

## AN AMAZING ARRAY OF CHINESE DANCE DEPICTED

On the occasion of CAAM Chinese Dance Theater celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, CAAM CDT reflects on the breadth and depth of Chinese dance arts its choreographers and dancers have brought, often for the first time to an American audiences. Key vehicle for sharing Chinese dance arts and culture has been at least one production each year often at the O'Shaughnessy auditorium, a premier Twin Cities location for dance performance. By growing and broadening its audience each year, CAAM CDT serves its mission to share Chinese culture and dance with all Minnesotans.

Twenty years of dance has yielded an amazing wealth of content. Each production comes alive through the efforts of artistic directors, teachers, dancers and volunteers. Each show is unique and reflects the talent and wisdom of a succession of artistic directors, professionally trained in China with many years of artistic experience – Cui Tianjiang, Shen Pei, Yang Qiang and Teng Lili. Each performance is like a wonderful Manchu Han Feast of dance composition (See the table below for the complete history of the production shows). The first few years were simply celebrations of Chinese culture consisting of 12 -16 dances and musical performances. But since 1997, each show has had a carefully chosen theme to reflect a cultural influence or artistic element from Chinese culture.

Beginning in 1997 with the theme “Harmony” CAAM CDT constructed a dazzling collection of Chinese minority dances, reflecting many geographical and cultural characteristics of the ethnic minorities in China. The theme for the 1998 show, “3,000 Years of Classical Dance of Dynastic China”, consisted of 14 Chinese classical dances. Beginning with the ritual and music of the pre-Qin period, the

period of the Terracotta Warriors (now on view at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts) these Qin dynasty's "eternal treasures" , were followed by dances from classic periods of the Han, Tang and Song dynasties, a treat for all seeking to learn and experience the grace, agility and style of a several early golden ages of Chinese culture. Concluding with the Yuan, Ming and the Qing dynasty, these later periods capture the further essence of palace beauty, and strong cultural heritage.

Contrasting in following year, 1998 drew the audiences into a fuller understanding of the ethnic diversity of China by introducing its audiences to folk and multicultural dances of China's 57 ethnic groups living in China.

By 1999 CAAM CDT sought to depart from its reflections inward to explore the dance influences across Asia in its show "Dancing Mosaic". By featuring not just Chinese dance but also dance from Japan, India, Korea, Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia and the Phillipines. CAAM Chinese Dance Theater created a pan-Asian collaboration with other Asian dance groups. Divided into four parts, "gestures and eye contact", "Physical and mental", "drum and dance", and "props and emotions" the production exposed the audiences to the mired charm of varied Oriental dance.

In 2000, also the Year of the Golden Dragon, CAAM CDT produced a world premiere of a dance drama, "Descendants of the Dragon". Cycling through an entire year of celebrations and festivals, "Spring Memorial", "Triumphal Summer", "Mid Autumn Reverie" "New Year Reunion" and the grand finale "Onward the Dragon", the show cleverly wove together dance themes with Chinese lunar festivals. 2001's production "Beloved Land" brought to life many

other themes focusing on the people of China, part of a series seeking greater meaning of China's times and people.

For its tenth anniversary, CAAM CDT's 2002 production "Quintessence" CAAM CDT's celebrated the landmark occasion with original choreography to the famous legend and music "Butterfly Lovers" while bringing together other live music and innovative dance to the stage.

As its second decade unfolded CAAM CDT produced a series of productions focused on the lives of ordinary people in China. 2003's annual production "Four Seasons" explored seasonal themes across many people. 2004's annual production "Rhythms of Life" featured many aspects of everyday life in particular, rituals and customs of people of China reflecting their geographic and climatic context. Original award winning choreography by the artistic director featured a US premier.

By 2005 the theme of CAAM CDT's productions refocused on the imaginative. The 2005 Production, "Legends of China" featured dance stories based on beloved tales from China including the Monkey King, Snake Queen.

In 2006 CAAM CDT's artistic director Shen Pei retired and Lili Teng rejoined CDT as Artistic Director. To honor our Chinese heritage but leave her own mark on the repertoire of the dance theater, Lili Teng began her artistic director's tenure by staging three successful productions based on themes attractive to family audiences. Beginning with 2006's Family Day show "Close to my Heart", CAAM CDT reflected universal themes of memories from childhood of growing up in China. In joint collaboration later that year with the MInghua Chorus, 2006 production lauded the universal theme of love with many stunning performances.

The series was rounded out with a special production just dedicated to the many ways of celebrating Chinese New Year in China.

2008 and 2009 saw a major development in the themes of the Production. By using various symbols of Chinese culture, CAAM CDT began to mount productions to deeply explore Chinese art, culture and values. "Ode to Flowers" first staged 2008 in St. Paul and then restaged in 2009 for Rochester audiences was an artistic success. Each dance drew inspiration from either famous poetry or works of art such as Lee Jeong's Tang Dynasty poem, ("The most representative of the Peony of elegant temperament".), "Song dynasty poet Lu Meipo's poem about plum blossoms in snow ("There is no spirit of snow does not, snow is no vulgar person") as well as other famous Chinese poets, Mei Xunxun and Lu Meipo which provided a backdrop for a dynamic modern dance piece.

Continuing to explore Chinese symbols but moving from the grace of a blooming flower to the drama of a beating drum, CDT's 2010 production the "Sound of the Drum" took inspiration from the 2010 Beijing Olympics' opening ceremony as thousands of drums took center stage. Taking advantage of the world's awareness of the symbol of the drum CAAM CDT expanded its audiences understanding of the use, times and symbolism behind the use of the drum in Chinese culture while weaving throughout the performance pulsation dances and spirited movements.

In 2011 CAAM CDT introduced a new cycle of thematic approaches, "China: The Beautiful", a travelogue through China's culture and ethnic groups beginning with the regions laying along its coasts. 2012 completed the cycle with the mountainous and prairies lying inland. In total eight geographical areas of China

were highlighting augmented with innovative technical stage designs, one of which used Google Earth technology to transport the audience from St. Paul to China.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a major year long celebration for CAAM Chinese Dance Theater. A high-point for this celebration will be the annual production show in January 2013. Chinese dance teachers and volunteers are hard at work in preparation to bring you a spectacular show to cap this celebration.

1993	1 <sup>ST</sup> Annual Chinese Dance and Music Festival 第1屆中美舞蹈社艺术节 Artistic Director艺术总监: 崔天江
1994	2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Chinese Dance and Music Festival第二屆中美舞蹈社艺术节 Artistic Director艺术总监: ShenPei沈蓓
1995	3rd Annual Chinese Dance and Music Festival 第三屆中美舞蹈社艺术节 Artistic Director艺术总监: ShenPei沈蓓
1996	Chinese Folk Dance Festival customs & Traditions 第四屆中國舞蹈節 Artistic Director艺术总监: ShenPei沈蓓
1997	Fifth Anniversary Production: Harmony Chinese Ethnic Dance Concert 第五屆中美舞蹈社年度公演: 融中國少數民族舞蹈節 Artistic Director艺术总监: Shen Pei沈蓓
1998	3000 Years of Classical Dance of Dynastic China 第六屆中美舞蹈社年度公演: 脈中國历代古典舞 Artistic Director艺术总监: ShenPei沈蓓
1999	Dancing Mosaic - A Pan-Asian Performance Showcase 东方絮语 (第七屆中美舞蹈社年度公演)
2000	The World Premier Dance Drama: Descendents of the Dragon世界首演创作舞剧: 龙的传人 编导: 沈蓓 音盘: 张鹰 编舞: 沈蓓, 滕莉莉
2001	Beloved Land - the first in the series of Seed .Fruit . Shade 一方热土 Artistic Director艺术总监: ShenPei沈蓓

2002	Quintessence 源远流长 Celebrating the best of Chinese Dance and Community
2003	China's Four Seasons 四季
2004	Rhythm of Life 寻常人家 Artistic Director 艺术总监: 沈蓓 Shen Pei Associate Artistic Director 艺术副总监: Yang Qiang 杨强
2005	Legends of China 中国传奇 Artistic Director 艺术总监: 沈蓓 Shen Pei Artistic Director 艺术总监: Yang Qiang 杨强
2006	Annual Production: Only Love (CAAM CDT & MINHUA CHORUS ) 人间情. 世间爱 Family Show: Close to My Heart: Memories of Growing Up in China 童年的故事 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉 Artistic Advisor 艺术顾问: ShenPei 沈蓓
2007	Leap Into Spring – Chinese New Year Show 迎福闹春
2008	Ode to Flowers 百花赋 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉
2009	Ode to Flowers 百花赋 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉
2010	The Sounds of Drums from the Land of China 鼓舞, 鼓风, 鼓韵 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉
2011	China: the Beautiful (Part I) 印象中国之一 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉
2012	China: The Beautiful (Part II) 印象中国之二 Artistic Director 艺术总监: LiliTeng 滕莉莉