

Saturday, January 20, 2007, 2pm & 8pm
Sunday, January 21, 2007, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Peking Acrobats



Cal Performances' 2006–2007 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Peking Acrobats

PROGRAM

Double Pole Act
Feet Balancing
Hoop Diving
Colorful Contortionists
Teeter Board Balancing with a Twist
Darling Diablos
Keep It Under Your Hat
Let's Play Ball
Unicycle Bowl Balancing
Kung-Fu Surprise

INTERMISSION

Lion Dance
The Nose Knows It
Squeeze Play
Spinning Plates
High Chair
Pagoda of Chairs
Human Pyramid / Bicycle Act

There will be one intermission.

The program for this performance will be selected from the above. The Peking Acrobats reserve the right to make alterations in the order of the program or in the cast due to illness or any cause whatsoever. The use of cameras, flash or video photography and tape recorders is strictly prohibited.

The Peking Acrobats recommend that you advise your children that what they see on stage takes years of practice and should not be tried at home!

Staff

Company Director Ken Hai
Group Leader Shao Kun
Technical Consultant Lui Fei
Stage Manager Jiang Jun
Orchestra Director Yuan Yuan
Technical Director Steve Kirkland

Management

IAI Presentations, Inc.
Don Hughes, *President*
International Asia, Inc.
Ken Hai, *President*

About the Artists

Since their debut in 1986, the **Peking Acrobats** have redefined audience perceptions of Chinese acrobatics. They perform daring maneuvers atop a precarious pagoda of chairs. They are experts at treacherous wire-walking, trick-cycling, precision tumbling, somersaulting and gymnastics. They defy gravity with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility and control. They push the envelope of human possibility with astonishing juggling dexterity and balancing feats, showcasing tremendous skill and ability. They are masters of agility and grace. Accompanied by live musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments, high-tech special effects that coalesce with the music and awe-inspiring feats combine to create an exuberant entertainment event featuring all the excitement and festive pageantry of a Chinese carnival.

Many of the magnificent acrobatic acts we see today, despite their sophistication, were performed in ancient times. The history of Chinese acrobatics is rich in tradition and dates back over 2,000 years. Throughout the history of China, the acrobatic arts flourished, but in varying degrees. At first, court entertainments were formal and monotonous, quite the opposite of the lively folk arts of the people. Acrobatics as we know them today began with these folk arts: tumbling, juggling ordinary household objects and balancing. Common games of the people, such as “Rang Hitting,” or throwing a small wooden strip the size and shape of a shoe sole at a target, developed performers’ accuracy. Modern-day Whip Feats are traced back to this game.

Myth and religion also influenced the acrobatic performing arts. The Lion Dance is Buddhist in origin. The lion was seen as the reincarnation of a woman who was teased into revealing her true identity. This dance was a symbol of spiritual renewal and was also revered for dispelling bad luck.

Eventually, however, the excitement of the acrobats’ amazing feats caught and held the attention of the ruling class. Acrobatic performers were routinely invited to the court to entertain

and impress visiting dignitaries. The varied acts of tumbling, singing, dancing and juggling became known as “The Hundred Entertainments” during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). Records of acrobatic acts can be found as early as the Ch’in Dynasty (221–207 BC), and Chinese acrobats through the ages have continued to perfect what has become an evolving folk art form. The Peking Acrobats’ ability to perform astounding feats is rooted in centuries of this Chinese history and folk art.

Tradition demands that each generation of acrobats add its own improvements and embellishments. Generations of families carry on this highly acclaimed and popular tradition. Children begin training at a young age and adhere to a rigorous training schedule which they follow for the rest of their lives. Today, the acrobat in China is considered an artist. Because of the unusual and difficult nature of the feats involved, high honor is conferred upon those skilled enough to become acrobats; an acrobat can be considered the Chinese equivalent of an American opera star. It is telling that the Chinese acrobatic tradition gets stronger, due to the continued innovation of the artists and the endless enthusiasm from their adoring public.

The Peking Acrobats have performed the world over to standing-room-only crowds in such far reaching corners of the globe as Australia, Europe, throughout the Americas, the Middle East, Africa and numerous Asian countries.

The Peking Acrobats have been featured on numerous television shows and celebrity-studded TV specials, including *The Wayne Brady Show*, *That’s Incredible*, ABC’s *Wide World of Sports*, NBC’s *Ring in the New Year* and Nickelodeon’s hit show, *Unfabulous*. They set the world record for the Human Chair Stack on Fox’s *Guinness Book Primetime*, where they astounded audiences with their bravery and dexterity as they balanced six people precariously atop six chairs 21 feet in the air without safety lines.

The Peking Acrobats are also making the scene on the silver screen. Company members

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were featured in Stephen Soderbergh's hit films, *Ocean's 11* and *Ocean's 12*, playing alongside Hollywood's elite, including Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt and George Clooney. Qin Shaobo of the Peking Acrobats will appear in *Ocean's 13*, which will feature many of the original cast members as well as Ellen Barkin and Robert DeNiro. *Ocean's 13* is slated for release in June 2007.

The Peking Acrobats regularly perform for symphony concert audiences across the United States. This milestone in their career was achieved in 2003, when they debuted at the Hollywood Bowl's Fireworks Season Finale, blending their unique brand of acrobatics with the majestic sound of the 100-piece Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. The acrobats infused Bowl audiences with their powerful maneuvers in a multicultural, multimedia spectacular. These performances led to concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, San Diego Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic and Cincinnati Pops, among many others, bringing the Peking Acrobats' unique artistry to an entirely new audience.

In February 2005, the Peking Acrobats made their Italian debut with a five-week, 12-city tour of Milan, Pisa, Bologna, Naples and other cities. The acrobats endeared themselves to the Italian audiences, performing to sell-out

crowds. In December 2006, the Peking Acrobats returned to Europe for a six-week tour of the Netherlands, Belgium and Holland. Sparked by their tremendous success of their 2005 tour, the Peking Acrobats visited many new locales, where they enjoyed sharing their ancient artistry with an ever-widening European audience. They performed in Amsterdam and many other Dutch cities, as well as Bruges in Brussels and cities they had yet to visit in Italy.

In 2006, the Peking Acrobats released a DVD that was recorded on their 2005 North American tour as a television special for HDNet. It is available for sale to the general public for the first time on this tour. The show, shot in high definition format, has aired many times on HDNet television. The Peking Acrobats are honored to have been selected by HDNet to participate in such innovative programming, putting this attraction on the cutting edge of modern technology.

A performance by the Peking Acrobats brings with it the opportunity to view the epitome of a rich and ancient folk art tradition, highlighted by today's technology—a melding of the ancient and traditional with the modern wonders of the 21st century.