

Edinburgh International Festival Review – The Peony Pavilion



by Mary Durkacz

The National Ballet of China presented the last of three performances of The Peony Pavilion at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre last night to an enraptured audience. A sumptuous fusion of East and West, the ballet was a feast for the senses.

Adapted by Li Liuyi from a play by Tang Xianzu (1550-1616), it was first performed as a Kun opera. Kun sought to educate and enlighten through stylish and refined story-telling rather than through slick dialogue or action. Traditional singer Yu Xuejiao reflected parts of the love story through eerie, ethereal vocal commentary.

But the ballet owed its impact to the meshing of cultural styles and techniques. Extracts from Debussy, Ravel, Respighi and Prokofiev complemented traditional Chinese music. The spare, simple stage setting of Kun was enhanced by extravagant, oversized stage props and representations of snow and petal falls. Elegantly and sensually choreographed by Fei Bo, classical ballet steps and movements gave way to more strident, modern techniques, particularly in the second act. Traditional stiff, red, white and blue costumes were softened by modern fabrics and muted hues.

Choreographer, Fei Bo, sees ballet as a universal language that links people from various cultures. That he has succeeded was evidenced by the standing ovation The Peony

Pavilion received last night.

Edinburgh International Festival 2011 (Friday 12 August – Sunday 4 September) has been proclaimed as an exploration and celebration of the vibrant and diverse cultures of Asia and the long standing influences on the cultural landscape of the west.

Artists from China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Vietnam, as well as North America, Germany, Belgium, Russia, the UK and from across the Arab speaking world gather in Edinburgh for three weeks of classical and contemporary music, dance, theatre, opera and visual arts.



Photos : Liu Yang

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There are many other shows at the official festival which you can still attend by logging on to the [official Festival website](#).