

Stage



Aug 9, 10: Royal Danish Ballet
Napoli & La Sylphide come to Meet in Beijing. See listing, this page.

When it rains it pours, for it isn't just the athletes of the world who have decided to descend upon Beijing this month. The Israel and Helsinki philharmonics, the New Zealand Symphony, and the Cincinnati Pops and EU Youth orchestras will all be gracing the city's various concert halls throughout August, and dance companies from the United States – Odyssey Dance Theater (Salt Lake City, UT), Kim Robards Dance Company (Denver, CO), and Silver-Brown Dance Company (New York, NY) – will also be joining the Beijing Modern Dance Company in the weeklong booking Dance Festival Beijing 2008.

And not only are the people coming, the animals are coming, too. *Rhinoceros in Love*, playing at Fengchao Theater, is a quirky Chinese drama about uncontrollable desire; *Madame White Snake*, being offered at the Egg, is a bit more of the same; but *The Monkey King* gets a makeover by the Sight, Sound and Action performing arts company, who have adapted the classic tale into a "rock musical" (their term). It debuts this month at the Beijing Exhibition Theater.

Opera lovers will be pleased, as August offerings encompass just about every vocal range – the purported "number one baritone of Asia" Liao Changyong, tenor Jose Carreras from Spain, and New Zealand soprano Kiri Te Kanawa are among the variety. There won't be an alto, but to make up for it there will be a mezzo-soprano, Italian Cecilia Bartoli, who will be one of the three sopranos visiting as part of the Divas in Beijing series (the other two songbirds are American Renee Fleming and Sumi Jo from South Korea).

With so many newbies in town, there's bound to be some who seek something of local flavor, and hence Beijing is flaunting the vocal art form for which it is renowned: Peking Opera, going on all month at the Mei Lanfang and Chaoyang theaters. In particular, *Peony Pavilion* is a sight (or sound) to behold, and the Kunqu-type opera has been regarded as a UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. As Peking Opera can be something of an acquired taste, regarding it as such might help make the high-pitched vocals easier to swallow.

Among the highlights of the month will definitely be a visit from Dimitris Papaioannou, the creative director of the 2004 Athens Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies (see Feature, p70). He comes to Beijing with a retake on Euripides' *Medea*, a Greek myth that delves into the theme of love gone awry – murderously and bloodily awry. Papaioannou's first production of *Medea* in 1993, often regarded as the director/choreographer/visual artist's seminal work, has since gone down as legend, and those want to see whether this new adaptation exceeds or falls short of that first success better be on top of their game, as *Medea II* will be performed over a single weekend at the very beginning of the month. Lisa Liang

Aug 13-17

booking Dance Festival Beijing 2008
the Beijinger sponsors the first-ever booking Dance Festival Beijing 2008, taking place at Chaoyang Cultural Center's Nine Theatres. Beijing Modern Dance Company, well as artists from the prestigious National Ballet of China, will be performing alongside some of the most innovative dance companies from America, including Odyssey Dance Theater, Kim Robards Dance Company, and Silver-Brown Dance Company. Styles will vary from contemporary ballet and modern dance to hip-hop. RMB 30-300. Times vary depending on day. For additional details, visit www.bookingdance.com. Tickets at 67845. Chaoyang Cultural Center (8599 6011)