Dance-drama calls for love and peace

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Dragon Boat Racing, an award-winning Chinese dance-drama performed by the Guangdong Song & Dance Ensemble, completed its US tour, with shows in Washington and Philadelphia from Feb 2-7.  
Set in 1930s China against the Japanese occupation, the drama follows two lovers whose passion for each other is equaled only by their passion for music. It tells the story of how one of the finest and most famous Cantonese compositions, also titled Dragon Boat Racing, becomes an inspiring piece for encouraging people fighting against enemies while calling for love and peace.  
Zhang Qiyue, consul general of China in New York, said her team made a great effort to bring the show to the East Coast as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations.  
"I have seen this performance twice, two nights in a row when they premiered at Lincoln Center in New York last year. I assure you that the show is definitely a spectacular," Zhang said at a pre-show news conference on Wednesday evening.  
The drama was originally scheduled for two shows in Philadelphia. However, the show on Thursday was canceled as the city hosted a parade for its NFL team, the Philadelphia Eagles, which won their first Super Bowl last Sunday.  
Dragon Boat Racing had its US premiere at Lincoln Center in New York in 2016; The New York Times referred to the show as "A Stormy Sea of Love and Song".  
"It's absolutely gorgeous. It is the first time that I saw something very traditional (from) Chinese culture. Absolutely beautiful," said Catherine Revill, a Philadelphian who went to the show to celebrate her birthday.  
"I think people from different countries share common things about feelings and emotions," said Zhou Liya, director of Dragon Boat Racing.  
In 2016, Dragon Boat Racing was named a Wenhua-Award winner, the prestigious national award presented every three years by the Chinese government to recognize the highest level of staged performing arts productions presented by the Ministry of Culture.  
"Chinese culture is not about just telling a story. The most charming part of Chinese culture is the feeling of the people. We do not only tell a story with our music and dance. I'd rather say we're interpreting a Chinese spirit,"said Li Xing, who played He Liunian, the main actor in the show.

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