

Actress: 'It's Something That Really Elevates the Soul'

Nobody does it better than Shen Yun, says Quebec celebrity

Epoch Times Staff

MONTREAL—Although Anne Létourneau, the famous Quebec actress, director, and writer, has seen Shen Yun Performing Arts five years in a row, her enthusiasm for the unique Chinese cultural show has not diminished.

"I am really a fan. I absolutely love this show, and I recommend it to everybody, for it's one of the highlights of the new year," she said after Sunday's show at Place des Arts in Montreal, which she attended with her husband and daughter.

"In my work I use a lot of influences of ethnic dances, Indian and Chinese as well, so I am always fascinated by the quality of the dancing and the beauty of the costumes in this show. It's truly extraordinary."

Ms. Létourneau has achieved some extraordinary accomplishments herself, including being nominated for a Genie for best performance by an actress in a supporting role in the 1981 film "Les Plouffe"—the role that cemented her career as an actress. She was also nominated for a Felix prize in the categories of author, composer, and best show for the musical "Scheherazade," which she co-wrote.

She has played in numerous stage and TV productions, does speaking engagements, and has written an autobiography.

"[Performing] is something close to my heart, and I can really

relate to what [Shen Yun] is doing," she said.

"I think the artistry, I mean the dancing, there is so much precision, so much grace, so much beauty, and I think that the blend of ancient technique, mixed with the projection, it makes it a really special show.

"I think it can be enjoyed by everybody, you don't have to be an expert in dancing or Chinese culture. It's full of joy, and the story is presented in a simple way. My daughter has been coming to see the show since she was 6 years old."

The mission of New York-based Shen Yun is to revive the spirit of traditional Chinese culture that has been all but destroyed by the Chinese Communist Party.

"I think that this kind of show is very important not only because

of the beauty of what you see, and the execution, but also because of the messages that are behind it, which is truth, compassion, and tolerance," Ms. Létourneau said.

"I think it's a show that can really bring you to another level in your life, especially when it's now in the new year, to reflect a little more about how you can be maybe a better human being."

Ms. Létourneau also commented on the deeper effects of the combination of sound and color in the show.

"You know that sound and color is frequency, and I think nobody does it better than Shen Yun as far as mixing the colors together

'It was so exquisite; the color is exquisite and the sound is exquisite. Nobody does it better than Shen Yun—to mix and achieve this amazing bouquet of sounds.'

—Ms. Létourneau



THRILLED FAMILY: Quebec actress Anne Létourneau attended the Shen Yun matinee with her husband, John Gillard, and their daughter, Lili Mei, at Place des Arts on Sunday, Jan. 9. CRYSTAL YIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

with the sound.

"So it's not only a feast for the eyes, it's something that really elevates the soul because the level of artistry is so much out there that is much more than meets the eye, and there are frequencies and amazing sounds and levels of colors that stay in your head for days and days afterward.

"It was like a 360-degree global spectacle, it was really truly an experience, much more than sitting down and enjoying beautiful dancing."

Both Ms. Létourneau and her husband, John Gillard, were struck by the piece "Plum Blossoms," which tells the story of the brave

flowers that bloom even in the harshest winter weather and symbolize hope in China.

"It's radiantly beautiful. The plum blossom piece was the most beautiful piece I've ever seen. We've seen lots of things and this was magnificent, absolutely beautiful," Mr. Gillard said.

"It was so exquisite; the color is exquisite and the sound is exquisite. Nobody does it better than Shen Yun—to mix and achieve this amazing bouquet of sounds," added Ms. Létourneau.

Mr. Gillard said Shen Yun's focus on the depth and excellence of China's traditional culture "manages to bring both music and historic

themes back into the present, which is wonderful.

"I think the message is that this long and wonderful and beautiful Chinese tradition needs to be precisely preserved. And that's why we are all here, supporting the show, and Anne of course was trying to promote it with hope that with time the political view in China will be more accepting."

He concluded by saying the show is "visually one of the most beautiful shows, artistically most gracious, with a profound message to take home."

Reporting by NTD Television, Crystal Yin, Grace Lee, and Joan Delaney

State Representative Uplifted by Shen Yun

Epoch Times Staff

PORTLAND, Ore.— State Rep. Brian Clem, who represents Oregon's District 21, found Shen Yun's performance at Portland's Keller Auditorium both beautiful and uplifting.

Inspiration is particularly needed today, Mr. Clem said, because he and many others have been reflecting on the shooting of Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others earlier in the day.

"Today ... one of my colleagues from another state was attacked and nearly killed—I don't know if she'll live—for doing the same thing I do every day. It's not been easy because it makes you think about your family—my wife, my daughter—and it could have easily been me. She's the same age as I am," Mr. Clem said. "Not very many things were lifting my spirits."

After seeing Shen Yun, he noted that "the music and the dancing, just incredible artistry helped me—at least forget for a little while—that not everything's perfect ... on this earth."

Mr. Clem was reminded that humankind still has a lot of work to do to make the world a better and safer place.

He recalled and shared some specific aspects that he enjoyed about the show.

Referring to the lyrics of one of the songs in the program, he said, "There was one particular line on the screen about all the things that you think matter on earth that you cannot take to heaven with you—fame, fortune, love, hate.

"The events of the day aren't in the end what really matters, and I think that was probably the most touching," Mr. Clem noted.

He also highlighted a dance that portrayed young Buddhist monks doing some training of their own, and another dance that depicted celestial maidens in their heavenly home in the clouds.

"The mischievous little monks playing around just lightened it. I think, the cloud, it was almost like angels dancing in the clouds—beautiful. It was just a beautiful program," Mr. Clem said.

Mr. Clem said he was excited about bringing his wife and daughter to tomorrow's matinee performance, because he was sure they will be in awe watching Shen Yun's state-of-the-art animated backdrops come to life during the performances.

"The clouds and watching the celestial figures dance in the clouds, my daughter tomorrow is going to love that. ... She'll think it's the neatest thing," Mr. Clem said.

Sharing how he would explain the show to his friends, he said, "I would probably not try and spoil the surprise because I want them to see it, so I wouldn't tell them every detail. I would just say, it's just beautiful, and gorgeous colors, and the artists are so talented."

Reporting by Gerry Wang and Abraham Thompson

Russian Dance Teacher Praises Shen Yun

'You could see the soul of the nation'

Epoch Times Staff

NEW YORK—Professional dancer and Russian dance teacher Julia Kulakova was glowing as she came out of the Shen Yun Performing Arts show at New York's Lincoln Center on Sunday. She had seen the show in previous years at Beacon Theatre and was thrilled to be back.

"I am very excited, uplifted; it made my day completely with the color, with the symmetry," she said. "It is such a thorough experience."

As a professional dancer, Ms. Kulakova believes dance should preserve culture and felt Shen Yun succeeded in expressing the essence of traditional Chinese culture. "It preserves culture, and in the movements you could see the soul of the nation. It is so graceful, so beautiful. [It] really delivers a deeper message," she said.

"I am sure if you look at the people coming out of the theater you see the people almost blooming with this [experience]," she went on to say. "I am so thrilled."

Ms. Kulakova was especially enamored with the elaborate costumes and grand visual displays that Shen Yun features. "[Shen Yun] uses silk, and this is one of my favorite materials to dance with. It always flows and it creates a fantastic experience," she said.

Shen Yun combines ancient legends, animated backdrops, a live orchestra, and elaborate choreography to express ancient and modern-day China.

"The special effects were just fantastic," Ms. Kulakova said. "It is always such a great surprise—beautiful, beautiful. It is that fairy tale-ish feel. I love it."

"I enjoy Chinese classical dance so much and especially the Shen Yun Company. ... For me it is the best holiday performance," she added.

The dances in Shen Yun portray the values and beliefs of ancient Chinese people and give viewers a glimpse into traditional Chinese approaches to life.

Ms. Kulakova appreciated how Shen Yun presented the different

essences of male and female energy through dance movements, gestures, and expressions.

"It really delivers a deeper message about the essence of Asian femininity, which is very unusual for Westerners, but there is a lot of curiosity, especially right now, to it," she said.

"The male dancers are fantastically athletic. ... In Chinese dance, men dance [and] always dance manly."

As a dance teacher, Ms. Kulakova couldn't wait to share Shen Yun with her peers and students. "My friends and my students should see the show," she declared. "I will make sure that my students will receive an e-mail from me sending them to this show."

Reporting by NTD Television and Justina Wheale

Shen Yun Performing Arts will perform at the Kennedy Center Opera House in Washington from Jan. 26 to Jan. 30 and at Academy of Music in Philadelphia from Feb. 22 to Feb. 23.

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts.



DANCE TEACHER: Julia Kulakova attended the Shen Yun Performing Arts show at New York's Lincoln Center on Sunday, Jan. 9. COURTESY OF NTD TELEVISION

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