



krannert center

YOUTH SERIES

CELEBRATING
35 YEARS

THE MARTIAL ARTISTS
AND ACROBATS OF
TIANJIN, THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA

CHINA SOUL



COLLEGE OF
FINE + APPLIED
ARTS





ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Glittering costumes, breathtaking tricks, and magnificent feats of athletic daring splendidly create a tour de force when this magnetic, award-winning troupe takes to international stages. First formed in 1957, but with a legacy stretching back thousands of years, the Martial Artists and Acrobats of Tianjin bring joy to audiences through their delightful gymnastics, towering human pyramids, precise Kung Fu maneuvers, and more in the debut tour of *China Soul*.

The art of acrobatics in China is thousands of years old. Some historians point to engravings that are more than 2,000 years old showing tricks like pole climbing and balancing on chairs. Other historians have found written records that suggest acrobats were performing 4,000 years ago! During the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) acrobatics flourished and became the subject of poetry by Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi. In historical times acrobatic troupes were family companies. Today there are still family troupes, but the Chinese government also supports training programs and schools to make sure this art form endures.

This season we invite school communities to explore the performing arts through a selection of topics that reveal the IMPACT of the Arts for Youth.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTS | PRODUCTION
MEANING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT | CAREERS
ART-MAKING AND CREATIVITY | TRAINING

IMPACT FOCUS: T IS FOR TRAINING

In China, training to become a professional acrobat starts at a young age. Students selected by talent scouts begin their training when they are six years old. They study six days per week, and spend half their days on acrobatics and the other half in regular school. Acrobats begin by learning the handstand to improve their balance and strength. As students continue, they work on three core skills: tumbling, flexibility, and dance. After 10 years of training, only a few will be chosen to be in a professional touring company like the Martial Artists and Acrobats of Tianjin.



Chinese Kung Fu (also called *gongfu* or *wushu*) is a martial art that has developed over hundreds of years, and is known around the world as a symbol of Chinese culture. There are many styles, including Shaolin and Wudang. Shaolin is one of the oldest forms, and began at the Songshan Mountain temple in the Henan Province more than 1500 years ago, when Buddhist monks from India first came to China. Kung Fu training developed fighting skills in warrior monks who protected the temples. These skills depend on strength, flexibility, and balance, but also include the practice of meditation as well as combat skills. The study of Kung Fu takes hard work, a willingness to fail, and the ability to face difficulty.



EXTREME TEAMWORK

When the Martial Artists and Acrobats of Tianjin perform, their artistry and safety relies on trust, teamwork, and communication. You may not need to jump through hoops or create a human pyramid, but applying these same ideas in your own life will help you to connect with others, solve problems, and gain new perspectives.

TOE-TO-TOE OR BACK-TO-BACK

Pair up and sit in a chair facing your classmate who is also sitting in a chair. Line your feet up so you are touching toes to toes and hold hands. Now stand up at the same time. Can you do it? Did you crash? What forces were helping you? Which forces were working against you? Now sit on the floor back to back and link elbows. Work together to try and stand up. *Concepts to explore further: inertia, gravity, mass*

ON THE BALL

Have one person grab a ball, and form a circle with all your classmates, leaving enough room between you to move your elbows to your sides without touching your neighbor. The first ball carrier tosses the ball to the person opposite them, then that person throws the ball to the classmate to the right of the first person. Each person throws the ball to the classmate to the right of the person from whom they received it. Continue tossing the ball in this pattern, until you establish a regular rhythm. Next, have your teacher introduce a second ball into the mix. How many balls can you keep in the air? *(Variation for younger students: pass the ball neighbor-to-neighbor around the circle and count how many passes you complete before the ball hits the ground. Spread out a little farther and try it again.)*

ON THE MAP

THE MARTIAL ARTISTS AND ACROBATS COME FROM . . .

TIANJIN 天津
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

HISTORIC CHINESE TEMPLE



TIANJIN FERRIS WHEEL



DOWNTOWN TIANJIN



THE MARTIAL ARTISTS AND ACROBATS OF TIANJIN, PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Director: Mrs. Guo Qingli,
Columbia Artists
Tim Fox, producer

**Wednesday, October 25, 2017
at 10am and 12:30pm**

Foellinger Great Hall
Approximately 60 minutes
Recommended for grades K-12

Campaign for Young Audiences

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LOCAL CONNECTIONS

LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

Krannert Center has partnered with Champaign Public Library and The Urbana Free Library to help expand your students' Youth Series experience. Our local libraries have placed materials that relate to *China Soul* on display, and librarians are prepared to help your students immerse themselves in the wide-ranging subject areas that are covered by the production. These resources will be available approximately two weeks before through two weeks following the performance.

www.champaign.org | www.urbanafreelibrary.org

We hope that you are able to take advantage of these exciting partnerships with our local libraries!

SPURLOCK MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE, OCTOBER 25, 2017

Drop in for a self-guided interactive visit before or after the performance. Museum guides in each room will offer hands-on object studies and gallery-based challenges for students, tied to the themes of *China Soul*. The Spurlock Museum has a variety of China-related resources for classroom use. Contact Kim Sheahan at ksheahan@illinois.edu or 217.244.3355 for information on available artifacts and lesson plans.

LUNAR NEW YEAR PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS

Continue your study of Asian cultures with the Lunar New Year program, facilitated by the Asian American Cultural Center at the University of Illinois. Contact Christina Carpio (ccarpio@illinois.edu) for information on the program and teacher in-service dates in December.

5TH ANNUAL MARTIAL ARTS WARRIORS CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, October 14, 2017 8am-2pm | Brookens Gym, Urbana | hosted by the Midwest Wushu Federation

SHAOLIN MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Dragon Claw Academy
www.dragonclawacademy.com

Jade Fortress Shaolin Martial Arts Academy
www.facebook.com/Jade.Fortress

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