

THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

www.bellinghamherald.com

Chinese Culture Festival comes to Bellingham

**MICHELLE THERIAULT
THE BELLINGHAM HERALD**

Celebrate the beginning of the Year of the Dog - not with a bark, but the tremulously sweet sounds of a "zhen," or a 12-stringed Chinese zither.

Hear it Friday night when Mount Baker Theatre hosts a Chinese New Year Celebration, which features Seattle's Peking Opera Troupe, the Vancouver, B.C.-based Silk and Bamboo Ensemble, Mount Baker Youth Symphony and Western Washington University Symphony. The Northwest Chinese Cultural Association is sponsoring the event.

While the traditional lion dances and parades that celebrate the Lunar New Year on Jan. 29 have mostly passed, the festival is a chance to experience the sounds of China during the festival season.

"Music is a universal language. It belongs to people of all races and nationalities," says Austin Huang, one of the event's organizers.

"As the world gets smaller," says Huang, "neighbors get closer."

SILK AND BAMBOO

One of the groups performing at the festival is Silk and Bamboo, a classical Chinese music troupe.

The group's leader, internationally known master of the Chinese zither and ethnomusicologist Mei Han, says that the ensemble is steeped in musical tradition.

"This is a typical Chinese chamber music ensemble form, which reflects over 2,000 years of chamber music history in China," says Han .

Instruments include the "zheng," a 21-string Chinese zither, "erhu," or two-string fiddle, "ruan," or four-string Chinese round lute, and "dizi," or bamboo flute.

CHINESE CULTURE FESTIVAL

- When: 7 p.m. Friday
- Where: Mount Baker Theatre, 104 N. Commercial St. in Bellingham
- Tickets: \$10/adult, \$5/youth
- What: The Chinese Culture Festival features the Peking Opera Troupe from Seattle, Silk and Bamboo Ensemble from Vancouver, B.C., Mount Baker Youth Symphony performing a Chinese violin concerto, and a performance by the Western Washington University symphony.
- More information: 734-6080 and www.mountbakertheatre.com

The sounds they make are evocative of everything from "old style teahouse silk-bamboo music" of Shanghai, to music from the Cantonese-speaking south and contemporary solo pieces, Han says.

For Han, it's also an important link to her personal history. She left Beijing 10 years ago.

"Chinese culture, especially music, is part of my soul," she says.

"Playing Chinese music is like going home."

Reach Michelle Theriault at 756-2803 or michelle.theriault@bellinghamherald.com

THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

www.bellinghamherald.com

print • back