

No laughing matter as Chinese stand-up comedians take North America by storm



The Shanghai-based Xiaoguo Comedy opened its stand-up comedy tour of North America with a successful show in Seattle, Washington, last Friday. It was the first time that a Chinese stand-up comedy was staged in North America. — Photos by Ti Gong



The three-hour show brought together 10 top stand-up comedians of the country to present their new original acts especially created for North American audiences on the occasion of the Lunar New Year.

Xu Wei

Just as it's very unlikely for Western people to enjoy live shows of Jimmy Fallon or Jimmy Kimmel in China, Li Sinan hadn't expected to see her favorite Chinese talk shows in the United States.

"It was so amazing to watch a live show of my favorite comedians such as Li Dan at a theater in the US," the young overseas Chinese woman proclaimed.

On January 27, Li and her friend drove a long way from Portland, Oregon, to attend a Chinese stand-up comedy show along with 2,000 spectators at the McCaw Hall in downtown Seattle, Washington. But they thought it was quite worthwhile as they were shedding a tear from laughing so hard throughout the performance.

The hugely successful show presented by the Shanghai-based Xiaoguo Comedy was also the launch of a stand-up comedy tour in North America. It was the first time that a Chinese stand-up comedy was staged in North America.

The three-hour show brought together 10 top stand-up comedians from across the country,

including Li Dan, Cheng Lu and Yang Meng'en, to present their original and brand-new materials especially created for North American audiences on the occasion of the Lunar New Year.

After sending Chinese New Year blessings, they discussed topics covering work, culture and family relationships that related to the overseas audiences, managing to tickle their funny bones and making them burst into fits of laughter.

Despite its origin in Europe and the US, stand-up comedy is growing rapidly in China with increasing popularity among the young generation. Hilarious jokes and jibes inspired by real-life topics and stories resonate well with urbanites who seek quick laughs and relaxation from the stresses of a fast-paced modern society.

However, the promising entertainment genre in China's culture industry is not simply satisfied with catering to domestic audiences nowadays. It is greeting the world with Chinese humor and perspectives on issues of worldwide concern.

Following the first stop in

Seattle, comics of Xiaoguo Comedy will also travel to other big cities in the US and Canada, including San Jose, Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, and Vancouver. At landmark and large professional theaters, all these live performances will attract more than 10,000 spectators. The comedy lineup will also participate in the National Basketball Association's Lunar New Year celebrations.

According to He Xiaoxi, co-founder and CEO of Xiaoguo Comedy, it is not the first time they have brought Chinese stand-up comedy to foreign audiences.

Three years ago, they were invited to participate in the Mandarin Comedy Week during the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in Australia, and tickets sold very well for the 1,000-seat theater.

"After that, we immediately started planning overseas tours in North America, Australia, and New Zealand," He said. "With the gradually optimized pandemic restrictions this year, we put the first North American tour for Chinese stand-up comedy high up