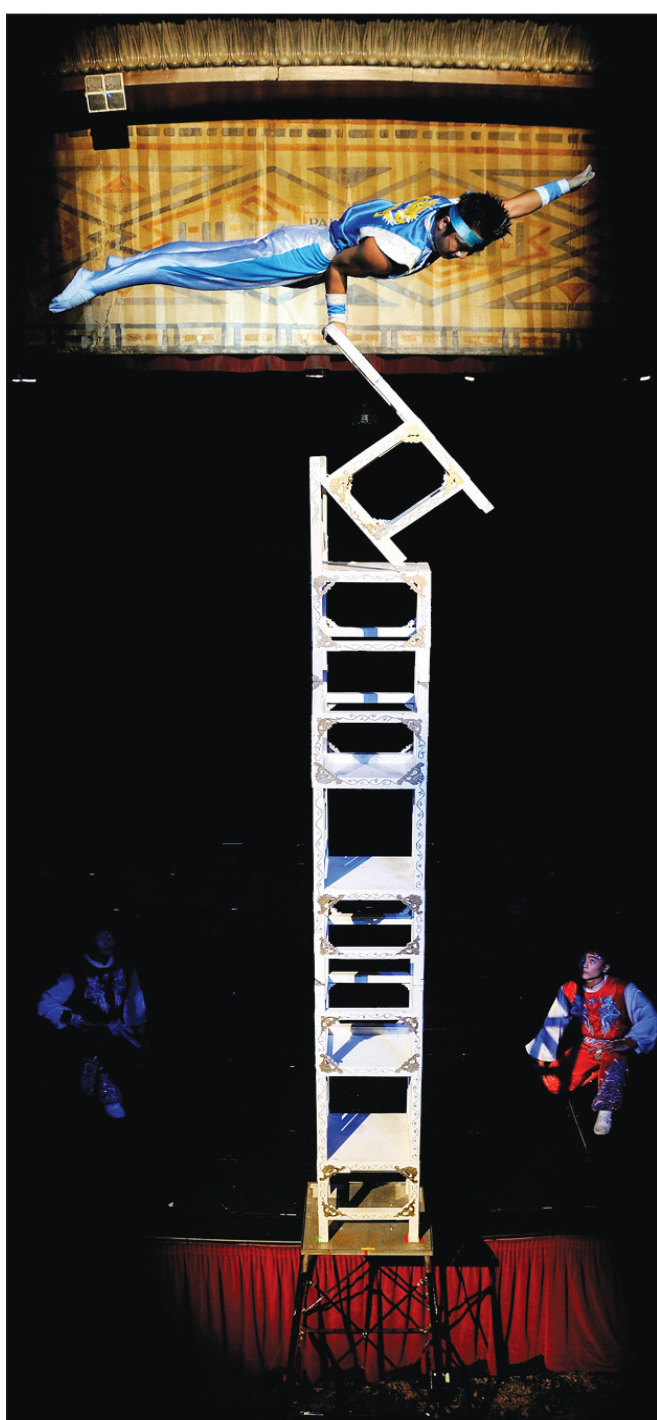


Acrobats will astonish crowds at the Shuler once again



Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Up, up and away . . . performers make a plaything of gravity

Three women (top) from the Golden Dragon Acrobats kept 12 soccer balls airborne at one time — one for each arm and leg — when the team last performed at the Shuler Theater. The show stopper came near the end of the performance when an acrobat (left) took seven chairs in turn, climbing them as he stacked them, until he was level with the proscenium arch over the stage, seen here from the balcony.

Can you find all three women acrobats in the photo at the right?



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By Tim Keller
Correspondent
The Chronicle-News

RATON — The Golden Dragon Acrobats bring their astonishing show back to the Shuler Theater Thursday night after a three-year absence. Shuler impresario Bill Fegan helped to create the group in 1978, collaborating with Danny Chang, who still produces and directs the touring production each year. The show's Chinese acrobats have performed at the Shuler about a dozen times over the company's 35-year history.

Often seeming to defy the laws of physics, the troupe of 25 young acrobats puts on a jaw-dropping two-

hour show. The feats of balance, contortion, juggling, speed and daring beg the question: How long did they have to practice to perfect that? The answer would seem to be measured in years, although the acrobats are all young and limber. They come from various parts of China, where records of this art form go back 4,000 years.

Angela Chang costumes the performers and choreographs their movements in precise coordination to ever-present music. Despite their youth, the acrobats are seasoned professionals who know how to thrill and entertain a crowd.

The last Shuler performance, in August 2010, reached its zenith near the

end when a chest-high stand was placed between the stage and the front row of seats. A young man topped the stand and accepted a chair from a helper. He set the chair on the stand and climbed higher; then did the same with another chair. He continued adding chairs under himself until he stood atop the stand and seven chairs, giving him direct eye contact with the people in the balcony.

Way up there, he did handstands and other stunts. It seemed truly dangerous — not only for himself but for the audience members below. He never faltered. It was an exhilarating end to an unforgettable show.

The acrobats have returned to the Shuler often enough that they already have a following locally. That explains the nearly full house last time and the reason so many parents brought their kids of all ages — on a school night at the beginning of the new school year: It is a show not to be missed.

A benefit performance for the Santa Fe Trail School for the Performing Arts, Thursday night's show begins at 7:00 p.m. General admission tickets are \$20 for adults, \$5 for students and children. Information is available at the Shuler Theater, 575-445-4746.

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