From the Artistic Director:
China. So, how did it go? What people are saying...

"I was thrilled to see authentic Isadora Duncan dance for the first time."
WAN Su, Professor, Beijing Dance Academy

"It felt as if I were in conversation with Isadora Duncan herself..."
ZHAN Xiaonan, Choreographer, Hong Kong Dance Company

"The dancers’ outstanding performance and strong presence held the entire space. This is a world-class company."
SHAN Xiehe, President, Shenzhen Youth Social Education Association

"Only people with hearts so pure can deliver such a beautiful performance."
What did we perform? We performed a suite of dances from the operas of C. W. Gluck that tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, from the wedding celebrations, the infamous snake bite, Orpheus' decent into the Underworld, his encounter with the Furies, to his ascent out and into the Land of the Blessed Spirits. Then came the Andante con Moto movement from Schubert's 9th Symphony, with our Homage to Apollo, the eternal rising of the sun. Next followed the solo Mother, to the music of Scriabin with the voice-over telling the audience of the tragic death of Isadora's two children. The last dance was in homage to the God of Wine and Ecstasy, Dionysius, with music again from Schubert's 9th Symphony, closed the program. Our encore was a group version of the Rose Petals, from the suite of Brahms' Waltzes.

Click here for slideshows of the performance and behind the scenes

In preparing for the program I had to dream big for a huge stage and small cast (Kim D'Agnese, Emily D'Angelo, Beth Disharoon, Faith Kimberling, Nicole Poulos, and myself). And, I included the Duncan Dance Academy students, with only a few weeks of Duncan lessons and rehearsals! Sight unseen, I wove the children into the program and prayed. To engage and educate our new foreign audience, we projected images of Isadora with voice-overs, telling her life story with highlights of her dance philosophy, (subtitles in Chinese). A further step in the touring was gaining approval from the "Chinese censorship committee" for our program. The program could not be political, challenging, or controversial in any way -- all joy and light. We did add the Dance of the Furies, keeping within the boundary of safe territory with a Western Greek mythical theme... Once approved, I moved forward with my most experienced Company members who could handle the opera size stage.
The Production: When I performed in China last year to inaugurate the contractual signing ceremony, I went Solo. I had only Company Manager Tina Huang to help with production details. We quickly learned the extent of female respect in this culture. From that experience I decided to bring our own male Stage Manager and Lighting Designer. That secured, we went for additional days to engage with the students and the Duncan Dance Academy teachers, which is the other aspect of my responsibilities as Artistic Director of the Academy. The preparation days were glorious, with time for the Company to focus intensely on long Company classes, rehearsals. We also enjoyed Shenzhen and Chinese culture...the food, mall shopping, observing classes, and just exploring.

The production was a challenge with delays of all kinds, miscommunication, and bizarre theater rules. First, yes, you could sneak food in, then, no. You could not sit in the house seats, but only folding chairs provided. For our extensive tunic ironing, I was promised two wardrobe helpers. One arrived with an iron, but she didn’t know how to use it... Backstage help was inexperienced as they focused watching the rehearsals and the show! (A good thing?!) We missed a few entrances because costume changes were so tight.

Did we dance our hearts out? You bet! And we rocked out the best program of our collective selves. The dancers amazed me.

The audience responded with spontaneous clapping along with our bow encore (Ode to Joy). Then we received bundles of flowers and bowed with the children...followed by banquets with all the Chinese food delicacies.
The Company left the next morning early, returning to their families and life back in the USA. Tina and I stayed for a post-performance reflection seminar focusing on Isadora Duncan Dance and the current state of dance education in China, with representatives from Beijing Dance Academy, Hong Kong Dance Company, and Shenzhen Youth Social Education Association. One highlight of note: historically, 30 years ago China was exposed to Duncan dance as the country opened to the West. Overall, modern dance as an expression has had a bumpy existence. Most dance training is still in standard ballet (RAD), traditional Chinese folk, and a smattering of modern styles from Graham and contemporary experimental. This was news to me, and made the positive reception of our visit all the more important historically. More tours are being scheduled now. Enjoy the slideshows (links above) and stay posted!

Through all the production nightmares and pre-show, I thanked the dancers for coming on this journey with me. In the dressing room I told them, "with all that I have taught you, and with all you bring individually, in the name of Isadora Duncan, we are all ambassadors to her great Art. Let's dance our hearts out!" -- Yours in the Dance, Lori

A special thank you to all for helping make this tour and our existence of the highest artistic caliber possible, and to the amazing people who have supported our China adventures to date: Stanford Makishi, Daniel Krause, HUANG Xin, Fran Kirmser, Jim &
All about our China tour.

Ginger Belliove, Steve Herzog and ZHANG Yue of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, Chantal D’Aulnis, Reba Palker, and Dean XIAO Xiangrong of Beijing Normal University.

Your expertise in all regards helped so much!

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WANG Mingtao, President, YMM Art Education Group

"Seeing Shenzhen and the Duncan Dance Academy for the first time was exciting! It was glorious to perform in the beautiful Shenzhen Poly Theatre -- it was fun and an honor to dance on such a large stage. I also loved the generosity of Moses and YMM while treating us to a number of wonderful traditional Chinese meals!"
-- Faith Kimberling

"I was very impressed by the Duncan Dance Academy and the people of Shenzhen, who greeted this work with such enthusiasm and respect. Besides performing in their beautiful theater, we enjoyed a wide-ranging cultural exchange, teaching Duncan, rehearsing with the children, observing their classes, and sharing ideas over dinner and wine. Shenzhen is such a

Upcoming Performances

February 6-10
Residency
Randolph College

March 25
“March Madness”
IDDF Studio
BUY NOW

April 17-28
Residency
Beijing Normal University

May 4, 11, 18, 25
June 1, 8
Workshop in partnership with The Creative Center

June 19
Isadora’s 140th Birthday
The Joyce Theater

July 10-19
Residency
Duncan Dance Center
Athens, Greece

August 13-16
Summer Workshop
modern, vibrant city -- I hope to go back someday!" -- Beth Disharoon

Photos courtesy of the Duncan Dance Academy