

China Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra to Entertain, Educate

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China Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra. • Courtesy Photo

Seattle has sister-cities around the world. And now, the Seattle Symphony Orchestra has a sister-symphony of sorts: the **China Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra**, which will perform at Benaroya Hall on February 25.

This event is the result of past efforts by the Pacific Northwest Cultural Exchange Council (PNWCEC), which has worked since 2005 to develop cultural exchange and diversified cultural services in the Pacific Northwest through both live concerts and music newsletters.

As described by PNWCEC producer Austin Huang, “PNW Cultural Exchange Council has established a wide variety of connections with many individuals, and an advisory board with many well-established leaders in Chinese culture and local communities.”

The program on February 25 will feature a variety of music and folk songs celebrating the Chinese New Year and Chinese cultural life, including Spring Festival Overture by Huanzhi Li, Chinese Folksong Suite In the Taihang Mountain by Bao Yuankai, and Yellow River Piano Concerto arranged by C. Yin, W. Chu and Z. Liu, among others.

The concert will be conducted by Jindong Cai, professor at Stanford University. “The Seattle concert program will showcase some of the best and most popular symphonic works by Chinese composers to celebrate the Chinese New Year,” Cai said.

He has been preparing for this role for some time. “I have been working with the orchestra for a few years and as principal guest conductor two years ago,” Cai said. “I am very impressed by the orchestra’s quality and energy.”

The orchestra’s performers are equally enthusiastic. “Since our first America tour is focusing on the West Coast, we want to perform and explore all the major cities on the Pacific Rim,” said performer Nie Bing. “Of course, Seattle is a must.”

He also adds: “Your former governor, Gary Locke, was the ambassador to China. So we want to meet the people in Seattle.”

Performer Lin Yishu agrees: “Although we have toured many countries in Europe and Asia, we have never toured the United States,” she said. “We are very excited about the opportunity to share our music with wonderful people in the United States.”

An exchange of this magnitude comes to fruition due to the hard work of many individuals. “To take a 90-person orchestra on tour is always a challenge logistically,” said Chen Chuansong, the Shenzhen Orchestra CEO.

And he has many goals for this event. “We want to make an impact in Seattle,” Chen said. “We want to meet friends, build relationships. We also want to learn about American music, musicians, and orchestras.”

Chen said he is confident that their goals, and the goals of the PNWCEC, will be met. “With all the help we are getting from the local organizations—and especially from the Chinese-American community in Seattle—we are confident that we will have a great experience,” he said.

Cai said he has multiple goals: to both entertain and educate.

“Through the program, I want to give the audience an overview of how Western symphony orchestra has developed in China,” Cai said.

Cai also plans to speak to the audience during the concert, to provide added context for the performances.

“It’s my great pleasure to work with the orchestra, especially introducing Chinese symphonic music,” Cai said.

Future cooperative exchanges are already in the works: the Seattle Symphony has been invited to perform in China in 2016, and the PNW Cultural Exchange Council hopes to continue these exchanges as the decade progresses.

The China Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra will perform on February 25 at Benaroya Hall, 200 University Street, Seattle. For more information, visit www.seattlesymphony.org.