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Aimusic Festival Reigniting the Passion for Chinese Traditional Instruments in Silicon Valley

World Journal journalist Irene Gong reported in San Jose

Around the 2025 Lunar New Year, Aimusic.us held its 10th Aimusic Festival, reigniting the passion for Chinese traditional instruments in Silicon Valley. As the founder of the Academy, Gordon Lee's Aimusic education program attracted a large number of students eager to learn. Through teaching traditional instruments such as the flute, erhu, and pipa, Lee is dedicated to spreading the beauty of Chinese culture through music in the Bay Area, bringing these unique instruments and musical forms into more people's lives.

Gordon's musical journey began with his love for traditional culture, particularly the performance and promotion of Chinese traditional instruments. He started learning the pipa at a young age, and many members of his family were also musically inclined. Lee once joined the China Pingju Opera Theater, where he began accumulating experience in the fusion of drama and music. Years of stage practice endowed him with a solid artistic foundation and made him deeply aware of the influence and shaping power of music education on children's hearts and minds. In 1988, he moved to the United States with aspirations of living abroad. In the U.S., Gordon did not give up on music; instead, he continued to enrich himself and gradually became an important figure in the field of music education.

In 1994, Gordon founded his initial music studio, which gradually developed into the current Aimusic.us. As the founder of the school, Gordon has always believed that music education is not just about technical training, but also about shaping children's emotions and personalities. One of his proudest achievements was helping a shy, introverted youngster regain confidence and vitality. He recalls that when this girl first arrived at the school, she was very fearful of interacting with anyone and often relied on her parents' cues to answer questions. In response, Gordon asked her parents to temporarily leave the classroom, allowing the girl to interact with him independently in a stress-free environment. Lee always provided timely positive feedback to the student and encouraged her to participate more in group activities and performances. Through these methods, he helped the girl gradually overcome her inner loneliness, become more lively, and eventually regain the ability to communicate naturally with others.

This year, the Aimusic Festival continued to uphold its unique philosophy of natural sound music, adhering to the principle of not using microphones and amplifiers, allowing the music to return to its purest and most original form. While microphones and amplifiers can increase volume, they also bring sound delays and, to some extent, alter the original texture and expressiveness of the music. Gordon uses a vivid analogy to explain: "In the forest, the sound of a monkey's call will never be louder than a lion's roar; but if the monkey is given a microphone,

although its sound becomes louder, it is no longer the original sound of the monkey.” Gordon emphasizes the uniqueness of sound quality and authenticity, as well as the irreplaceability of natural music. He hopes the festival will allow the audience to experience the most genuine musical encounter, where pure notes and melodies bring the greatest resonance.

Over the past few decades, Gordon Lee’s persistence and efforts have made Aimusic.us widely influential. With his lifelong passion for music, Lee has interpreted the true meaning of music education—not only imparting skills but also fostering spiritual resonance and cultural transmission.

(Photo 1: The 4th International Aimusic Festival closing ceremony concert.)

(Photo 2: Gordon Lee leads the wind and percussion music in the 8th Aimusic Festival in 2023.)