward to working with you well into the future.

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A KALEIDOSCOPE OF CULTURAL COLOURS

On Sunday 16 March 2014, the Melbourne Town Hall was alive with the buzz of Chinese opera fans and colourful performance artists. The Qian (Guizhou) Opera Troupe of Guizhou Province, China arrived in Melbourne to perform in the 2014 Chinese Opera Festival held in conjunction with Victoria's Cultural Diversity Week. Thirty-two performers in opera and ethnic local instruments ranging from the pipa, zither, liu qin (Chinese mandolin), yang qin (hammered dulcimers), erhu (two-stringed instrument), flute, and the suona (oboe) gave a rousing three-hour performance to a rapturous audience of about 200 that cut across both young children and retirees.

The Executive Chairman of the Chinese Opera Festival – Mr Xinmin Wu – opened the Festival, followed by speeches from Mr Chap B Chow (People of Australia Ambassador) and Mr Huang Guobin, Deputy Consul General from the Consulate General of PRC (Melbourne). A common theme running across the concert



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performances was the Guizhou country setting and its farming communities. As one of the most culturally diverse states in China, the Guizhou concert gave a glimpse into the different ethnic cultural groups and their influences on the arts. The first performing act was a burst of colours and music from both veteran opera singers and young acrobatic dancers. The rousing performance was subsequently matched by a duo act in the traditional art of 'face-mask changing' and then topped by some live fire-blowing. Subsequently, the concert transitioned to calmer melodies from a Chinese stringed instrument ensemble made up of young performers who deftly alternated between the gentle 'Fragrance of Jasmine', to the robust chorus of the 'Erhu Unison Horse Racing' before rendering a moving piece from 'the three Stanzas of Plum Blossoms'. The Jinhua Dancing School also added to the cultural density with its flaming interpretation of a minority group dance. Most vividly however, the entire concert was best remembered for its operatic excerpts from two traditional operas on love and courtship which shed some light on the difference in the culture of desires between the West and the East: a poor scholar is wooed by a lower-caste girl who lent him money instead of his rich aunt, and a water-melon thief was 'punished' by his potential father-in-law to a duel, lost but won his daughter's hand in marriage in the process. The message of the operas, though baffling to modern day citizens, seems to convey a consistent theme of harmony and enduring love between young men and women no matter how trying their circumstances...how much of this is still relevant in modern China remains to be observed!

Overall, the concert was a refreshing appetiser into the breadth and depth of Chinese performing arts of the Qian people. The only drawback was in the organisers' well-intentioned efforts to make the performances accessible to both the English and Chinese-educated audience, the subtitles displayed in the background became a distraction when it was not well coordinated with the performances. Otherwise it was an endearing concert performed whole-heartedly by the Qian Opera Troupe and enjoyed by one and all.



Wai Ching Chan

HANGGAI Port Fairy Folk Festival 2014

It was the final morning of the Fort Fairy Folk Music Festival. Most of the performers and many of the crowd had taken advantage of the Monday holiday to drive back to Melbourne. I was feeling the effects of the night before spent with some Irish musical friends. I was taking a last walk through the Festival Grounds when I heard an amazing sound coming from the tent which houses Stage 3, the largest stage of the festival. I pulled back the flap to see the tent full to capacity, the whole audience standing and clapping, many were also dancing. Given the Port Fairy demographic, this was no mean feat. On stage were six Chinese men wearing traditional Mongol clothing playing a mix of traditional and western instruments. The lead man was stripped to the waist holding a horse whip and wearing studded leather.

As described in the festival programme guide "The six-piece Hanggai encompasses a hell of a lot of tradition, culture, fusion, and folklore to produce their unique sound".

The music was firstly incredibly exciting as the response from the mainly middle aged audience demonstrated. It was totally new to me, rooted in Mongol folk music and yet utterly contemporary. Some of the songs included, Quinhai Lullaby, The Rabbit on the White River and Beautiful Mongol Horse. It ranged in mood from the almost austere plaintive sound of the Erhu to the thumping rhythm of a heavy base and a serious drum outfit (both traditional and western), with brilliant performances on strings and flute. The performers engaged their audience in a language few could understand but we all got the message. There was one attempt at English by the lead man "So.... You like mongol music..." he said. The response was thunderous applause from the 3000 capacity crowd. After the show the que to purchase their signed CD stretched over 100 metres, everyone just bubbling with happiness.

For me, Hanggai are the most exciting thing to come out of China since Mao tse tung.

Chris Loorham



Supporting Chinese Seafarers far from Home

The Mission to Seafarers Victoria was established to care for the welfare of Seafarers from all nations and faiths in 1857 and is still operating today. Around 3,200 ships visit the Port of Melbourne each year and many of these are from China.

The Seafarers are at sea for many months without contact with their families and whilst in port, the Mission offers a home away from home.

The Mission to Seafarers Victoria offers free transport to and from the Port of Melbourne, phone and internet for Seafarers to contact their families and recreational facilities. The Mission runs with the support of volunteers and they perform the roles of ship visitors, drivers and hosts.

Many of the Seafarers coming from China speak good English, however oral communication is often difficult. The Mission would love to have Chinese speaking and other volunteers who could support their work.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, more information on the history and activities of the Mission can be found at <http://www.missiontoseafarers.com.au> or telephone Bill Reid, Operations Manager on 0416 153 116 or 9629 7083.

OZ Reporter in Beijing On 3rd March 2014, my friend and colleague Louise Kenney and I travelled to Beijing to attend the National People's Congress press conferences, representing CAMG Media as journalists.

We were greeted at the airport and escorted to our hotel. The next morning and every morning following, we arose to a 6 o'clock alarm to start our busy day. On the first day of the proceedings, we went to Beijing's Media Centre to collect our journalist pass which would allow us to attend all the major conferences and meetings. We then journeyed to 'the People's Hall' situated by Tiananmen Square for the opening ceremony.

I had been once before to the 'the People's Hall' to perform for the 2013 International Women's Day in which all the female ambassadors from embassies in Beijing attended. For me, it was still breathtaking to see the grand architecture and atmosphere of the People's Hall, and was extremely exciting for Louise and I to be part of such a renowned event.

We entered after thorough security checks, and put our coats away in the provided cloak section. It was quite cold outside that day, and the smog pollution was at a high point. Luckily, the smog subsided over the next coming days and Louise and I were able to enjoy time outside interviewing some representatives and guests from around China. The opening ceremony was filled with media press in one section, ambassadors and embassy representatives in another, and on another floor there were government officials and representatives. As the honourable government ministers and chairmen entered the room, we took photos and observed. We saw President Xi Jin Ping take a seat and shortly after we rose to sing the national anthem of China. We were then asked to bow our heads in tribute of the tragedy that happened in Yunnan province and commemorate the loss of the people who passed away in that horrific terrorist attack. We then listened to politician Mr Du Qing

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Lin speak, followed by the Honourable Yu Zheng Sheng.

After the opening ceremony came to an end, Louise accepted an interview by CCTV and explained a bit about the policies we were most interested in and wanted to report back to our listeners and viewers in Melbourne.



CLARISSA Belanti IN GREAT HALL

and strong-willed lady, who also showed compassion and warmth to all media and all who attended; often beginning her answers with “thank you for your care and understanding towards this issue..”. Another highlight was meeting the famous comedian and representative of the National People’s Congress, Feng Gong (冯巩) who has been one of my idols since I met him at 2013 New Years Eve Gala (央视春晚) in which I performed. He was surrounded by a lot of press and I was only able to get in a “hello” and “you’re awesome”, but it was still worth it.

Everyday we dressed in our best clothes and made our way to all events organised, trying to interview and get interviewed. We feel we represented our company well and would go back to Beijing for the National Congress events in a heart beat.

We were treated extremely well and were lucky enough to have lunches and dinners with one of the representatives who I knew from my old school in Beijing ‘The Central Conservatory of Music’, Professor Liu Yuening. She allowed us to interview her about her feelings towards the event and if she was pleased with new and refined policies. As a teacher, she was most interested in the education department and seemed pleased with the development and future of education in China.

On the last day Louise attended the press conference in which Premier Li Ke Qiang spoke and answered all media questions. He spoke with great confidence and showed his English language ability, understanding all the English questions with no translation needed.

After a long two weeks in Beijing, Louise and I were ready to go home. We said good-bye to our business partners and colleagues in Beijing and made our way to the airport. We left with many stories, amazing memories and experiences that we will always hold on to.

Clarissa Belanti 白丽莎

We were interested in policies such as the revisited one child policy; on smog pollution; protection of the environment; agriculture, economy and finance, and had our questions answered during the following press conferences.

On the 6th March, we were lucky enough to ask one of our questions to the Minister of Finance Mr Lou. It was about an issue becoming more and more prominent in China; faking divorce to avoid tax on buying and selling apartments. Our queries were all answered thoroughly and we admired the Minister’s efforts.

One of the highlights, was attending the press conference in which Deputy Governor Ms. Li Bin spoke. She was such a passionate

SHU-CHEEN YU is one of our best-loved singers. She has generously performed for the ACFS at a number of our events and recently she produced a CD titled *Lotus Moon, Willow Spirit Song and Serenade* for ABC Classics with some of her favourite songs. In June this year, Shu-Cheen will be performing as the Queen – Lady Thiang in the *King at I* at the Princess Theatre. Tickets can be obtained from Ticketmaster.

LOTUS DREAMS

It is my great pleasure and absolute delight to see “Lotus Dreams” come to reality.



Since I recorded *Lotus Moon, Willow Spirit Song* and *Serenade* with ABC Classics, many music lovers have suggested that they would like to hear me sing *Lieder* and other styles of repertoire. This CD is a collection of my favourite songs and ballads.

Interestingly, my love affair with art songs started at very early age. I was born into a musical family and both of my parents were involved with local opera companies in Shanxi Province. My father was a fine musician. He was broadminded and he wanted me to learn Western music notations and solfège (do-re-mi...) to expose me to a different music style.

Some of the first Western songs I heard were Brahms' *Lullaby*, Schubert's *An Die Musik* (*Ode to Music*) and *Danny Boy*, the Irish air. During the Cultural Revolution period, Western music was banned in China. But these peaceful, haunting and beautiful tunes stayed with me always.

After the Cultural Revolution, following my graduation from Shanxi Province Conservatorium of Music in Peking Opera Art & Performance, I became a Chinese and Oriental folk song specialist. I was a principle artist with the prestigious China National Oriental Song and Dance Company and was widely regarded as one of the best folk singers in China. As a result I performed regularly on China's top radio and TV programs. In addition I entertained visiting Heads of State and foreign dignitaries.

Whilst I was very busy with Oriental folk music, the haunting tunes of Western art songs were never far from me. They keep appearing in my head from here and there, now and then. They were like a lovely neighbour: I would hear them occasionally but I did not live with them.

In 1987, I came to Australia and finally had the wonderful privilege of learning Western style of singing at the Opera Studio of Sydney University. The rest is history!

The beautiful songs on this CD are a reflection of my artistic journey. They have all played an important part in my life. Each of them means so much to me and is so dear to my heart.

Through music like this we celebrate humanity and the great world cultural heritage that we enjoy. We are fortunate indeed to have such a breadth of musical activities to appreciate and experience so freely today.

Thank you for your interest in *Lotus Dreams* and thank you too for allowing me to share my gratitude with you. May this divine music give us all much peace and joy.

With blessings!

Shu-Cheen Yu



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.

PRESIDENT: Mr Anthony Leong

VICE PRESIDENT: John Breheny
Mr Tower Liu

SECRETARY: Ms Robin Matthews

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