



PHOTOS BY ZHAO YANRONG / CHINA DAILY ASIA WEEKLY

Thai children were enthralled when the China National Theater for Children staged a show of the Monkey King legend at the China Cultural Center in Bangkok.



The China Cultural Center in Bangkok is one of the largest such Chinese facilities in Southeast Asia and has hosted nearly 200 cultural events since 2012.

own culture, such as between the Chinese and Thai ethnic dances, and between the Chinese Peking opera and the Thai Khon dance," Lan said.

Even the Monkey King, a popular character in Chinese classic literature, can also be found in Thai legends.

When the China National Theater for Children staged a show in the center, many primary school students laughed and clapped while watching the performance. "It's amazing how Thai people are easily drawn to Chinese culture," said Lan.

On display at the exhibition hall in the center are many artworks.

described as "Chinese cultural treasures", including porcelain from Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province in the southeast, silk clothes from Hangzhou in the eastern Zhejiang province, and costumes of the Peking Opera from Beijing.

"I had many firsts and a great experience about my own culture in Bangkok because of the center," says Wang Xiao, a 28-year-old Thailand resident originally from Liaoning province. She adds that she rarely went to a show or exhibition featuring traditional Chinese culture back home, because "as a Chinese, I'm living with the culture".

Wang admits that she only realized how little she knew about

her own culture after moving to Thailand. "At the Bangkok center, I watched the Peking Opera live show for the first time. I gained more knowledge about Chinese traditions," she says, adding that wandering around the Chinese-style courtyard makes her feel relaxed and at home.

Besides shows and art exhibitions, cultural classes are also conducted regularly at the center. Just like many other cultural centers, the Chinese language classes are the most attended. Lectures for various age levels are held seven days a week, including at lunchtime and weekends. But the waiting list is long.

Language training is open to personnel of Thai government agencies and institutes like the Thai Tourism Authority, the Thai Journalists Association and the Thai-Chinese Culture and Economy Association.

Vipapat Nivasabut, a news reporter for the Thai-language *Daily News*, who already speaks fluent English as a result of her US education as well as Thai, says learning Chinese is her new goal. "I want to learn the language so I can read in Chinese, which is important for my work. I will gain firsthand information from China, rather than following up the reports from Western media. My understanding of China can be more balanced by knowing the language," she says.

Other classes such as those fo

ing on Chinese music, folk dance, tai chi, painting and calligraphy are also offered at the center, mostly on weekends. Citizens from many countries around the world, such as Japan, Colombia and France, also join the classes often.

"I don't understand many Chinese characters, but I still like learning Chinese calligraphy because it helps me to be focused. I think it's a good way to practice my concentration," says Keeratra Supornpraditchai, who works in the financial sector.

Li Yang, who plays the *guzheng*, a traditional Chinese stringed instrument, has been living in Thailand for nearly 25 years. A member of the center's performing arts group, she runs a music studio at the facility.

"In the past, I was working by myself, which was a bit lonely. Now, we work as a group at the center. I have a bigger space for recruiting more students and more opportunities for public performances," she says.

Li adapted a number of Thai folk songs to *guzheng* performances, which attract more local students learning the instrument.

Now that the center is entering its third year, Lan feels more confident about what it can achieve. More Chinese cultural events and classes can be expected across more Thai cities, she says, adding that these are bound to generate more