

Qingdao making Olympic cultural effort

By Du Shu

During the Olympic sailing competitions in Qingdao, athletes and tourists from home and abroad will enjoy local cultural activities and feel the ardent Olympic atmosphere.

"The Olympic competitions play an active role in promoting Qingdao's cultural development," Jiang Zhengxuan, director general of Qingdao Municipal Cultural Bureau (QMCB) told China Daily.

Jiang said a range of Olympic-themed artistic works have been produced including symphonies, songs, dances, dramas and movies.

"More than 20,000 Olympic cultural activities have been held in 20 city squares and parks since 2007. Most of the performers in these activities are Qingdao citizens," Jiang said.

"We have more than 200 elderly people who are all good at singing and dancing. We have staged choruses, short plays and instrumental music performances more than 20 times since the beginning of 2008," said Wang Nongcun, leader of Qingdao elderly art group.

Qingdao also places importance on international cultural exchanges.

"Our art groups have given performances in about 18 countries including France, Japan,

Russia and the South Korea," Jiang said. "We also invited international counterparts to Qingdao to boost cultural exchanges."

More than 30 Olympic-themed exhibitions have been held in the city including photography, folk arts, calligraphy and painting.

On May 9 to 16, rural folk Yangko dancing troupes gathered in Qingdao to welcome the Olympics.

The city also held a paper-cutting competition that attracted about 500 competitors. A 17-m-long cut by craftsman Wang Yunchang called *Qingming Shanghe Tu* — or The Scene at the Upper River during the Qingming Festival — was packed away by the Chinese National Art Gallery.

At the 100-day countdown to the opening of Olympics, 63-year-old calligrapher Zhang Ruiqin created a 100-m-long work of calligraphy and donated it to Qingdao Olympic Sailing Committee.

According to the QMCB, a series of activities such as singing and dancing, a singing competition, knowledge quiz on the Olympics and fitness workouts will be held in Huiquan Square in August.

"The performances held during Paralympic sailing competition will hail the hard working spirit of disabled athletes and show the society's care for them," said Jiang.



Performances by Qingdao locals to welcome the coming Games

Ju Chuanjiang

Economy animated by arts

By Zhao Ruixue

"Qingdao's culture industry has become a new engine driving the city's economic development," Jiang Zhengxuan, director general of Qingdao Municipal Cultural Bureau, said.

By the end of 2007, Qingdao had more than 200,000 people working in the culture industry, which was valued at 18.76 billion yuan, accounting for 4.9 percent of Qingdao's GDP.

Wang Wei, head of Qingdao Municipal Information Office, predicted that Qingdao's culture industry is expected to increase in value by 20 billion yuan this year.

Six culture industry clusters are to be built, including a culture creation park, the culture-featured street, a Laoshan Mountain culture tourism area, a musical instruments and art crafts export area in Chengyang district and an artwork production and export base in Jiaonan, a satellite city of Qingdao.

A software industry center, a digital animation industry base and a national animation and internet games industry base have contributed to development of the city's animation industry.

The city is expected to have at least 50 animation companies by 2010, which are projected to yield a production value of 1 billion yuan a year.

The development of digital animation in Qingdao has attracted a number of companies. At present, more than 30 companies have settled in the city to make games, video cartoons and multimedia designs.

Another 10 companies specialized in game development have also settled in Qingdao. With thousands of people working in animation, an industrial chain has evolved that includes production, research and operation of animated products.

Universities such as the Beijing Film Academy and Qingdao University of Technology and Science train animation professionals in Qingdao.

Another highlight of the city's culture industry is the "Creative 100" park home to more than 50 creative enterprises.

"Qingdao aims to develop the Creative 100 into a nationwide famous park in three years and worldwide in five years by introducing fashion design enterprises from South Korea, Japan and Europe," Jiang said.

The 275-meter long culture street features tourism, fashion, arts and other cultural trade.

"In the year of 2008, Qingdao will give more support to the culture industry and enhance culture exchanges between China and international counterparts," Jiang added.

Music among the many charms of coastal city



Rural folk Yangko dancing at May 4th Square in Qingdao

Ju Chuanjiang

By Huang Yanhong

Olympic songs can be heard throughout Qingdao as the city prepares for the 2008 Games.

"Greeting the Olympic Games has been the main tune for the entire year's performances in Qingdao," said Lian Xinguo, chairman of the Qingdao Musician Association.

From February to April this year, 100,000 Qingdao residents attended events, while 33 groups gave performances on the 100-day countdown to the Olympics Games.

Chorus members themselves composed dozens of songs such as "Raise the Olympics Sail".

Lian said that Qingdao is making efforts to build a culture brand called "Island of Music".

Qingdao, a coastal city in east of China, is known as *Qin* — violin-shaped — Island. It is also known as a cradle of violinists.

Tan Shuzhen, the first Chinese professor of violin, was born in Qingdao and the very first violin in

China made its appearance in Qingdao.

A number of famous violinists, including Lü Siqing and Liu Yang, studied in Qingdao before they became widely known.

Art groups and troupes in the city number more than 100. Some 1,000 universities, high schools and elementary schools offer music courses.

With 100,000 pianos in the city, music and dance have become popular courses among the elementary students.

Traditional plays, Peking opera and Liu opera are popular among ordinary residents. As many as 500 concerts were held in the first five months of this year.

Qingdao has invested more than 32 million yuan since 2005 to remodel the Qingdao People's Hall and the Qingdao University Music Hall.

Qingdao Great Theater, a public cultural facility designed to be a symbol of the city, will be finished in 2009 when it will meet the needs of large performances.

Qingdao has also estab-

lished itself as a center of communication for music associations from both home and overseas.

Since 2005, the annual Chinese International Violin Competition has attracted violinists from countries all over the world.

Every year, more than 70 contestants from 20 countries and regions gather to compete in Qingdao.

In the past three years, many grand performances and competitions have been held in the city, including the Eighth National Violin Performance Competition, the International Piano Summer Training Camp, the Qingdao International Music Festival & Academy, the International Master of Piano Tours, the Qingdao Music Festival, Hisense Symphony Orchestra and the Qingdao Symphony Orchestra.

As well, a youth folk music festival has a large number of performers. Sheng Zhongguo, one of the most acclaimed violinists in China, said "a great number of musical activities held in Qingdao show the city's charm."



History lives on in old buildings, streets

By Xue Xiaoying

"I really like Qingdao. The old buildings make me feel as if I'm standing in a German setting. The architecture, old streets and small fishing villages make Qingdao a unique city in China," said Michael, an American teacher at Qingdao University.

The charm of Qingdao, which was approved by the State Council as a "Historic Cultural City" in 1994, is drawing more and more foreigners like Michael.

To preserve the charm, a Qingdao mu-

nicipal historic cultural city protection committee was established in 2002 that promulgated statutes for the protection of modern and historic sites.

Qingdao went through seven distinct periods from the 19th century to the 1940s, in turn occupied by Germany, Japan and the United States. The port city absorbed and preserved their styles of architecture that are still intact, said an official from Qingdao culture bureau.

The city has declared 10 State-level sites for cultural protection, along with 30 at the provincial level and 88 local destinations.

The local government published 313 books on historic architecture with illustrations in both Chinese and English.

In 2006 a program to "rescue cultural relics and historic cultural streets", a part of the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10), was put forward.

In Qingdao over 490 hectares of protected historic sites include Badaguan, Huiquan Bay and Taiping Bay.

The original features and surroundings of the nine traditional streets from different periods are strictly preserved and protected.

The structure and interior of 88 buildings cannot be altered.

Special protection is given to Taiqing Palace of Laoshan Mountain and Langyatai in the satellite city Jiaonan.

Memorial sites include those for major historic events and the former residence of scores of contemporary and modern celebrities, such as Kang Youwei, a democratic reformer of Qing Dynasty (1644-1910) and Lao She, a modern writer. An investment of over 70 million yuan for cultural protection is earmarked during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10).

Historic cultural sites in Qingdao attracted more than 30 million visitors last year.

Left above: Guest House in Qingdao in the style of a classic German castle
Below: Former residence of Kang Youwei, a democratic reformer of Qing Dynasty

Ju Chuanjiang