

## BEIJING CONTEMPORARY DANCE THEATRE

The birth of Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater in December 2008 created the first contemporary ballet troupe in China and a bright new star in the constellation of dance organizations in the Capital. The new company brings under one roof the talents of three dance veterans: Wang Yuanyuan (Choreographer and Artistic Director); Han Jiang (Lighting Design); Tan Shaoyuan (Set Design). These three artists have worked together extensively over the past 5 years, with performances and accolades around the globe, on stage and in films—their new home at the Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater allows them to focus their energies on developing fresh works that showcase their combined talents. Under the artistic direction of Wang Yuanyuan, one of the most sought after choreographers in contemporary dance in China, the young company boasts 19 dancers all trained in ballet—the first such fusion of ballet and modern dance among Chinese companies. The company’s rich repertoire plays on its strengths in ballet, bringing together traditional elements of Chinese culture and dance with ballet and a modern edge. The company seeks to foster a love and appreciation for dance in Chinese society and has already opened the BCDT Training Center, which gives children an opportunity to train with top teachers in theater and ballet. In an effort to enrich dance culture in China and promote cultural exchange and dialogue, the company is already sponsoring an annual program to bring three visiting choreographers to China. Through performance, visiting artist programs, and educational outreach, Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater aims both to lead the cultivation of dance and the arts in China, and to bring a glimpse of the creative visions of modern China to the world stage.

## ARTISTIC DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

### WANG YUANYUAN (王媛媛)

Wang Yuanyuan is one of China’s leading modern dance choreographers. Born and raised in Beijing, she studied Choreography at the Beijing Dance Academy, where she later served as teacher and helped redesign the curriculum, at the same time winning high awards for the school as dancer and choreographer in international competitions in Shanghai, Paris, Seoul and Moscow. From 2000 to 2002 she trained at the prestigious Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program at the California Institute of Arts (Cal Arts) School of Dance in Los Angeles. Ms. Wang has led the development of modern dance in China. In 1998, she was named resident choreographer for the National Ballet of China. The following year she premiered *Butterfly Lover* at the People’s Hall for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Ballet, as well as a Chinese version of the *Nutcracker*. In recognition of her excellence in choreography, she was invited to serve as guest choreographer at the New York City Ballet in 2003. She has choreographed important works for top Chinese filmmakers, including a ballet version of *Raise the Red*

*Lantern* for director Zhang Yimou and the dance sequences for Tan Dun's music in *The Banquet* (a Chinese adaptation of *Hamlet*) for the director Feng Xiaogang. She has been invited to choreograph for many top companies throughout China, and was given the honor to choreograph both for the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 and the Olympic Opening Ceremonies in Beijing (again with Zhang Yimou) in 2008. Her works have been staged around the globe in the United States, Russia, Japan, France, Bulgaria, Denmark, Singapore, and Australia, as well as Beijing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. She was the first choreographer in Chinese history to win top prize for choreography in International Ballet Competitions an unprecedented four times. In 2008, she founded the Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater with veterans Lighting Director Han Jiang and Set Designer Tan Shaoyuan, and the company premiered the new work *Space Diary*.

## EVENING-LENGTH PROGRAMS

### **STIRRED FROM A DREAM (惊梦)**

**Time:** 70 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** Du Wei

**Dancers:** 3 female, 9 male, 1 male Kunqu Opera singer

A haunting and erotic meditation on the transience of love and life, *Stirred from a Dream* conjures the emotional core of the Ming Dynasty Kunqu Opera masterpiece *Peony Pavilion*, originally performed in 1598. This modern dance interpretation of the opera—an opera which takes 20 hours to perform in its entirety--distills the essence of the original into an intense 70-minute dance drama. Exploring the boundaries between life and death, between love and madness, between illusion and reality, this seductive work combines ethereal stagecraft, stunning multimedia, and sensual choreography to follow the passions and illusions of the beautiful girl Du Liniang as she pursues the love of the young scholar Liu Mengmei. Du Wei's mesmerizing original score transmutes the traditional sounds of Kunqu Opera into a modern piece which plays on echoes of ancient song. Acclaimed film director Feng Xiaogang's hand in the project is seen in cinematic touches and the nuances of visual storytelling. A theatrical journey across the threshold of the underworld and into the land of dreams, *Stirred from a Dream* breathes new life into the characters of this classical story. *Stirred from a Dream* premiered at The Peking University Theater in Beijing in November, 2007.

**Haze (霾)**

**Time:** 70 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** Henryk Gorecki, Symphony No. 3 + Biosphere (selections)

**Dancers:** The Full Company

*Haze* came into being as a creative response to the economic and environmental crises of early 2009. On a bare stage covered in thick sponge mats, the dancers strive to keep their footing in time with the brooding music contemporary sacred music of Gorecki, later giving way the electronica of Biosphere. The bare stage, challenging surface, and ponderous music frame the movements of the dancers, as they stumble, roll, fall, crawl and collapse on the uncertain terrain. The piece proceeds as a metaphor that links the environmental haze and pollution with the spiritual confusion involved in a time of social or individual crisis. The piece explores the spiritual struggle of finding one's way through darkness. *Haze* will premiere on May 5, 2009, at the Tianqiao Theater, Beijing.

**REPERTORY PROGRAM**

**UNSTEADY SPACE (不定空间)**

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** Excerpts from Antonio Vivaldi's Violin Concertos Op. 4 "La Stravaganza," arranged by Chen Yuli

**Dancers:** The Full Company

*Unsteady Space* plays on the tension between restraint and freedom, form and flow, as the dancers move between structured ballet point work and the more fluid movements of modern dance. It seems as if the dancers discover the potential and limitations of the forms throughout the process of the piece, which is driven by the edgy remix of Vivaldi's Violin Concertos "La Stravaganza," composed by Chen Yuli. As music shifts from the Baroque majesty of Vivaldi to the sharp dissonance of Vivaldi-remixed, the dancers appear to struggle in an open rehearsal space in a live exploration of form and passion that draws the spectators with them. *Unsteady Space* premiered at The Minzugong Theater in Beijing in October, 2004.

## **CROSSING (跨界)**

**Time:** 18 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** Wu Jun, Liu Bo

**Dancers:** 6 female, 7 male

Onto a dark and empty stage, a single dancer enters from stage right to the quiet hum of white noise. The single act of marking his path begins the action of this piece, and a single streamer falls, vertically dividing the stage, as the industrial cry of the original music by Wu Jun and Liu Bo begins. *Crossing* traces the struggles of the individual dancers to mark the emptiness, and evolves as simple white horizontal and vertical streamers fill and reconfigure the space. Asymmetrical in form, the piece progresses as solos, duets and trios fill the evolving set, pitting lyrical movement against the stark realities of the space and sound. *Crossing* premiered in summer, 2008, at the Lyric Theater in Hong Kong.

## **THE MOMENT (此刻)**

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** Chen Yuli, Joewi Verhoeven, Wang Zhiyi

**Dancers:** 7 female, 7 male

*The Moment* explores the transience of “now” through a series of seven vignettes that trace the arc of a love affair. Created especially for the opening performance of the Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater, this playful collection showcases the company’s strengths in choreography, set and lighting design, multimedia, and the dancers’ fluency in the idioms of ballet and modern dance. Charged by the energetic original score, the dancers embody the magnified emotions of “now” in a love affair, from the thrill of first meeting, to the electricity of first touch, through the passion of embrace, through loss, insecurity and finally acceptance that all that exists is this moment right now. The piece premiered at the Tianqiao Theater in Beijing on December 10, 2008.

## **DIARY OF EMPTY SPACE (空间日记)**

**Time:** 1 hour 18 minutes

**Choreography:** Wang Yuanyuan

**Music:** various

**Dancers:** full company

*Diary of Empty Space* is a collection of three works from our Repertory Program: *Unsteady Space*, *Crossing*, and *The Moment*. The three pieces together played together for the opening performance of the Beijing Contemporary Dance Theater, and showcase the talents and strengths of the company. From the playful point-work and edgy

Vivaldi-remix of *Unsteady Space*, to the asymmetry and lyrical realism of *Crossing*, to the playfulness and depth of *The Moment*, the anthology makes for an inspiring evening of dance. See individual pieces for more detailed descriptions. The collection premiered at the Tianqiao Theater in Beijing on December 10, 2008.

## KEY ARTISTS

### **Tan Shaoyuan (谭韶远) / Visual Design Director & Set Designer**

Tan Shaoyuan was born in Qinghai, China, and graduated from the Central Academy of Drama, Department of Stage Design, in 1999. He has built a reputation as a versatile and creative set-designer, and has served as director the ACCSDO Performance & Visual Design Agency and as set designer for the Lin Zhaohua Drama Studio in Beijing. He is known for excellence in set design, lighting design, and multi-media visual arts. His portfolio includes work with many top directors, including a number of plays for Lin Zhaohua. He served as assistant to the set designer for the 1999 performance of the full-length *Peony Pavilion* at Lincoln Center in New York with director Chen Shizheng. His design has appeared in China, the United States, and Germany, and in 2004 he was awarded the Grand Prix for Stage Design for the Fourth Annual China-Japan International Friendship Award.

### **Han Jiang (韩江) / Lighting Designer**

Han Jiang was born in Ningbo, China, and graduated from the Central Academy of Drama in Stage Design. In 2002, he became the lighting designer of the National Ballet of China. As one of the younger generation of Chinese designers, he has been active in the field of stage design for nearly 10 years. His style in modern dance is at once cool and creative, transforming performance space with both liberty and precision. After learning his craft through work at the Central Academy of Drama, Mr. Han developed his personal style through long collaboration with the famed director Lin Zhaohua and through his work at the National Ballet. His collaboration with Wang Yuanyuan in modern dance began in 2004. His work has featured in performances around the globe, including China, the United States, Mexico, Australia, Russia, England, South Korea, and Japan. In 2008, he worked with famed composer Tan Dun on the new opera *The Gate*.