

# PANDA'S HOME

熊貓的家



compagnia  
tpo

MET  
TEATRO METASTASIO  
STABILE DELLA TOSCANA

立里  
空间  
TONG  
PRODUCTION

# PANDA'S HOME

## **PANDA'S HOME**

TPO Company in co-production with  
TONG PRODUCTION | TEATRO METASTASIO DI PRATO

artistic direction Francesco Gandi, Davide Venturini  
based on an idea by Lizhu Ren  
choreography Daniele Del Bandecca, Martina Gregori  
dance for two performers  
visual design Elsa Mersi  
sound design Spartaco Cortesi  
computer engineering Rossano Monti  
costumes Chiara Lanzillotta  
props Livia Cortesi

# HOME





With dance steps, let's follow a Panda... his "house" is in a forest as large as all of China. In this imaginary journey we will travel into China's stories, tradition, and culture.

We will encounter bamboo forests, monsters, fireworks, kites. In a simple and intuitive way we will come to understand how, in Chinese thought, the elements of nature exist in relationship to each other according to a circular movement. It is the theory of the 'Five Elements' (*Wu Xing*), whereby each element is transformed and generates the next one: wood - fire - earth - metal - water.

Therefore, the 'Five Elements' are a trace followed by the two dancers in order to involve the children in a journey in time and space, across China and its landscapes made of nature, ancient culture, traditions, songs.

On stage, the images and sounds envelop the young spectators in colourful and interactive settings, in pleasant games played in a group with the dancers, making this travel experience unique and immersive.

PANDA'S HOME





**NOTES**

running time: 50'

limited capacity

age level: 4 years old and up

## PRESS REVIEWS

"China represents an incredible resource for European artists, especially those who are able to share experiences and practices..."

For TPO, the main task with Panda's Home is to fill the gap between the young audience, the contemporary world and Chinese traditions."

- *Chen Nan, China Daily*





## NOTES FOR “PANDA’S HOME”

A journey in China by dance steps/dance-stepping.

A journey that serves as a pretext for getting to know the centuries-old culture, traditions, and stories of the great China. Presenting these themes has allowed us to explore the complexity of traditional Chinese thought and to acquire a different way of thinking and of considering reality. We have seen that in traditional Chinese thought nature’s elements are closely tied to each other by a circular evolution, just as one of the fundamental theories of Chinese philosophy explains: this is the theory of the five elements – or better, movements.

The Five Movements or *Wu Xing* or Dynamic Elements play a role of fundamental importance, they are the key-stone to understand all Chinese philosophical thought.

The word *Wu Xing* is composed of the ideogram *Wu*, indicating the number five, and of *Xing*, indicating to move or to walk. Together the *Wu Xing* means a dynamic and permanent transformation, with the Five Elements that each indicate the mode in which these transformations are expressed. Wood generates Fire and through burning creates ashes which decompose into soil. Thus Fire is the generative element of Earth. Metals are extracted from the Earth which are dissolved into water that nourishes plants and trees, according to an eternal and unchanging universal law. This is the “*sheng*” or “creation” cycle, which in traditional oriental medicine is called “mother-son” relationship.

In preparing this show we tried to follow this theory as rigorously as possible; it became a true “guideline” for our construction of visual framings and sets, choreographies, images and sound landscapes. By following this trace the show took on the form of five main parts, each corresponding to one of the elements. Within each part we created the context to tell a legend or belief from the child’s imagination in the Chinese cultural tradition.

A prelude introduces “the theme of the journey” before the parts – “Wood”, “Fire”, “Earth”, “Metal”, “Water” – are presented. The introduction is devoted to the panda, China’s animal-symbol and our character- guide. During the course of the journey, the small panda will undergo transformation, in a playful way, to become “a means of transport”, first as an automobile, then as a ship, train, plane and, finally, a bicycle. He will take us all the way to China, right to the Great Wall. This is where the “movement” via the five elements begins.





PANDA'S

## 1 ● Wood

On stage wood is represented by bamboo green which propagates via its roots to grow slender and flexible.

In synchronic time with the bamboo's sprouting, the stage is also "propagating." From emptiness to fullness. From one element to many elements. Other geometrical stage elements, circular and rectangular, appear on the backdrop which functions as a projection screen. We watch as, first, the bamboo starts to sprout and, then, grows into a forest.

The green, the bamboo represent springtime. Every element also has a correspondent cardinal point which, for the element of Wood, is East.

The resulting choreography recalls bamboo's characteristic "flexuous" quality.





PANDA



## 2 • Fire

Wood mutates into Fire. The colour here is red, the corresponding season is summer, the cardinal point is South.

Tradition tells us that bamboo canes can be used to make firecrackers and fireworks. These together with red lanterns and drums traditionally serve to drive away the arrival of the terrible sea monster Nian, who came out of the depths once a year to eat a human being. This is the origin of the red lantern duet and the solo with sticks that is beaten to the ancient rhythm of traditional drums.



### 3 ● Earth

Fire evolves into earth. This element's corresponding colour is yellow.

The Earth, in a graph rendering, is located at the centre of – and equidistant from – the other elements. Indeed the Earth contains all the other elements within itself: Wood with the trees' roots, Fire with its incandescent magma, Metal kept in the underground depths and, finally, Water ready to pour forth from the subterranean sources.

In this part the woman dancer – with the aid of a neutral object, a hoop of cloth that can take on various forms and become a surface for projections – develops a choreography that represents the variations among the four seasons. Her dance gives form to a landscape that we could term "the garden of the four seasons" or of "the four cardinal points".

This section's images contain references to the colours, flowers and birds that are characteristic of each season.





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This landscape introduces us to the representation of a well-known legend that attributes the discovery of silk thread to the princess Lei-Tzu, wife of the Yellow Emperor.

The story goes that, while the princess was sipping some warm tea, under a shady tree, a cocoon fell into her cup; intrigued by the thin thread that was strong and shiny as she unwound the cocoon, she was so fascinated that she decided to use it to weave a fabric.

Thanks to its light weight and resistance to wind, silk cloth in ancient times was employed - among other uses - to build kites. Another meaningful element of Chinese culture, kites symbolise the union of earth and sky. They are a recurring presence in some traditional festivals and here they become a stage object that will accompany us along our walk towards the Great Wall.







The final part of this scene is the onset of night-time and of the full moon.

Here we refer to two aspects of Chinese tradition. The first is the festival of the moon or of mid-autumn; in this period, when the moon is perfectly round, families come together and go outside to appreciate the moon's brilliant light and to eat "moon sweets."

The second aspect is the belief that a rabbit lives on the moon: the Jade Rabbit. It is said that it lives under a magic cassia tree, making pills of immortality also known as the elixir of jade.

On stage, in this nocturnal setting, we are called upon to play with the moon and the rabbits who live there. invités à jouer avec la lune et les petits lapins qui l'habitent.



## 4 ○ Metal

The Earth generates metal, whose colour is white and season is autumn. The animal corresponding to metal is the white tiger.

On stage the full, round moon is transformed into a gong. When it sounds leaves fall and the earth is covered by a blanket of autumn leaves. In this space a choreography inspired by the *Taji Sword* is executed; as the dancer moves the leaves shift allowing glimpses of the white tiger's coat.

Only at the end of the movement does the dancer reveal the ideogram, which represents metal. The ideogram is transformed into a bell, first it swings and sounds, then it takes the form of the street game known as "the bell game" on which the children can jump and also play sound.

(This game, known as hopscotch in English, is played in many countries around the world, including China.)

The scene ends with another reference to the repertory of traditional songs for children, 小白船 "Little White Boat" Here it appears in a short film format that concludes the episode devoted to Metal and opens the section about Water. We watch as the moon is transformed into a boat carrying the rabbit and his cassia tree.





## 5 • Water

From the element of Metal, the action moves on to Water. Its corresponding colour is black, its season is winter and its cardinal point is north.

In a classical source book, *Yue Ling* or *Treatise on the Calendar*, it is written, "(...) *The first month of Winter (...) water begins to turn into ice, the earth starts to freeze, the rainbow hides from the people's sight (...) In this month winter begins once more. This period's supreme virtue is seen in the Water Movement.*"

The new-fallen snow covers and hides everything. The ice and cold freeze the stage and the dance. Then, slowly and one step at a time, the elements reawaken in a magic thaw.

From under the snow emerge the colour and water with its trickles, bringing with them a new life cycle. The bamboo starts to sprout again. The verses of the Chinese poet Du Fu are projected onto the screen:

好雨知时节 当春乃发生

*"Rain has come just in time, in spring as if it is wise"*

These words conclude a full cycle of the five elements and a new one begins.

The journey is over and the playful reappearance of the Panda brings the show to its close.







## TPO AND INTERACTIVE THEATER

Visual, emotional and immersive theatre. Space is the protagonist in TPO's shows with its images, colours and sounds. Thanks to the use of interactive technologies every show is transformed into a 'sensitive' environment where the thin border between art and play can be experienced. Dancers, performers and the audience itself interact with each other exploring new expressive forms that go beyond language and cultural barriers.

The work of TPO is a collaborative effort of a multi-talented and close-knit team of authors from various disciplines of the visual and performing arts. The shows are characterized by the use of large-format projections, the creation of immersive theater environments and the use of interactive technologies some of which are specifically developed by the company for their shows.

The stage space is conceived as a dynamic and reactive environment that can involve the public in individual or group actions: in fact it is set up with sensors (videocameras and microphones) that allow both the performer and the public to modulate sounds or interact with images through movement or voice. These technologies allow the creation of 'sensitive' theatrical environments where children can explore the stage space, discovering that it responds to their actions in a certain way. Thus an active relationship ensues between the young people and their environment, a kind of dialogue - with space, forms, and sounds - which becomes artistic experience.

In the TPO's shows even the performers' role is imbued with special meaning: the dancers 'paint' and 'play' on stage, using the body and movement thanks to the interactive effects but, especially, they invite the children to explore the space with a theatrical approach that emphasizes the use of the body and the gaze.

### Awards:

- China SPAF-Shanghai Performance Arts Festival | 'Going to the world' Award | 'Panda's Home' | Shanghai (CHINA) | 2017
- Festiwalu Teatralna Karuzela - Teatr Pinokio | 'Farfalle' | Włochy (PL) | 2016
- XXI Międzynarodowego Festiwalu Teatrów Lalek SPOTKANIA | 'Il Giardino Dipinto' | Torun (PL) | 2014
- World Congress Assitej | Award for Artistic Excellence | Warsaw (PL) | 2014
- Feten 2010 | Premio especial del jurado a las nuevas propuestas escénicas | Gjon (ES) | 2010
- New England Foundation for the Arts, National Dance Project, US Tour | Compagnia TPO | Boston, MA (USA) | 2010
- Teatri di Vita | Premio della giuria dei ragazzi 'Il Giardino Dipinto' | Porto Sant'Elpidio (IT) | 2007
- ADE (Art Digital Era) | Compagnia TPO | Polverigi (IT) | 2004
- ETI Stregagatto | 'Storie ZIP' | Roma (IT) | 1999
- ETI Stregagatto | 'Riflessioni' | Roma (IT) | 1983

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