

Huang to make a man out of Mulan

Dancer ready to roll out girl power again, **Li Xinzhu** reports.

Famous dancer and choreographer Huang Doudou prepares to dazzle audiences once again with his new production of *Mulan*, a musical that will be staged at the Shanghai Grand Theater on Oct 9 and 10.

The musical is based on the famous Chinese

story of the same name and uses a variety of artistic forms, combining traditional and modern cultural elements from China and Japan.

"This is a very good opportunity to work with overseas teams, and our first public performance was a great success," said Huang.

Mulan tells the story of how a young girl in ancient China dresses like a man to join the army so that her father doesn't have to. With the help of Disney's cartoon, the story is well known among children and adults around the world.

The musical stresses Mulan's psychological growth during the year she spent in the army, struggling, suffering and finally overcoming the challenges she faces.

"I want to produce a woman character who is more manly than a real man," Huang said.

Huang will play the role of Mulan, and Tsubasa Makoto, one of the stars from Takarazuka Revue, a Japanese all-female musical theater troupe, will play the leading man.

"The Expo has offered artists all over the world a great platform to present and to share experiences with others," Huang said.

This musical was first presented at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space in early September, where it earned praise from Japanese audiences.

Huang's involvement in the Expo 2010 Shanghai began much earlier than with this latest performance.

Huang said he performed in Paris as part of a promotional program when Shanghai applied to host the World Expo, and then performed again on Nanjing Road W when Shanghai was awarded the honor.

When the Expo began, Huang cooperated with the Spanish troupe La Fura dels Baus for a show called *Window of the City*, which is performed three times daily at Houtan Square in Zone C of the Expo Garden.

The 45-minute performance combines music, dance and multimedia technologies to show audiences what real metropolitan life looks like.

"I chose dancers and actors of various body shapes to make it seem more real," Huang said. "After all, we are all surrounded by ordinary people, not professional dancers with seemingly perfect body shapes."

Born in 1977, Huang is currently working as the artistic director of the Shanghai Song and Dance Ensemble.

He describes himself a dancer and choreographer. "I will never give up dance," Huang added.

While he didn't always think of himself as a "family man", Huang married Su Yi, an actress with the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center, when he was 27. "It was a bit early to get married as a dancer," Huang said. "Then I realized that this marriage would provide me a second life full of happiness."

"Family is a significant channel for an artist to seek the true value of life," he added. "The quality of my family life has shaped the content of my art."



PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dancer and choreographer Huang Doudou is not afraid of taking on a woman's role.



PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A promotional poster for *Mulan* starring Huang Doudou.