

CHAIRMAN GEORGE

BIO

- 30** Performing tours in China
- 8** Years performing as Chairman George
- 2** Nominations for Best World Music, Canadian Folk Music Awards
- 5** CDs released
- 15** Chinese cities where Chairman George has performed
- 2** Documentaries featuring Chairman George broadcast in Canada, China, U.S.A., U.K., Denmark, Middle East and Taiwan
- 150** TV appearances worldwide
- 2** Olympic torch bearer on two occasions, Athens and Beijing Olympic Games
- 50 million** Average TV viewers and radio listeners per performance in China
- 1 billion** Chinese TV viewers at 8:38 a.m. 8/08/2008 watching Chairman George run with the Beijing Olympic Torch.

Chairman George The Performer and the Band

Background

George Sapounidis, helmsman of a unique new band, Chairman George, burst onto the scene 13 years ago as a solo performer at the Shanghai Baoshan International Folk Arts Festival.

This charismatic Greek Canadian bouzouki master was an instant hit, enchanting audiences and drawing crowds with his irresistible off-beat charm wherever he went – from the aging hutongs to the bustling boulevards of China’s cities. He invited young and old to join him in impromptu performances that soon went viral.

Although George has been performing regularly at folk festivals, rock concerts, variety shows, and diplomatic and multicultural events for over 25 years, it’s his concert tours of China that have catapulted him to stardom in that country. He quickly became a phenomenon, a media darling, with his grasp of Mandarin, disarming his interviewers with his ability to slip into Chinese culture with ease.

The stage name “Chairman George” was adopted from a 2005 documentary about his quest to perform before the world at the Olympic closing ceremonies in Athens as the torch passed to Beijing.

New Direction

Experimenting with different musical genres from timeless Greek and Chinese ballads to folk and rock, Chairman George continues to evolve, reinventing his persona, whether performing solo or as a band leader. And now he is the driving force behind Chairman George, the band.

The six member group is taking his vision in new directions, pioneering the melding of melodies of ancient China with age-old Greek folk ballads and bursting onto the pop scene with Chinese Greek disco party dance music.

The five impressive back-up musicians are masters of multiple musical forms, from the 2000 year-old pipa and guzheng dating back hundreds of years B.C., to lap steel and electric guitar, bass and drums. And of course the Greek bouzouki as the unifying element.

The Musicians

Yadong Guan is a pipa virtuoso whose artistic sensitivity immediately evokes the sound of ancient China giving it a new modern twist, its bright tremolo flirting with the bouzouki, creating exhilarating new directions into disco pop and folk ballads. As a soloist she also performs with orchestras and small ensembles.

Award-winning soloist **Zichan (Cindy) Yang** is Principal Director of the Canada Ottawa Tianyi Guzheng School. Her passion is to cultivate an appreciation of this venerable mellow instrument with its wide tonal range in both eastern and western cultures, on her travels from China to North America and from South East Asia to Japan. With Chairman George she introduces a new playful element to this ancient court instrument.

Ross Murray, the band's drummer and recording engineer has recorded and toured with luminaries such as Bruce Cockburn, Bo Diddley and Etta James. A well known musician among world artists he has been a producer, engineer and musician for over 30 years, collaborating with bands, vocalists, composers, choreographers and film makers worldwide. His adventurous experimentation with different musical genres from pop to the styles of diverse cultures continues to introduce new and exciting inventiveness to the band.

Stuart Watkins' (electric bass and backing vocals) talents span the global musical spectrum. He has worked with Hip Hop artists in Los Angeles and studied Mblax music in Senegal (a popular dance music that is a fusion of jazz, soul, Latin and rock, merged with sabar traditional drumming) that emerged in the 1970's. He has also played reggae as well as Bhangra (Indian pop) and tango. Stuart has also taught performance at Carleton University to bass guitar students. And he tours the world with the best: artists like David Foster, Paul Anka and The Tenors.

Fred Guignion's electric guitar stylings have been featured on countless albums as well as film, theatre and sound tracks. He is as comfortable with a folksy ballad as searing heavy metal. He has toured the U.S., Europe, the U.K. and Canada.

Conclusion

The eclectic musical stylings and diversity of these artists, led by the universal troubadour and "minstrel of multiculturalism", Chairman George, culminate in an artistic journey that melds instruments, ancient and modern, celebrating the spirited rhythms of Greek popular music and Chinese musical traditions.

Chairman George. Bridging Greek and Chinese cultures and traditions through music.