



A New Era for NYC's Chinese Immigrants

In the past generation, two important shifts have taken place in New York City's Chinese immigrant community. First is the decline of the garment industry, a main source of jobs for the many immigrants who arrived poor, and with little knowledge of English. The second is the composition of the immigrant community.

The first Chinese immigrants arriving in New York City after 1965—the year that federal legislation permitted Chinese immigration back into the United States after nearly 80 years of virtually uninterrupted prohibition—were mostly from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The dominant language was Cantonese. Now, new arrivals from China are more diverse than ever before, with Mandarin-speaking Mainland Chinese now eclipsing the earlier Cantonese-speaking Chinese-American community.

As director of workforce development at the Chinese-American Planning Council, **Simon Chiew '02** is helping immigrants as well as businesses navigate the new landscape. Chiew, who was born in Malaysia, and whose family was assisted by a similar organization

when they arrived in the United States, says it's important for new arrivals to extend their lives beyond their immediate communities.

"We want them to integrate outside of their community," he says. "We want them to go to the library, we want them to take the subway, we want them to shop in supermarkets that are not owned by their fellow immigrants. We want them to explore, and

we want them to live and use the resources that New York City has to offer."

The garment industry once made it possible for Chinese immigrants to sustain themselves almost entirely within their own communities. But the sector, which was already eroding through much of the

1990s, was dealt a decisive blow after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The tragedy left many Chinese employees struggling to find alternative employment. The council has focused much of its job training since then on preparing immigrants for the hospitality and service industries. It's an approach that capitalizes on the rise of a newly affluent class of Chinese who are traveling the

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world and spending large sums of money. By 2020 overseas spending by Mandarin-speaking Chinese is projected to top \$458 billion per year.

The program Chiew runs, the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton Fundamentals in Luxury Retail program, is a collaboration of the council, the luxury retailer, and the Parsons School of Design. The program, to which Mandarin-speaking immigrants must apply, takes the successful applicants through eight weeks of classroom instruction on subjects from fashion history to retail operations, and a two-week internship at one of the stores. Of the 60 people who have participated in the program since it began in 2014, 80 percent have found employment in stores such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Dior.

"Most of our students never saw themselves in luxury retail," says Chiew. "A lot of the people we are working with are severely underemployed or long-term unemployed."

Salina Zhao, an alumna of the program, came to the United States from southern China at the age of 11. Before she began her training, she was afraid to set foot inside a luxury retailer. "I was intimidated," she recalls. "If I can't afford something like that I wouldn't even enter into the store."

As part of the program, Zhao interned at Christian Dior at the Saks Fifth Avenue flagship store. She was hired by Dior right after. She says Chiew prepared her well.

"I think Simon prepares us as much as possible for everything that we're going to experience in the future. He will spend an hour or two going through our résumé, making sure it's as professional as possible, and going through even small details like how we dress up and how to professionally answer the questions."

Now she looks forward to career advancement within the company. "I think this program really gave us a huge opportunity to get into a different environment," she says, describing the training experience as a valuable shortcut into a world that would otherwise be hard to reach.

Chiew says successful alumni are part of what will help the council's training programs to continue.

"Some of the people who are successful now went through our services to get to where they are. So they're very aware of the struggle and the barriers," he says. "Our focus on building our alumni network and having them contribute either with funding or with their time has really improved. People do want to give back." **R**

—MAYA DUKMASOVA '12



NOMINATED: Recordings by Eastman alumni Maria Schneider, Kristian Bezuidenhout, and John Fedchock (from left) are among those nominated for 2016 Grammy Awards.

In the News

Eastman Counts Seven Grammy Nominees

One Eastman professor and six Eastman alumni have been nominated for 2016 Grammy Awards, which will be presented on February 15 in Los Angeles:

Kristian Bezuidenhout '01E, '04E (MM), fortepianist and pianist: Best Classical Instrumental Solo for *Mozart: Keyboard Music, Vol. 7* (Harmonia Mundi); Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for *Beethoven: An Die Ferne Geliebte; Haydn: English Songs; Mozart: Masonic Cantata* (Harmonia Mundi).

Martha Cluver '03E, soprano, and **Eric Dudley** '01E, tenor, of the ensemble Roomful of Teeth: Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance for *Render* (New Amsterdam Records).

John Fedchock '85E (MM), trombonist,

bandleader, and arranger: Best Arrangement, Instrumental or A Cappella, for "You and the Night and the Music" from *Like It Is* (Summit Records).

Bob Ludwig '66E, '01E (MM), recording engineer: Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical, for *Sound & Color* by Alabama Shakes; *Sound & Color* was also nominated for Album of the Year.

Paul O'Dette, professor of lute and of conducting and ensembles at Eastman: Best Opera Recording for *Steffani: Niobe, Regina Di Tebe* (Erato) by the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, with O'Dette conducting.

Maria Schneider '85E (MM), jazz composer and bandleader: Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album for *The Thompson Fields* (ArtistShare); Best Arrangement, Instru-



Better Basketball

Former Yellowjacket basketball star **John DiBartolomeo** '12 (with the ball) had a chance to post up against one of the professional game's all-time greats this fall, when his Israeli professional team took on sure-fire Hall of Famer Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers in an exhibition preseason game at Staples Center in Los Angeles. DiBartolomeo and the Maccabi Haifa lost 126-83 in the game, which was part of a U.S. tour for the team.