

Shen Wei

Shen Wei, born in Hunan, China, is a choreographer, dancer, painter and designer. He started to study Chinese opera at the age of nine. From 1984 to 1989 he worked for the Hunan State Xian Opera Company. From 1991 to 1994 – as a dancer and choreographer – he was one of the first members of the Guangdong Modern Dance Company, the first modern dance company in China, with which he performed in various festivals in Korea, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and India. On being awarded a scholarship by the Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab, Shen Wei moved to New York City in 1995.

Prior to founding Shen Wei Dance Arts in 2000, his choreographies were presented at the American Dance Festival (1995), the National Theater in Taiwan (1996), the Palace Theatre in London (1997), the Asia Society in New York (1997), the Stockholm Dance House (1999), the Brighton Arts Festival (2000), the Edinburgh Festival Theatre (2000) and the Germany Millennium Moves Festival (2000).

Shen Wei has received many awards. In 2007 he was awarded the MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship. In China, he won the first prize as best choreographer and best performer at the 1994 Inaugural National Modern Dance Competition. In the United States he received a scholarship from the New York Foundation for the Arts in 2000 and the American Dance Festival’s Ben Sommer Fellowship in that same year. He was also awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2001, the Nijinsky Award as “Emerging Choreographer” in 2004, Australia’s Helpmann Award for “Best Ballet or Dance Work” in 2005, and the 2006 “Les Etoiles de Ballet” award, Palais des Festivals in Cannes.

Shen Wei received twelve commissions for the American Dance Festival (1995, 2000–2006, 2008–2011) and others from Het Muziektheater (2004 and 2007), New York City Opera (2005), Lincoln Center Festival (2005, 2009), Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2007), the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater II, Dances We Dance Company of Hawaii, the Margrit Mondavi Center for Performing Arts at the University of California, the Guangdong Modern Dance Company and the Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal (2007). In 2008 Shen Wei created the choreography for the opening ceremony at the Beijing Olympics. In 2010 he received a commission from Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo and from the Teatro dell’Opera in Rome, where he created the choreography for “Mosè in Egitto” by Rossini, conducted by Maestro Riccardo Muti.

For each ballet or dance work created for his own company, Shen Wei also designs the stage sets, costumes and make-up. As independent visual artist, he is both a painter and designer. His paintings have been exhibited in New York and Hong Kong; his creative exploration of *The Rite of Spring* inspired him to produce a series of paintings first exhibited as part of the company’s New York debut at the Lincoln Center Festival in 2003. In October 2006 the paintings toured with the company in Hong Kong for the New Vision Festival and in July 2007 they returned to New York, featuring alongside the company’s performance of *Second Visit to the Empress* at the Lincoln Center Festival.

Shen Wei Dance Arts

Hailed by *The New York Times* as “startlingly imaginative”, Shen Wei Dance Arts seeks a novel approach to movement and the body for both performer and audience. Each work develops an original physical vocabulary based on the exploration of movement. The choreography, at once realistic and abstract, combines Eastern and Western aesthetic forms and powerful scenic elements designed to create a pictorial and hybrid mise-en-scène. The result is a “fascinating fantasy in movement”.

In just seven years since its debut at the American Dance Festival in 2000, the Company has achieved top-ranking status among dance companies of worldwide renown. In addition to its repeated engagements with the American Dance Festival, Lincoln Center Festival and Venice Biennale, the Shen Wei Dance Arts Company has appeared in some of the best known festivals around the world, from Spoleto to Massachusetts, from Dublin to Rome, from Montpellier to Hong Kong and Sydney. The company received the 2005 Helpmann Award in Australia for “Best Ballet or Dance Work”, on the occasion of its debut at the Sydney Festival in association with the Sydney Opera House. In September 2006 the company performed the premiere of *Re- (Part I)* at the Joyce Theater in New York. In May 2007 it started a five-year residency at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and in July it staged three performances of Shen Wei’s highly acclaimed *Second Visit to the Empress*, inspired by the tradition of Chinese opera, at the New York State Theater as part of the Lincoln Center Festival.

In 2008 Shen Wei and his Company contributed to the organization of the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympic Games.

A selection of his engagements includes: American Dance Festival (2000–2007), Lincoln Center Festival, New

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York (2003–2005, 2007); Jacob's Pillow, Becket-Massachusetts (2004 and 2006); Kennedy Center, Washington D.C. (2001, 2005, 2007-2011); Disney Hall at the Los Angeles Music Center (2007); Dorothy Chandler Pavilion at the Los Angeles Music Center (2004); Zellerbach Hall/CalPerformances, Berkeley (2004 and 2007); Dance Umbrella & Sadler's Wells, London (2004); The Barbican, London (2007); the Venice Biennale (2004 and 2005); Israel Festival (2004); Het Muziektheater, Amsterdam (2003 and 2005); Sydney Festival (2005); Singapore Esplanade (2005); Movimentos Festival, Wolfsburg-Germany (2005); Montpellier Festival, France (2005); Melbourne International Arts Festival (2005); Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal (2006); MODAFE in Seoul (2006); Joyce Theater, New York (2006); Hong Kong New Vision Festival (2006).

The company's repertoire includes: "Folding" (2000), "Near the Terrace – Part I" (2000), "Behind Resonance" (2001), "Near the Terrace – Part II" (2001), "Rite of Spring" (2003), "Connect Transfer" (2004), "Second Visit to the Empress" (2005), "Map" (2005), "Re– Part I" (2006), "Re– Part II" (2007) and "Re– Part III" (2009). The last three creations culminated in the programme "Re– (I, II, III)."

As well as choreographic activity for his company, Shen Wei is famous for his site-specific creations, including choreography for the art installation by Ernesto Neto at Park Avenue Armory's Drill Hall (2007) and "Connect Transfer II," an installation at the Judson Memorial Church, New York (2008). His most recent creations for the company include a site-specific performance at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (6th and 13th June 2011) and his most recent choreography "Limited States" presented at the American Dance Festival (14th -16th July). Shen Wei is currently involved in the "Artist-in-Residence" project at the Park Avenue Armory (2010-2011). This residency will lead to a new creation, commissioned by the Park Armory, and to a new staging of two of Shen Wei's works ("Folding" and "Rite of Spring"). These two creations will be presented in a single programme in the vast Park Armory Drill Hall for the start of the company's next New York season (29th November-4th December 2011).

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