

Banners to feature classical Chinese dance

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Lake Charles, La. -

Classical Chinese dance will be fused with Western ballet and modern dance for the one-night-only performance by the Lily Cai Chinese Dance Company at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 23, in the Rosa Hart Theatre of the Lake Charles Civic Center. This performance is part of the McNeese Banners Cultural Series and is co-presented with the city of Lake Charles.

Tickets are part of a Banners Series membership. Individual tickets are available at the Lake Charles Civic Center Box Office, online at www.banners.org (click on Lily Cai) and will be sold at the door. Prices are \$20 for adults, \$5 for students and free to McNeese students with ID.

The program is titled "Dynasties and Beyond" and will feature three dance segments.

The first, "Dynasty Suite" is Lily Cai's interpretation of four classical Chinese dances from dynasties beginning in 770 B.C. to the present. The "Suite" is one of contrasts, from the flowing freedom of movement in China's Golden Age, the Tang Dynasty, to the restricted movement of the more recent Qing Dynasty, when it was fashionable to bind women's feet.

It begins with "Basket Girls - Dance from Zhou" (770-221 B.C., with traditional Chinese music). Dancers in long elegant blue dresses, carrying long slender poles with dangling baskets, will make beautiful visual designs and patterns across the stage.

Next, the stage will be filled with red silk ribbons as the dancers throw breathtaking high arches of ribbon in "Dance from Tang" (618-907 B.C.). In the "Dance from Qing" (1644-1911 A.D.), dancers will be dressed in richly embroidered Chinese attire and headdresses and will walk on high platform sandals with royal grace and charm.

The final dance in this segment, "Straw Hat Girl," features a mysterious, sensual, soloist in a modern Dai dance style. Then all four dynasties will be briefly re-visited with a "Dynasty Quartet" - a combination of Zhou, Tang, Qing and Dai dynasty soloists.

The second dance segment, "Candalas," features fire and usually draws gasps of awe over its beauty. Dancing to the haunting fourth movement of Gustav Mahler's "Symphony No. 5," each dancer holds a lit candle. Cai says that she choreographed this piece to feature the company in an intimate encounter with beauty and fire and that it is a commentary on self-sacrifice, respect and modesty. "One by one, the dancers reveal their souls," according to Cai, "and the light of the candles comes together in a symbolic journey for the dancers and the audience."

The final suite, "Silk Cascade," is a personal favorite of Cai and an innovative take on traditional Chinese ribbon dancing.

Choreographed to "Century Rolls" by John Adams, the stage will explode with an exuberant blend of the vivid colors of almost 200 ribbons, dance and light.

Cai created her company 22 years ago. "From the moment I began my company, my passion has been to reveal the soul and the internal beauty of the Chinese woman through dance," she said. "This performance was created to give you an experience that transcends the visual, connecting with the emotions at the heart of the work."

The Lily Cai Chinese Dance Company is known for introducing new work, often created in collaboration with music, dance, video and visual artists, including Chanticleer with the Women's Philharmonic, the Alexander String Quartet, the New Century Chamber Orchestra, Composer Gang Situ and Calligrapher Lampo Leong. In 1996, the Company was honored twice with Isadora Duncan Dance Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography and Company Performance for "Common Ground," a collaborative work with Dimensions Dance Theater.

For more information, see www.banners.org. Persons requesting accommodations in accordance with the ADA should contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at least 72 hours before the event. Additional information is available from: the Office of the ADA Coordinator, Smith Hall, Room 127; Voice: (337) 475-5428; Fax: (337) 475-5960; TDD/TTY, Hearing Impaired: (337) 562-4227; or adacoordinator@mcneese.edu.

The McNeese Banners Cultural Series brings 22 main events to the community this spring. It also brings some 60 live performances into K-12 schools, outreach which is partially sponsored by CITGO Petroleum Company and the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury.

The Banners Series is supported by membership fees, corporate sponsors and grants.

Grants have been received from the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, the city of Lake Charles, the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, the Arts and Humanities Council of Southwestern Louisiana, the Louisiana Division of the Arts, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and the Southern Arts Federation.

Corporate sponsors, which pick up more than 60 percent of the cost of the series, include Isle of Capri Casino, CITGO, PPG, Chase, Entergy, ConocoPhillips, American Press, Empire of the Seed, city of Lake Charles, Union Pacific Railroad, Stockwell Sievert Law Firm, Jeff Davis Bank & Trust Co., Calcasieu Parish Police Jury, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana, West Calcasieu Cameron Hospital Foundation, Southern Sound Systems, Inc., Southwest Beverage Co. Inc., Fuerst & Godley Law Firm, State Farm Insurance

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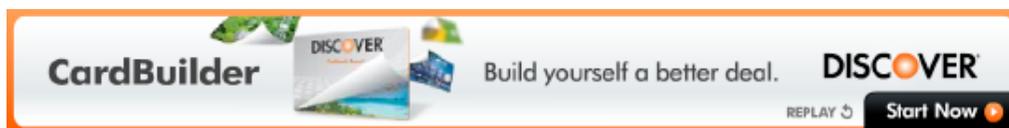
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