

Chinese Voice 26 February 1998 issue

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Shanghai Penjing Master visits

"A Chinese garden is an enchanting series of cameo scenes: On entry one turns to the left and sees a scene of enchantment, then turns to the right and is greeted by another scene of delight. Whilst the Chinese garden is constructed, by man it gives the semblance of having been created by nature."

An interesting and colourful talk on Chinese gardens was presented on Tuesday evening at Victoria University to garden enthusiasts by landscape designer and penjing expert, Master Yunhua Hu. Penjing (scenery in a pot) is an ancient Chinese art form pictured on tomb murals as far back as the Han Dynasty (A.D. 25 – 220). It was later introduced to Japan where it has been developed as Bonsai. This talk was arranged through the good will of the Wellington Bonsai Club, who have sponsored the visit of Master Hu.

Master Hu, a graduate in Landscape Architecture from Beijing Forestry University, holds a number of distinguished positions; he is the director of the Penjing Research Centre, the deputy director of the Shanghai Botanic Garden, a standing council member of the China Landscape Association and he is also now in charge of landscape work in Shanghai.

The Master is the author of "The Art of Chinese Miniature Landscape" and has published a number of academic papers on miniature landscape.

We will be able to see examples of the Master's work showing his skill and expertise as he will be the lead demonstrator at "Bonsai '98", the convention organized by the Wellington Bonsai Club over Labour weekend, 23 – 25 October at the Wellington Town hall. The Bonsai Club have arranged a varied and interesting programme over the weekend for enthusiasts of the art.

For details ring:

567 2668, 566 2898, or 388 3835.

The Mayor, Mr. Mark Blumsky will open the Convention on the Friday evening.

An Asian at my Museum

Chinese in Wellington are delighted that the new Museum, Te Papa, includes an exhibition charting the history of the Chinese in NZ.

This history has five separate phases: 1) the invitation to come to NZ to mine gold, 2) racial discrimination and incredible hardship, 3) supporting the NZ war effort, 4) acceptance and integration, 5) the "Asian Invasion".

The exhibition consists mainly of photographs, memorabilia and explanatory text; multimedia and interactivity are limited to a continuous home movie (which admittedly is very apt). One might question the inclusion of a "sexy and sensational" lady's slipper for bound feet since it was unlikely to have been worn by the miners' womenfolk in NZ or indeed in China.

Details aside, the inclusion of this display in Te Papa on opening day demonstrates that at long last the Chinese are officially recognised as an integral part of NZ history.

But wait, there's more in Wellington during this month of festivities which shows that local Chinese culture is being integrated into the NZ mainstream. Raybon Kan's self-consciously Chinese NZer stand-up comic act, An Asian at My Table, located somewhere between Fringe and International, has been a sell-out to a predominantly European audience. There is also the world premiere of an experimental opera Alley. This was

written by Jack Body of Victoria University's music department and features an all-male cast telling the story of Rewi Alley, a Kiwi who demonstrated his love of the youth of China in the 1950s by opening a number of schools to train them in practical agriculture.

Background material regarding the Chinese exhibition at Te Papa by Steven Young, a discussion of the Chinese community's involvement in the exhibition by Nigel Murphy, and a history of the Chinese in NZ by Dr James Ng and related material may be found at <http://www.stevenyoung.co.nz>.