

EL NORTE

Oct 29, 2007

By Jessica Meza

Dance piece staged on a life-sized chessboard accomplishes checkmate



"It was marvelous," said editor of Dance Magazine Wendy Perron at the finale of the performance. No one needed to ask the audience who witnessed the performance at the Grand Hall of the Teatro de la Ciudad if they shared the same opinion -- the standing ovation at the end of the evening's performance said it all.

That is how moving the Saturday evening performance of Beijing LDTX Modern Dance Company was. Directed by Willy Tsao, the company was presented as part of the Extremadura International Festival of Dance this

year co-presented with Forum Monterrey 2007.

Hundreds of audience members witnessed the dance troupe's elegant, smooth and precise choreography during the Mexican premiere of "Cold Dagger" the full-length dance piece created by deputy artistic director Li Hanzong in 2006.

Company members demonstrated a perfect blend of the various types of dance training acquired in their home country -- from classical, contemporary and modern dance to martial arts.

With a minimal set consisting of floor mats simulating a life-sized chessboard and lighting dramatizing every single move, the dancers conveyed the intricacies of human relation and interaction.

Additionally, the special flooring made it possible for the dancers to perform acrobatic movements that otherwise would not have been possible by reducing the risk of injury had they been executed on a normal dance floor.

The costumes also held true to the aesthetics of chess. Half of the troupe was costumed all in white, while the rest wore black -- appearing very much like Chinese warriors on a battlefield, like a challenge between bishops and rooks.

While the piece featured the music of composer David Darling from the album "Darkwood" there were segments in the dance that were performed in complete silence. It was during these moments of silence that the strength of each movement was witnessed not through heavy floor landings, but through the force of each dancer's breath.

Throughout the performance, the audience appeared spellbound by the movement onstage. It wasn't until the performance was over that the spell was broken, with the audience yielding at the feet of the company LDTX.

Post Performance Discussion

At the end of the engagement, Willy Tsao, the company's Artistic Director, and a major influence in the evolution of Modern Dance in China took part in a post performance discussion with the audience in which he explained the dancer's technique. "The dancers don't hit the floor hard because they are trained not to do so. The combination of classical dance and martial arts is what makes this effect successful." Another question from the public and Perron was what the game of chess throughout the piece symbolized. "In China chess is often seen as a metaphor for life. There are constant struggles in life -- where decisions must be made and one must deal with conflict, similar to what is witnessed in the piece.