Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan Brings 13 Tongues to Stanford Live

Artistic Director Cheng Tsung-lung’s energetic production fuses modern Taipei with legend and imagination

Stanford, CA, September 12, 2022—Under the direction of artistic director Cheng Tsung-lung, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan brings its production of 13 Tongues to Stanford Live on October 6. In 13 Tongues, Cheng transforms his childhood memories of the streets of Bangka into a fantastical, dreamlike world, fusing ancient ideas and modern Taipei culture into a visually arresting expression of cultural memory.
Founded in 1973 by choreographer Lin Hwai-min, Cloud Gate is one of Asia’s foremost contemporary dance companies and combines martial arts, meditation, Qi Gong, modern dance, and classical ballet. When Lin Hwai-min retired in 2019, he handed the reins to choreographer Cheng Tsung-lung who is touring with the company to the United States for the first time since being appointed artistic director in 2020.

"I was able to see 13 Tongues when I was visiting Shanghai in the fall of 2019,” says Chris Lorway, Stanford Live’s Executive Director. “This stunning production confirms that the company is in great hands under Tsung-lung’s leadership.”

As a child in the 1980s Cheng would contribute to the family business by helping his father sell slippers on the streets of Bangka/Wanhua, the oldest district of Taipei. Known for its vibrantly diverse and bustling street scene, Bangka embraced religious and secular life, rich and poor, work and play, and legal and illegal activities.

The young Cheng was transfixed by his mother’s accounts of the legendary 1960s street artist and storyteller known as “Thirteen Tongues” who had adopted Bangka for his informal stage. It was said that “Thirteen Tongues” could conjure up all the Bangka characters—high and low born, sacred and profane, men and women—in the most vivid, dramatic, and fluently imaginative narratives. Thirty years on, Cheng’s fascination with “Thirteen Tongues” became his inspiration as he transformed his childhood memories into dance.

Beginning and ending with the sound of a single handbell, the music accompanying 13 Tongues ranges from Taiwanese folk songs to Taoist chants to electronica. On a stage awash with projections of colors, shapes, and images, dancers gather, interact, separate, and then come together again in a vibrant representation of the clamor of street life. The spirit realm and the human realm also coalesce as the audience is taken on an immersive that recalls the art of “Thirteen Tongues” through centuries of human endeavor, behavior, and belief.

Credits
This tour is made possible in part by the grants from the Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan).
Tickets and More Information
Tickets are on sale now at live.stanford.edu.

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan
13 Tongues
Thursday, Oct 6, 7:30 pm
Memorial Auditorium
Tickets start at $32

About Stanford Live
Stanford Live presents a wide range of fine performances from around the world, fostering a vibrant learning community and providing distinctive experiences through the performing arts. From its home at Bing Concert Hall and Frost Amphitheater, Stanford Live functions simultaneously as a public square, a sanctuary and a lab, drawing from all Stanford University has to offer to connect performance to the most significant issues, ideas and discoveries of our time.

We take a moment to recognize that Stanford sits on the territory of Huichin, the ancestral and unceded land of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, who are the successors of the historic and sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Ohlone people. We recognize that every member of the community has benefited—and continues to benefit—from the use and occupation of this land. Consistent with our values of community and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the University’s relationship to Native people.

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