

The Knotcracker: Boldly Breaking with Traditions



By Laura Salinger

Renowned choreographer and dancer Li Chiao-Ping stayed true to her usual bold style recently and put her own spin on the usual holiday traditions. While a traditional performance of “The Nutcracker” can be a holiday institution for some, try on “The Knotcracker” for size. Li Chiao-Ping Dance showcased this evening-length event with Chiao-Ping’s usual creative flair from Dec. 3-5 at the Promenade Hall of the Overture Center for the Arts.

“The Knotcracker” follows the story of Little Miss Steps (Kenna Titus), a young girl determined to dance who is faced with bullying and other challenges. The story also follows her adult counterpart (company member Liz Sexe). While playing on a few Nutcracker themes, the show was decidedly Li Chiao-Ping’s style, blending dance and storytelling with visual creativity and athletic prowess. Features of the evening included a duet where dancers spun from colorful ribbons hanging from the ceiling and a Chinese dragon dance, performed by guests from the Zhong Yi Kung Fu Association. The ultimate moral: don’t give up on your dreams, learn to love yourself, accept others’ differences, and simply, hope.

“More than seven months ago, I toyed with the idea of making my own “Nutcracker,” but quickly changed my mind after listening to a recording of a “Klezmer Nutcracker,” deciding that I was much more interested in creating my own story altogether rather than re-creating someone else’s,” explains Li Chiao-Ping. “The title came later when I found my subject. As a dance educator, I find myself in the role of sleuth at times, trying to untangle the knots of my students’ bodies and movement patterns. My own visits to my favorite chiropractor likewise added to my sense of us as puzzles. After hearing a friend’s story about her daughter’s problems at school, followed by more recent tragedies about bullying, I discovered that my small story had farther-reaching connections and so, with this new work, I offer you a message of hope. Wrapped up in this program meant to delight and entertain is a wish for mutual respect and acceptance of differences.”

About Li Chiao-Ping

Since 1993, renowned dancer, choreographer, and producer Li Chiao-Ping and her dance company, Li Chiao-Ping Dance, have made Madison, Wis. their home. A professor in the UW-Madison dance program, Li’s work has been described as athletic, emotionally charged, and visually stunning. As a Chinese American, she has often explored culture and identity in her charged performances. She has produced and performed over 60 works for the stage and screen, including “Yellow River” and “Odyssey,” and continues to use her visionary dance style to create unique and powerful performances.

Having traveled worldwide to perform, she is a much decorated dancer and choreographer. In 2001, she was named by Dance Magazine as one of the 25 “we’ll be watching in 2001 and for years to come!” She has received first place awards in Choreography and Performance for the Los Angeles Arts Council, has been twice nominated for a Bonnie Bird Choreography Fund North American Award, and has received numerous other awards, grants, and commissions.

Laura Salinger is a freelance writer based in Madison,

Wis.



COMMUNITY INVOLVED
INNOVATIVE
NOT-FOR-PROFIT COOPERATIVE
PATIENT-CENTERED
QUALITY DRIVEN

www.ghcscw.com

FIND YOUR
NEW CAREER at
www.ghcscw.com

P.O. Box 44971
Madison, WI 53744-4971
(608) 251-4156 or (800) 605-4327
TDD (608) 828-4815
AA/EOE

BETTER TOGETHER™  **Group Health
Cooperative**
of South Central Wisconsin

MK09-83-0(609)A

[HOME](#)

[JANUARY 2011
ARCHIVES](#)