

Student Yang Fan performs 26 meters above the ground at the opening ceremony last night.

EDMOND TANG / CHINA DAILY

# Shenzhen opens its 'door'

## YOUNG SOUTHERN CHINESE CITY EMBRACES ATHLETES FROM ALL AROUND WORLD

By SHI YINGYING  
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — It was the night Liu Xiang returned to the Universiade — 10 years after the 2001 Beijing event — but this time, instead of coming as a young and inexperienced athlete, he lit the torch with four other athletes from different continents.

Liu performed the feat after President Hu Jintao declared the 26th Summer Universiade open at the Stadium of Shenzhen Bay Sports Center.

Rather than following the tradition of the Beijing Olympics and the Guangzhou Asian Games, whose opening ceremonies showcased China's history, the Shenzhen Universiade chanted a message to the youth of the world.

"Shenzhen was only 26 years old when it applied for the Universiade six years ago. Then, the average age of our residents was 26 as well," said Shi Gang, director of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies Department. "This young city is a perfect host for the

World University Games and the combination of hip-hop dance with the old song *Do Re Mi* and the playing of a violin 26 meters high are just a few examples to show that we are innovative."

Shi said more than 90 percent of the Universiade opening ceremony's 8,000 performers were university students.

"I feel pleased that we are doing a totally different thing from the Olympic and Asian games' ceremonies," he said. "Without the burden of tradition and history, we are free to exhibit the uniqueness of Shenzhen, which is young, passionate, modern and technology-based."

The choice of venue inspired the show's directors, according to Dong Xuehai, deputy director of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies Department, who was in charge of the opening.

"The Bird's Nest (the National Stadium) is an enclosed stadium and Haixinsha Square (where the opening ceremony of the Asian Games was held) is open-ended, the Spring Cocoon (Shenzhen

Bay Stadium and where the opening of Universiade was held), is semi-open, which allowed for the possibility of having stages inside and outside the stadium at the same time," said Dong.

Shaped like a big, white cocoon nesting near Shenzhen Bay, the Spring Cocoon is one of the closest spots to Hong Kong in Shenzhen — the two cities are linked by the Shenzhen Bay Bridge.

Thanks to the semi-open design, the audience was able to appreciate a breathtaking view of the sea and, in the background, Hong Kong.

"It gave us lots of ideas and finally our team narrowed it down to the concept of 'door,'" he said. No one could forget the first sight of the view — the color of Hong Kong's night skyline unveiled bit by bit through the "door," a 110-meter long and 20m high LED screen, which slowly slid away.

However, that was not the original plan. "We thought about a giant curtain at the beginning," said Dong.

That idea was canceled because of the strong sea breeze. "You've got strong winds at the spot right next to the sea, and the ceremony was to be held from 8 pm to 10 pm, that's the period when you've got the strongest winds," he said.

"The door will be opened three times during the ceremony. The first time represents China opening its door to welcome delegations from all round the world; the second time, it is the 'door of knowledge' to show the students' desire for knowledge," said Dong. "And, of course, it opens the last time for the torch."

Bouchiba Nasser (Africa), Fernandes Paulo Roger (the Americas), Dzeineka Volha (Europe), Genny Star (Oceania) and Liu Xiang (China) ignited the flame on behalf of university students all over the world.

Dong said the torch tower will be kept after the event.

"It will become part of the heritage of the city and provide light to keep the water areas of Shenzhen and Hong Kong safe," he said.

## Sweet calm way above the crowd

By SHI YINGYING  
CHINA DAILY

SHENZHEN — Playing violin is hard enough.

Try doing it while rapidly rotating on a platform 26 meters above the ground in front of a huge audience.

That's just where 19-year-old student Yang Fan found herself on Friday night at the Universiade opening ceremony.

"To be frank, I was thrilled for the first time," Yang said, adding that she made her debut at that height just a few weeks ago. "But I knew I would be fine after several practice sessions.

"The wind was strongest when I faced the sea and that was the most scary moment," Yang said. The woman, who first picked up the violin 15 years ago, is a sophomore from the College of Arts, Renmin University.

"I had no idea I had been picked to perform in the Universiade's opening ceremony until my teacher told me. It was probably because my Chinese name literally means 'sail,'" said Yang. "I was told many girls who can play violin pretty well were competing for it.

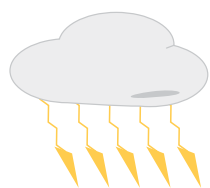
"Of course I said 'yes' because nobody told me I have to play ... at that height during that time," she said.

"We were thinking about hiring a professional acrobat at the beginning," said Shi Gang, director of the opening and closing ceremonies department, "but we preferred an average university student — that's why we ended up choosing Yang Fan. It's 100 percent safe, even though it may not seem like it."

The trick, according to Yang, was a metal prop that kept her waist fixed, which was hidden under her white silk skirt.

"So there's no way I could fall — I couldn't even make a move," she said.

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**Scattered T-Storms**  
Max **34°C**  
Min **29°C**  
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