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Chinese artists visit Eastside to promote Olympics

Cross-cultural event features world-class entertainment

Special to the Reporter

A cross-cultural goodwill event supporting the Beijing 2008 Olympics played to an enthusiastic audience on the Eastside Saturday, Aug. 18.

Internationally renowned China Symphony violin "super-genius" virtuoso, Chuan-Yun Li led a group of 30 of China's top musical, dance and "talk show" stars who performed at Overlake Christian Church in Redmond.

"The parties, receptions for the Chinese stars and main event, through the help of countless Seattle-area and Eastside volunteers and sponsors, all went according to plan," said Chi Wang, the organizer of the event. "Many, many organizations, including Bellevue-based Mulvanny G2 Architecture and Great Wall Mall, who sponsored the press reception for the Chinese stars and dignitaries, need to be thanked."

More than 3,000 eager fans of the Beijing Olympics crowded into the Overlake auditorium to see and hear the Beijing Olympics 2008 concert, which was co-sponsored by Well Pacific Cancer Foundation and the Pacific Performing Arts Center. The gala included dancers and singers who joined in a cross-cultural smorgasbord of world-class entertainment that ran almost four hours.

"With Seattle being the gateway to the United States and the Northwest in its way of loving the arts, sports and life, we thought it presented a world-class opportunity for a concert and gala that would be a great way to share the Olympic spirit," Wang said.

Former Gov. Gary Locke gave welcoming remarks at the China Harbor gala and Bounce Foundation provided top Northwest jazz groups: HB Radke's Quartet, Overton Berry and Grace Holden & Keith Terhune and Josh Rawling's Trio. Neal Golden, Bounce co-founder and president, provided entertainment for the Anthony's press luncheon in Seattle.

"We need to support any effort to build better understanding and relationship between the U.S. and China, including the media of arts and culture," said Bellevue City Council member Conrad Lee, a guest of Bruce Nurse, Kemper Freeman's representative. "And, we support and applaud the event



Baixue Jang photos

Violin virtuoso Chuan-Yun Li, international super-star of the Chinese National Symphony Orchestra, performed to a standing ovation.



Grammy winner KC Porter, left, and Chinese pop star Cheng Lin have collaborated on an Olympics song, which they performed at the event.

organizers, volunteers and sponsors for making this event happen."

Included in the concert Saturday night was China Symphony's "national treasure," violin virtuoso and "super-genius" (San Francisco Chronicle), Chuan-Yun Li, star of the Chinese National Symphony Orchestra.

Chuan-Yun Li treated the Seattle press and main event-goers with a performance so vigorous that at one time he broke the

strings at the reception. At the Saturday event, the frenzied pace saw his bow spin out of his hands and leap into the air, whereupon he caught it again, barely missing a note.

A child prodigy who began playing music at age three, Chuan-Yun Li is already touted by world-class violinists as surpassing his early hero, Isaac Stern, and Itzhak Pearlman, one of his world-class teachers.

At the main event and galas,

Chuan-Yun Li and Golden, who performs internationally, visibly struck up an immediate mutual admiration.

"Neal Golden is such a youthful, free-spirited artist," Chuan-Yun Li laughed. "I just love his jazz and his voice is so sensitive and so provocative."

The twosome discussed furthering cross-cultural concerts and events with Seattle and Beijing. This was further picked up and supported through the

America China Exchange Council's Executive Director, Diana Wu, who said the event has follow-up opportunities.

Other projects being worked on are Jazz group exchanges between the Northwest and China. Both Chuan-Yun Li, a classical violinist, but with a new passion for American jazz, and Cheng Fangyuan, the internationally acclaimed pop singer who introduced 1 billion Chinese to the song, "Do-Re-Mi" from The Sound of Music in the '80s, agree that American Jazz could be the newest genre to be introduced in China.

Several Northwest-Beijing venue options already exist for bi-lateral exchanges of symphony concerts, but it can also be a "smorgasbord of genres" in vital exchange concerts," said Golden.

Jerry Hanauer, a large civic backer and executive director of the Seattle Opera Company, added:

"We must strive to bring Western Civilization and Asia into closer cultural and musical synchronization, as together we face and are going to have to deal with some huge realities. The environment, health concerns and global warming can be dealt with better following goodwill arts exchanges and the Olympics. The entire peoples of both countries are going to have to get behind this."