

# CAN'T CONTAIN US!



**HANCHER** 

  
THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF IOWA

# HANCHER

The National  
Acrobats of  
The People's  
Republic of  
China

Wednesday, October 19, 7:30 PM  
The Englert Theatre



Iowa Center for the Arts  
The University of Iowa



# PROGRAM

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## **1. Opening Ceremony**

Performers: all performers

## **2. In the Moonlight - Ballet and Hand-to-Hand Balancing**

Added breathtaking features to the classical ballet dancing, but also lend a sense of elegance to the acrobatic hand-to-hand balancing techniques.

## **3. Buffoonery - the Swan Lake**

## **4. The Five Musical Elements – Hand Juggling With Balls**

Performer: Zhao Hanlong

Different from traditional ball juggling, this act is made more difficult by throwing the balls on the floor and then catching them. The truly amazing part of the act is the fact that the acrobat must constantly throw down the balls while climbing up and down the stairs. The nine balls the acrobat must juggle are another highlight, earning the acrobat the moniker “King of Nine Balls.”

## **5. Solo**

One acrobat performs a balance routine on the floor, creating beautiful shapes.

## **15-Minute Intermission**

## **6. Crystal of White Snow - Contortionist with Cups**

Performers: Di Hui, etc.

Perched on a small board supported by the heads of the acrobats, the actress presents unbelievable contortion poses with her head, feet and hands, all while holding numerous glass pagodas.

## **7. Juggling Tridents**

The solo performer uses his arms to juggle long fishing forks around his body in what is a very traditional Chinese acrobatic act.

## **8. Equilibrium**

Stretching the human body beyond its limitations, the actor balances on the head, shoulders, arms, elbows and palms of another actor. This act adds a sense of strength to the acrobatic hand-to-hand balancing techniques, and serves as a unique combination of both Eastern and Western art.

## **9. Clown Act**

## **10. Hand Juggling**

The juggler plays with badminton pads, beginning with two and slowly working up to five or six at a time. He does the same with rings, starting with four and adding rings until he juggles ten at once.

## **11. Daring Chasing in the Sky – Swinging High Crutches**

Performers: Li Zhenyu, Zuo Chaofeng, Ge Wen

This new acrobatic act, which was invented by the company, won the Silver Medal at the Paris Cirque de Demain Festival in 2011.

## **12. Buckjumps and Rhythm – Grand Pagoda of Bowls**

Performers: Wang Yang, Huang Shifeng, Tian Tianyu, etc.

By combining traditional bowl-balancing skills with breathtaking throwing and catching techniques, this act provides a unique blend of rhythm and silence. With the bowls held tightly by the actress’s foot for the duration of the act, the magnificence of the Chinese character is vividly presented. The spectacular key movements, such as “single hand balancing and rolling,” “hand throwing and catching continuously,” and “throwing up to the fourth level” (in which two acrobats throw an actress to the top of a human pagoda three-heads tall), can be found nowhere else in the world.

This act won Golden Clown Award, which is recognized as the “Acrobatic Oscar,” at the 28th International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, along with other golden awards both at home and abroad.

## **13. Finale**

# Acrobats - long history, passionate dedication, amazing artistry

By Tine Schempp

The Chinese culture has a long and rich history of acrobatics. The National Acrobats of the People's Republic of China was founded by the government in 1950 and is funded by a special grant from the municipality of Beijing. The troupe is dedicated to improving and renewing the standards of acrobatics and to continually investing in scientific research on acrobatic training. The ensemble also works to add new facilities and equipment for the performers and students to each year. This company has toured to over 40 other countries worldwide.

The history of acrobatics is rumored to go back as far as 4,000 years, but documentation is scarce because practitioners were protective of their skills and did not want foreign invaders to steal the secrets of this elegant art form. Many early acrobat troupes were families that passed their skills on to the next generation while traveling throughout their provinces performing.

Today most municipalities and provinces have their own acrobat troupes. Troupes may have schools and training facilities where the performers train every day. It is typical for children to begin training as early as five or six years old. There are still many family operated or privately operated troupes performing all over China and around the world, as well as the government funded troupes of several municipalities and provinces.

In a typical day at an acrobatic school children will have lessons in diet, exercise, academics, and physical training. The day starts 6 a.m. and ends by 9 or 10 p.m. Students start their

day with warm ups, breakfast, physical training, and then academics later in the evening after supper. The first two years of a young acrobat's training are the most important. They are evaluated by their teachers on four basic categories: handstands, tumbling, flexibility, and dance. It is these evaluations that will ultimately determine which acts the students will be performing and what skills they will be focusing on in their training.

Students can begin performing for audiences as early as 12 years old. Many acrobats retire from performing between the ages of 20 and 30 because the physical demands of being an acrobat wear on the body quickly. Some move on to other careers while others become teachers and administrators for their troupes.

Living, working, and training with the same group of peers creates an environment for the acrobats to form strong bonds from childhood. The lifestyle of an acrobat also requires a lot of traveling, and having strong family bonds with your fellow acrobats makes traveling a lot easier, especially when traveling to other countries. We're very pleased the National Acrobats of the People's Republic of China have traveled to Iowa City to perform for us.

*Tine Schempp is UI dance major who is also pursuing the Performing Arts Entrepreneurship Certification. She is one of two Hancher Arts Management Interns for the 2011-2012 season. ♦*

## Movement Never Lies

By Julia Gouge

*Paul Taylor Dance Company to perform on November 1 at West High School*

The Paul Taylor Dance Company, one of the world's premier dance ensembles, was developed by Paul Taylor in the 1950s. Taylor is the last living member of a pantheon of dancers, including Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, credited with pioneering modern dance in America. Although Taylor retired as a performer in 1974, Paul Taylor Dance Company and his three other companies continue to showcase his inexhaustible repertoire of new choreography that engages audiences worldwide. The high talent of his dancers is irrefutable, as several famous dancers have emerged from the company since its establishment, including David Parsons, Twyla Tharp, Christopher Gillis, Senta Driver, and Amy Marshall.

In a number of his early pieces, Taylor desired to bring vernacular movement into the high art of dance. He was inspired by and collaborated with visual artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, who were attempting to break similar barriers in painting by incorporating everyday symbols and techniques into their work. To Taylor, vernacular movement included everyday gestures and stances from the street, such as checking a watch or waiting for a bus. Taylor's work reflects the beauty and pathos of the most common aspects of society. Early audiences found Taylor's style unusual and inaccessible, thus prompting Martha Graham to label him the "naughty boy" of dance. Today, Taylor remains cutting-edge.

The strength and honesty with which Taylor addresses life's most difficult subjects is perhaps what has attracted audiences to his work for decades. Through dance, he wordlessly illuminates experiences with war, spirituality, sexuality, morality, and mortality. Taylor confronts topics both meta-

physical and seemingly insignificant, often drawing from iconic moments in American history. In the 1980s, Taylor took a poignant look at soldiers, their families, and military structures. By telling the story of intimate relationships among military men through dance, he shed a new light on war and prompted the New York Times to hail him "among the great war poets." Taylor shies away from no subject, and in the past ten years alone has produced choreography that condemns American imperialism, pokes fun at feminism, and warns against blind submission to authority.

Aside from provocative subject matter, the Paul Taylor Dance Company promises an exceptional performance experience with dance given Taylor's quirky musical taste. In the 1960s, Taylor began setting his dances to experimental music, both modern and ancient, and continues to do so today. In the past, he has choreographed to an eclectic mix of sounds including rock and roll, Baroque concertos, laughter, Medieval masses, telephone time announcements, and compositions from Debussy and John Cage.

Taylor's work has earned him three Guggenheim Fellowships, a MacArthur Fellowship, an Emmy, a National Medal of Arts, and even knighthood by the French government. Taylor's choreography and the dancers of the Paul Taylor Dance Company undoubtedly tackle stark realities but also celebrate the passion, joy, and humor of life in America.

*The Paul Taylor Dance Company will be performing Tuesday, November 1, at 7:30 pm in the West High School Auditorium. For tickets, call the Hancher Box Office at 319-335-1160 or 1-800-HANCHER, or order online at [www.hancher.uiowa.edu](http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu). ♦*



**For Taylor,  
a dance is the  
first step in  
returning the  
viewer to the  
street more  
aware of the  
beauty in  
the simple  
movements he  
or she sees  
every day.  
—PBS**

*Julia Gouge is an art history major at the University of Iowa. During the summer of 2011, she was a member of the Hancher intern team.*

## Celebrating an ancient tradition in the modern world AnDa Union brings Mongolian music to Iowa City on October 27

By **Bian Elkhatib**

*Bian Elkhatib is a UI student in English literature with an emphasis in creative writing and a member of the Hancher intern team.*

Imagine you are in a rural province of Inner Mongolia. A chilly breeze sweeps across your face. The sun has just risen, and it is time to milk the yaks and continue your journey along the rocky steppes. As you dismantle the family yurt, your mother begins singing a song, a song that has been in her family for generations.

Mongolian music. Those two words only begin to describe AnDa Union's spirited, tonal, and dynamic sound. The group plays a variety of instruments, from the traditional horse head fiddle—which uses real horse hair - to the more common lute. Influenced by Mongolia's ancient folk music, AnDa Union captures the country's rich history, including its triumphs and downfalls.

Living in Hohhot, China, the group's ten members work actively in their community, fostering cultural awareness and musical education. The ensemble, formed in 2003, call themselves "music gatherers," collecting both ancient and modern sounds. Drawing inspiration from Genghis Khan's unification of Mongol tribes, AnDa seeks to unite historical sounds with listeners from around the world through shared experience and history. The horse hair fiddle expresses joyous musicality, while the lute emotes deep longing and nostalgia.

AnDa members come from diverse backgrounds, and their lives encompass the dual aspects of modern and traditional Mongolian life. One member, Chinggel, makes Mongolian metal flutes, and drives a Yamaha motorcycle. Another member, Urgen, grew up with the traditional

herder lifestyle and is now married to a children's television presenter. Saikhannakha, who plays the Morin Huur in AnDa, recently opened a bar, in hopes of it becoming a youth music venue.

As the new generation of Mongolians leave their nomadic lifestyle and settle in cities, fears that old traditions and music will be lost become real. However, the group is making its mark on the musical world, ensuring that traditional Mongolian folk music is never forgotten. AnDa Union was recently the subject of a documentary called *From the Steppes to the City*, which details the group's struggle to keep ancient music and traditions alive. The ensemble has also released a new CD, entitled *The Wind Horse*, and recently performed at the Kennedy Center Festival in China. When listening to AnDa's music, it is obvious why these traditional songs have lasted over thousands of years, and that AnDa will continue to bring this music into the future.

So log off Facebook, turn off your television, and immerse yourself in the beautiful sounds and handmade instruments of ancient Mongolia. Watch as these performers fight to keep their cultural traditions relevant in our increasingly globalized world.

AnDa Union will be performing at the Englert Theatre on Thursday October 27 at 7:30 P.M.

*For tickets, call the Hancher Box Office at 319-335-1160 or 1-800-HANCHER, or order online at <http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu>. ♦*