



CHINESE FOLK AND CLASSICAL DANCE

Art Form: Dance

Style: Traditional

Culture: Chinese

Technical Needs

- microphone with stand
- 20 x 20 performance space
- cassette player

Meet the Artists

Dancers **Ming-Yan Davis** and **Olinda Chang** perform traditional folk and classical dances of China.

Ming-Yan Davis graduated from the Beijing Dance College and began a career with Central Ballet Theater of Beijing shortly after. Since moving to the United States, she has performed with a variety of dance companies and worked extensively as an arts educator.

Olinda Chang is a choreographer and professional dancer who has performed and taught authentic Chinese classical dance for over twenty years. She holds a B.A. degree in performing art from the Chinese Cultural University in Taiwan.

About the Performance

The performance includes a variety of traditional dance styles taken from several Chinese provinces and historical periods including: the Han, Mongolian, Xing Jiang, Tang and Ching dynasties.

The artists will perform six to eight dances and describe where the dances originated, how the costumes were developed and what the traditional story is behind each dance.

The dancers will perform the following:

Tang Dynasty Ribbon Dance: performed by the emperor's servants to demonstrate their flexibility and athletic skills and to give the effect of flying through the air.

Han Fan Dance: originated from Chinese peasant farmers who used fans or towels to keep themselves cool while dancing to celebrate their harvests.

Xin Jiang Style Dance: a wonderful combination of Chinese and Russian styles that reflects the cultural mix of the people of this northern Chinese province.

Mongolian Style Dance: reflects the outdoor lifestyle including horse-riding, hunting, and cow-milking, of the people of the plains of China.

Classical Sword Dance: used mostly by Chinese generals of the old era. Chinese legend Mulan went to the army for her father and was well versed in this sword technique.

Martial Art Style Kung Fu Fan Dance: demonstrates the martial art movement, aggressiveness, strength and powerful force of the kung fu fan.

Contextual Information

Chinese dance traces its origins back before the appearance of the first written Chinese characters. Ancient pots dating back to 300 B.C. have been discovered with images of group dances in which people locked arms and stamped feet while singing to instruments. Traditional Chinese dance was divided into civilian and military dance.

In civilian dance, dancers held feather banners in their hands to symbolize the day's hunting or fishing. This developed into the dance used in the emperor's palace, and other religious rituals.

In military dance, weapons were carried and moved in a coordinated group motion. This evolved into movements used in military exercises.

As early as the second century B.C., an active effort was made by the Music Bureau of the Han Dynasty to collect Chinese folk songs and dances. In the third century A.D., conquest of the central Asian people brought their folk dance forms into the Han Dynasty dances. From 618-907 A.D., during the Tang Dynasty, dancing was raised to a peak level. The Imperial Academy, the Pear Garden Academy, and the T'ai-ch'ang Temple gathered the top dancing talent of the country to perform the Ten Movement Music dance, incorporating elements of dance originating throughout Asia.

Poetry, songs, a dramatic plot, and background music were all combined to create a multimedia production that became the predecessor of modern Chinese opera.

Vocabulary

Bu ke chi: means "you are welcome" in Chinese

Chinese aboriginal dance: reflects the original Taiwanese tribal lifestyle customs as part of a harvest ritual

Chinese characters: the written form of the Chinese language, usually written from the top to the bottom of a page in a straight line

Chinese embroidery: traditional Chinese needle art work made with colored thread on silk or cotton cloth

Chinese people: consists mainly of 7 different groups: Han, Manchu, Mongolian, Mohammedan (Moslem), Miao (Hmong, in southwestern China), Tibetan, Yao (in Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Yunan)

Dance objects or props: objects used to express or symbolize a sensation, idea, or feeling

Dialect: a form of a language spoken in a particular region or spoken by a particular cultural group within a country; China has 36 different states, each of which has its own dialect

Folk dance: a traditional dance reflecting the customs or practices of a culture

Flower fingers (Lang Hwa Gar): a special finger gesture of Chinese classical dance used by females

Ni hao: means "hello, how are you?" in Chinese

P.R.C.: the People's Republic of China, or the mainland

R.O.C.: the Republic of China, or the island of Taiwan

Shan Pong: a combination of arm and palm gestures in Chinese classical dance used by males

Xie xie: means "thank you" in Chinese

Zao jian: means "goodbye" in Chinese