



Doudou Huang

SHANGHAI SONG AND DANCE ENSEMBLE

Friday, October 21, 2005

11 a.m.-12 p.m. ET

Grades 4-8

When viewing *Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble* and participating in this guide's suggested activities, the following National Standards for Dance will be addressed: 3, 5 and Music: 8, 9.

Program Notes

China, the Country

China is a vast country with a long history. Among China's 56 ethnic groups, the Han (pronounced Hahn) Chinese make up the majority of its population. Other diverse groups include the Mongolians (Mong-GO-lians) to the north and Uighurs, (or Uygurs, WEE-gurs) of Xinjiang (SHIN-JIANG) in the northwest.

The dance traditions of these different ethnic groups have evolved over time because of such conditions as geography (terrain, climate), agricultural activity (crops planted, harvesting, perennial celebrations), social network (how the community is organized, festivities and rituals), and belief systems.

Shanghai Song and Dance, the Company

Formed in 1979, the Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble presents dance dramas that incorporate folk dance, modern dance, and courtly pageants from China's rich historical past, sometimes with elaborate sets and costumes, lighting and other special effects. Its full-length dance dramas touch on stories of military heroes or ancient fairy tales. While the company's choreography is a blend of modern dance, ballet, and acrobatics, their work is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese dance. The company is famous for its range of presentation styles and dancers' astounding balance of grace and athletic prowess.

Doudou Huang, Artistic Director

Born in 1977, Doudou Huang (Doh-Doh HWAHNG) came from a family of dancers. His parents were determined that he follow in their footsteps. But when he was young, his height was below the dance school's minimum requirement. Doudou and his parents devised a method to help him "grow taller." He recalls, "I would hang upside down from a pole every day for a couple hours, hoping that would lengthen my torso and my legs. And it did work!"

Huang was admitted to the Shanghai Dance School at age 12. Then he went to the Beijing (Bay-JING) Dance Academy to study in the traditional dance department. At age 23, Huang was appointed the Artistic Director of the Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble.

Huang's vision of modern dance incorporates deep historical roots of Chinese culture, as well as athletics and martial arts. He explains, "Chinese traditional martial arts (wushu, woo-SHOO) is one of the deepest manifestations of our 5,000-year-old culture. It already is a comprehensive body language that allows for beauty, balance, and speed. Wushu movements are so rhythmic, which makes them a great fit with new and contemporary music."

Critics around the world have been watching Huang's meteoric rise in the past few years, not only as a superb dancer, but also as an innovative choreographer. Among his works are those inspired by Chinese martial arts, terra cotta warriors, even the ancient chess game of "go."

About the Program

The program will feature demonstrations of folk dances from various Chinese ethnic minorities, and an excerpt from *Six Dance Images of Zhou Dynasty*, choreographed by Doudou Huang. The music for this dance, newly composed for bronze bells by Academy Award®-winning composer Tan Dun, was inspired by the sounds of ancient bronze bells called bianzhong (Bee-ANN-JONG), which were excavated from the grave of nobleman Marquis of Zeng. Zeng lived during the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.) of the Zhou Dynasty (1100–221 B.C.). During the Zhou Dynasty, the Chinese feudal system developed and philosophies and literature flourished. Among the Chinese philosophers who lived during this period were Confucius (Con-FEW-cius) and Lao T'zu, (LAO as in "Loud" without a "d,"--tsi) the founder of Taoism.

What to Look and Listen for Dances of the Chinese ethnic minorities

- Mongolians – Animals close to the Mongolian people are eagles and horses. Representative movements include arm movements for flying, or body movements that imitate the galloping of horses.
- Xinjiang – Women of the Xinjiang minority are famed for their beauty. Their dances are often beguiling, and expressiveness and attraction are transmitted through the eyes. Note also twirling of the waist, which is related to belly dancing of the Middle East.
- Folk music and especially folk songs are used to accompany the dances of minority people.

Six Dance Images of Zhou Dynasty

- Look for modern dance movements, as well as body language that imitates shapes and symbols of ancient Chinese script or drawings or sculptures of static figures.
- Tan Dun's inventive use of bronze bells creates not only atmosphere, but also a steady backdrop for the dancers. Note the rhythmic interplay between Tan Dun's modern music and Doudou Huang's modern dance.

Instructional Activities

This Land Is Their Land

Explore the terrain and climate of the following regions in China: Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. Discover the crops planted, belief systems (e.g., Uighurs in Xinjiang are Muslims) and the distinctive features of their folk art and costumes. Learn more about the origins of the Uighurs and their links with Central Asia and beyond.

Look Back in Time

Research the Zhou Dynasty and its historical and cultural legacy. Look up information on the Chinese feudal system and how this ancient form of government assigned power on various levels.

Examine at least two sayings from Confucius, as recorded in *The Analects*, and learn more about this great philosopher and teacher.

The Bells Are Ringing

Explore all types of bells and how they function whether in terms of music, as signals for time, or as symbols of a people (e.g., Liberty Bell and its historical significance). What is your favorite bell? Is it your favorite because of its sound, signal, or symbol?

Internet Resources

time.com/time/asia/arts/magazine/0,9754,201980,00.html

Uyгур/Uighur

search.pbase.com/search?q=Xinjiang
china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-uygur.htm

Mongolian

search.pbase.com/search?q=Mongolia
china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-mongolian.htm

Zhou Dynasty/Ancient Bells

mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/china/ancient_china/zhou.html
antique-chinese-furnitures.com/special-topic/neolithic-bronze/

Confucius/Confucian Teachings

wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/confucius.html
wam.umd.edu/~stwright/rel/conf/Analects.html

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Additional resources related to *Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble* can be found on pages 28-29.