

# H.T. Chen dances are savory blend

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There's a traditional Chinese feel to the dances of H.T. Chen — but the look is all-American modern.

After a week-long residency in Cincinnati, Mr. Chen and his company of nine dancers moved into the Jarson-Kaplan Theater for two performances this weekend. Friday's concert was undampened by the raging rains outside.

Actually by concert time the rains had begun to diminish and 200 people ventured to the theater. They were rewarded with an evening full of beautiful images supported by entrancing music.

Mr. Chen, who is Chinese, embraces the spirit of his ancestry with movements that reflect ceremony,

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ritual, drama and power. The mode of propulsion, however, is modern dance's deeply driven movements originating in the spine and middle. From this mix he creates grand gestures, rapid-fire moves and supple delicacies.

He presented "Opening the Gate" and "Warriors of Light," two older works, and a short preview of a new work, "Bian Dan".

To show what the company's weeklong residency had accomplished, students from School for the Creative and Performing Arts and Schiel School demonstrated what they had learned in workshops. They looked like little warrior dancers in

the making with choreographed martial arts moves.

The music, except for "Bian Dan," which had a modern beat as it began, was full of the ancient sounds of gongs, drums, chimes and monks chanting and singing and created a powerful background for the dancing.

In "Opening the Gate," interpretation was open. Gate to heaven? A temple? The human heart? The choice was yours. The piece was marked by rushes of energy as dancers surged forward to the audience.

Duets in every dance could be tender, but many reflected bodies coming together in tension. There were oddities, but if Mr. Chen's meaning was not always apparent, the sheer inventiveness of his movements were enough to keep you in your seat.