

CTOT to celebrate 20th anniversary with concert

By JANE RICKARDS
The China Post

The Canadian Trade Office in Taipei (CTOT) mission will celebrate its twentieth anniversary on Monday evening with a music concert reflecting Taiwanese and Canadian culture, featuring a rising young Canadian conductor Kenneth Hsieh and Taiwanese pianist Eric Chen.

With works ranging from Taiwanese folk songs to the "Crown Imperial March" written for the coronation of British King George VI, the concert's different styles of music will reflect Canada's diversity and its ties with Taiwan.

Hsieh, who is the assistant conductor of the Vancouver Symphony orchestra and one of TV Week's "10 Most Beautiful People of British Columbia", said selecting music which reflected the different elements of Canada was a challenge.

"Canadian music is relatively young. We don't have a history like Germany or Austria which has 400 to 500 years of music development," Hsieh said, adding Canadian music also has multicultural influences.

"We have a vast variety of styles and I think we have found a really nice combination that will satisfy everyone," he said.

Hsieh, whose parents come from Tainan, said he picked "Chanson Joyeuse" by Canadian composer Michael Conway Baker for as its English meaning is "happy song" and he felt Canadians have an easy-going nature.

Another work by Baker, "Through the Lion's Gate", reflects the nature and scenery of Vancouver, Hsieh said, with its first move-



The Canadian mission here will hold a music concert on Monday night to celebrate its 20th anniversary. From left to right is the concert's Taiwanese pianist, Eric Chen, Canadian Trade Office Executive Director Gordon Houlden, and Canadian conductor Kenneth Hsieh.

ment dedicated to Vancouver's rain, the second to the city and the third to Vancouver's scenic backdrop of mountains.

William Walton's popular "Crown Imperial March" gives a nod to Canada's British

roots, Hsieh said. The concert will also feature works from Canadian composer David Foster, who has written music for artists such as Celine Dion, including the 1998 Winter Olympic theme "Winter Games" and

the theme of the film "St Elmo's Fire".

Chen is one of the most popular pianists in Taiwan and has a global reputation, winning prizes in several international piano competitions.

Taiwanese folk tunes featured in the concert include "When I Open My Heart". The lyricist Wang Chang-hsiung wrote the song in 1956 to express the longing he felt for Taiwan when studying in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s.

Another Taiwanese folk tune "Mountain of Youth", which dates from 1936, is frequently performed in Taiwanese operas and modern theater performances to signify moments of passion between men and women.

Chen and Hsieh will play with the Taiwan-based Evergreen Symphony Orchestra. Hsieh said three of the orchestra's 70 members are Canadian.

"It's a young orchestra with a lot of energy," he said.

Executive director of the Canadian Trade Office Gordon Houlden said trade and cultural ties between Taiwan and the north American nation are growing all the time.

"Over...20 years, Canada's interests in Taiwan have grown tremendously," he said.

He said the mission started out with three members of staff in 1986. It is now Canada's busiest visitor visa issuance center in the world, with over 80,000 visitor visas issued each year. Taiwan is also Canada's fourth most important trade partner in the Asia-Pacific region. The mission is also planning other events to mark the anniversary, including an aboriginal exhibition at the National Museum of History on March 24 and a Canadian cultural month in July.

"2006 Canada-Taiwan Evening of Music" will be held at the National Concert Hall on Monday March 13 at 7.45 pm. Ticket prices start at NTS350.

Akie Ang, The China Post