

Saturday, January 25, 2014, 2pm & 8pm
Sunday, January 26, 2014, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

For Families

The Peking Acrobats®

with special guests

JIGU! Thunder Drums of China®



Cal Performances' 2013-2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

The Peking Acrobats*

with special guests

JIGU! Thunder Drums of China*

PROGRAM

Hear the Tiger and the Dragon Roar (*featuring* JIGU!)

Pole Position

The Nose Knows It

Diving Daring Do

It's a Tight Squeeze

The Sounds of Rolling Walnuts (*featuring* JIGU!)

Let the Spinning Plates Spin

Let's Have a Ball!

The Happy Chef's Colorful Contortion

Kung-Fu Ceremony

INTERMISSION

The Lion Dance

The Bull and the Tiger (*featuring* JIGU!)

Fruit on the Tree

Keep It Under Your Hat

What a "Jar"-ring Experience!

Daring Diablos

Pagoda of Chairs

Springtime Paradise (*featuring* JIGU!)

Human Pyramid/Bicycle Pagoda Finale

The program is subject to change.

The Peking Acrobats suggest that parents advise their children that what they see on stage takes years of practice and should not be tried at home!

SINCE THEIR DÉBUT in 1986, **The Peking Acrobats** have redefined audience perceptions of Chinese acrobatics. They perform daring maneuvers atop a precarious pagoda of chairs; they are experts at treacherous feats of daring, trick-cycling, precision tumbling, somersaulting, and gymnastics. They defy gravity with amazing displays of contortion, flexibility, and control. They push the envelope of human possibility with astonishing juggling dexterity and incredible balancing feats, showcasing tremendous skill and ability. They are masters of agility and grace. Accompanied by the live musicians, playing traditional Chinese instruments with modern flair, high-tech special effects that coalesce with the music, and all of this in harmony with the Acrobats' awe-inspiring feats, an exuberant entertainment event appears before your eyes, featuring all the excitement and festive pageantry of a Chinese carnival infused with fresh, explosive energy.

Many of the magnificent acts we see today, despite their sophistication, were performed in ancient times. The history of Chinese acrobatics is rich in tradition and dates back over 2,000 years. Records of acrobatic acts can be found as early as the Ch'in Dynasty (221–207 B.C.). Throughout the history of China the acrobatic arts flourished, but in varying degrees. Originally, court entertainments were formal and monotonous, quite the opposite of the lively, folk arts of the people. And, it did all begin with folk arts: tumbling, juggling ordinary household objects, and balancing. According to Fu Qifeng, author of *Chinese Acrobatics Through the Ages*, acrobatics originated from the people's daily life, drawing from their experiences in work, war, and sacrificial rites. Common games of the people, such as "rang hitting," or throwing a small wooden strip the size and shape of a shoe sole at a target, developed accuracy. Modern-day whip feats are traced back to this game. Myth and religion also influenced the acrobatic arts. The Lion Dance is Buddhist in origin. The lion was seen as the reincarnation of a woman, who was teased into revealing her true identity. This dance was a symbol of spiritual renewal and revered for dispelling bad luck.

Eventually, the excitement of the acrobats' amazing feats caught on and held the attention of the ruling classes. During the Warring States Period, acrobatics became widespread. It was believed that practicing acrobatics could steel people's will, increase their physical strength, and hone the accuracy of their movements.

During the Han Dynasty (207 B.C.–220 A.D.), acrobatics flourished, and this wide variety of juggling, tumbling, and magic acts came to be known as the "Hundred Entertainments." It was at this time, according to Fu Qifeng, that Emperor Wu Di presented the first grand acrobatic performance at the Imperial Court. The emperor invited a number of important foreign dignitaries, thus making this performance the first time in Chinese history that acrobatic art was presented for diplomatic purposes. The foreign guests were so impressed by what they saw that they agreed to enter into military and trade alliances with the Han Emperor.

Chinese acrobats through the ages have continued to perfect what has become an evolving folk art tradition. The Peking Acrobats' ability to perform the astounding is rooted in centuries of this tradition. No doubt, the Chinese acrobats of the Han Dynasty would be awestruck and amazed at how their modern-day counterparts have elevated their art, and that their tradition, begun so many ages ago, is still going strong, even into the 21st century.

Tradition demands that each generation of acrobats add its own improvements and embellishments to their acts. Generations of families have carried on this tradition. Children begin training at a young age and adhere to a rigorous training schedule which they follow over the length of their careers. Today, the acrobat in China is considered an artist. Because of the unusual and difficult nature of the feats involved, high honor is conferred upon those skilled enough to become acrobats; in China, an acrobat may be considered the equivalent of an opera star in the West. As the years go by, it is telling that the Chinese acrobatic tradition just gets stronger, due to the continued innovation of the artists and the endless enthusiasm from their adoring public.

THE PEKING ACROBATS have been the featured performers on numerous television shows and celebrity-studded TV specials, including appearances on *The Wayne Brady Show*, NBC's *Ring in the New Year Holiday Special*, Nickelodeon's *Unfabulous*, and *Ellen's Really Big Show*, hosted by Ellen DeGeneres. The Acrobats set the world record for the Human Chair Stack on Fox's *Guinness Book Primetime*, where they astounded audiences with their bravery and dexterity as they balanced six people precariously atop six chairs, 21 feet up in the air, without safety lines. The Acrobats are also making the Hollywood scene on the silver screen. Company members were featured in director Steven Soderbergh's hit film *Ocean's 11*, playing alongside Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt, and George Clooney and other members of Hollywood's elite. Qin Shaobo, an alumnus of the Peking Acrobats, appeared in that film's two blockbuster sequels, *Ocean's 12* and *Ocean's 13*. The Acrobats were also the featured performers at the star-studded Hollywood première of *Ocean's 13* in June 2007.

As an added treat for their 2014 North American tour, the Peking Acrobats are joined on stage by drum and percussion virtuosos JIGU! Thunder Drums of China. The performers in JIGU!—which in Chinese means to touch or beat the drum—literally make music with drums and percussion, and are an innovative new addition to this year's tour. Hailing from Shanxi Province, this world-renowned company of drummers, percussionists, and musicians has toured North America many times, and has thrilled audiences around the globe with their awe-inspiring performances. They add a full-tilt sensory dimension to the Acrobats' performances, and you can feel their incredible music inside your soul as they play.

The Peking Acrobats achieved another milestone as they made their début at the Hollywood Bowl in fall 2003. They performed as part of the Hollywood Bowl's Fireworks Season Finale, where the company blended their unique brand of acrobatics with the majestic sound of the 100-piece Hollywood

Bowl Orchestra, conducted by John Mauceri. The company's musicians played traditional Chinese instruments alongside the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra as the acrobats inspired audiences with their powerful maneuvers in a multicultural, multimedia spectacular. Between the "fireworks" on stage and the "fireworks" in the air, audiences experienced theatrical alchemy at its finest.

Since their Hollywood Bowl début, the Peking Acrobats have performed with some of the most prestigious symphony orchestras in North America today, including the Atlanta Symphony, the Ravinia Festival Orchestra, the San Diego Symphony, the Cincinnati Pops, the Buffalo Philharmonic, and the San Francisco Symphony. In fall 2008, the Acrobats were invited to return to the Hollywood Bowl, where they performed with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra as special guest artists. In May 2011, the Acrobats performed in sold-out concerts with the Edmonton and Winnipeg symphonies in Canada. These concerts marked the first time that the Acrobats had performed with Canadian orchestras, expanding their reach to yet another concert-going audience.

In February 2005, the Peking Acrobats debuted in Italy, where they astounded audiences on a five-week, twelve-city tour that took them to Milan, Pisa, Bologna, and Naples, where they performed to sold-out crowds. Their opening in Milan was covered by the national Italian press.

Today in China, professional acrobatic troupes have many outlets for displaying their talents. Some appear on Chinese television, since the broadcast industry in China has expanded to include several channels featuring diverse programming. Some travel throughout China, bringing their own unique costumes, stage props, and acrobatic styles to factories, villages, army units, remote areas, and frontier outposts. Still others have formed joint ventures with theme parks as an economically thriving China has fostered the growth of its own family entertainment industry, where they perform seasonally as part of the theme park's entertainment.



Peking Acrobats Staff

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2014 North American Tour Credits

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