

## Elegant dance program focuses on Chinese families

By Roberta Burnett  
Special for The Republic

In 2000, Lisa Chow of Tempe's Desert Dance Theatre met H.T. Chen, of H.T. Chen & Dancers, a company based in New York's Chinatown.

They were brought together through an Arizona State University community outreach program to create Chen's elegant, evening-long dance *Bian Da*, choreographed and developed at Gammage Auditorium. Chow was its rehearsal director. The dance explores issues confronting Chinese immigrant families who must recognize the generational and cultural gap among family

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members while struggling to adjust to a new country, Chow said.

*Bian Da* is a multimedia event combining multiple art forms. When it was performed in Tempe four years ago it used cross-generational dancers, with help from the Valley's Chinese community.

"Many families from Tempe, Mesa, Chandler and Gilbert became part of the show," Chow said. Annie Hsu of Tempe led some traditional dancers including Scottsdale's Wei Li Chen. Kohong Chen, Wei Li's son,

skateboarded on stage. Quetzal Guerrero, a jazz violinist from Mesa, and friend Edgar Garcia of Phoenix, did break dancing to show immigrant youths becoming Americanized.

Now those dancers, who ranged in age from 6 to 86, are reuniting Tuesday night at Chandler Center for the Arts where they will have a potluck and see a videotape of their dance.

The event is a kickoff for two public events later in the week. Chen's company will perform *Journey to Gold Mountain* at 9:45 a.m. Thursday in a performance aimed at audiences from East Valley schools. And the company

will team with Desert Dance Theatre for *Looking Back, Dancing Forward* at 8 p.m. April 2. Both shows are at Chandler Center for the Arts.

Coincidentally, both companies celebrate their 25th anniversaries this year and continue to have close ties. Chow won a grant in 2000 to choreograph a dance for her company that premiered at Chen's venue, the Mulberry Street Theatre in New York. While there they learned *Warriors of Light*, which will be part of next Friday's program.

Chow said the process of a long-distance concert collaboration creates complexities during rehearsal and per-

formance. The 30-minute version of *Warriors* consists of each company performing separately, then combining dancers for another section. Citing time pressure as "challenging but doable," Chow said DDT rehearsed its parts beforehand, learning them from videotape.

Also on Friday's program, DDT will perform *The Butterfly Effect* by Billbob Brown, based on the science of chaos theory, which suggests that the beating of a butterfly's wings in China can create a hurricane in the Caribbean. DDT will also perform Marion Kirk Jones' *Quickening*, an earth-centered dance that celebrates

the community spirit of women.

Chen's company will perform *Opening the Gate*, which features Chinese martial arts movements to explore the search for self and humanity.

Tickets for Friday's performance range from \$10 to \$15 and are available through the box office at (480) 782-2680 or Ticketmaster at (480) 784-4444. For information on Thursday's performance, contact Desert Dance Theatre at (480) 962-4584. Chandler Center for the Arts is at 250 N. Arizona Ave.

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