

Saturday, January 23, 2010, 2pm  
 Sunday, January 24, 2010, 3pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## Peking Acrobats

### PROGRAM

Opening Ceremony / Double Pole Position

Magic Carpet Ride

Water Meteors

Diving Daring Do

Jar Juggling

Laughter in the Air

Just Skatin' By

Amazing Adagio

The Nose Knows It

Five-Girl Contortion

Kung-Fu Surprise

### INTERMISSION

Lion Dance

Let the Spinning Plates Spin

Get Strapped In

Colorful Contortionists

Keep It Under Your Hat

It's a Tight Squeeze

In the High Chair

Human Pyramid / Bicycle Pagoda

Finale

*The use of cameras, flash or video photography and tape recorders are strictly prohibited.*

*The Acrobats recommend that parents advise their children that what they see on stage takes years of practice and should not be tried at home.*

Brittany App

*Cal Performances' 2009–2010 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

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 feats of daring 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 incredible balancing feats, showcasing tremendous skill and ability. They are masters of agility and grace. Accompanied by live musicians playing traditional Chinese instruments and high-tech special effects that coalesce with the music, an exuberant entertainment appears before your eyes, featuring all of the excitement and festive pageantry of a Chinese carnival infused with explosive energy.

Many of the magnificent acts we see today, for all of their seeming modernity, 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. Originally, court entertainments were formal and monotonous, quite the opposite of the lively, folk arts of the people. But it all began with 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, helped to develop 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 classes. 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 the astounding is rooted in centuries of this Chinese history and folk art. No doubt the Chinese acrobats of the Han Dynasty would be awestruck and amazed at how their modern-day counterparts have elevated their art form, and the fact that their tradition, begun so many ages ago, is still going strong in the 21st century.

Tradition demands that each generation of acrobats add its own improvements and embellishments. Generations of families have carried 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; in China, an acrobat can be considered the equivalent of an American opera star. It is telling that the Chinese acrobatic tradition continues to get stronger, due to the persistent innovation of the artists and the endless enthusiasm of their adoring public.

The Peking Acrobats have been featured on numerous television shows and specials, including *The Wayne Brady Show*, *That's Incredible*, ABC's *Wide World of Sports* and NBC's *Ring in the New Year Holiday Special*. They have also appeared on Nickelodeon's hit show *Unfabulous* and *Ellen's Really Big Show*, hosted by comedian and talk show host, Ellen DeGeneres. They set the world record for the Human Chair Stack on Fox's *Guinness Book Primetime* TV show, where they astounded audiences with their bravery and dexterity as they balanced six people precariously atop six chairs 21 feet up in the air without safety lines. Internationally, they have appeared on the *Artistgalla*, a benefit show that was filmed live at the Drammens Theatre in Oslo, Norway. The Peking Acrobats are also making the Hollywood scene on the silver screen as former company members were featured in director Stephen Soderbergh's hit film *Ocean's 11*, playing with Hollywood's elite such as Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt and George Clooney. Qin Shaobo, an alumnus of the Peking Acrobats, appeared in that film's two

blockbuster sequels, *Ocean's 12* and *Ocean's 13*. The Peking Acrobats were also the featured performers at the glamorous Hollywood premiere party of *Ocean's 13* and impressed the star-studded audience with their acrobatic feats.

The Peking Acrobats are also pleased to report on the tremendous success of their first consumer DVD, initially released on their 2006 North American tour and filmed on their 2005 North American tour as a television special for HDNet. The DVD is available for sale to the public at the acrobats' performances and at [www.iaipresentations.com](http://www.iaipresentations.com). The show, shot in high-definition format, has aired many times on HDNet television. The Peking Acrobats are excited and honored to have been selected by HDNet to participate in such technological innovation, thereby putting this attraction on the cutting edge of modern technology.

The Peking Acrobats continue to perform for symphony concert audiences across America. Fans will recall that this milestone in their career was achieved when they made their debut at the Hollywood Bowl. They performed as part of the Hollywood Bowl's Fireworks Season Finale, where the company blended 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. Between the fireworks onstage and the fireworks in the air, audiences experienced theatrical alchemy at its finest. Concerts such as these have led to many other performances with symphony orchestras across the United States, such as the San Francisco Symphony, the San Diego Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic and the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra, to name a few.

The Peking Acrobats have returned to the Hollywood Bowl in three separate outings, most recently performing with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra in September 2008 with Maestro Tom Wilkins conducting. They were thrilled at the opportunity to play this prestigious venue once

again. Hollywood Bowl audiences received them so warmly that it was like a homecoming celebration for the performers. The Peking Acrobats are now bringing their unique artistry to a completely new audience with the symphony concerts and will continue to do so in the future.

The Peking Acrobats have also expanded their reach into the European market. For the past five years, they have toured throughout the continent and visited such countries as Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. They have traveled to several of these countries two and three times over, visiting such cities as Milan, Bologna, Naples, Bruges, Amsterdam and The Hague.

Their affinity for and popularity with European audiences does not end there, however, as in December 2009, the Peking Acrobats once again returned to Europe, this time for their fifth European tour. Here, again, is another triumph for the Peking Acrobats as they share their incredible talents, abilities and culture with ever-widening audiences, building their reputation as the finest Chinese acrobatic troupe in the world. On all of these European tours, the performers have endeared themselves to the audiences, and so it is no surprise that they are asked to return there by popular demand. The warmth and appreciation of the European people makes the Peking Acrobats feel right at home, and the future holds many more such successful tours for the Peking Acrobats, much to the delight of their growing numbers of European fans.

A performance by the Peking Acrobats, therefore, brings with it the opportunity to view the epitome of a rich and ancient folk art tradition, highlighted by today's technology melding the ancient and traditional with the modern wonders of the 21st century. It is with much pride and pleasure that the Peking Acrobats embark on their 22nd North American tour. So sit back, relax and enjoy, as our performers reveal to you their mastery of a fascinating and ancient art form, thousands of years in the making.



Brittany App

*Peking Acrobats Staff*

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|----------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Ken T. Hai     | <i>Company Director</i>                    |
| Chu W. Jian    | <i>Group Leader</i>                        |
| Zhang Ping     | <i>Technical Consultant</i>                |
| Jiang Fu Jun   | <i>Stage Manager</i>                       |
| Fu W. Fang     | <i>Orchestra Director</i>                  |
| Steve Kirkland | <i>Technical Director</i>                  |
| Keenan Hansen  | <i>Assistant to the Technical Director</i> |
| Mei Ying Hai   | <i>Translator</i>                          |
| Wu De An       | <i>Assistant Translator</i>                |

*Tour Credits*

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| IAI Presentations, Inc.           |                              |
| Don Hughes                        | <i>President</i>             |
| Cynthia A. Dike-Hughes            | <i>Vice President</i>        |
| Katie M. Bates, Graham P. Haworth | <i>Production Associates</i> |

- |                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| International Asia, Inc. |                  |
| Ken Hai                  | <i>President</i> |

*Tour Direction*

- SRO Artists  
[www.sroartists.com](http://www.sroartists.com)