

Cheng Cheng-Kung

THE MASTER OF SI-DIAO

ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2007

Two years ago I attended the Golden State Bonsai Society Convention in Anaheim, California. My primary focus was to watch and photograph Dorothy Schmidt train under several artists after winning the 2005 BSF Scholarship. After learning that Dorothy wanted to take studies in California, I was equally excited to learn that Cheng Cheng-Kung was the headliner from China. Cheng is very well-known for his beautiful bonsai, with nebari to die for! How lucky I would be to also see him while he was in the United States.

Cheng was born and raised in Taiwan, and was very well known to me

from visiting the internet, as well as from my friend José Luis, who is a student of Cheng's. Cheng is a Taiwan-based artist who grows many tropical species. I was fascinated by the beauty of his work. He styles beautiful *Ficus*, *Juniperus*, *Premna*, among other species that we grow in Florida. This made him a wonderful choice as headliner for our 2008 BSF Convention.

Many of his trees portray the beauty of nature and focus on how a tree of that species would grow in the wild. His trees not only are styled with branches that

are harmonious, but the nebari on his work is perfect. He pays special attention to the rootage of his trees.

Mr. Cheng is an accomplished artist in the bonsai world, and has traveled to many countries as a feature headliner. He is also famous for his technique called Si-Diao. The translation is silk carving. This is a technique he perfected. He carves and creates dead wood on trees, tracing the lifeline of the tree, then uses only hand tools to carve and strip the wood, leaving no tool marks at all on the tree or trunk. This technique looks as close to nature as you can possibly get. When completed the bonsai is magnificent.

Cheng's silk carving is fascinating to watch, and the journey to the end-result is unbelievably beautiful. He brings with him his collection of carving tools and chalk to mark the trees before carving. His tools are his specialty and when you see how he works you will be totally captivated.



Si-Diao BSF 2008

Using chalk and gloves made of Kevlar, so as not to injure his hands with the tools or splintered wood, he begins his work by looking for the lifeline of the tree. He marks the lifeline, working in great detail up the trunk to create interesting movement within the tree. Waving in and out of the branches and trunk to create interest.

Cheng's focus is to maintain the tree's health, so he is meticulous about making sure the tree will survive this technique. Great detail is paid to where the lifeline of the tree goes and he explains how and why along each step of his progress. After he outlines the lifeline, he begins the ripping and carving by chipping away at the tree piece by piece, creating something that is



Mr. Cheng working on his silk carving si-diao.
Website: http://sidiao.myweb.hinet.net/index_e.htm

Cheng Cheng-Kung CONTINUED

very natural looking. When complete there are basically no distinguishable tool marks remaining on the tree, leaving them looking totally natural as if nature created the deadwood, not the artist. Time alone will make the final impression on the tree.

Believable driftwood is extremely difficult to effectively create – but I promise you Cheng will prove that it can be done while leaving the tree healthy and alive.

This carving is certainly not easy. It takes time and much work. The reward is having a bonsai containing such beautiful deadwood and the knowledge to create such beauty.

While Cheng is well known for his carving, he is also famous for creating the most breathtaking tropical bonsai.

One of these trees is *Ficus microcarpa*. Visit his website and you will see trees that will knock you out by their beauty.

BSF searched for top quality *Ficus microcarpa* for a demo and workshop for Cheng. We found great trees in Florida at one of our vendors and purchased them for the workshop, as well as a great specimen for his

demonstration. This workshop will sell out fast, so if you are interested, don't procrastinate – sign up for this event now. The trees for the workshop are large, with beautiful rootage and a lot of branches for selection and styling. We are very happy to have a speaker of Cheng's quality and ability, and want to make sure all of the supplied trees will make BSF proud. But more important, we want all of our participants to be pleased with their workshop creations.

I think we have proven ourselves at the last convention, supplying quality material for workshops, and we will continue to do so. You will be very excited to see the material for 2008 convention.

The workshops for Cheng include *Ficus microcarpa*, *Podocarpus* and an all-day workshop for Bring Your Own Tree.

Cheng has a website and you can view his trees, read a profile and his history in bonsai. Cheng is a published author of a series of carving books. He will be bringing copies of his books which will be available for sale at the convention. More information on this will follow.

We will try to take orders in advance for his books, and he has agreed

to do a book signing at the convention. Mr. Cheng will also have sets of his tools for sale at the convention as well. Pricing information will follow.

Iwant to take this time to remind you how special this artist is, and make sure you understand how much you will take away from this convention if you work with him. I was blown away by his work two years ago and I know you will be as well. I look forward to working with him as I have already signed up for his *Ficus* workshop to make sure I have a spot. Don't waste any time – they will sell out fast. If you plan on taking the Bring Your Own

Tree workshop please pick your best tree. I know you will be very happy with your session with Master Cheng.

If you have any questions about Mr. Cheng please feel free to contact me via e-mail mysecretbonsai@bellsouth.net

Louise Leister

The work flow of creating a juniper bonsai from raw material consists of a total of eight steps:

1. Examining the favorable and unfavorable qualities of the tree.
2. Determining the water and lifeline of the tree.
3. Sketching of the design blue print.
4. Establishing the lifeline of the tree.
5. Carving the shari.
6. Styling the tree by wiring the needed branches.
7. Letting the foliage and lifeline grow and fill in.
8. Prepare it for the show.



JOIN US FOR THE

Bonsai Societies of Florida 35th Annual Convention

JUNE 6TH – JUNE 9TH 2008

AT THE

RADISSON HOTEL & RESORT, CAPE CANAVERAL
FOR RESERVATIONS: (321) 784-0000, MENTION BSF 2008 CONVENTION

FEATURING TAIWANESE MASTER

Cheng Cheng-Kung

IN TWO FULL-DAY WORKSHOPS & ONE HALF-DAY WORKSHOP

WORKSHOPS & DEMONSTRATIONS WITH
*Gustavo Bures, Toby Diaz, Mike Rogers,
Sean Smith & Ed Trout*

ALSO FEATURING OUR 2007 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS:

Allen Carver & Erik Wigert



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Cheng will focus on refining & redesigning "your own special bonsai" in a full-day workshop with his special silk thread carving technique or choose a full day workshop with selected Podocarpus or you may opt for the half-day workshop on Ficus microcarpa.

WORKSHOPS & DEMONSTRATIONS WITH:

Gustavo Bures
Puerto Rico

Toby Diaz
Florida

Mike Rogers
Florida

Sean Smith
Pennsylvania

Ed Trout
Florida

ALSO FEATURING OUR 2007 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS:

Allen Carver
1st Place

Erik Wigert
2nd Place

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2008

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. BSF Board Meeting
 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Registration Open

FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 2008

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration Open
 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Welcome Breakfast
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Bazaar Open
 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 p.m. Raffles
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm. *DEMONSTRATION 1*
 ALLEN CARVER
 MIKE ROGERS
 WORKSHOP 1 (PART I)
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Podocarpus
 WORKSHOP 2 (PART I)
 ED TROUT Bougainvillea
 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 pm. *DEMONSTRATION 2*
 ERIK WIGERT Bougainvillea
 WORKSHOP 1 (PART II)
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Podocarpus
 WORKSHOP 2 (PART II)
 ED TROUT Bougainvillea
 WORKSHOP 3
 SEAN SMITH Tool Sharpening
 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Dinner on Your Own
 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Cash Bar & Reception/Exhibit Opens
 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. *Club Night & Scholarship Competition*

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2008

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Registration Open
 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast on Your Own
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Bazaar Open
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Raffles Open
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Exhibit Open
 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *EXHIBIT CRITIQUE 1* SEAN SMITH
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm. *DEMONSTRATION 3*
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Ficus microcarpus
 WORKSHOP 4
 MIKE ROGERS Shimpaku
 WORKSHOP 5 (PART I)
 ED TROUT Bring Your Own
 WORKSHOP 6
 TOBY DIAZ Neea Buxifolia
 (shohin) w/pot

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2008 (continued)

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Luncheon
 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Annual BSF Meeting
 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 pm. *DEMONSTRATION 4*
 SEAN SMITH Suiseki
 WORKSHOP 5 (PART II)
 ED TROUT Bring Your Own
 WORKSHOP 7
 GUSTAVO BURES Bucida spinosa
 WORKSHOP 8
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Ficus microcarpus
 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Dinner on Your Own
 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. President's Party

SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 2008

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Registration Open
 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast on Your Own
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Bazaar Open
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Raffles Open
 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Exhibit Open
 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *EXHIBIT CRITIQUE 2* ED TROUT
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. *DEMONSTRATION 5*
 ALLEN CARVER
 GUSTAVO BURES
 WORKSHOP 9 (PART I)
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Bring Your Own
 WORKSHOP 10
 SEAN SMITH Daiza Carving
 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Lunch on Your Own
 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 pm. *DEMONSTRATION 6*
 SEAN SMITH Shimpaku
 WORKSHOP 9 (PART II)
 CHENG CHENG-KUNG Bring Your Own
 WORKSHOP 11
 TOBY DIAZ Ficus nerifolia
 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. *EXHIBIT CRITIQUE 3* GUSTAVO BURES
 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Cash Bar
 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. Annual Banquet & Auction

MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2008

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast on Your Own
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Bazaar Open
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Raffles Open
 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Exhibit Open