

# A culture of collaboration

By **H.E. LUO SHUGANG**

MINISTER OF CULTURE, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA



**LUO SHUGANG** studied Scientific Socialism at the Renmin University of China and also holds a Master's degree from the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Between 1986 and 2014 he held a number of positions including Director for Policy and Legislation Research and Director General of the Bureau for Political Theories in the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee. Within this department he also served as Vice Minister and Executive Deputy Minister. He assumed his current position as Minister of Culture in September 2014.

The year 2015 has witnessed extraordinary progress in China-UK cultural relations, and it ushers in the second decade of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. This year, the State Visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the UK is also expected to mark a new milestone for China-UK relations.

China and the UK are significant representatives of the Eastern and Western civilisations, each boasting a time-honoured history, splendid culture, and remarkable contributions to the intellectual endeavours of mankind. For a long period of time in history, China and the UK have served as important gateways for exchange and communication between the East and the West.

The key to sound relations between nations lies in the amity between their peoples. Intercultural dialogues are essential for deepening mutual understanding and recognition between the Chinese and British peoples. Since the establishment of China-UK diplomatic relations in 1972, the two countries have enjoyed a sound and dynamic cultural relationship featuring frequent exchange and cooperation. Collaborative mechanisms have been constantly upgraded to expand the coverage and enrich the content of cultural exchange programmes. Today, culture has become an important pillar of the comprehensive China-UK relations. Following the agreement on cultural cooperation signed by the Chinese and British governments in 1979, executive programmes on cultural exchange have been signed between the two sides on a regular basis since 1984. In 2012, culture was identified as a key area of cooperation, and its importance was further confirmed within the framework of China-UK High-Level People-to-People Dialogue, the first Dialogue mechanism of its kind established between the People's Republic of China and an EU country.

Facilitated by inter-government cultural cooperation mechanisms, more and more China-UK cultural exchange and cooperation programmes are being developed with contributions from various social sectors and promoted in a market-oriented manner under the guidance of the government. Endorsed by the two governments, China and the UK jointly presented various major cultural events, including *China Now* and *UK Now*, which were respectively held in the UK and China during the

2008 Beijing Olympic Games and 2012 London Olympic Games. Both *China Now* and *UK Now* focused on culture and creativity, and rolled out a rich variety of activities covering culture, trade, education, technology, and sports, to attach rich cultural meaning to the Olympic Games and inject new momentum into the progress of bilateral cultural relations. This year, as a significant testimony of strengthened ties between the two countries, the China-UK Year of Cultural Exchange has been carried out, during which the Chinese and British sides agreed to exchange cultural seasons to showcase the cultural diversity and celebrate the creativity of both countries. The British Cultural Season was opened in March, 2015 during the visit of the Duke of Cambridge to China, when he added a final touch to a Shaun the Sheep sculpture in a traditional eye-dropping ceremony. With more than 30 creative and cross-boundary modern arts programmes, the Season offers the Chinese audience rich and diversified experiences of the contemporary cultural and creative development of the UK. In the second half of this year, the Chinese Culture Season, themed Creative China has been launched in the UK, presenting the




Spring Festival  
celebrations in  
London's Chinatown

Chinese culture and creativity to the British public. By jointly hosting such major cultural events, China and the UK shared with each other their respective traditions and latest development in the cultural fields, and enhanced the mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

In addition to governmental support, direct dialogue between the Chinese and British cultural institutions, art societies and artists also ensure and greatly foster the advancement of China-UK cultural relations. It is delightful to see that in recent years, various major Chinese and British cultural and arts institutions have established sustainable and long-term partnerships, facilitating the cultural exchange and collaboration between the two countries in a substantial way. Such institutions include the Chinese National Museum, Palace Museum, National Library, National Centre for the Performing Arts, and National Theatre Company, and the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Library, the Royal Opera House, and National Theatre of the UK. In 2012, *Passion for Porcelain*, a British Museum/Victoria and Albert Museum Porcelain Collection Exhibition was held in the National Museum of China and in 2014, *Ming: 50 Years That Changed China* was held in the British Museum, both attracting huge public interest, and were very warmly received. As a successful role model case in China-UK collaboration in arts and the creative economy, the Chinese version of the stage play *War horse*, a joint production of the National Theatre Company of China and the British National Theatre, is currently playing and highly acclaimed in China.

As the China-UK cultural relationship intensifies, professional and skill development become a new focus. In 2014, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Culture of China and the British Council on China-UK Arts and Creative Industries Professional Development was signed to develop different approaches towards professional training and jointly identify different training options. In 2015, the China-UK Workshop for Senior Museum Management was successfully held in Beijing, at which experts from the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Museum Wales, and Whitworth and Manchester Museum conducted face-to-face dialogues and discussions on museum-related issues with about one hundred senior museum curators and managers from all across China.

Cultural dialogues are about the communication between hearts and minds. In the context of economic globalisation, cultural exchange and cooperation play an increasingly important role in international relations. Despite being geographically distant and with different social systems and historic backgrounds, China and the UK are always mutually attracted by each other's cultural appeal. Such mutual appreciation provides a solid foundation for the sustainable growth of bilateral cultural exchange and cooperation. It is my sincere hope that the cultural administrations, local governments and cultural institutions continue to make concerted efforts to encourage substantial and practical collaborations between the Chinese and British art companies and cultural societies in cultural, arts and creative industry fields, and make further and greater contributions to the deepening of the China-UK strategic partnership. 

**Despite being geographically distant and with different social systems and historic backgrounds, China and the UK are always mutually attracted by each other's cultural appeal**



Chancellor George Osborne meets the cast of the Chinese touring production of *War Horse*