

# Rocking

## around the world

Greek 'cultural ambassador' to perform

By Zhang Kun

George Sapounidis is a Canadian Greek artist addicted to the Olympic spirit.

He is as colorful and cultural a figure as the Olympic emblem itself, singing in nine different languages and making a point of being involved in some way in every Olympics he can, from Athens 2004 to Vancouver 2010.

The colorful character known as Dr George Sampson, at his day job as a statistician with the Canadian government back home in Ottawa, will perform at the World Music Center at Zhujiajiao in suburban Shanghai, on June 22. He will then head to Beijing to be



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form at the World Music Center at Zhujiajiao in suburban Shanghai, on June 22. He will then head to Beijing to be an Olympic torchbearer.

Sapounidis, will perform with Jeremy Moyer — a residential artist with the World Music Center who plays *erhu*, (a stringed musical instrument similar to a violin) — plus Miguel Angel Casas. The trio's program is made up of Greek and Chinese folk songs, as well as songs written by Sapounidis himself.

Sapounidis has to take "leave of absence" from work to perform his role as a self-styled cultural ambassador. His love of China began 10 years ago when his Chinese girlfriend dared him to try and sing in Mandarin since he was accomplished in so many other languages. He learned his first Chinese song, a folk song of the Uygur ethnic group, "The Girl from Daban Town" and later was invited to a folk music festival in Shanghai. Since then he has performed in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Dongguan, and many other cities in China.

Tianjin Television station has just made a serial documentary about Sapounidis and his band called "Chairman George." Chinese people are fascinated to see the tall, lanky Canadian singing their own music. Many of Sapounidis's favorite Chinese songs belong to Uygur music.

"I think Uygur music is lively, and I feel close to the music," Sapounidis said. "I think the Uygur resemble the Greek people. And their Dombra is similar to the Bouzouki," he said.

When Athens won the chance to host the 2004 Olympics, Sapounidis hoped to perform at the opening or closing ceremony. He didn't make it, but his passion for the Olympics never ceased and he instead volunteered. He will volunteer again at the Beijing Olympics once he has dispensed with his torchbearing duties.

His obsession-driven volunteer work does not end there. He will also devote his time at the Paralympics in September, and also be involved in the Winter Olympics to be held in Vancouver in 2010.

"It (the Olympics experience) enriches me, empowers me, and makes me feel like a citizen of the world," Sapounidis said. The World Music Center at Zhujiajiao is located at a historical garden house in the ancient water town. About 45 minutes' drive from People's Square, it's a nice destination for a weekend outing.



The artist with fans

COURTESY PHOTOS

3 pm, June 22  
24 Xihu Street, Zhujiajiao,  
Qingpu District  
Tel: 5923-0700  
Free admission  
For more information, go to  
[www.chairmangeorge.com](http://www.chairmangeorge.com)

