

Asia

ASIAN STUDIES CENTER

2013 – 2014 MAGAZINE

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MSU Students Engaging with Asia

As I write this note, I am traveling in Malaysia and Indonesia with a group of students as part of the 2014 "Wild Borneo" study abroad program led by Professor Pamela Rasmussen, an internationally known authority on Asian birds. To date, our group has identified close to 150 different species of birds on the island of Borneo, and we hope to identify a number of additional species on the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Bali in Indonesia in the coming weeks.

Traveling with our students has given me the opportunity to experience first-hand the wealth of knowledge that students acquire when they travel to Asia, both about their chosen disciplines (in this case zoology, natural science, and the interface between economics and the environment) and about engaging with and adapting to a culture that differs from their own. Therefore, I would like to highlight MSU's study abroad offerings in Asia with a summary of the description we provided in our recently submitted application for funding from the U.S. Department of Education National Resource Centers program.

MSU is a leader in study abroad participation amongst public universities. From January 2012 through May 2014, MSU offered over 50 different study abroad programs in over a dozen different countries across Asia. Participation in MSU-sponsored study abroad programs in Asia from 2010 through 2014 increased significantly over the 2005-2009 period. MSU and the Asian Studies Center support language-focused study abroad programs at partner institutions and work with

faculty to develop new programs and strategic partnerships across Asia. Responding to student demand, new study abroad options include intensive language programs in China, Japan, Russia and Thailand, and internship programs in Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, and Singapore, several of which are teacher-training programs.

Recent research-focused programs in the professional schools, in which students engage in directed field research, include Civil Engineering Planning & Practice in China and South Korea, Ecology of the Mountains in India, Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation in Malaysia and Indonesia, and Engineering in Taiwan. Several programs allow students to focus on agricultural and environmental studies, which support MSU's strengths in natural science and applied international development. Among these are programs with a sustainability component in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam. MSU also co-administers the Japan Center for Michigan Universities, which offers academic year, semester, and summer programs in intensive Japanese language at its campus in Japan.

While our study abroad offerings in Asia are rich in disciplinary and geographic breadth, cost is often a hurdle for students. I hope that you, the reader, will consider supporting our efforts to encourage students to undertake one of MSU's study abroad programs in Asia by communicating the value of these programs to our students and by considering supporting these efforts with a financial contribution.



**Siddharth Chandra, Director
Asian Studies Center**



**The MSU Asian Studies Center on the
third floor of the International Center.**

Delia Koo: Creating an Engine of Opportunity

The Asian studies community continues to benefit from the generosity of Dr. Delia Koo. Through the endowment established by Dr. Koo, MSU faculty may apply for funds to support their activities including conference presentations, teaching, research, and outreach. The endowment was established to advance creativity, discovery, teaching about a global society, and its underlying economy.

Born in China, Dr. Delia Koo came to the United States on the last passenger ship out of Shanghai in the midst of World War II to pursue graduate studies. She earned both master's and doctoral degrees in English at Harvard's sister institution, Radcliffe College, where she was both an Evans Fellow and an Anne Radcliffe Fellow.

Beginning of a Relationship

Delia Koo's relationship with MSU began when Dr. Anthony Koo, her husband, took a faculty position here. Dr. Delia Koo decided to pursue a master's degree in mathematics, which she completed in 1954. Subsequently publishing two books in the field of mathematics, she taught for nearly 20 years at Eastern Michigan University and became actively involved in the Mathematical Association of America, where she once held the position of governor of the Michigan section.



Delia Koo in her home.

International Mission

Dr. Koo has made notable contributions to MSU's international mission and to helping international students over the years. Chief among them was her creation of the MSU Volunteer English Tutoring Program (VETP) in 1983. Koo's impromptu effort to help several Korean students struggling with the English language flourished into a program that has served thousands of international students from all over the world.

In recognition of Koo as an educator, benefactor, and humanitarian, the MSU Board of Trustees on November

10, 2000 adopted a resolution to name the academic wing of the International Center the "Delia Koo International Academic Center," where the Asian Studies Center is housed today.

The Dr. Delia Koo Global Faculty Endowment

The endowment was created to fund education, research, and outreach, including professional development for faculty and students that are in line with Dr. Koo's vision.

The goals of the endowment are:

1. To facilitate the incorporation of international and global studies, especially of Asia, in teaching, research, and outreach at Michigan State University (MSU).
2. To develop the capability of MSU faculty members to conduct activities related to (1.) above.
3. To enhance the standing of the colleges, departments, and the Asian Studies Center and affiliated units at MSU in the area of Asian Studies.

The Asian Studies Center manages distribution of the endowment proceeds and currently accepts applications for faculty research funding and conference travel funding. It is expected that multiple awards will be made in each category every fiscal year (July to June). Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and may be accessed on the Center's website: http://asia.isp.msu.edu/resources/Koo_appln.pdf

Recent endowment-funded projects include research on human rights and history in Indonesia led by Dr. Elizabeth Drexler in the Department of Anthropology. Another example is

a research project led by Dr. Sheila Maxwell in the School of Criminal Justice focuses on the role of procedural justice in political trust and compliance to environmental laws in the Philippines.

The Dr. Delia Koo endowment ensures that the Asian Studies Center becomes an engine of opportunity for faculty who incorporate global studies, especially of Asia, into their education and research. Faculty are able to continue to improve their global connections in an increasing internationalized atmosphere at MSU.



Delia Koo International Academic Center.



Construction of the third floor of the International Center, which opened in 2000.

From India to Korea: A Student's Passion for Asian Studies

Asia has been part of Alexis Pierce's life since she was five years old. Pierce lived in Chennai, India twice for a total of four years because of her father's job relocation, including one year during kindergarten and three years during middle school. As a student in an international school and the only American in her grade, she was exposed to different cultures at a young age. These international experiences inspired her to double major in International Relations and Comparative Cultures and Politics in James Madison College with a specialization in Asian Studies. Following the language track, she focuses on Korean in the specialization. "I appreciate the flexibility allowed in fulfilling requirements for the specialization. I was able to enroll in a variety of Asian focused courses," she says.

Pierce's passion for Asian studies is exemplified by her completion of two years of Korean language courses, Asian studies coursework, involvement in student organizations, and her recent study abroad in Turkey. She will study abroad in Seoul, South Korea at Yonsei University for the 2014-15 academic year.

Academic Coursework

Pierce purposefully targets Asia in her research papers and other projects for as many courses as possible. She wrote a grant proposal for a project in Indonesia for an applied international development course and completed a project on enclave tourism in the Maldives in another James Madison College course. In choosing courses, "I strive to understand Asia as a whole with its diverse regions," she says.

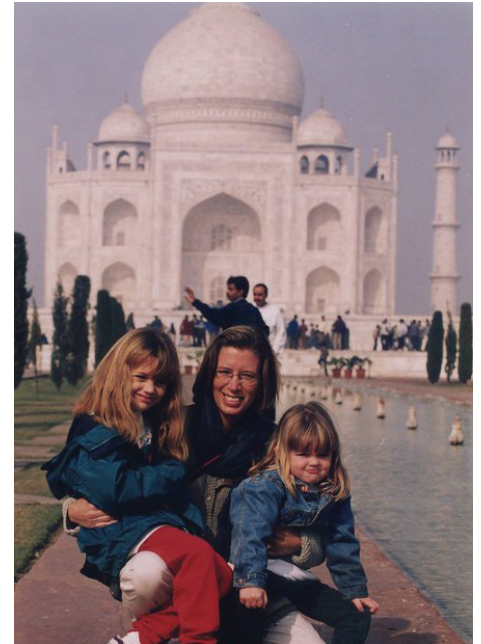
Having completed an independent study on the Korean diaspora in Central Asia this past spring, Pierce explored the connectivity of the Korean peninsula with other regions in Asia.

Student Organizations

During her three year membership, Pierce served as the chair of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in MSU Model United Nations (MSUMUN), an annual completely student-run conference for 600 high school students to experience Model United Nations. "I moderated a committee of 100 high school students using parliamentary procedure and educated students on how to effectively solve world issues using diplomacy," Pierce noted.

Seemingly never tired, Pierce co-founded and served as the President of Liberty in North Korea (LiNK). Established in the fall of 2013, the organization has grown to include over 25 active members. "LiNK raises funds through campus and community events for the resettlement of North Korean refugees and raises awareness about them to help reshape public perception," she says.

A delegate in the MSU International Relations Organization (MSUIRO) during her freshman and sophomore years, Pierce travelled to cities in the United States and Canada to participate in Model United Nations conferences.



Alexis Pierce (left) in India at the age of five with her mother and sister.

Studying Abroad

Intellectually curious about the country, Pierce discovered that James Madison College offered a program named "Sociocultural and Political Change in Modern Turkey" during the summer of 2013. She participated in the four week program split between Ankara and Istanbul. Pierce spent the last week exploring Istanbul with friends. The political climate while in Turkey is the most memorable. "We were in Ankara visiting the Parliament and we spoke to a couple of Members of Parliament. One member seemed to foreshadow what would happen the following day: the political demonstrations. I remember sitting in the university's guesthouse with my classmates and professor and we

were all wondering how this would impact us," she says. In Istanbul, "every night around 9 p.m. everyone in the streets and restaurants would cheer and make noise by banging their cups and silverware as part of the political demonstrations. And occasionally I would be sitting in a restaurant when a mini parade would pass by."

Having studied the Korean language for two years, Pierce is ready to improve her language proficiency and cultural competency by enrolling at Yonsei University for the 2014-15 academic year. She will live with a host family and plans to become involved in student organizations at Yonsei University in order to become culturally immersed.

Working at the Asian Studies Center

Pierce has been working at the Asian Studies Center as an office assistant since February of her sophomore year. This opened the doors for her to expand her repertoire by working on a multitude of Asia-related events. Last fall, the Center planned and hosted the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs (MCAA). Pierce recruited, trained, and led the conference volunteers, many of whom were international students. At the Center, she communicates with people from around on the globe on a daily basis - with faculty, students, visiting scholars, and other professionals. "I enjoy the responsibilities given to me for a variety of projects and events. Every day at the office is different which makes coming into work more exhilarating," she said.

Honors and Awards

Pierce is a member of the Honors College and has been on the Dean's List every semester since she began at MSU. She received the National Security Education Program (NSEP) David L. Boren Scholarship for study abroad in South Korea in 2014 - 15. Boren Scholarships provide up to \$20,000 to U.S. undergraduate

students to live and study in areas of the world that are critical to U.S. interests and underrepresented in study abroad. Pierce also received the Office of Study Abroad Academic Excellence Award twice, the James Madison College Dean's Award twice, the Shao Chang Lee Scholarship, and the William B. Ford Scholarship.

Future Plans

As a Boren Scholar, Pierce is congressionally mandated to serve in the federal government in a national security-related area for at least one year after graduation with her Bachelor's. Her goal is to become either a Political or Consular Foreign Service Officer in the U.S. Department of State or a political analyst in the Central Intelligence Agency. She will be allowed three years following graduation until she must complete the service requirement. During that time she is interested in teaching English in Korea, applying for the Junior Fellows Program at the Carnegie Endowment, and obtaining her Master's degree to further increase her knowledge in Asian Studies. "The future is bright and I'm excited to see where my life takes me in a couple of years."



Alexis Pierce with Sparty at the Student Employee of the Year reception.



Alexis Pierce (far left, front row) with her MSU study abroad group in Turkey.

Journalism and the Environment: A Faculty Member's Dedication to Central Asia

Central Asia is "an area of the world with such a deep past. We can enjoy and learn from its part of the cultural area of the world with its music, literature, architecture, and archaeology." – Eric Freedman

Eric Freedman, Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism and the Knight Center Chair, continues to work extensively in Central Asia. Before coming to Michigan State University, he worked with the State Capitol Bureau of the Detroit News covering state government and politics. Freedman first started his engagement with Central Asia in 2002 as a Fulbright Scholar in Uzbekistan, where he co-designed and co-taught the country's first course about reporting on environmental science. Since then, he is primarily involved in Kyrgyzstan. The last time he went to Uzbekistan was in 2004, where he led journalism workshops for Freedom House, a U.S.-based non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights. He has also been to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan for research trips.

Current Work

Freedman is currently drafting a conference paper with a former journalism student at the American University of Central Asia about the relationships between environmental NGOs and the media that he hopes to present in September. He has a journal article that will appear in the next issue of *Applied Environmental Education Communication* about

barriers and trans-border reporting on environmental issues in the Fergana Valley that spreads across Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Freedman is also working on a book proposal about the environmental problems in the Caucasus in Central Asia. His research is primarily focused on journalism and the environment.

Freedman has received numerous awards as a journalist and faculty member, including the Pulitzer Prize in Journalism for Beat Reporting, the Curricular Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Award from Michigan State University, and the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award.

Importance of Central Asia

Central Asia, a region where most Americans rarely make their travel destination in comparison to other Asian regions, is a place that Freedman would like others to know about. Central Asia is strategically and economically a crucial area because of its energy resources and location geopolitically. Freedman says, "It's a region with rich environmental, cultural, and historic resources that most of the world is unaware of." He also says "that there are a lot of lessons for those who are in the International Relations field about



Eric Freedman (on right) in Samarkand, Uzbekistan with an army guard.



Eric Freedman in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

the failure of American expectations and Western expectations after the collapse of the Soviet Union...We as Westerners cannot expect that you can take any Western model...and transplant it elsewhere in the world."

A memory that stands out to Freedman about his experiences in Central Asia is his visit to Samarkand in Uzbekistan, an ancient city known for its importance in the Silk Road. Freedman was visiting the city with some friends and they wanted to go up in one of the minarets which was closed. After some discussion between Freedman's friend, who speaks Russian, and one of the army guards present, the guard took a bribe to take the group of friends up the minaret. Bribery is part of the culture in Central Asia, where corruption is more open and in every level of society. Freedman notes that this experience "illustrates this intersection of different cultural values and traditions and economic realities of the area."

Engagement with the Asian Studies Center

Having led several study abroad programs in the British Isles and Australia, Freedman spent seven and a

half years as an associate dean in the MSU International Studies & Programs (ISP). However, it was not until after his return from Uzbekistan that he began his engagement with ISP area studies centers. Freedman leads lectures for both the Asian Studies Center and the Center for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies and is a core faculty member of both. He notes that "because of my engagement with people through the area studies centers, I know a whole lot more people who do interesting things around campus." Freedman has also received research and conference grants from the Asian Studies Center. For his 2012 trip to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which involved interviewing journalists about the

coverage of trans-border issues in the Fergana Valley, he received financial support from the Asian Studies Center and the Muslim Studies Program. "For a lot of faculty, a relatively small grant in the scheme of things can make... [a] difference ...[in] being able to do a research project," Freedman says. Furthermore, Freedman participated in the 2013 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs that the Asian Studies Center coordinated. He, along with Dr. Martha Olcott and Dr. Richard Shafer, presented a paper about the press constraints in Central Asia.

Looking Beyond

As a professor, Freedman cares about how his students perform after graduation and that they gain an international perspective through their education. "My job as a faculty member, and I think this is the job of all faculty members, is to make sure for when our students leave the university, they can function either in a professional setting or graduate school setting...It doesn't matter how many journal articles or books you publish. We're preparing students to function in a globalized, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural world where borders change all the time, or disappear, or they suddenly spring up." When understanding the world, Freedman says that students must understand that it is more than learning a subject, "It's also the people, the culture, history, and traditions."



Eric Freedman kicks off his speaking tour in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Learning Uzbek and Russian Opens Doors: An MSU Graduate's Story

"Now that I'm in graduate school... I'm realizing that there is a lot of responsibility tied to this region... how the people who focus on Central Asia have to transmit information to the English-speaking world. If it comes to some point that I'm the person everyone is paying attention to, I want to be sure that I'm writing something that's actually representative of history and the way life is there." – Alyssa Meyer

Alyssa Meyer, MSU alumnus (B.A. 2011) and current graduate student at Indiana University (IU), focused her undergraduate career, her work experience with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and as a Fulbright scholar, and now her graduate career, on Central Asia. Meyer graduated from MSU with a major in International Relations, an additional major in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy, and a specialization in Russian and Eurasian Studies. She was also a member of the Honors College.

Learning Central Asian Languages

Meyer started taking Uzbek her freshman year at MSU, and later in her junior year she enrolled in Russian. She was the only student taking Uzbek then and when she entered her second year there were two students. Meyer notes that learning Uzbek, a Least Commonly Taught Language (LCTL), was exciting but there were also challenges. The largest challenge was that when she started learning Uzbek in 2007, there was only one first-year textbook produced through



Alyssa Meyer in Istanbul next to the Bosphorus strait.

IU. After her first year, Meyer learned the language by employing materials native speakers would use.

She currently uses Uzbek and Russian quite a bit. She speaks in Russian with her classmates at IU, many of whom are from Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. She also researches primary sources written in Russian and Uzbek "because in Central Asian studies oftentimes when you go to write a research paper, especially [in] history classes, you have to use primary sources [like newspapers] because there aren't really any secondary sources [such as scholarly articles] on what we're writing."

Interest in Central Asia

Meyer's interest in Central Asia resulted from the opportunity to learn Uzbek. She began learning about the region and is particularly interested in the past and current government structures, especially about how



the only example of government in the countries in Central Asia has been the Soviet model. Meyer says, "For me it's really unique to watch how they developed and how they tried to democratize [after the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s] just because the only example they have is from the Soviet Union."

Meyer also comments on the responsibility scholars have in transmitting information about Central Asia. Since many of the sources about the region are not in English, Meyer has the power to represent the region in a certain way to the English-speaking world. She says, "It's not a niche I ever planned to be in. I guess that's the side effect that came about from studying a Least Commonly Taught Language." Meyer notes that it is a responsibility she takes very seriously because she does not want to mislead people about the region.

Meyer wants to change the negative perspective that people have about the countries in Central Asia. She says, “A lot of people mistakenly see that the government doesn’t want Americans there,” especially when looking at the number of student exchange programs that have closed in the region. During her Fulbright experience, she found “overwhelmingly that people were very happy to see me there and see me working with local expertise.”

Studying Abroad

After her sophomore year at MSU, Meyer studied abroad in Turkey through a James Madison College (JMC) program led by Professor Folke Lindahl. She also studied abroad twice through Arizona State University’s Critical Language Institute, first going to Tajikistan to study Russian, and then to Uzbekistan to study Uzbek for two twelve-week summer programs.

After Graduation

Soon, after graduating from MSU a great opportunity came her way: she

was offered a position at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to work in their program on Russia and Eurasia. Three to four weeks after working in Washington, D.C., Meyer was sent to Almaty, Kazakhstan to work at the Al Farabi Carnegie Program in Central Asia, which seeks to deepen international understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing Central Asia. She says, “To represent Carnegie in a reformed country was a little strange, but it happened that way because I had strong Uzbek and they thought that if I had strong Uzbek then I could pick up Kazakh” since the Program is located in Kazakhstan. Working at Al Farabi also gave Meyer an opportunity to practice Russian since all of the events were in Russian.

Centering her work on Central Asia, Meyer received a Fulbright scholarship in 2012, leaving Kazakhstan to research energy security in Kyrgyzstan for a year. Then the following year she started attending graduate school at IU.

Working for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and then completing the Fulbright year

changed Meyer’s mind on her future career plans. She started to think that she might be happier “on the ground in a non-governmental organization ...particularly something that would work on interests in energy or access to basic needs.”

Lessons from MSU

MSU prepared Meyer with several skills and interests that are applicable to her current work. She says that if she had not attended MSU, “I may have never started learning Uzbek and Central Asian languages because when I came to college I initially thought that I would start learning Russian.” The opportunity to learn Uzbek instead made her “think about that region,” noting that learning how to think critically is an important skill she uses. In her master’s program, she says, “We have a lot to read and a lot to write and I feel like I really had a head start in a lot of my classes in terms of my writing ability. And I don’t think that I would have been able to do that without James Madison...I think I really owe JMC for my ability to succeed in graduate school in that respect.”



Alyssa Meyer (third from left) at a wedding in Astana, Kazakhstan with other MSU alumni.



Alyssa Meyer in Kyrgyzstan on the Naryn tributary of the Syr Darya.

MCAA 2013: Bringing Together Great Minds on Asia

The MSU Asian Studies Center was proud to host the 62nd Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs (MCAA) from October 25 to 27, 2013, at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. MCAA is one of the largest regional gatherings of the Association of Asian Studies (AAS), and provides a valuable forum for scholars and teachers of Asian Studies in the Midwest and elsewhere to exchange information and ideas about Asia. The Asian Studies Center served as the lead MSU unit for planning and implementation.

With over 270 participants, MSU's 2013 MCAA may have set a new attendance record. Participants came from across the United States as well as from Canada, England, China, Korea, and Japan. The conference featured over 50 panels and roundtables, plus an innovative new format called a diamond presentation, at which faculty and students presented and discussed new research and pedagogical tools. Panel topics ranged from "Higher Education in China and Mongolia" and "Intellectual and Religious Thought in India" to "Civil Society and Development Projects in Central Asia" and "Confronting Social Norms in Japan and Indonesia." A complete listing can be found at the conference website: <http://asia.isp.msu.edu/MCAA/>.

Special Conference Features

In addition to the diverse selection of panels, there were a number of special features. The conference opened with the Presidential Panel led by outgoing MCAA President



Ethan Segal speaking at MCAA 2013.

Rebecca Copeland and Program Chair Ethan Segal, titled "The Shifting Borders of Asian Studies." Michigan-based faculty from a wide range of disciplines, including Siddharth Chandra, Andrea Louie, Sean Pue, and Catherine Ryu of Michigan State University, and Yongju Ryu of the University of Michigan, discussed the ways changing demographics and funding streams affect the composition and outlook of Asian Studies in the Midwest. Later that evening, "Across Asia" featured music and dance performances from student and community organizations sharing the traditions of Indonesia, India, and China.

The Association for Asian Studies (AAS) President Thongchai Winichakul

offered the keynote address at Saturday evening's banquet. The recipients of the Sidney DeVere Brown and Mikiso Hane prizes for undergraduate papers, and the Percy Buchanan prizes for graduate students were also recognized that evening. Through these prizes, the MCAA continues its long tradition of contributing to the professional development of the next generation of scholars and teachers.

The conference also featured an exhibit room for the display of Asia-themed books and materials generously sent by several university presses. In addition, eight different documentary and feature films were screened throughout conference on topics including the wrongful

conviction of Filipina nurses in Michigan, Uyghur life in western China, and globalization in China and Taiwan. Among the films were two documentaries never before screened in the U.S. on the massacre of Koreans in Japan following the 1923 earthquake.

MSU Support

The program committee, led by Ethan Segal, Associate Dean in the College of Social Science and Associate Professor in the Department of History, included Professors Karin Zitzewitz (Department of Art, Art History & Design), Khalida Zaki (Department of Sociology), Charles Keith (Department of History), Catherine Ryu (Department of Linguistics and Languages), Louis Hunt (James Madison College), Aminda Smith (Department of History), and Xian Wu (MSU Libraries). These faculty members reviewed all panel and roundtable proposals and worked diligently to assemble individual papers into coherent panels.

Julie Hagstrom, Assistant Director of the Asian Studies Center, office assistant Alexis Pierce, and webmaster Sivaram Murthy handled the development, logistics, budget, and day-to-day management of the conference. During the conference itself, they were assisted by 30 student volunteers.

Based on the extensive feedback provided by those who attended, the conference was a tremendous success. Conferees commented positively on everything from the professionalism of conference staff to the innovative panels. We would like to thank our sponsors, the program committee, the conference staff, and our volunteers for making this MCAA a wonderful opportunity to “show off” the strength of Asian Studies at Michigan State University.



Asian Studies Center staff and conference volunteers.



A panel at MCAA 2013.

The Silk Road Chinese Orchestra: Bridging Two Cultures

When asked about how the idea for an orchestra came about, Shujing Xu said a PhD student, Kang Li, "encouraged me with the idea of establishing a Chinese orchestra at MSU. Once Kang gave me that idea, I realized it was totally possible. I posted information online on all the social networks I knew and other mailing lists...That's how it began."

The Silk Road Journey

The journey to create the Silk Road Chinese Orchestra began after Shujing Xu played the liuqin (pronounced lu-ch'in), a traditional Chinese instrument that she has played for eighteen years, for some individual performances. There she met Karen Klein, the Asian Studies Center Outreach Coordinator. Karen invited Shujing to play the liuqin for a LATTICE (Linking All Types of Teachers in International Cross-Cultural Education) workshop where she met Kang Li.

The orchestra began with 11 people and now has grown to include over 40 members. All the members are students from MSU except one who is a student at the University of Michigan. The Silk Road Chinese Orchestra is the first to use only traditional Chinese instruments at MSU. The musicians play an assortment of both Chinese and American songs.

Performances

The orchestra performed at several events both on and off campus during

the last year, including the Chinese New Year Celebration at Meridian Mall in Okemos, Michigan, the 2013 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs (MCAA) at the Kellogg Center on MSU's campus, and the Sandhill Crane and Art Festival in Calhoun County, Michigan.

The orchestra plays not only traditional Chinese music, but also combines traditional Chinese music with Western popular music. The orchestra has a composer from China who translates songs like the Beatles' "Hey Jude." Shujing herself can also play songs like "Over the Rainbow," from the film *The Wizard of Oz*, and



The Silk Road Chinese Orchestra.



Shujing Xu playing the liuqin.



The Silk Road Chinese Orchestra at a performance.

"Memory," a song from the musical *Cats*. "I played 'Memory' last year at the concert at Marshall Music Company in Lansing, and people seemed to be touched by that piece. They seemed to really respond to that music," she says.

About the Leader

Shujing Xu, an undergraduate psychology major at MSU, founded the Silk Road Chinese Orchestra in 2012. She came to the United States in 2011 because of her love for American culture. Shujing notes, "Like with other study abroad experiences, I wanted something that was totally different from how I lived before." Prior to coming to MSU, Shujing was the leader of another Chinese orchestra, the Shanghai Student Chinese Orchestra.

Playing the liuqin, Shujing says it is "kind of like a pipa. It is a four-string stringed instrument played like a guitar, but it is smaller and the sound is totally different."

Forming the Silk Road Chinese Orchestra was not without its challenges, however. Shujing notes that the largest "was finding the really professional-level players of Chinese instruments in Michigan." Another was finding a way to buy and ship instruments from China within a budget, along with finding players who perform on the same level, a composer, and space to rehearse.

Looking Forward

As a growing organization, the orchestra has more goals they want to accomplish in the future. Shujing notes they are currently "in the process of collaborating through social media and organizations like the State News and the Asian Studies Center to promote the Silk Road Chinese Orchestra to the larger community." They would like to perform more to exhibit Chinese culture and music to diverse audiences. The orchestra even plans on extending beyond the borders

of Michigan. They are interested in communicating with Chinese music groups in other States as far away as California.

Recently, MSU's International Studies and Programs (ISP) awarded Shujing the 2014 Homer Higbee International Understanding Award. The award recognizes her significant contributions to the support of international awareness at Michigan State University through involvement in programs that promote cross-cultural understanding on campus and in the community through the creation of the Silk Road Chinese Orchestra.

Common Goals

Even though the orchestra is a relatively new student organization, they have made great progress and will only grow in prestige in the Lansing community and beyond. The orchestra aligns well with the goals of the Asian Studies Center's Outreach program: promoting cross-cultural experiences through an educational lens.

The Outreach program at the Asian Studies Center engages with diverse community groups to increase awareness of Asia-related culture through educational activities by working with K-12 schools, community colleges, libraries, and a host of other community organizations in promoting and developing instructive events throughout the calendar year.

About the Asian Studies Center

The Asian Studies Center, named a National Undergraduate Resource Center (Title VI NRC) since 2000 by the U.S. Department of Education, directs one of the largest, most diverse programs of education about Asia in the Midwest. Unlike comparable programs, the Center is distinguished by its comprehensive attention to East, Central, South, Southeast, North, and West Asia in the design of its curriculum, focus of faculty research, and scope of outreach activities. Presently, the Center has over 200 affiliated faculty members representing over 46 disciplines ranging across the curriculum in teaching undergraduate and graduate students.

The Asian Studies Center's shift toward an all-Asia emphasis reflects the university's growing internationalization. Two-thirds of MSU's foreign students and over half of the university's 1,200 foreign scholars come from Asia, and nearly 2,000 undergraduates are Asian-Pacific Americans. The changing domestic demographics and the increase in students and scholars from Asia have created demands for an Asian studies curriculum relevant to new needs and experiences reflecting the university's genuinely multicultural quality.

Look us up on the web at
<http://asia.isp.msu.edu>

And follow us on Facebook at
Asian Studies Center

Contact us:
Asian Studies Center
Michigan State University
International Center
427 North Shaw Lane, Room 301
East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: 517-353-1680
Fax: 517-432-2659



Asian Studies Center Staff



Siddharth Chandra - Director



Julie Hagstrom - Assistant Director



Weijun Zhao - Director, Office of China Programs



Cathy Fields - Fiscal Officer



Karen Klein - Outreach Specialist



Bhanu Sisodia - Special Projects Coordinator, India



Norman Graham - Director of Special Projects, Central and West Asia



Julia Grimm - Secretary



Alexis Pierce - Student Employee



Anne Lusty - Student Employee



Tessa Raymond - Student Employee

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Asian Studies Center
International Studies and Programs
International Center
427 N. Shaw Lane, Room 301
East Lansing, MI 48824-1035

