

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## Traditions will collide in Vancouver at weekend dance festival

By Chuck Chiang, Vancouver Sun March 5, 2014



The Guangdong Modern Dance Company — one of the pre-eminent modern dance troupes in China — will collaborate with Vancouver's Goh Ballet (above) in presenting a unique mix of contemporary and traditional dance at the Vancouver Playhouse during the Vancouver International Dance Festival.

Photo courtesy of David Cooper  
Photograph by: David Cooper photo

### Guangdong Modern Dance/Goh Ballet

March 7-8, 8 p.m. | Vancouver Playhouse

Tickets and info: \$50-60, [vidf.ca](http://vidf.ca), [gohballet.com](http://gohballet.com)

Those of whom frequent the Far East are well aware that Guangzhou, located in southern China, is a very different place than Vancouver. This week, however, Vancouverites won't need to leave their city to gain a rare glimpse of the divergent cultures of the two cities — at least in dance form.

On Friday and Saturday, the Guangdong Modern Dance Company — one of the pre-eminent modern dance troupes in China — will collaborate with Vancouver's Goh Ballet in presenting a unique mix of contemporary and traditional dance at the Vancouver Playhouse.

The program — which will feature Guangdong Modern Dance's 17 dancers, as well as some of Goh's top local talent — is one of the featured events at this year's Vancouver International Dance Festival.

Willy Tsao, director of Guangdong Modern Dance, noted this will be the first time the troupe will collaborate with a Vancouver dance company to present an eclectic program mixing juxtaposing styles, themes and artistic perspectives.

"We were here years ago, but that time, we basically came, performed and left," said Tsao. "That's not enough time to understand what Vancouver's dance scene is about. This time, we came a few weeks ahead of time to prepare the program with Goh Ballet, and there's more of a chance to interact with the local dance community. And I think the performance will reflect that deeper understanding between us."

Goh Ballet director Chan Hon Goh agreed, adding that the presence of Guangdong Modern Dance will make this weekend's performance something rarely seen before in Vancouver — something not to be missed.

"The important thing is that all these dancers come from different backgrounds, and they are coming together to create this program ... and what they are bringing to Vancouver is truly something memorable," she said. "I think this will allow the Vancouver audience to experience something very different, and to be exposed to the different nuances in the artistry from both sides."

What Goh was referring to — Guangdong Modern Dance's high-impact, fast-paced and sometimes hard-edged performance style — was readily evident during a short media preview held at Goh Ballet's Vancouver training facility last Saturday. And with the program consisting of three parts (one modern dance routine from Guangdong, one traditional ballet from Goh, then a finale mixing the styles and performers of both companies), it is almost guaranteed the audience will see something they've not witnessed before, said Goh.

She added the interaction between the Chinese group and her students may have long-lasting benefits to Vancouver's dance scene, as many students have already benefited from the exposure to a drastically different artistic perspective.

"We love being cultural ambassadors," said Goh. "For me, part of my vision is for everyone to experience this open, inviting and collaborative atmosphere, so that more outstanding dance professionals can come here and share with us what they do."

As for Tsao's dancers, this is the first time many have visited Vancouver, and Tsao said they've already had their own version of "cultural shock" after landing on Feb. 20 — in the form of several snowfalls that hit the Metro Vancouver region since they arrived.

"A lot of them have never seen snow before," Tsao said. "They were very excited to see that."

This weekend, it will be Vancouver's turn to be excited to see something it has not seen before.

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