



UC DAVIS PRESENTS

Community Outreach Program
2001-2002 School Matinee Series

NATIONAL ACROBATS OF TAIWAN (ROC)

Thursday, January 17, 2002
Sacramento Community Center Theater, 11:00am

Dear Teachers:

We hope you will find this Teacher's Guide helpful in preparing your students for what they will see and hear at the National Acrobats of Taiwan performance matinee. The Guide provides background information on the performance company, a program repertoire, a brief country profile, as well as a review of theater conventions and audience protocol. The National Acrobats of Taiwan matinee, which is specially designed for student audiences, will amaze with its parade of magicians, contortionists, jugglers, and clowns—all masters of the traditional Chinese acrobatic arts!

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NATIONAL ACROBATS OF TAIWAN



Acrobats doing handstands on stools stacked 30 feet high, a handful of women balancing groups of spinning plates on rods, jugglers spinning large pots on their head, elbows and feet--just some of the spectacular delights presented by the National Acrobats of Taiwan (Republic of China). Returning to Sacramento for their first visit to the region since Fall 1998, the National Acrobats of Taiwan are distinctive for their use of ordinary household items--tables, chairs, ladders, bowls, plates and jars--in their performances. Since the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - 240 A.D.), dramatic folk arts and variety shows have reflected the deepest roots of Chinese civilization. The performers precise movements and flexible showmanship have provided entertainment to people from all walks of life for centuries. Associated with the esteemed **Fu Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy of Taipei**, the 35-member National Acrobats of Taiwan upholds the over 2,500-year tradition of acrobatic and dramatic folk arts that are an intrinsic part of Chinese cultural history.

The National Fu Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy was originally founded as a private school by Mr. Zhenzu Wang in Taipei in 1957. It became the National Academy in 1968, with the purpose of training actors and actresses for the traditional Chinese and Taiwanese Performing Arts. The Chinese Acrobatic Department was established to produce the folk acrobatic arts, and the Dramatic Music Department was set up to cultivate traditional dramatic musicians. In 1994, the Taiwanese Opera Department was added. The students are tutored by masters in a regimen of physical skills,

acrobatics, magic, dance, and martial arts, as well as stage gestures, lighting, sound effects, and properties. Fu Hsing now has two performing theaters, a multi-media room, and an exhibition hall for costumes and properties of Chinese Opera. The Academy is working on collecting and publishing numerous Chinese opera scripts, dramatic historical textbooks, and also issuing video tapes. All of these materials are for the purpose of education, promotion and research of traditional arts, which is the Academy's main mission. In August 1999 the Fu Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy joined with the National Taiwan College of Performing Arts to become one of the largest and most prestigious in Asia.

The National Acrobats of Taiwan have toured the world as the Republic of China's national acrobatic troupe and are considered to be China's foremost company. The masters and students of the Fu Hsing Academy present more than 500 performances each year, both domestically and overseas. In the Autumn of 1998, the National Acrobats completed a highly-acclaimed three-month coast-to-coast tour of the United States and Canada. The company now returns to North America for a Winter/Spring 2002 performance season.



LO JIH-HUNG
Artistic Director

The National Acrobats of Taiwan's artistic director, Lo Jih-Hung, was born in 1949 and was educated at the Peng-xiang County Acrobatic Institute in Jiang-xi Province, mainland China. After performing as a magician throughout Southeast Asia in the early 1970s, Mr. Lo was hired as a magician/comedian for the "Tonight" television show in Hong Kong. He then went on to host numerous television shows in Asia, including the variety magic show "Ha Ha and little Sweet" in 1976. From 1984 to 1990, Mr. Lo served as co-director of the Golden Dragon Acrobats which toured throughout the United States and Canada, most notably performing at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. From 1988 to 1991, Mr. Lo performed in the Diamond Stage Show on CTS-TV in Taipei, and he continues to organize television productions of acrobatics and magic.

In 1991, Lo Jih-Hung joined staff of the Fu Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy as a performer and in 1995 he managed the “Clown Magic Show” at the Academy. He toured North America and Europe as part of the Han Kuang Goodwill Mission and was featured as a guest artist of the Shanghai Magic Festival in 1997. He also toured Central and South America in that same year with the Acrobatic Troupe of the Republic of China in a tour sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taipei. Mr. Lo was honored as a judge in the National Magic Contest in Guei-lin Province, mainland China. In July 1998, he was named artistic director of the National Acrobats. Lo Jih-Hung is a Commission Member of the Taipei Craft and Dancing Art Guild, and has received the Public Welfare Award in Taipei (1991), Outstanding Performance Award from the Taiwan Provincial Government (1996), and the Mayor’s Award (1998). He was also named outstanding performing celebrity in mainland China in 1995.

PROGRAM REPERTOIRE



FLAG DANCE

The synchronization of waving flags and tumbling is one of the classic exhibitions of the Chinese acrobatic art form.

CELEBRATION OF ACROBATIC SKILLS

This exhibition demonstrates many of the most popular acrobatic movements, choreographed into an entertainment spectacular.

DIABOLO SPINNING

The Diabolo is a special acrobatic spinning-wheel based upon an ancient Chinese child's toy. Accompanied by a traditional Chinese melody, the acrobats throw, coil, toss, and cross diabolos with dexterity and finesse. This ancient skill has been revived and will enrapture the contemporary audience.

DEXTEROUS FEET

The use of the feet by Chinese acrobats will create amazement and even suspicions of witchcraft!

SIRENS IN BARRELS

Accompanied by a lively melody, two girls dance with and shuttle through hoops and barrels.

CHAIR BUILDING

This acrobatic performance demonstrates the difficulty of balancing on chairs!

BICYCLE AND UNICYCLE RIDING

A unicycle rider kicks four bowls up into the air to land on the top of his head! This balancing skill is topped when more than ten acrobats ride a single bicycle and perform even more astounding feats.

COLORFUL PHOENIX-PLAYING PLATES

Originating in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-240 AD), the ancient skill of plate dancing is demonstrated with incredible mastery. The plates are balanced on sticks representing the hands of the Phoenix.

ACROBATIC CLOWN SHOW

One of the great traditions of Chinese acrobatics is the inclusion of the Clown, who combines humor and stunning acrobatic techniques.

PLAYING WITH CANDLESTICKS

An elegant actress balances candlesticks on the soles of her feet, her forehead, hands, and even on her mouth. By candlelight, the audience will enjoy a graceful and brilliant dance.

BREAKING LADDER

In this astounding feat, a female acrobat climbs up a ladder, held by a male performer. She enacts handstands and other remarkable skills of balance and agility.

COMEDY MAGIC

Our magician will astound and amuse the audience with ancient tricks and games.

PARADISE OF ACROBATICS

This concluding performance combines many acrobatic feats into a spectacular grand finale!

TAIWAN

OFFICIAL NAME: Taiwan
AREA: 36,000 sq. km. (13,900 sq. mi.)
POPULATION: 20,830,000
CAPITAL: Taipei
LANGUAGE: Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, Hakka
RELIGIOUS GROUPS: Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist
CURRENCY: Taiwan dollar

Off the eastern coast of Asia lie the mountainous island arcs of the Western Pacific. The island chain closest to the continent marks the edge of the Asiatic Continental Shelf. Taiwan, one of the islands of this chain, is the largest body of land between Japan and the Philippines. The island of Taiwan is 394 km long and 144 km at its widest point, shaped like a tobacco leaf. With a total area of nearly 36,000 sq. km, Taiwan is separated from the Chinese mainland by the Taiwan Strait, which is about 220 km at its widest point and 130 km at its narrowest. The shoreline of Taiwan is relatively smooth and unbroken with a total length of 1,566 km (including the Pescadore Islands).

The most important feature of Taiwan's topography is the central range of high mountains running from the northeast corner to the southern tip of the island. The capital of Taipei administers the Penghu Islands and about twenty offshore islands as well as the island of Taiwan. The climate is maritime subtropical.

The majority of Taiwan's inhabitants are descendants of Chinese mainlanders. A small group of aborigines, which lives in the mountains in central Taiwan, is most likely of Malay-Polynesian origin. Taiwan's languages are mainly various dialects of Chinese, a Fujian dialect, and a dialect known as "Hakka." Most religious practices combine Buddhist and Taoist beliefs with the Confucian ethical code.

Chinese migration to Taiwan began as early as A.D. 500. Dutch traders claimed the island in 1624 as a base for trade with China and Japan. It was ruled by China's Manchu dynasty from 1683 until 1895, when China ceded Taiwan to Japan after the first Sino-Japanese war. Following World War II, China regained possession of Taiwan. A civil war in mainland China between Nationalist and Communist forces ended with the victory of the Communists in 1949. Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan, proclaiming Taipei the provisional capital of Nationalist China. In 1971 the People's Republic of China replaced Taiwan in the United Nations. While the Republic of China still maintains it is the legitimate ruler of all China, nearly all nations now recognize the mainland's People's Republic of China. The first official talks regarding reunification were held in 1993, and an historic accord was signed committing the two countries to continued dialog.

In the space of a generation, the small island of Taiwan has seen the birth of democratic rule and development of one of the world's most advanced economies. Since World War II, Taiwan's economy has changed from agriculture to industry. A past emphasis on light industry, producing mainly consumer goods, has shifted to technology and heavy industry. Although only one-quarter of the island is arable, farmland is intensely cultivated, with some areas producing two and three crops a year. Though rice, sugar cane, fruits, tea, and fishing are important, much food must be imported. Taiwan's natural resources include small deposits of coal, natural gas, limestone, marble, and asbestos.

Helpful web sites

<http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/chpt01.htm>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tw.html>

<http://www.taiwanstudies.org/>

TAIWAN



THINK ABOUT IT!

Talking with your teacher, friends, and family about a performance after attending the theater is part of the experience. When you share what you saw and felt you learn more about the performance. You can now compare ideas and ask questions and find out how to learn even more. Here are some questions to think about:

- 1) Would you like to be an acrobat, why or why not?
- 2) What feelings did you have while you watched the performers execute their feats?
- 3) Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter, write a review of the National Acrobats of Taiwan.

ATTENDING THE THEATER

What is expected of student audiences at the matinee:

- Enter the auditorium quietly and take seats immediately (*note that all matinees for 2000-2001 have reserved seating*);
- Show courtesy to the artist and other guests at all times;
- Demonstrate appreciation for the artist's work by applauding at the appropriate times;
- Refrain from making unnecessary noise or movements;
- Please eat lunch before or after the performance to avoid disruption;

- Relate any information acquired from the pre-matinee discussion to the new information gained from the matinee.

What you can expect of your experience in a performing arts theater:

A theater is a charged space, full of energy and anticipation. When the house lights (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, the excitement level goes up! Theaters are designed so that the voices of the singers and actors and the music of the musicians can be heard. But this also means that any sound in the audience: whispering, rustling of papers, speaking and moving about, can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Distractions like these upset everyone's concentration and can spoil a performance.

The performers on stage show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their very best work. The audience shows respect for the performers by watching attentively. Applause is the best way for audience members to share their enthusiasm and to show their appreciation for the performers. Applaud at the end of a performance! Sometimes the audience will clap during a performance, as after a featured solo. Audience members may feel like laughing if the action on stage is funny, crying if the action is sad, or sighing if something is seen or heard that is beautiful. Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form and the culture(s) of the people in the audience. While the audience at a dance performance will sit quietly, other types of performance invite audience participation.

This Teacher's Guide was written by ANETT JESSOP, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department of English, UC Davis