Asian Arts & Culture Program Presents the New Shanghai Circus

Happy Chinese New Year, Welcome the Year of the Dog
A Brief Overview of China

China is one of the world’s oldest civilizations. Its written history goes back 3,500 years. China lies in eastern Asia. It is the world’s largest nation in population, and is the third largest in area. Only Russia and Canada have more territory.

What does spaghetti, a wheelbarrow, the compass, paper, gunpowder, silk cloth, porcelain and acrobatics have in common? They were all invented in China.

The first recorded use of gunpowder by the military was during a period of Chinese history known as the Five Dynasties. They simply put the gun powder in clay posts, set it on fire and threw it. The fiery explosion was enough to send their enemies running in the other direction.

Several hundred years before the invention of gun powder, in a period known as the Qin Dynasty, something we use everyday without even thinking much about it was invented: paper!

The Chinese take great pride in what is known as “the four inventions,” the compass, gunpowder, paper and printing. They should be proud! These inventions transformed sea transport, warfare and literacy—not just in China but all over the world.

What about spaghetti? If you think spaghetti is Italian, think again. Spaghetti originated in China. And the next time you are in a hardware store and pass a wheelbarrow, remind yourself that it was invented in China also.

Although we have put to use many of the things the Chinese people have invented, there are some practices in China which are much different from what we are used to. For example, the Chinese calendar is much different from ours. When our calendar came to the year 2000, the Chinese calendar will show the year 4698! Obviously, their calendar is several thousand years older.

The Chinese do not use an alphabet to make up words. They use characters. Each character represents a thought, a concept or an idea, which has a meaning of its own. These characters are combined in group of one, two, three or four together to form what we think of as words.

Which leaves one last thing to think about — acrobatics. Ancient stone carvings, earthen pottery and early written works trace the ancestry of today’s spectacular acts to and era long since vanished. Even Confucius’s father was an acrobat—a strongman of unrivaled strength who, it is claimed, lifted 1,000 pound city gates to let an army storm through.

It was during the Han Dynasty, more than two thousand years ago, that the Chinese saw the first acrobats, magicians, and jugglers. Acrobats, with their amazing skill of strength and impossible balance, developed out of the annual village harvest celebrations. Chinese farmers and village craftsmen, with relatively little to do over the long winter decided to spend their time improving their societal positions by becoming acrobats. They practiced the art form with just about anything they
could find around the house and farm... cups, saucers, tables, chairs plates... Even their own bodies, with which they formed human walls and pyramids. Every year in the fall the village's peasants would join in the village share in a celebration of a bountiful harvest... a sort of Chinese Thanksgiving. It was at this time that the common people would show off their skills by performing fun and exciting feats of daring and strength using household tools and common items found around the farm and workshop. Building on the traditional performances today's artists have added new techniques and spectacular stunts thrilling audiences around the globe. Highly skilled, rigorously trained, and superbly talented, these performers follow an unbroken tradition since 700 BC.

**Chinese Acrobatic Skills**

Hoop diving has its origins during the harvest time when the field workers used a tool shaped like a large tambourine. These large hoops with a woven mesh bottom were used to shake and divide the grain from the leaves and stems. It became a tradition to challenge each other to see who could dive through these hoops and to see how many or how tall a stack could they dive through.

Similarly, the pottery maker would learn to juggle and spin his wares. Spinning a pot to make it uniformly round and smooth is a natural action of the potter. However, when he adds to this a few tricks of juggling and tossing high into the air, he becomes a local hero performing a thrilling feat.

Climbing to the top of a tall stack of chairs... the spinning of plates on the end of a long bamboo stick... balancing small wooden benches on the head... flipping bowls with your feet... climbing tall poses and long leather straps... these and most other traditional Chinese acrobatic acts derived from the lifelong skills of the village peasant, river sailor and local craftsman.

Children learned skills from their fathers and grandfathers before they were of school age. The tradition of Chinese acrobatics is therefore one that they have passed down from generation to generation to become the feats of strength, balance and grace that comprise this unique tradition of China. Like traveling European gypsies, the great acrobatic families of China would entertain the city rulers and the village people at ceremonial carnivals and public theaters. Today there remain only a few brothers and sisters of the famous old acrobatic families. They have now organized China's traditional entertainments into professional acrobatic troupes with formal academies for training young promising entertainers and internationally award winning performing companies. Still today China has an annual competition for the acrobatic academies. Acrobats representing troupes from all over the nation compete once a year to see who will win the all important Gold, Silver and Bronze Lions.

Obviously, immense athletic ability and a keen sense of timing are vital to becoming an acrobat, but so is an appreciation of oriental philosophy. The skill of “Qi Gong” or “spirits from air”, a semi-religious study of the form of breathing and movement is very important to acrobatics. Qi Gong teaches one to use the mind and body together in perfect harmony with each other. While a thorough knowledge of Qi Gong is not a requisite for acrobats performing with modern-day circuses, the tradition of Qi Gong has roots in a 2000-year tradition that began in China. All early acrobats were well founded in the tradition of Qi Gong. The incredible performances are much like the acts first put on for Chinese emperors and royalty for the last 2000 years.
The Dragon Dance — In Chinese mythology, the Dragon King rules the middle kingdom. The Dragon King lives in the heavens. He is the fiery king in the sky. His first wife is the Firebird, or Phoenix. They are the sun and the moon and rule the natural order of the world.

The Dragon King has a son, who is also a Dragon. He is the prince that rules the earth. This son lives in a magnificent palace in the waters of the earth. The wild oceans, the rivers that rush through the mountains and plains, and the beautiful lakes are the domains of the Dragon Prince.

As it is in many places on earth, the rainfall is seasonal, it comes and goes during the year. In periods of drought people thought it might never rain again. In China, the people were always worried about whether it would rain. For this reason, the magic men, or Shamans, gave the people of the village the Dragon Dance, performed for the Dragon Prince, to remind him to send rain. This is very similar to our native Americans and people in other cultures who perform a rain making dance to bring rain to the people and the land.

In ancient China, the main crop was millet, not rice. Rice, which was for wealthy city people, needs a great deal of water to grow. When the new year arrived and spring came to the land, the people would perform the dragon dance in celebration . . . and perhaps the Dragon Prince would remember the people's needs once again.

The Lion Dance - The Lion Dance is not originally from China although we know it now as a part of Chinese tradition. As we know, there are no lions in China, the lion is only found in Africa. The Lion Dance was actually a gift to an ancient emperor of China from a kingdom far to the west. Perhaps the Lion Dance originated from a time when the African lion roamed a territory much greater than the African continent.

The lion, with his strength, represents a powerful figure that protects the villagers from evil spirits and the devil. This is why Chinese often have lions guarding their gates and doorways. Lions are also thought to bring strength, balance and health to the village and its people.

Today there are two different styles of lions in China. The lion of northern China is big with a beautiful golden head and big eyes. The long fur hide of the Yak was traditionally used for the costume of the lion in northern China. In the south, the lion dance costumes are much more festive and comical. The body is made of different colored fabric and the head consists of fabric stretched over a wire frame.
The Chinese zodiac is divided into 12 parts and is used as a 12-year calendar. Each year is ruled by one of 12 animals. Five cycles of 12 years make up one complete cycle of 60 years—the basis of the Chinese calendar. When someone turns 60, and completes a full cycle, the family plans a big birthday celebration.

The zodiac cycle starts with the Rat, followed by the Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. Lots of stories tell why the zodiac starts with the rat. One tells about the animals crossing a big river. The rat rode on the ox’s back and jumped off at just the right time, winning the race. The ox came in second, and just as you might have thought, the pig came in last, because he never rushes.

Traditionally, when a child was born, fortune-tellers took careful note of the year of birth as well as the hour, day, and month to figure out the baby's destiny. According to Chinese folklore, every person has personality traits that are the same as their animal birth sign. What sign were you born under? What are you like? What will you become?

**Horse**—(1978, 1990) You are cheerful, talkative, a hard worker, and a bit of a show-off. You will be best as an explorer, writer, or debutante.

**Sheep**—(1979, 1991) You're a strong believer in what you do, gentle and loving, and very talented in the arts. You will make a good author, therapist, or landscape architect.

**Monkey**—(1980, 1992) Very smart, you have a lot of wonderful ideas but are full of mischief. You will be good at everything you do, from famous magician to head of state.

**Rooster**—(1993, 2005) You are neat as a pin, have lots of confidence, and would like everything to be perfect. You will be happiest as a fashion model, actor, or world traveler.

**Dog**—(1982, 1994) Keeping an eye on everything, you are alert and dependable. You will be an excellent secret agent, psychiatrist, or librarian.

**Pig**—(1983, 1995) You are happy, good-natured, outspoken, but a little too trusting. You might do well as a craftsman, artist, or comedian.

**Rat**—(1984, 1996) You are charming, well organized, logical, and careful not to waste a penny of your allowance. You will make a good architect, salesperson, or campaign manager.

**Ox**—(1985, 1997) Patient, determined, and easy going, you never miss a beat. You will be happy as a tennis pro, surgeon, hair stylist, or rock climber.

**Tiger**—(1986, 1998) You are brave, kind, daring, and full of feeling. You might be a race car driver, animal trainer, reporter, or soap opera star.

**Rabbit**—(1987, 1999) Rabbits are selfless, neat and tidy, and get along well with their brothers and sisters. You are well suited as a banker, lawyer, interior designer, or videogame player.

**Dragon**—(1988, 2000) One of the most showy characters in the zodiac chart, you are imaginative, lucky, full of fun, and energetic. You will make a good talk-show host, artist, or diplomat.

**Snake**—(1989, 2001) Yin to the dragon's yang, you are mysterious, quiet, and a deep thinker, successful as a philosopher, fortune-teller, or best friend.
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Vocabulary
Calligraphy written in simplified characters by ZhongWei Shen

Dynasty
Cháo dài

Population
Rén kǒu

Acrobatics
Zá jì

Peasant
Nóng mín
Dragon Boat Festival

Have you ever seen boats that look like dragons? They have a wide open mouth at the bow and a scaly tail at the stern. Along the waterways, lakes, and rivers of central and south China, huge boats—some up to 100 feet long—arrive on one of the hottest days of the year to challenge each other to race. It's said that the dragon boat races are held to remember the river search for Qu Yuan, an ancient patriot and poet who lived over 2,000 years ago. Dragons are protective, powerful, and full of good tidings, so the boat races are one way of spreading good luck.

After the races, everyone spends the rest of the day looking at martial arts demonstrations, watching street theater or snacking on sweet buns, dragon-boat dumplings, and roasted pine nuts. Shop owners and children set off firecrackers long into the night. The day of the “double 5th” (5th Day of the 5th Month) draws to a close and the cycle of seasons moves from the growth of winter and spring (yang seasons) to the quiet of summer and autumn (yin seasons).

Dragon: The word for dragon in Chinese is long. Chinese dragons are strong and powerful and are used as a symbol for spring rain and growth.

Dragon Boat Dumplings

Ingredients & Utensils
- baking pan
- sauce pan
- mixing bowl
- measuring cups and spoons
- string—cotton twine
- wok or big pot with lid
- steamer
- tongs

For the dumplings
- 2 cups glutinous rice flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1 teaspoon banana extract
- 12 dried bamboo or cast iron leaves (available at Chinese groceries in neatly tied bundles)
- vegetable oil for brushing leaves

For the sweet filling
- 1 cup canned sweetened red bean paste or melon seed or lotus seed paste. (A sweet, thick, firm paste made from mashed red beans.)

Step by Step

Make sure a grown-up has looked over the recipe and can help at the stove.

- Gather all ingredients and tools. Soak leaves in a pan of warm water until soft (1 hour for cast iron, 4 hours for bamboo).
- Put the rice flour in the mixing bowl. Bring to a boil in a sauce pan: 1/2 cup sugar in 1/2 cup of water. Add extract to liquid. Pour into flour, add 2 tablespoons of cold water, and mix with a fork into a squeezable dough. Knead (knuckling and punching) until smooth. Put it on a lightly floured clean surface and using your hands, roll out into a sausage shape. Cut into 12 pieces and roll each into a ball.
- Pat the leaves dry and brush with oil. Flatten the dough balls with your hands. Place a tablespoon of the paste into the center of the dough and wrap the dough around the filling, bringing up the edges to seal.
- Place near the corner end of a leaf and wrap the leaf around it so that nothing falls out. A four-sided shape looks nice. Tie with string.
- Steam the dumplings in a covered steamer for 15 to 20 minutes. Carefully take them out with tongs. Unwrap and eat (not the leaves!). Serve hot or cold. (Makes 12 tasty treats).
The Race

Each boat in a Dragon Boat race belongs to a different village or association. They're painted different colors—green, red, yellow, white, and black. In most places, the races take place in the early afternoon. The boats begin to line up, and someone on the crew of each boat beats the drum to set the pace for the paddlers. When the starting gun is fired, they're off! It's wet and wild—the waves crashing into the boats and spray flying from the oars soaking everyone. What a splash! The winners take home prize money and the heads and tails of the boats (which are removable) are put away in nearby temples and club halls until next year's race.

The Hungry River Dragon

The Dragon Boat Festival honors Qu Yuan, China's earliest known poet. He served as a loyal minister to the king, but no one would listen to his advice on how to keep peace, and he was told to leave the kingdom forever. He became very sad and wrote a beautiful poem about his life and hopes while walking along the riverbank. That's the last anyone ever saw of him.

The people got into their boats to look for him in the river. They never found him, so they threw rice into the water for his soul to eat. But Qu Yuan didn't always have a chance to eat these offerings. This is the story that tells why.

There once was a fisherman who went to the river every day to fish. Each time he cast out his net, he sprinkled a handful of rice over the water to feed the river spirits.

One day he went to the river and tossed out his offering of rice. But he didn't catch a single fish. Instead, he heard someone shout, "I am hungry!"

The next day, he threw out a few extra handfuls of rice. He started to fish but was startled again by a voice saying, "I am hungry!"

The third day he took a whole bag of rice and before casting out his net, threw all the grain into the river. Then he heard the voice again, only louder still, "I am hungry!" Suddenly, in full daylight, he caught sight of a man who called himself the poet Qu Yuan.

"What's wrong?" the fisherman cried, "Aren't you getting enough rice?"

"No!" Qu Yuan said. "A hungry dragon is eating all the rice. He has the eyes of a rabbit, the scales of a carp, the claws of a hawk, and the horns of a deer.

His voice is like the clanging of pots and pans, and when he's not eating he plays with a bright, gleaming pearl in the middle of his mouth. He's always following me around, and he's really quite a pest."

"What can I do?" the fisherman asked.

"Seal the rice with bamboo leaves and tie it together with different colored threads—green, red, yellow, white, and black." Qu Yuan instructed. "The colors will scare the dragon away."

The fisherman did as he was told, and sure enough the waters were still once more. He never heard from the soul of Qu Yuan again. And lucky for the fisherman, his nets were always full.

Today dumplings made from glutinous (sticky) rice are wrapped in leaves and tied with colored cords. They are eaten on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival to honor Qu Yuan. Little children also wear bracelets of five different colors as protection. After all, would you want a river dragon nibbling snacks out of your hand?

Five Poison Charm

In traditional China, people wore "five poison" (wu du) charms on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival. Five poisonous creatures—the snake, centipede, scorpion, lizard and frog (or sometimes a spider)—protected them against summertime diseases and danger. Nowadays, the five poison designs are used to decorate all sorts of things like clothing, quilts, and book bags. They are embroidered with bright colors and interesting patterns—you can find blue-striped snakes, pink lizards, or open-mouth frogs.
Acknowledgement

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Vocabulary in calligraphy by Zhong Wei Shen

Study guide also available online at
http://www.umass.edu/fac/calendar/asian/events/NewShanghai1.html

Synopsis about Chinese acrobats by the New Shanghai Circus Company

Zodiac, Dragon Boat Festival, Hungry River Dragon from the book:
Red Eggs and Dragon Boats: Celebrating Chinese Festivals by Carol Stepanchuk,

Resources from the Five College Center for East Asian Studies
http://www.smith.edu/fcceas/china/ck.htm

The following page is a list of suggested activities for teachers to perform with their students for a better understanding of the Chinese culture.
Recommended Resources
Activity kits of Five College Center for East Asian Studies catalogue www.smith.edu/fceas/china/ck.htm

CK-002  CHINESE GAME KIT
GRADES 2-6. The kit contains pamphlets and descriptions including Chinese chess and Tangrams.

CK-003  CHINA KIT
GRADES 6-12+. This kit contains many artifacts brought back from a study tour in China. It includes more than 15 items that would be found in contemporary China, as well as several replicas of items from China's past. Descriptions of the artifacts are included with the kit. Northampton, MA: Five College Center for East Asian Studies, 2002.

CK-005  TOP SECRET ADVENTURES: MAYHEM ON THE MAINLAND
GRADES 1-4. This is a puzzle and activity book based on geographic and cultural facts of China. // Jeffery O'Hare. Columbus, OH: Highlights for Children, 1995.

CK-006  SING CHINESE II: CHINA'S BEST FOLK SONGS

CK-007  CHINA: A CULTURAL HERITAGE

CK-008  THE CHINA BOX

CK-009  CHINESE JUMP ROPE

CK-010  CHINESE CHESS

CK-011  TANGRAM: ANCIENT CHINESE PUZZLE
GRADES 3-12+. This puzzle consists of 7 pieces cut from a square that can be arranged in many different ways inside the wood frame. The accompanying booklet contains 90 images and their solutions. // Mtn. View, CA: Square Root Games, Inc., 1995.

CK-012  DRAGON KITE

CK-014  CHINESE NEW YEAR KIT
GRADES K-4. This grouping includes a 25-minute video on the Chinese New Year and a booklet entitled "Celebrating Chinese New Year." It also includes a decorator only firecracker kit and a paper lantern kit, both of which are to be used as prototypes. Teachers must purchase their own materials to be used with the kit. // 1994-2002.

CK-016  FEILONG: THE CHINA GAME
GRADES 6-12+. This resource includes questions, game board, play format, and related materials designed to teach about China. // Burlington, University of Vermont. 2004.
Evacuation Procedures

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building, procedures are in place to ensure that the audience can exit safely.

Sections 4, 5, 6
Exit through the lobby.

Sections 1, 2, 3 & Pit
Exit toward stage.

Note: Interior house conditions may necessitate alternate exit routes.

Mezzanine 1, 2, 3
Exit rear through lobby.

Balconies 1, 2 exit toward stage, up two flights and down interior fire escape.
NOTICE TO ALL TEACHERS AND CHAPERONES

➢ PERFORMANCE BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 9:30 am OR 11:30 am. Many of our performances sell out. This means we can have up to 1,600 students to seat. Please help us by arriving 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow our ushers to get everyone seated and for you and your students to visit the restrooms and get settled. It is important that we begin our performances on time so that all schools can meet their lunch and/or dismissal times.

➢ PLEASE CHECK LOCATION OF PERFORMANCE WHEN MAKING YOUR BUS RESERVATION.

➢ The staff of the Fine Arts Center needs your help! An increasing number of students are coming into the performance space with gum, food, beverages and portable music players. None of these items is allowed in the halls for performances. Many of these items are stowed in backpacks and are not easily noticed. Our goal is to offer high quality performances for young people. In order to enhance the experience, we ask for your cooperation in preventing these items from entering the hall.

➢ For the comfort of all concerned, we ask that backpacks, lunches and other gear be left on the bus. Our long-standing policy of no cameras or tape recorders still is in effect.

➢ At the conclusion of the performance please remain in your seats until your school group is dismissed.

We hope that you and your students enjoy your theatre experience!
PARKING AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FINE ARTS CENTER CONCERT HALL

School Bus Parking: Students should be dropped-off at Haigis Mall off of Massachusetts Avenue. University Security will direct buses to an appropriate parking lot during the performance (typically by the football stadium). PLEASE BE SURE YOUR BUS DRIVER KNOWS THAT ALL PERFORMANCES LAST APPROXIMATELY 1 HOUR AND THEY SHOULD RETURN A FEW MINUTES BEFORE THE ANTICIPATED END TIME. If drivers are not with the buses, they may miss the radio call from security asking them to return for pick-up, resulting in unnecessary delays returning to your school.

Individual cars: If necessary, individuals may drop-off students with a chaperone at Haigis Mall (you will be directed by security to the mid-point turn of Haigis Mall – see map) prior to parking. We recommend parking in the Campus Center Parking Garage to avoid searching for a metered space. It is a five-minute walk to the Concert Hall. All other available parking during weekdays is at meters. Available lots and pricing (current as of 9/1/04) are listed below:

Parking in the Garage is available to our patrons at a discounted rate of $1. To receive this rate you MUST give the Garage attendant a parking pass. To receive your pass, please call our office to let us know that you will be arriving by car. Parking passes are sent with the invoices.

Parking meters are enforced Monday – Friday, 7AM – 5 PM. Meter rates are $1.00 per hour.

Parking Garage – near Campus Center, across from the Mullins Center off Commonwealth Avenue
Lot 34 – Behind Visitors Center with 3, 5 & 10-hour meters available
Haigis Mall – 2 hour maximum on meters
Lot 62 - Adjacent to Fernald Hall with 3 hour maximum on meters, limited spaces available.

From the North: (Vermont, Greenfield) I-91 south to Route 116. Follow signs on 116 “To the University of Massachusetts.” Exit ramp leads to Massachusetts Avenue. Turn left (east) on to Massachusetts Avenue toward the campus. Continue through one light and watch for Lot 34 by the Visitors Center on your right and the entrance to Haigis Mall on your left.

From the South: (Springfield, Holyoke) I-91 north to Route 9. Turn right (east) on Route 9 over the Coolidge Bridge and through Hadley. Turn left (north) on Route 116 (across from Staples) heading toward campus. Turn right at first exit at “University of Massachusetts,” then bear right onto Massachusetts Avenue toward campus. Continue through one light and watch for Lot 34 by the Visitors Center on your right and the entrance to Haigis Mall on your left.

From the West: (Northampton, Pittsfield) Route 9 east through Northampton and over Coolidge Bridge. Follow remaining directions from “From the South” above.

From the East: (Belchertown, Ludlow) North on Routes 21, 181 or 202 to Route 9 into Amherst. Right on to North Pleasant Street (main downtown intersection), north through center of town. Turn left at Triangle Street (Bertucci’s Restaurant on your right), rejoining North Pleasant Street. To reach Lot 34 and Haigis Mall continue on main road, which becomes Massachusetts Avenue. Haigis Mall will be on your right, Lot 34 on your left.
For Concert Hall, Rand Theater and Bowker Auditorium – Patrons traveling by car are encouraged to park in the parking garage. Discounted parking is available in the garage for $1. A parking permit is required for discounted parking in the garage. All other parking on campus is at available meters at the rate of $1 per hour. Parking is enforced Monday – Friday, 7AM – 5 PM.

Buses will drop-off students as indicated on map. Buses will be given parking instructions by Campus Security.