

Experiencing Cultural Collision and Integration

■Yang Hua (Chief Editor, Beijing Publishing Center, 21st Century Publishing Group) □Zhao Yixue

□What achievements have the 21st Century Publishing Group achieved in cooperation with German publishers in recent years?

■Our group was one of the earliest Chinese publishers to engage in copyright cooperation with German publishers. As early as 1989, we established a strategic partnership with the Thienemann Publishing House, which has a history of 150 years. This partnership attracted several top German publishers to collaborate with us, leading to the publication of a series of prestigious children's books. Later, we collaborated with the German Academy for Children's and Youth Literature to select 16 classic German children's literature works, which we compiled into the *Colorful Raven* series ("彩乌鸦"系列), a collection popular among Chinese children.

Due to the diverse themes and extensive catalog of German children's books we offer, we have undertaken two key initiatives to better adapt to the Chinese market in recent years. First, systematic reading + reading services. The *Michael Ende Collection* ("米切尔·恩德作品典藏") was our first project where we created a product line for an author, inviting top teachers to develop comprehensive reading courses. This year, we launched the *Colorful Raven World Library* series ("彩乌鸦世界文库"系列), bringing together the most philosophical and thought-provoking German literary works to create the most collect-worthy German children's literature series. To help Chinese children understand the philosophical and educational value of German children's literature, we enlisted master teachers from the Yiyue Academy to create customized reading services.

Second, customized reading for the Chinese market. In recent years, we have added hardcover editions, commemorative editions, and various book-related products such as notebooks and canvas bags, offering more

choices for the market. Our latest release, *the Never-ending Fairy Tales* series ("永远讲不完的童话"系列), is a colorfully illustrated edition. To meet the reading preference of Chinese readers, we split it into three volumes, creating a reading gradient from picture books to bridge books and to novels, establishing a complete reading system.

□In April of this year, as the first book of the Cao Wenxuan International Cooperative Picture Book project, *Lost* (《迷路》) was published in German by 21st Century Publishing Group and Leiv Leipziger Kinderbuch Verlag GmbH. What was the opportunity for this collaboration, and what efforts have been made?

■The *Cao Wenxuan Picture Book Library* series ("曹文轩绘本馆"系列) is a collaborative project aimed at creating world-class picture books, allowing children to experience cultural collisions and integration through reading. This project is also an important experience in our strategy of bringing original quality works "going out globally".

In 2019, we signed a project cooperation agreement with Leiv Leipziger Kinderbuch Verlag GmbH. However, the sudden outbreak of the pandemic significantly affected the project's progress. Due to the advanced age of German illustrator Klaus Ensikat, much of the communication about the manuscript had to go through the publisher's director, Lehmann, but this communication was greatly hindered by the pandemic. For a long time, we couldn't get feedback from the illustrator. Finally, with the help of Lehmann and Cai Hongjun, general manager of Hercules Business & Culture GmbH, we managed to keep the project moving forward. In terms of the illustrations, we greatly respected Ensikat's creative process, giving him ample space and time to work. For the text, we invited German sinologist Martina Hasse to ensure high-quality transla-



Yang Hua

tion. The German editors also made significant efforts, repeatedly refining the text and making suggestions in line with German linguistic habits.

□In your opinion, what are the advantages of Chinese children's books compared to German ones? What aspects of German children's books are worth learning from?

■Germany is one of the first countries in the world to focus on "folktales" and "fairy tales" in children's literature. I believe German children's books deeply explore the philosophical aspects of children's thinking. American philosopher Gareth B. Matthews once pointed out in *Philosophy and the Young Child* (《哲学与幼童》) that "children are born philosophers". The most important aspect of growing up is learning to think, and German children's books inspire children to think more.

Compared to German children's books, Chinese ones are more diverse and inclusive in subject and content, showing a strong concern for children's reading education.

Hoping for More Cooperation with Chinese Publishers

■Daniela Steiner (Rights Director, Carlsen Verlag GmbH) □Zhao Yixue

Carlsen was founded by Danish publisher Per Carlsen in 1953, as a German subsidiary to Forlaget Carlsen in Denmark. Then, Per Carlsen introduced the successful brands "Petzi" and "Pixi" into the German market. Especially Pixi, the small softcover picture books, which has achieved tremendous success to this day.

As German market leader in children's books, Carlsen excels in picture books, docu-fiction like *Lesemaus* series for the younger ones, *Pixi*™ mini books, fiction for children and young adults, and the *Conni* series which gives guidance to kids from age 3 to 12. Recently, we interviewed Daniela Steiner, the rights director of Carlsen Verlag GmbH to talk about publishing cooperation between Germany and China.

□In recent years, how has Carlsen cooperated with China Publishing Houses?

■Since 2018, our company has worked more closely with Chinese publishers than ever before. We were especially happy to have our *Pixi*™ books (A popular series of children's books founded in 1954. In 1982, Pixi himself took shape. The character—a little elf with a pointed cap, green doublet and red boots—was created by illustrator Eva Wenzel-Bürger.) on the Chinese market, co-published with 21st Century Publishing Group. Also, we are happy to have placed some of our picture books with valued partners. And a couple

of publishers are currently interested in *Wolf* by Sasa Stanisic, which is nominated for German Youth Literature Award this year. Carlsen is German market leader for children's & YA books, so we are cooperating with lots of Chinese publishers.

□Have you ever been to China? In your opinion, how have China publishing industry and Chinese books changed over the years?

■Yes, my colleague Sylvia Schuster and I have last been for the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair in 2017 where we attended the German Collective Stand of the Frankfurt Book Fair. It was a lovely experience to talk to representatives of different publishing houses—with appointment or just as they passed by. We then proceeded to visit some (potential) partners in Beijing. I just loved to see some of the very innovative ways of publishing books—and on a personal note, I just loved the Beijing Arts District and a little trip to the Summer Palace where we had a wonderful evening impression of frozen surfaces of the adjacent lake.

To some extent, Chinese publishing industry has changed. It is harder nowadays to place foreign books in the Chinese market. However, we still work with many of our decade-long partners. It is a pleasure to build trust gradually as time goes by.



Daniela Steiner

□What are your favorite Chinese books?

■I remember to read Dai Sijie's works when they became available in Germany, and enjoyed the fun of delving into Chinese fantasy stories.

□In what areas do you hope to cooperate with China Publishing House or cultural institutions in the future?

■Of course, we are looking forward to cooperating in areas where we already work together, and we never know what kind of new ventures the future will bring! Carlsen is looking forward to it. We would be happy to welcome Chinese publishers at our stand in hall 3.0 at the upcoming FBF!