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Chinese dancers will take the stage at Wollenberg Auditorium

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Tom Paulu"> By Tom Paulu The Daily News Online | Posted: Thursday, April 23, 2009 12:00 am | No Comments Posted

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Chinese dancers will take the stage at Wollenberg Auditorium

Chinese dancers will fill the Wollenberg Auditorium stage with bright ribbons, glowing candles and shimmering silk costumes during a show Saturday night.

The Lily Cai Chinese Dance Company will present the final show in the Columbia Theatre's 2008-09 season at Lower Columbia College's Rose Center while the downtown theater is closed for renovation.

The Lily Cai company, based in San Francisco and named for its founder, melds ancient Chinese dance forms with modern choreography.

"It's not traditional Chinese dance," Cai said in a phone interview. "People sometimes misunderstand. As an immigrant myself, I had strong traditional and cultural roots before I came to the United States. I've lived in this country 26 years. I combine Chinese dance elements in a new look."

Cai's eight dancers are a mix of women born in China and in the U.S.

"They're all Chinese," Cai said. "I want to create a beauty and sense of Chinese women's lives on stage."

Cai is a native of Shanghai and former principal dancer with the Shanghai Opera House. As a soloist, she performed and toured in the United States and Europe. She started her own dance company in 1988.

The Longview program will include three sections:

- "Dynasty Suite" presents four classical Chinese dances from dynasties beginning in 770 B.C. In one, dancers in long blue dresses create visual patterns with baskets dangling on poles. In another dance, performers throw red silk ribbons into high arches that depict graceful goddesses. A third number features dancers walking on high platform sandals. The segment ends with a contemporary dance called "Straw Hat Girl."

The "Dynasty Suite" music was composed for the company by Gang Situ, a native of China, and Gary Schwantes.

- "Candelas," which is set to the solemn music of Gustav Mahler, features the candle as a symbol of humility.

"It's a very slow, meditative atmosphere," Cai said. "I find a candle is a perfect match" for the mood. "Also candle brings the peace," she said.

- "Silk Cascade" is inspired by the "splattered" paintings of modern artist Jackson Pollock. Cai's interpretation of traditional Chinese ribbon dancing evolves into a stage filled with the vivid

colors of 200 ribbons.

The dance is performed to music by Chinese composer Huan Zhi Li and contemporary American composer John Adams.

The Cai appearance is sponsored by Dorothy Gevers-Wojtowych, Cowlitz Bank and WESTAF (Western States Arts Federation).

Photo exhibit will accompany performance

Several Asian-themed events have been scheduled in conjunction with Lily Cai's dance presentation.

"Viet Nam Sojourn," an exhibit of photos by four people who went to Vietnam last year with a local group that is building schools there, is displayed at the LCC Art Gallery and the Koth Gallery at the Longview Public Library.

Kites from China, Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam will be displayed in the Rose Center lobby through Saturday. The kites are from the World Kite Museum in Long Beach.

IF YOU GO

What: Lily Cai Chinese Dance Company.

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Where: Wollenberg Auditorium, LCC Rose Center.

Tickets: \$20 in mezzanine, \$35 on main floor. Tickets for students 18 and younger \$17.50 with a full-price adult ticket in advance. All students through college \$10 at the door if available. 575-8499 or (888) 575-8499

More information: www.columbiatheatre.com.

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Posted in Lifestyles on *Thursday, April 23, 2009 12:00 am* Updated: 9:59 am.

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