Suzhou Chinese Orchestra charms Portland with folk music

2018-07-29

chinadaily.com.cn |  
 Updated: 2018-07-29 04:53

PORTLAND, Oregon – The Suzhou Chinese Orchestra drew hundreds of Chinese folk music-lovers to the Lincoln Performance Hall at Portland State University on Friday with a "Charm of Chinese Music Concert".  
The audience was deeply impressed with the young orchestra's great vigor and dedication. After the performance, the orchestra received a long standing ovation.  
"I traveled almost three hours from home to see the beautiful concert," said David Perkins, a Chinese-language teacher who lives in Sisters, Oregon, a town more than 150 miles from Portland.  
Bonnie Miksch, director of Portland State University's School of Music, was also among the audience members who were thrilled to hear the Chinese instruments.  
"It is very interesting to me that instead of the violins, we have the erhu, which is of a very different timbre from the violin, and against the whole orchestra, a very special color, that I was very struck with. It's very rare to hear something like this, other than on TV, or YouTube, that kind of thing. It's very special to be upclose," Miksch said.  
The concert was conducted by Pang Kapang, who has conducted at the Golden Hall of Vienna 13 times. The repertoire included six carefully selected pieces: Celebration Prelude by Zhao Jiping, Jasmine Flower by Wenjin Liu, Butterfly Dream by Zhao Jiping, Variations of Emotion by Liu Changyuan, Peony Pavilion · Touring the Garden by Zhu Changyao, and Macau Capccio by Wang Danhong.  
The Peony Pavilion · Touring the Garden is adapted from a play of the world intangible heritage Kun Opera and is composed by famous erhu virtuoso and composer Zhu Changyao. At the concert, the piece was also accompanied by a classic singing of the Kunqu Opera by artist Wang Fang.  
Founded last December, the orchestra now has more than 90 members, including renowned musicians and students from top-class music schools across the country. Famous conductor Pang Kapang is its artistic director and principal conductor.  
"Although Suzhou Chinese Orchestra is still very young, we are passionate and have been dedicated to integrating folk music into the orchestra performance and reinterpreting and expressing traditional Chinese music with international mainstream symphonic language," Pang said.  
The concert is part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association and relationship.  
"This celebration is more important than ever to celebrate the many years of friendship and cooperation between our two cities, Portland and Suzhou, which help make our cities better places to live, work and play," Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association President Robert J. Fraser said.  
The orchestra was scheduled to play another concert on in Portland on Saturday.

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