

MALTA CHINA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

马耳他·中国友好协会

Malta China Friendship Society promotes cultural ties and friendship between Malta and China

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MCFS ANNUAL Xmas/New Year DINNER 2008

€1,500 Donation by Standing Ovations

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€1500 Donation by
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The Malta-China Friendship Society organized its annual Dinner on the 28th December, 2008. This was held at the Corinthia Palace Hotel, Attard.

Mr Reno Calleja, the President of the Society, welcomed the 120 guests who attended. The guest list included H E Mr Chai Xi, The Chinese Ambassador to Malta, Mr Zheng Hao, the Director of the Chinese Cultural Centre as well as Mr Zhang Yucheng and Mrs Li Qiujie, the Commercial Attaché at the Chinese Embassy together with Mr Cao Dianpeng the Director of the Medical Centre and other members of the Embassy staff.

During the dinner, the Chinese Ambassador was presented with a cheque for €1,500 on behalf of Dr Edric Bonello, Director of "Standing Ovations" the company that brought The Shaolin Monks to Malta. In a short speech, H E the Ambassador acknowledged that the performances by the Shaolin Monks went down extremely well with the Maltese audiences that filled to capacity the theatre at the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta. It was on the initiative of the Malta China Friendship Society, particularly its President, Mr. Reno Calleja and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Tonio Borg, that part of the proceedings from the Shaolin Monks performances was donated to the Ambassador as aid to the earthquake victims in the Sichuan Province. H.E. Mr. Chai Xi thanked Mr. Calleja and the MCFS for the initiative and Dr. Bonello of Standing Ovations for the donation.

This gesture was appreciated by all as was the food and ambiance created by the staff at the Corinthia Palace Hotel, Attard. The dinner was attended by all the executive members of the MCFS Committee. Special thanks go to Mr Rota, the General Manager.



The 3rd Edition of the Valletta Chinese Spring Festival 2009



The Chinese Spring Festival or the Chinese New Year is the most important traditional festivity for the Chinese People. It falls on the first day of the first month on the lunar calendar based on the cycles of the moon phase.

This year, the Chinese New Year, represented by the OX, will be celebrated on January 26th. As in the past years it will be marked by the 3rd Spring Festival in Valletta.

The festival is inaugurated on January 19, 2009 by a Gala Evening and a Chinese New Year Concert, performing the *Beijing Opera, folk Singing and Dancing, Acrobatics & Puppetry*, at the Manoel Theatre. A Chinese parade is held on January 20th in Republic Street. Between January 15th and February 15th, the China Cultural Centre is organising a Chinese Embroidery Exhibition. Lost Horizon is another exhibition portraying a series of unique photographs of South West China by Charles Mifsud.

This exhibition will be open between January 12th to 31st at The Malta Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, Palazzo De La Salle, Republic Street, Valletta. Entrance to both events is free of charge and the public is invited to attend. We wish everyone, especially the Chinese living in Malta, a prosperous New Year of the OX.



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79449975
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Editorial Team:

John Agius—Editor
Reno Calleja— Consultant
Joyce Guillaumier
Robert Micallef



A tribute to Xie Jin, Chinese film director

(1923-2008) by Clifford Borg-Marks from Hong Kong

Malta China Friendship Society
St Christopher Street
Valletta
Malta
E-mail: info@maltachina.org

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I was saddened to hear of the passing away recently of director Xie Jin, a giant in the world of Chinese movies.

Throughout his life, Xie wrote and directed numerous films with topical social themes, including a good number of films that depicted strong female characters in leading roles. His first major success came with "Woman Basketball Player No. 5" in 1957, an excellent mix of socialist realism and Hollywood, that depicted the lives of athletes in Shanghai before and after the birth of the People's Republic in 1949.

His highly popular comedy "Big Li, Little Li and Old Li" in 1962 excelled in the casting of well-known Shanghainese stage comics and promoted the spread of communal calisthenics throughout China. Other internationally acclaimed films included "Two Stage Sisters" in 1964, "Hibiscus Town" in 1986, "The Opium War" in 1997 and "Woman Soccer Player No. 9" in 2001.

His films always showed a keen appreciation of both Western and Chinese dramatic traditions, and an awareness of Russian cinema. Even his work on highly propagandistic "model operas" of the chaotic Cultural Revolution such as "The Red Detachment of Women" and "Sea Port" managed to express his grounding in the real world and his interest in folk culture and history. Despite having directed such films, he was perhaps not straightforward enough in pushing the political line of the times, and still ended up suffering more than most in the chaos. Both his parents committed suicide as a result of political persecution, and he was banned from making movies for almost a decade.

I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing Xie Jin only a few months ago in connection with my recent documentary on Chinese sport movies. He was essentially the doyen of Chinese sport movies as well as an avid sports fan. I was impressed by his keen wit and sense of humor, but also by his energy. At age 84, he told me of his plans to make three more movies before he

died. Before we parted company, he mischievously invited me to follow him into a little alcove in his office where he kept his cache of malt whiskies, brandies and cognacs. He told me that his assistants forbade him from consuming alcohol any more, but told me, with a sparkle in his eyes, that they could not stop him having a drink with visiting foreign directors.

Xie Jin is an iconic figure not only in the field of Chinese cinema but also on the world cultural stage. He will be missed.



Xie Jin Museum

A Xie Jin Museum is expected to be opened to the public at Shanghai University. The museum will display Xie's photos, scripts and other articles related to his life. Xie served as the head of the University's School of Film and Television Technology for 13 years.





All set for an Ox-picious start to Chinese New Year

By ANN TAN

Staronline, Malaysia

Malta China Friendship Society
St Christopher Street
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E-mail: info@maltachina.org



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Build Bridges
Of Friendship
Between
Malta & China

Instead of the traditional lion and dragon dances for Chinese New Year, two bulls will dance to usher in the Year of the Ox in Malaysia.

The bull dance became a reality, thanks to an Ipoh craftsman who created the gold and silver bulls, complete with hooves and tails.

Teh Wing Liang, who has been making lion and dragon heads for the past 15 years, said he received the order to create the bulls from the Kepala Batas Tiong Hua Sports and Cultural Association.

Dances with bulls: Kepala Batas Tiong Hua Sports and Cultural Association members performing the bull dance after the eye-dotting ceremony for the bull heads.-MUSTAFA AHMAD/The Star

"Since we have never seen the bull dance in Malaysia, I had to browse through the Internet for inspiration," he said.

The 34-year-old craftsman took a week to complete the heads. Wing Liang said the jaw was the most difficult part to create.

He said he consulted a cowherd who told him that cows kept their eyes open even when they were asleep.

"That is why I did not put any eyelids on the two bull heads unlike the traditional lion heads," he said, adding that the heads were 20% smaller than a lion's head.

"I have to make sure the dancers can move comfortably with the bull's head on," he said. Having formed a bamboo 'skeleton' of the head, Teh used cloth for the hide, a pair of shoes for the hooves and a hose for the tail.

Guang Ming Daily senior business promotion manager Teh Eng Beng said the gold and silver bulls will perform during the Penang Chinese New Year Miao Hui celebration on Jan 17. The dances will be performed in front of the *Guang Ming Daily* office in Jalan Macalister at 8pm.

"We invited the Kepala Batas Tiong Hua Sports and Cultural Association to do the bull dance for the Year of the Ox. The event is jointly organised with *Sin Chew Daily*," he said.

Eng Beng said association members referred to the Internet to see how the dance was performed.

"The bull dance tends to be slower and more humorous than the lion dance," he said.



Malta China Friendship Society
St Christopher Street
Valletta
Malta

E-mail: info@maltachina.org

Maltese film-maker wins international award [Attend viewing at St. James Cavalier—Valletta]

Maltese film-maker Clifford Borg-Marks's feature-length documentary *Sinews* has won a Mention d'Honneur at the Sport Movies and TV International Festival held in Milan.

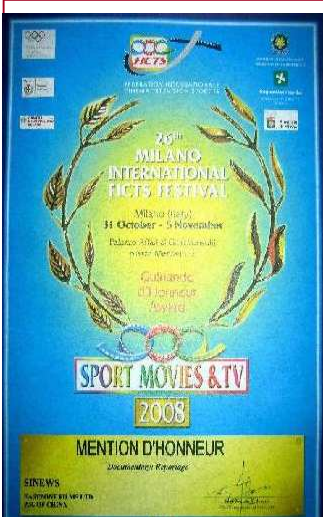
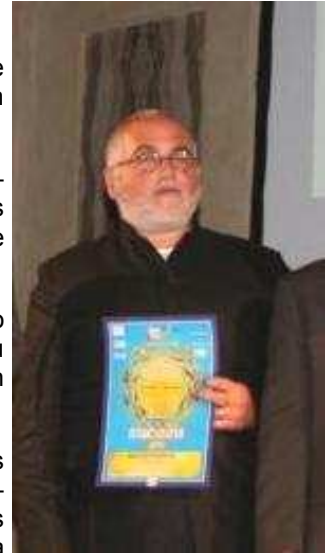
The festival is held under the auspices of the Federation Internationale Cinema Television Sportifs (FICTS).

This is Mr Borg-Marks's second international award. In 2005, he won a Guirlande d'Honneur for *The Hobby*, a documentary on table football.

Mr Borg-Marks's new film focuses on Chinese sports. It contains footage from about 20 Chinese sport movies as well as interviews with veteran film-makers and former athletes whose exploits were the subject of such movies.

These include swimmer Mu Xiangxiong, the first Chinese to break a world record in 1958, and table tennis player Qiu Zhonghui, the first Chinese woman to become world champion in any sport in 1961.

Clifford Borg Marks, was in Malta to attend the viewing of his film. The film was screened at St James Cavalier on the initiative of the Malta China Friendship Society. Mr. Borg Marks is the Hon President of the MCFS and its representative in China and Hong Kong.



"Sport Movies & TV" is the most important Worldwide Festival dedicated to sports television and movies, is organized by Fédération Internationale Cinéma Télévision Sportifs, association with 102 member Countries - recognized by IOC (International Olympic Commit-

Sinews Plot Summary:

This documentary looks at sport in modern China. By referring primarily to Chinese sport movies produced since the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949, it explores why China embarked on a course that would expend such human and material resources on the development of sport.

- Was it to build national pride and patriotism and to dispel once and for all the hated image of China as "the sick man of East Asia"? Was it to prove the superiority of the socialist system?
- Was it to show foreigners that Chinese athletes could beat them at their own game?
- Or was it to strengthen the bodies of the millions of people that would be needed to construct and defend the motherland?

Whatever the motivation, the results clearly go beyond the bulging trophy cabinets of late. This topic is particularly relevant in the immediate aftermath of the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

The film utilizes footage from about 20 Chinese feature films that depict one sport or another or that center around the life of athletes. It also contains interviews with persons associated with such movies, as well as with some of the real-life athletes that their stories were based on, including the first Chinese to break a world record in 1958 and the first Chinese woman to win a world championship in 1961.





Chinese New Year in Malaysia

Malta China Friendship Society
St Christopher Street
Valletta
Malta

E-mail: info@maltachina.org

By Choy Hong (Jasmine) Grech

Chinese New Year is the most auspicious celebration for the Chinese all over the world and that includes the culturally rich nation, Malaysia.



The history of Chinese emigrants to Malaysia dates back to Ming Dynasty era.

Emperor Yongle of China gave his daughter, Princess Hang Li Po, in marriage to Sultan Mansor Shah of Melaka. Admiral Cheng Ho, the renowned explorer, escorted the bride along with 500 maids to Melaka.

Melaka, a state in south of Malaysia, was colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. It is renowned for its rich history and tourism.

Although the Chinese community made up about 28% of the 27 million population in Malaysia, Chinese New Year is celebrated vibrantly and at national level.

The Ministry of Culture, Arts & Tourism and the selected State Government jointly host an “Open House” which is graced by the King and Queen along with the Chief Minister and other prominent guests. Visitors are welcome to indulge themselves in an array of local and traditional Chinese New Year delicacies and being entertained by local & foreign performers.



The Open House concept is adhered to by all communities during their festive celebrations. It symbolizes the renowned harmonious lifestyle of a multicultural, multiracial and multi religious nation.

Winter Solstice Festival, marks the last day of the Spring Festival and “Tang Yuan” (sweet glutinous flour balls) is served. The preparation for the New Year is then begun with “Spring Cleaning” i.e. cleaning the house and throwing old and unused items away to make way for good luck.

Houses are decorated with paper scrolls and couplets inscribed with blessings and auspicious words. A red banner is hung on the main door and red lanterns are raised at the entrance which symbolize happiness.

Debts are to be settled by the eve of Chinese New Year in believing that no new debts will be burdened, new clothing are to be worn, rice urn must be fully filled and food that symbolizes good fortune is to be prepared aplenty. Bad language and unpleasant topics are discouraged to prevent from bad omens.

Special prayers are held on specific dates to send off the deities to heaven and to welcome them back. The grandest one is prepared for “God of Fortune”.

This year, a new flower named “Mao Guo Hua” (hairy fruit flower) symbolizing good fortune is placed in homes and business premises.

The merit of Chinese New spirit begins several weeks ahead at the commercial hubs and busy areas, providing a festive atmosphere in their most sophisticated décor in bid to attract more customers.





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Banks, shopping complexes, corporate companies including the grocery shops print their corporate Chinese New Year greeting cards, calendars and Red Money envelopes to honour their clients.

Local & foreign artistes perform live concerts & TV shows. Fortune tellers and “Feng Shui” masters broadcast their predictions for the New Year on Radio and TV stations.

Chinese New Year’s Eve is a big day in itself. Family members from afar return home for Reunion Dinner. When the New Year is ushered in, greetings of “Gong Xi Fa Cai” are exchanged in the back ground of Chinese New Year songs.

The noise of firecrackers from tape recording is switched on to chase away any evil spirit. (Firecrackers are prohibited in Malaysia.) The house lights are left on for 2 days, believing they will bring “Good Light” into the homes.

1st day of Chinese New Year, is ritual homage offered to their ancestors and reverence to the Gods. Parents give “Hong Pao” (red envelopes containing cash) to their children and singles, wishing them a fruitful life.

Chinese New Year meals are made up of seafood, noodles, dumplings, waxed duck & chicken and variety of “prosperity vegetables”. Each meal ends with sweet desserts, hoping that everything in life will have a sweet ending. Food that has bitter taste is prohibited.

The 7th day is known as “Everybody’s Birthday”. A special dish named “Yee Sang” (raw fish) in a combination of pickled ginger, shredded veggies, ground peanuts, sesame seeds and sauces, is a must. Chopsticks are used to mix and raise the ingredients which they believe will receive better prosperities.

On the 8th day, the Hokkien dialect community host another family reunion. At midnight, they pray to “God of Heaven.” On the 9th day, special offerings are made to celebrate the birthday of “Jade Emperor” followed by temple parades on the streets.

On the 15th day, it is “Chap Goh Mei”. It marks the end of the Chinese New Year’s celebration. According to the belief, those who are single and are seeking a life partner can be possibly fulfilled, if they write their desires on a Mandarin orange and throw it into the river or sea with special prayers.

Lion and Dragon dance greetings are for special occasions and for Chinese New Year. By request, the dance troops visit from house to house and hotel to hotel to give good greetings. Mascots dressed as “God of Fortune” are seen distributing “Hong Pao” containing sweets, lotto numbers or chocolate gold coins in public places.



“Mahjong” games and card games are commonly played at home amongst the family members and friends throughout the 15 days’ celebration.

There are several Chinese dialects in Malaysia where some celebrate the Chinese New Year more elaborately than others according to their traditions.

