

Saturday, September 15, 2012, 8pm  
 Sunday, September 16, 2012, 3pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## National Circus of the People's Republic of China

Mei Yuezhou, *Director*  
 Ai Bing, *Deputy Director*



### *Cirque Chinois*

*Cal Performances' 2012–2013 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

### *Cirque Chinois*

#### PROGRAM

##### Opening

The show's opening ceremony expresses the good wishes of the Chinese people. This vigorous and encouraging performance displays the traditional Chinese culture and ancient artistic legacy, which reflect their humble lifestyles.

*All performers*

##### Girls' Group Contortion

These graceful contortions are newly created and choreographed, depicting the beautiful and elegant images of sculpture with masterful contorting skills. This act won the Gold Medal at the Wuhan International Circus Festival in 2006.

*Performer: Xiong yi, Huang Xiaolin, Lu Dan, Liu Shiyi, et al.*

##### Flying Meteors

Dancing and moving swiftly with enthusiasm and energy, each of the performers spins the meteors tied to both ends of a rope, throws them up in the air, and catches them. Like seeing the meteors in the night sky, the audience is sure to be amazed at this spectacular.

*Performer: Wang Chaoyu, Zhou Huixi, Wang Yiwen, et al.*

##### Aerial Silk

A perfect combination of dance and circus arts. The aerialists perform different tricks on the silks, which are raised up and down in sync with the rhythm of music. This act not only displays the performers' courage, but produces images of true beauty.

*Performers: Li Man, Jiang Xinzhao*

##### Dance: Guanyin's Thousand Hands

In Buddhism, Guanyin is the Goddess of Mercy, who always saves people from misery. This dance was developed from choreography by a famous Chinese disabled singing and dancing ensemble, which performed it as a part of the closing ceremony of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. During the National Circus's performances in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Germany in 2007 and 2008, the dance was adopted into its touring show.

*Performers: Cai Yunhong, Li Hongyi, Lu Dan, et al.*

##### Diving Through Rings

Dressing in tribal costume, performers dive through rings accompanied by the strong rhythm of the music. This act presents a depiction of the ancient sacrifice ceremony, with the performers beating drums and hunting for animals. It won the Gold Medal at the Third Wuhan International Circus Festival in 1996.

*Performers: Feng Dongdong, Wang Chaoyu, Huang Chuan, Xiao Pengfei, et al.*

### Faces Change

A magic act. The artist changes his Chinese opera masks to the fast tempo of the music.

*Performer: Wu Songtao*

### Aerial Rings

This aerial act combines of beauty and strength. Along with the beautiful rhythm of melody, the artists strike fabulous poses in the air.

*Performers: Li Man, Zhang Si, Ma Ran*

### Chinese Kung Fu

Professional Chinese martial artists perform the Kung Fu feats of knife, sticks, and swords.

*Performers: Wang Chaoyu, Chai Hua, Yuan Zheng, et al.*

## INTERMISSION

### Spinning Plates

These girls not only hold the plates atop three-foot-long, pencil-thin poles, but spin them at the same time. The spinning plates look like lotus leaves against the wind or butterflies dancing above the flowers. This act won the Golden Award at the Cirque de Demain festival in Paris in 1992.

*Performers: Liu Yuanyuan, Gao Chenchen, Huang Xiaolin, Liu Shiyi, et al.*

### The Great Teeterboard

An international high-caliber circus act that won Golden Awards at the Eighth China National Acrobatic Competition in 2010 and at the Ninth Wuhan International Circus Festival.

*Performers: Hu Bing, Li Pei, Huang Chuan, You You, et al.*

### Single Hand Standing Girl

The performer contorts her body while one-hand-standing on a single bar. This graceful performance is a breathtaking one. The girl's body, balancing on one hand, gives the impression of a lovely angel.

*Performer: Yuan Jiaqi*

### Aerial Rope

This aerial act, performed by a man and a woman, shows a couple in love.

*Performers: Li Tan, Cai Yunhong*

### Diabolo

This is a very Chinese performance. Playful girls play diabolo with light and graceful gestures accompanied by the bright rhythm of the music.

*Performers: Liu Yuanyuan, Zhou Huixin, Wang Yiwen, Gao Chenchen, et al.*

### Straw Hat Juggling

These scenes reveal the Kung Fu monks at Shaolin Temple chanting and sitting in Buddhist meditation. The happy training scene of "Straw Hat Juggling" conveys the sense of the ancient Kung Fu, which is characterized by sitting like a bell and walking like wind.

*Performers: Huang Chuan, Xiao Pengfei, Chen Sihang, Sun Huiyong, et al.*

### Magic

Performed by Mr. Wu Songtao, the magician, this act is quite entertaining and surprising.

*Performer: Wu Songtao*

### Head Balancing with Bowls

Girls' head balancing with bowls has been one of the most amazing acts with this circus troupe for years. The artists balance bowls on their heads and feet while making various handstands and rolls. This act won the Golden Clown prize at the Ninth Monte Carlo International Circus Festival in Monaco and the Silver Prize at the Fourth Wuhan International Circus Festival.

*Performers: Liu Shiyi, Wang Xiaolin*

### Transition: Clowning

*Performer: Tang Jizhou*

### Grand Bicycle


A traditional Chinese circus act with artists performing on running bikes. This act has replaced the circus' traditional horse act, and is used throughout the world by the leading contemporary nonanimal circuses.

*Performers: Li Yihong, Chen Zhe, Chen Sihang, Tian Dan, Cai Ting, et al.*

### Finale

*The program is subject to change.*

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**T**HE ORIGIN OF THE CHINESE CIRCUS is a subject of great debate. However, what is clear is that it is an ancient art. First records date back over 2,000 years to the Qin Dynasty (225–207 BC), when China was unified by the First Emperor Qi Shi Huang. It is believed that the art actually started about 3,000 years ago.

Some believe that the circus evolved out of the imperial court performers, something similar to court jesters in medieval Europe. These performances, however, tended to be quite formal and staid, and it is believed that the adaptation of some of these acts into performances for the people in turn became popular with the ruling classes. Given its age, it is likely that the circus was first a folk art which was later adopted by the imperial houses. The ancient Chinese came to call the circus “the show of a hundred tricks.”

As in Europe, families became involved in the circus, and a family tradition developed with skills being passed from generation to generation. The most famous circus families were well known. In 1949, following many years of decline because of war, the art received a boost from the government of the People’s Republic of China as an art form to be preserved.

There are over 200 circus and acrobatic troupes in China today, and most of them have toured around the world. Within China, acrobats in the circus troupes are regarded with respect and admiration. Training begins as early as four years old. Training for specific acts may begin by age eight. Basic training—balancing, tumbling, dancing, flexibility, and strength—is given in the early years. Although some children can perform at young ages, normally performers start their career in their mid-teens.

There are many classical acts. But after 1949, Chinese circus troupes have all developed into non-animal performing companies concentrating on developing human acts.



**T**HE NATIONAL CIRCUS of the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1953, making it one of the longest running and most distinguished circus troupes in China.

The National Circus is especially acclaimed in China because of the unique acts in their program such as Great Teeterboard, Grand Flying Trapeze, Group Contortion, Straw Hat Juggling, Head Balancing with Bowls, and many other outstanding acts. Many of the artists in the troupe have won international awards, including Li Liping, the first Golden Clown winner from China at the renowned Monte Carlo International Circus Festival, and Madame Xia Juhua, the “Chinese Ulanowa” of the Circus World and Chairwoman of the International Chinese Circus Society since the early 1980s. The Company has won over 20 gold and silver medals and various other awards at international circus festivals, including the Monte Carlo International Circus Festival, Cirque de Demain, Wuqiao International Circus Festival, Wuhan International Circus Festival, and China National Acrobatic Competition. The contribution the Company has made to the world circus society is profound. During the 1980s, the Company started to change the concept of the

animal circus to a new style of nonanimal circus which influenced the *nouveau cirque* pioneers of Cirque du Soleil, who invited many coaches from the Company to teach them such acts as Balancing Chairs, Bicycle, and Chinese Poles, which culminated in the revolutionary program *Circus Reinvented!*

The Company has toured to 80 countries around the world. In 1987, the troupe toured Western Europe for six months as the “Great Chinese State Circus.” In fall 1988, a cast of 75 members and the Company toured Canada and Seattle, Washington, for three months with a Giant Panda, who flew between China and North America in the first-class cabin (a feat which required removing all passenger seats from the plane). The Company performed in France as “Cirquede Pekin” in 1988 and 1989, three months each year, and was so ecstatically received that the French National Television and Radio Company broadcast the performances for months after the French engagements were finalized. In 1993 and 1994, the Company toured to Germany and Switzerland under the Direction of Andree Hiller, the Austrian director who Produced the later famous *Africa! Africa!* in 2004.

In the 2004–2005, 2005–2006, and 2007–2008 seasons, the Company toured to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Spain for six to ten months each year as the “Great Chinese State Circus” under the management of Henk van der Meijden, the famous European Impresario. The Company’s Flying Trapeze troupe was invited to perform with the United States’ Ringling and Barnum & Bailey Bros. Circus companies in 1999 and UniverSoul Circus in 2007. Additionally, the Company has performed in Europe again in 2008 for Swiss Knie Circus, Stuttgart Winter Circus, and Amsterdam Winter Circus. In fall 2012, the Company performs their new program *Cirque Chinois* while undertaking its inaugural coast-to-coast tour of the United States and Canada. The troupe owns the Wuhan Circus Center, a famous circus dome in China and the site, every two years, of the Wuhan International Circus Festival.