

Prologue

Dreaming of returning from the battlefield, “*Winning*”

Plot:

Two armies face off against one another. As the battle reaches a crescendo, MuLan appears. As the wind blows about the sand, MuLan loses herself in her memories.

Music:

The prologue is a celebration of the grandeur of percussion music; the fight scene of Peking Opera. The participation of the full ensemble builds an atmosphere of confrontation.

Song 1

Considering childhood, “*Status Quo*”

Plot:

Shifting between the battlefield and memories, MuLan is surrounded by the wind and the sand from the battlefield and childhood memories of singing. As she is about to defeat her enemies, memories of hometown and family flood in, as if they were departed soldiers’ bodies trying to return home.

Music:

This section depicts MuLan’s childhood. As a child, she was curious, playful, and brave. Thus, various musical instruments and objects from daily life are used to portray rural life and her joyous, innocent childhood.

Song 2

The soul returns to the wilderness, “*Return of the Soul*”

Plot:

Caskets are escorted solemnly to their final resting place. The sounds of prayers depict loneliness. A widow, and an aged father who has lost his son, are inconsolable. The marimbas symbolize the caskets in the funeral procession; they are moved forward and played slowly.

Music:

“Return of the Soul” is sedate. As the battle wanes, only caskets return. The composer employs here four marimbas as a symbol. The music is pensive, revealing the solemnities of war and life. Ensemble members use unconventional ways to play the marimbas. By blowing or pulling the strings, the musicians bring out the melancholic side, and accentuate the diversity, of marimbas.

Song 3

Incessant whispers while departing, “*Whisper*”

Plot:

The crooning of Concubine Deer, a land deity, is like a letter from home, arousing MuLan’s yearning for the peace of the hearth. Like a traditional folksong, this tune illustrates simple life on the farm. It takes extraordinary skill for Concubine Deer to demonstrate yearning for the people to be consoled, as represented through mallets and other instruments.

Music:

The musicians here demonstrate the richness and diversity of sound possible in percussion by using different mallets and striking techniques. This segment also requires excellent theatrical sound effects to imitate the sounds of nature. The composer calls it “theatrical music for percussion.”

Song 4

Saying farewell to red ribbons, “*Leaving home*”

Plot:

MuLan in a wedding gown sits in a sedan chair and pretends to leave home. There is a huge difference between getting married in a foreign place and setting off for the battlefield. Yet both lead to the unknown. Overwhelmed by memories, MuLan is charged with determination and courage.

Music:

This segment reveals how MuLan’s thinking changes. Starting off with wedding music, MuLan moves toward a complex, emotional decision to go to war. To depict her feelings, the composer changes the pace, making this the most dramatic part of the performance.

Song 5

Girding one’s loins for battle, “*Battle*”

Plot:

The “Eighteen Staffs”, one of the basic elements of Peking Opera, is merged with the percussionists’ skills. Different parts of the staff will make different sounds due to the staff’s composition. The body, rhythm, and skills have all been integrated into a way to perform percussion. Tension builds as in a game of skill, revealing the wilder side of human nature.

Music:

“Battle” is a challenge for more than simply the music, as the performers have to take their places and play using the staff, but must also make the music come to life. Thus, it is extremely difficult. The knocking sounds featured here suggest the roar of battle.

Song 6

Wine as the sunset glows, “*A Sky Full of Stars*”

Plot:

In the evening, MuLan, already a general, passes by an encampment. People bow to her and soldiers invite her for drinks. As the New Year approaches, the yearning to return to one's family grows ever stronger. MuLan leaves the crowd and heads outside.

Music:

MuLan has become a general. As others carouse, MuLan leaves the battlefield deep in thought. The composer uses a rhythmic melody to compose the scene.

Song 7

Night chat with the groom, “*Night chat*”

Plot:

Away from the crowd, MuLan wants to read a letter from home she has received. However, she runs into a groom who can communicate with horses, and they have a good laugh. The horses, having enjoyed a winning streak, are getting more excited the closer they are taken to the grasslands of the north. The groom speaks of returning home, and the horses seem to respond, but MuLan is left speechless, staring up at the sky.

Music:

Ensemble members imitates the clip-clop of six horses by stomping, forming a trio with MuLan and the groom. The music is rhythmic, and involves greater interaction and narration than in other segments.

Song 8

Gearing up for battle, “*Battle*”

Plot:

Battle is once again enjoined. MuLan shows her bravery on the battlefield, but her mindset has changed. She is giving her all just so that she can return home.

Music:

Undoubtedly, this is the most powerful part of the play. All of the drums are involved here, in an expression of the magnificence and richness of percussion.

Song 9

The sights on the way home, “Return home”

Plot:

Set to Concubine Deer’s singing, MuLan travels home. Having served in the military for a decade, MuLan is no longer a little girl. She is straightforward, fearless, and invincible. However, it has been 10 years since she last saw her family, so she does not know how to face her father, her family, or her future.

Music:

This song corresponds to “Leaving Home” of the first half. The performers here show off their singing skills. The trio of Concubine Deer, Percussion MuLan, and Peking Opera MuLan creates an enchanting, harmonious melody.

Epilogue

Emotions in the limelight, “Courage”

Plot:

At night, MuLan’s emotions change with the lights. Seeing the fireworks, MuLan is thinking of the people, things, and places along the way, and how to face her family and start a new life in Hua Village. Having grown from the little girl who sets off firecrackers to the woman of today, MuLan is thinking about the big questions of life, and seems to have found the answers in the flickering light.

Music:

This is the end of the play, and the music connotes a sense of completeness and reunion.

Artistic Director | Ju, Tzong-Ching

Director | Lee, Hsiao-Ping

Composer | Hung, Chien-Hui

Set Designer | Wang, Mang-Chao

Lighting Designer | Che, Ko-Chien

Multi-Media Designer | Ethan Wang

Costume Designer | Ling, Bing-Hao

Peking Opera singing style | Ma, Lan

Playwright | Chung, Yen-Wei

Inscription | Tong, Yang-Tze

Graphic Designer | Chuang Yi-Lun

Photographer | Chen, Wei-Chi

Performer | Ju Percussion Group

The Ju Percussion Group (JPG), founded by percussionist Ju, Tzong-Ching in January 1986, comprises 14 talented percussionists and 1 composer in residence. The group devotes itself to performance, education and percussion promotion. JPG has become known worldwide for its innovative blends of the East and West, traditional and contemporary. The members possess transcendental virtuosity in playing Western Percussion instruments as well as different forms of traditional Asian music.

Through more than 3,000 domestic and international performances, it has greatly expanded Taiwan's presence on the international percussion map. To date, the group has played in 34 different countries around the world, cultivating more than 150,000 percussion learners by means of its instruction system. Besides, the group has been commissioned to create as many as 247 pieces so far. The growth of Ju Percussion Group is, so to speak, a reflection of how contemporary percussion develops on the island.

Wu, Shih-San

Ho, Hong-Chi

Wu, Pei-Ching

Hwang, Kuen-Yean

Lee, Pei-Hsun

Lin, Chin-Hua

Lu, Huan-Wei

Chen, Hong-Yueh

Chen, Miao-Fei

Tai, Han-Chih

Peng, Ching-Yin

Liao, Wei-Chih

Kao, Han-Yen

Lee, Tsui-Yun

Performer | Ju Percussion Group 2

Always staying ahead of the times and willing to boldly experiment and explore, the Ju Percussion Group 2 is composed of young but outstanding percussion musicians who have received rigorous musical training since childhood. Indeed, they have been studying percussion music for more than a decade. Apart from inheriting the Ju Percussion Group's professionalism, enthusiasm, approachability, and East-West fusion, the young Ju Percussion Group 2 has a distinctive youthful flair, and exults in its unfettered freedom and boundless room for development either in building its repertoire or in rendering performances.

Giving more than 70 performances each year has enabled the Ju Percussion Group 2 to accumulate extensive on-stage experience and practice, and their annual concerts give them the opportunity to show how much they have improved their professional skills. The Ju Percussion Group 2 is characterized by creativity, freshness, and a unique professional style. It uses youthful thinking and enthusiasm to give percussion music a brilliant young aura. Looking ahead to the future, the group will continue to put even more efforts into promoting percussion music, and will also strive to initiate a new percussion music trend that is full of creativity and has a boundless outlook.

Tan, Chi-Khim

Wang, Yi-Hsuan

Allison Huang

Chang, Yi-Pei

Liu, Hsin-Yi

Ho, Shin-Rong

Chen, Huan-Wu

Lin, Yi-Hsuan