

THEATRE



# U - Theatre

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## About U-Theatre

*“beating drums in a peaceful state of one’s own”*

Founded by Ms. Liu Ruo-Yu, its present art director, in October 1988, and joined by its drumming master and music director Mr. Chih-Chun Huang since 1993, U-Theatre has presented rigorous works of aesthetic beauty rooted in the disciplined study and practice of meditation, drumming, martial arts, Tai-Chi, dance, and acting. Uniting East and the West, the ancient and the modern, the spiritual and the soulful, U Theatre lives and breathes ‘Excellence’ as embodied by the meaning of the Chinese character “U”.

Over the last decade the U-Theatre has been invited to perform at the world stage including Barbican Center (UK), Cultuurcentrum Brugges (Belgium), Avignon Festival, Biennale de la Danse (France), and the Next Wave Festival at BAM (NYC).

## Performance Reviews

*“A great and complex beauty to the drumming, sounds, and silence...”*

-The New York Times, NYC

*“A most peaceful heart, a most powerful performance...”*

-Volkskrant, the Netherlands

*“A synthesis of theatre, percussion, martial arts and meditation...”*

-The Times, London

*“A prolonged percussive tone poem...”*

-Financial Times, London

*“Truly Spectacular!”* -Le Figaro

# Artistic Direction



Ruo-Yu Liu

Chih-Chun Huang

## *Ruo-Yu LIU Founder and Artistic Director*

Born in 1956, a leading theatrical performer in the early 1980s and a native of Taiwan, Ruo-Yu Liu earned her MA in Theatre Arts from New York University, and was selected for a year-long master class under Polish director Jerzy Grotowski.

Her year with Grotowski changed her entire outlook and approach to life and clarified her understanding that a piece of theater work, in essence, was the expression of “an individual’s attitude toward life.” It became her fundamental approach to performance art.

In 1988 Liu founded U-Theatre and introduced, together with Mr. Huang since 1993, novel facets of drumming meditation, and martial arts to create a series of original works integrated with a wide range of elements drawn from music, literature, drama, dance and ritual. These aesthetic syntheses have not only added another dimension to the Taiwanese expression in modern art, they have also earned U-theatre much acclaim and many invitations to perform internationally.

In 2008 Liu was awarded the 12th Annual Taiwan National Award for Arts: Best Art Performer.

## *Chih-Chun HUANG Music Director*

Born in 1965 in Malaysia, Mr. Huang has been a drumming and martial arts practitioner for over 30 years, and is known for his mastery in synthesizing these two disciplines into a new form of performing arts.

Mr. Huang joined U-Theatre in 1993 as Drumming Master. His unconventional training regime of “meditation before drumming” has both elevated the disposition of the troupe and laid down a solid foundation for a contemporary artistic expression uniquely characteristic of U-Theatre.

Prior to joining U-Theatre, Mr. Huang performed with Taipei Folk Dance Theater and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre.

# Signature Works

## Sound of the Ocean (1998)

- 1998 Festival d'Avignon, FRANCE
- 2000 Biennale de La danse de Lyon, FRANCE
- 2001 Singapore Arts Festival, SINGAPORE
- 2002 Barbican's International Theatre Event  
2002, London, U.K.
- 2003 Haus der Berliner Festspiele, GERMANY  
Next Wave Festival, New York with a tour  
in the USA
- 2005 Chekhov International Theatre Festival in  
Moscow, RUSSIA
- 2006 Festival d'Automne en Normandie in  
Rouen, FRANCE
- 2009 The 10th International Spring Festival,  
Rishon-Lezion, ISRAEL
- 2010 Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad,  
CANADA with a tour in USA

2011 Auckland Arts Festival, NEW ZEALAND

2012 Düsseldorf Festival, GERMANY





## Sound of the Ocean

### Synopsis

An intense physical and emotional experience, *Sound of the Ocean* traces the cyclical journey of water from a drop to a stream, from a river to the ocean.

*Sound of the Ocean* encompasses five segments: *Collapse*, *Flowing Water*, *Breakers*, *Listening to the Ocean Heart*, and *The Sound of Ocean*. The five are animated by a theatrical tension devoid of explicit narrative. It is propelled by rhythms beat out on temple bells, gongs, and skinned drums large and small.

With a spare grace and clarity, *Sound of the Ocean* illuminates U-Theatre's creative process which centers on the concentric relationships of individual to the collective, and the larger natural and spiritual environment.



1-minute highlight

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo3bb8apMN8>

# Meeting with Bodhisattva (2002)



- 2013 OzAsia Festival, Adelaide, Australia
- 2010 Newark Theatre, Portland, White Bird Dance, USA
- 2008 BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, Next Wave Festival, New York, USA
- 2005 The Majestic Hall, Shanghai, CHINA  
Cultuurcentrum, Brugges, BELGIUM  
Théâtre à l'Italienne, Scène Nationale de Cherbourg, FRANCE  
Zénith, Le Grand-Quevilly, Octobre en Normandie, Rouen, FRANCE  
Culture Centre of the Philippines, Manila, PHILIPPINES  
Taiwan Tour  
Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, New Vision Arts Festival, HONG KONG
- 2002 National Theatre, Taipei, TAIWAN

# Meeting with Bodhisattva

## Synopsis

Be water when entering water,  
be light when entering light,  
be empty to attain emptiness,  
be indestructible to attain  
indestructibility.

This work is the outcome of three years' rigorous and detailed training that U people have gone through, combining martial arts, drumming, theater, dance and music into a "total theater". It is martial arts within drumming, but also dance within drumming.

The story derives from four Buddhist verses – "One Cudgel, like the sword of wisdom; one cudgel, like looking for a snake in the grass; one cudgel, like the roar of a lion; one cudgel, which is not a cudgel". This is developed to become a warrior's path of practice.



3-minute highlight

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc0t2S73oyc>

Latest Work

## **Beyond Time (2011)**

premiere, 2011 National Theater Taipei  
2012 HK New Vision Arts Festival opening  
program

**Scene One** *"A Downpour"*

**Scene Two** *"Reflection of the Moon on a  
Thousand Rivers"*

**Scene Three** *"Wading through the Air"*

**Scene Four** *"The Eclipse"*

**Scene Five** *"The Vortex"*

**Scene Six** *"Beyond time"*

6 minute highlight

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIHQ4aCmrqQ>





The whole performance uses imaging technology to construct a more distinct **three-dimensional and multi-layer stage** as well as a virtual 4D space through the use of projection and mirrored floors. Light is projected to create a contrast between “substance” and “void”, bringing the audience and performers to enter together a “universe of time and space”.

In this performance, some **dance** movements simulate that of the planets in the solar system. Regarding the **drum playing**, U-Theatre departs from the traditional styles of drum playing by having the performers carry the drums on their backs and **use their bodies to convey the sounds**, creating rhythm with tempo.

## Beyond Time

### Synopsis

With the power of man as the main component, through the technical realisation of theatre technology, U-Theatre expresses aptly the **relationship between “man” and “universe”** in *Beyond Time*.

# Sword of Wisdom (Mix Program)

## Synopsis

"Sword of Wisdom" conveys the power of solidity and tranquility, and is about the path the *Brave One* must take in his practice of moral teachings. He faces the unknowns of life, which result in fear, and this leads him to begin the search for wisdom. By holding on to the sword, the Brave One sees his own weakness, yet by holding on to the sword, he also finds the courage needed to confront life.

Using the *Brave One* with a sword as an icon, U-Theatre selected chapters that best fit this theme from its international touring repertory of "Sound of the Ocean", "Meeting with Bodhisattva", and "A Touch of Zen." The most prominent feature of "Sword of Wisdom" is the sounds of wooden and metal percussion that are added to the sound of drumming. Together with Gurdjieff Movements (the sacred dance), famous for its precision in movement, U-Theatre presents a higher level of drumming as an art.

7 min highlight

<http://youtu.be/hUn8Ts0J10g>

# Sword of Wisdom

## Photo Gallery



# LOVER (2014)

## LOVER

*Music-Dance Theatre for mix choir and percussion instruments*

A Joint Performance by U-Theatre and Berlin Radio Choir

- Berlin Premiere: Krafewerk Mitte  
April 2,4 and 5, 2014
- Creative Team:

Composer – Christian Jost (Siemens Foundation Award, Berlin Komische Oper)

Director--Ruo-yu Liu (U-Theatre)

Drumming and Choreography--Chi-chun Huang (U-Theatre)

Lighting & Stage Design--Ke-hua Lin

Costume Design—Johan Ku (winner of 2009 Gen Art's Styles International Design Competition )

Stage Elements—Yu-Wen Chiu



## About LOVER

### 3Sat Video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCoeWUAHKsQ>

Inspired by love poems selected from ancient Chinese poem “Shijing” to E.E. Cummings

In search for universal message on love

*LOVER* will take the audience on a journey to see a marvelous blend of aesthetics from tradition and modernity.



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