

MEDIA INFORMATION

Tuesday 23rd July 2013

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Pagoda Chinese Youth Orchestra Tunes Up To Celebrate 30th Anniversary

ONLY WEEKS after the death of its conductor and founder, five generations of Liverpool's renowned Pagoda Chinese Youth Orchestra are to celebrate its 30th anniversary by taking part in a special birthday - and tribute - concert in the city's famous neo-classical St George's Hall.

For three decades young musicians from the award winning orchestra have enchanted audiences across the UK and Europe and dazzled the VIP audience at Shanghai's Expo when they joined forces with Liverpool's Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and its distinguished conductor Vasily Petrenko for a gala performance.

Established in Liverpool in 1983 by one of Mainland China's most illustrious composers, Mr Li Kui Hsuing - a classically trained multi-instrumentalist - it was the first Chinese youth orchestra of its kind in Europe and remains the largest to this day.

Sadly Mr Li passed away on Friday July 12th. At a memorial service (on Monday 22 July) Liverpool's Mayor Joe Anderson pledged that the legacy of culture and music education forged by Mr Li must be protected and continue. The city's Lord Mayor Councillor Gary Millar added: "Mr Li was the beating heart of Chinese music and culture in this city. Long may his legacy go on."

Over the years the orchestra has nurtured between 500 and 600 students - most aged between four and 20 - in the intricacies of traditional Chinese instruments such as the stringed erhu, pipa, dahu and dezi (flute). Each year the orchestra is made up of about 30 musicians of all ages - mostly from Liverpool and Wirral - but membership rotates as the elder ones leave.

Those passing through its ranks have included British-born Chinese, children from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as others from Laos, Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia. "We have even had some children whose origins are in Africa and the Caribbean and we are keen to widen the nationalities," said Liao Zilan, who helps run the Pagoda Arts centre, which is home to the orchestra. She is Mr Li's daughter.

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To mark the orchestra's 30th birthday current members will be joined by their predecessors from earlier years in a mass performance of 'Command Of The General'. The event will also feature a performance of the critically acclaimed Chinese folk song 'Jasmine Flower' in a modern in Grime/Dub Step style version arranged by orchestra member John Wardle, aged 15.

Mr Li's last wish was that the birthday performance should go ahead and the orchestra will also pay special tribute to Mr Li's dedication to Chinese music and culture. His daughter Liao Zilan, a renowned virtuoso harpist, will introduce the concert. She has played with many well-known orchestras worldwide, and with her musician husband Jah Wobble who devised the popular cultural cross over show Chinese Dub. There will also be a performance of Chinese dance and a demonstration of the martial art of Taichi.

Liao Zilan was also member of the orchestra for many years. She commented: "The Pagoda Youth Orchestra is now well known all over Britain and in China and acknowledged as one of the front runners of its kind. We are all so sad my dad will miss the event. But he will be there in spirit, we know that."

The community focused Pagoda Arts organisation in Liverpool is a registered charity that enjoys support from Arts Council England, its principal funder; Liverpool Culture Company (Liverpool City Council); the Liverpool Integrated Youth and Play Service and Mersey Play Action Council.

Sally Whittle, Relationship Manager, Music, Arts Council England commented: "We're delighted to support Pagoda Chinese Youth Orchestra in their 30th anniversary year. Pagoda provides a unique experience for its members and makes a valuable contribution the cultural life of the region."

In various forms the orchestra has performed at the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, St David's Hall (Cardiff), Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, the Aldeburgh Music Festival in Suffolk and the Shanghai Expo as well as appearing on BBC TV's 'Blue Peter' and CBBies 'Take a Bow', amongst a long list of high profile activities spanning the 30 years.

A special film about the orchestra has also been commissioned by the BBC Community Music Fund and will be shown at the birthday concert.

NB: Mr Li suffered with leukaemia and the Pagoda Arts Centre has launched a fund raising campaign for the Royal Liverpool Hospital's Leukaemia Research Fund – it has so far raised £4,500. See link below:

<https://rlbuht.workwithus.org/Fundraising/Donate.aspx?page=8054>

NOTE FOR EDITORS

Pagoda Chinese Youth Orchestra 30th Anniversary Concert

St George's Hall, Liverpool

Wednesday July 31st 2013

Time: 12.30pm – Reception: 1.00-2.00pm – Concert

ADMISSION FREE but tickets *only from Pagoda Arts*

Contact: info@pagodaarts.org.uk

Or call the centre on (0151) 233 8833

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Further Performances:

Bluecoat Arts Centre - Sunday 4th August, 12pm to 4.00pm
Pagoda Chinese Youth Orchestra, Dance, Taichi demonstration/workshops,
Chinese story telling

Workshops are free. Performance admission: £2: tickets from Bluecoat.

Bluecoat Arts Centre, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BX
Info and Tickets - Tel: 0151 702 5324

For more information contact:

Performances

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