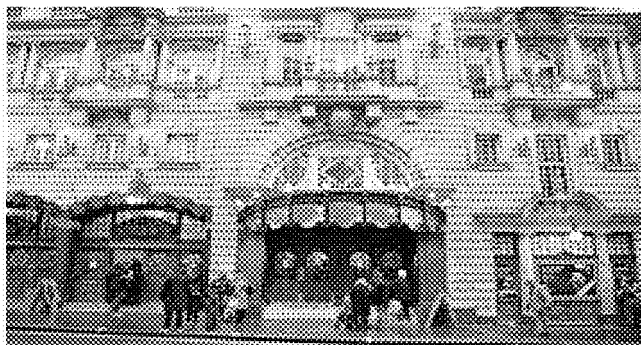


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Attempts to Stop Classical Chinese Dance Show Go Back Four Years, Promoters Reveal

By [Simon Veazey](#) On April 9, 2012 @ 4:32 pm In [National](#) | [No Comments](#)



The London Coliseum, the largest theatre in London, where Shen Yun will perform from April 12 -- April 15, this year. (Roger Luo/Da Ji Yuan/The Epoch Times)



The promoters of classical Chinese dance show Shen Yun have revealed for the first time a pattern of interference with UK and Irish performances stretching back over the last four years.

In 2008 Shen Yun performed for the first time in the UK at the newly revamped Royal Festival Hall.

Zek Halu was the main contact with Royal Festival Hall for the promoters at the time. He says that his contact at the RFH told him the Embassy staff had contacted the theatre and told them that there would be disturbances and problems with the audience.

Mr Halu says that he was also contacted by Special Branch police officers who knew that the Chinese Embassy had been interfering.

After the performances, he said the RFH had several e-mails from theatre-goers complaining about Shen Yun. "After I looked at a few of them, I realised

they contained identical phrases. It was clearly an orchestrated effort – the same as in other cities,” he said.

In 2009, venue group Live Nation cancelled a performance of Shen Yun at Edinburgh’s Playhouse theatre, citing Live Nation’s business interests in China.

Eddie Aitken [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) [end_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) of promoters Tang Arts, said: “The manager of the Playhouse told me that he’d made an enquiry to Live Nation, the parent company of the Playhouse, about whether there would be any conflict of interest with their business in China. Live Nation said yes. In that case, unfortunately, he said, we’ll have to cancel the booking.”

Following a campaign by fans of the show, Live Nation reversed their decision, ultimately allowing Shen Yun to perform to a capacity audience.

In 2010 it was revealed that all foreign diplomatic missions in Dublin were written to by the Chinese Embassy, to “kindly remind” them not to attend the first performance of Shen Yun in the city.

“The Embassy kindly reminds you not to attend the show,” the letter, sent by ambassador Liu Biwei’s secretary, stated.

Attempts by the Chinese Embassy to derail upcoming performances at the London Coliseum have now been condemned by a growing list of MPs and councillors.

Brian Coleman, an outspoken member and former chair of the London Assembly, described the actions of the Embassy as disgraceful.

“It’s not up to the Chinese government to dictate to the English National Opera who they let the Coliseum to,” he said.

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“There is a long and distinguished history here in Great Britain of allowing artistic freedom,” Mr Coleman told Sound of Hope Radio. “We are a free society here in London – the greatest artistic society in the world I would suggest – and we are not going to tolerate this sort of political interference from the Chinese government.”

Music professor Peter Graham saw Shen Yun for the first time back in 2008 at the RFH. He is full of praise for Shen Yun. What he highlights is not the music or the dancing – which he says are beautiful – but the values behind the performance, and the fact that Shen Yun includes modern stories of courage and compassion alongside the historical tales and legends.

Next page ... “Those are values which are rooted in China from the early days, but if you know your history, through the communist rise, they made every effort to destroy those very values.

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In addition to telling legends and depicting beautiful scenes from China’s many dynasties, Shen Yun also uses its hallmark performances of Chinese classical dance to tell stories set in modern-day China, which carry a message of courage and compassion against a backdrop of human rights persecution.

Graham says that the first time he saw Shen Yun he was a little unsure how to take the inclusion of these stories, but over time as he absorbed the message of Shen Yun more and more, he came to feel that these are an essential continuation of the values behind the show.

“Now I feel like it’s the drama to the backdrop – to the whole show – because the show is presenting principles of forgiveness and compassion.” The stories set in modern-day China really are the actualisation of those principles in real life, he says.

“It’s something to forgive, and they do transcend it, and it gets overcome.”

China expert Ethan Gutmann knows all about modern-day persecution in China, having spent the last several years investigating the large-scale harvesting of organs for profit from prisoners of conscience. He says he’s been a close observer of Shen Yun over four to five years, and believes that the show’s handling of persecution in modern-day China is highly restrained and understated.

“Shen Yun is based on the simple concept that there was a time when China was not only a big power, but it was a beacon of moral civilisation. There was a time when there was a balance and mutual respect between the rulers and the subjects, between man and the environment, between Heaven and Earth, that is the heart of Shen Yun, as I see it.”

Gutmann says that only a few of Shen Yun's many dances refer "very obliquely, in a very understated, stylised way" to the kinds of human rights atrocities that he spends his life investigating.

"I also find the restraint contained within Shen Yun rather breathtaking. In spite of terror, incarceration of family, blows to people's careers in the mainland, blacklisting, which many performers experience, they refuse to submit, or even obsess on a state that has little to offer in the way of morality.

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"Instead the performers have made it their lives' work to embody the moral values of a China that most Westerners assume couldn't or doesn't exist. But the Chinese state is wrong, and we're wrong, because Shen Yun exists, and it's still here, and it grows more talented, richer, and stronger every year." Vice President of the European Parliament Edward McMillan-Scott, wrote in a letter of support: "Shen Yun Performing Arts provides a fascinating insight into China before the Cultural Revolution and shows the beauty of its 5,000-year-old culture. This unique performance unfortunately cannot be seen in mainland China today. I believe that anyone who appreciates the arts cannot fail to be impressed by this remarkable performance."

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