



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, Zhejiang Shaoju Opera to perform

Little Ants Kunqu Opera Art Troupe will also perform during January 30 concert

MUSCATINE, Iowa – For the fifth consecutive year, Muscatine will be among just a handful of communities throughout the United States that will mark the celebration of the Chinese Lunar New Year with performances from three renowned groups from China. This highly energetic and enjoyable event, one of the must go to events of the winter, will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, January 30, 2020 in the auditorium at Muscatine High School, 2705 Cedar Street, Muscatine.

The Shanghai Chinese Orchestra, Little Ants Kunqu Opera Art Troupe, and the Zhejiang Shaoju Opera Theatre will present a rare opportunity to experience a celebration of Chinese culture that is not to be missed. A dazzling combination of traditional and modern Chinese music, vocal artistry, costumes, and acrobatics will delight all in attendance.

This is the fifth straight year that Muscatine has hosted a Chinese New Year's concert and is, once again, made available free to the public.

Muscatine is the fourth stop for the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra and the Zhejiang Shaoju Opera Theatre who will perform at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on January 22, in the Chicago Symphony Center, home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra., on Jan. 26 and in Orchestra Hall of the Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Music Center, home of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, on Jan. 28. The group will also perform in the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Feb. 5.

In the first half of the concert, Shanghai Chinese Orchestra will present their widely-acclaimed "New Oriental Music Scene," as well as original compositions and new adaptations of pieces that embody the legacy of Chinese national music, including "Dancing Birds," "The Silk Road" and "Farewell to My Concubine."



The Little Ants Kunqu Opera Art Troupe, a group of 11 elementary students in the second through fourth grades, will perform “Cloud Hand”, a Kun opera that will last for approximately five-minutes, prior to the start of the second half of the Chinese New Year Celebration concert.

In the second half, the Zhejiang Shaoju Opera Theatre will present scenes from the Shaoju opera repertoire including instrumental music, vocal performance, mime, face changing, dance and acrobatics.

Shaoju is an operatic tradition developed during the late 19th century in China's Zhejiang province, and is characterized by exaggerated singing and mimicry, colorful costumes with full makeup and forceful music.

The Shanghai Chinese Orchestra was founded in 1952 and will present the beauty of Chinese music played on traditional instruments embracing the sounds of bowed and plucked strings, winds, and percussion to create vivid imagery of China’s splendor with traditional folksongs and orchestrated works.

The opening program will be a fascinating musical evening in which East meets West as the Shanghai Chinese Orchestra reprises its celebrated *New Oriental Music Scene* program that opened the 18th Shanghai International Arts Festival and toured throughout Europe to critical acclaim. The audience will hear famous works such as “Dancing Birds” (adapted from *A Hundred Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*), “The Silk Road,” and “Farewell to My Concubine,” along with riveting performances of contemporary pieces such as “Flying Birds,” adapted from Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee.”

The Zhejiang Shaoju Opera Theater brings a dazzling combination of vocal artistry, costumes, and acrobatics that honors centuries-old musical traditions. Shaoju Opera, or Shaoxing Chaotic Melody, is popularly known as Shaoxing Daban. Its lyrics are based on seven-character couplings.



Shaoju Opera “Sunny Bajie” is a hilarious tale of Zhu Bajie, a character in the ancient Chinese novel “Journey to the West.” Bajie, one of Tang monk Xuanzang’s three apprentices, falls in love with Gao Cuilan in Gao Village. The play tells his love story before he escorts Xuanzang to retrieve Buddhist sutras from the “Western Regions,” which is in today’s Central Asia and India.

Members of the orchestra will arrive in Muscatine Wednesday evening (Jan. 29) with a welcome dinner at China Garden Restaurant. Most of the performers will be staying at the Merrill Hotel and Conference Center but some will stay in the homes of Muscatine residents. Home stays have been one of the favorite parts of the performers’ visit to Muscatine and a tradition that continues this year.

Families willing to host members of the orchestra or opera are still needed. If you would like to volunteer to be a home stay, please email Janet Clark at mclark@machlink.com.

Performance day (Thursday, Jan. 30) begins with a tour of Muscatine that includes stops at the Sino-U.S. Friendship House, Muscatine Art Center, Muscatine City Hall, the Muscatine riverfront, and the Muscatine Museum of History and Industry which includes the National Pearl Button Museum.

On Chinese Culture Day (Friday, Jan. 31) the performers will be able to leisurely tour the sites in Muscatine and visit with Muscatine students before leaving for California early Saturday morning. Following breakfast at the Merrill Hotel, performers will be able to spend time visiting with Muscatine students or to explore Downtown Muscatine, the riverfront, and do some shopping.

Chinese Cultural Day activities continue in the afternoon with an open house at the Sino-U.S. Friendship Center, 109 W. 2nd Street, Muscatine. The open house will be held from 1-3 p.m. and is free to the public. Included in the open house will be demonstrations of a Chinese Tea Ceremony, a Chinese Opera makeup demonstration, a close up look at Chinese opera costumes, a variety of “Monkey Games”, a traditional Chinese orchestra instrument demonstration, and samples of Chinese food.



The Muscatine China Initiative Committee (MCIC) is coordinating the event and supported by the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Chicago.

For more information or to request an interview please contact MCIC committee member Xiaowen Guo by email (xiaowen.guo@kentww.com). You can also call (573) 202-0923 or (563) 264-4929 to contact Xiaowen Guo.

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