

New Western Cuisine.



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Coming Together Bonding in MICE

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Dancing in the Street

By: Fred Tibbitts, Jr.
Photo by: Richard Xu

She seemed to appear from nowhere. I was at a high-brow cocktail party, the western jazz band was playing with unrestrained vigour and volume, as if the residents within a three block radius were to be entertained; I was standing with a glass of so-so Bordeaux "vin de table" at one of the more fashionable Tianjin restaurants along the charming Hai He River downtown Tianjin on a Friday evening, admiring the nearby floor to ceiling glass wall looking back to the street and parallel closer-in sidewalk, chatting with someone I had just met, when I happened to glance out at the view...nothing special, just the busy evening traffic of Tianjin, a second-tier, yet major Northern China Mainland metropolis of more than one hundred million people...and then about a minute later, intuitively, my attention was drawn once again to the sidewalk and the street.

As if from nowhere, a petite, elderly Chinese lady, dressed in her Tianjin, ragged finest was coming along the sidewalk, dancing in the street: For she could easily hear the music, and so, instead of simply walking from stage left to stage right along the sidewalk, she was dancing her way forward and then back in perfect ballroom box-step; two steps forward, one step sideways, two steps backward, one step sideways...advancing ever so slowly, as though it was her one moment of fame this lifetime...a solemn expression, eyes fixed straight ahead, as if in a trance, posture erect enough to pass the book atop-the-head test; her distinguished gentleman partner invisible to all, but this ballroom Princess of Tianjin. It was the sight of a lifetime. If captured on blog, it would have easily earned countless millions of hits overnight.

I returned my attention to my new, pontificating acquaintance, who all this time had not missed a beat with his story of whatever, nor even noticed I was at length gazing out the nearby wall of glass...and after a bit, when I felt compelled to return my attention back to the sidewalk, she was gone. I went right to the window and strained to look up the sidewalk stage left, but she had disappeared, as if to nowhere.

Who was she? What from her past prompted her to dance in the street? Was she happy or sad? Contented or lonely? Would she have liked to have been invited to the party to dance with the guests in their brand name, smart casual finery or was she simply happy just to dance in the street? I guess I'll never know. Sometimes we witness momentary acts of splendor that require no explanation or narrative. They just happen. And when we least expect them, and then they are gone. There is no instant replay. Our memory of what we experienced is all that remains.

But who can I thank for this moment of bliss? Just as the famous photograph of the unknown sailor kissing the unknown nurse at New York's Times Square on "V-J day" in 1945, when it was announced the War in the Pacific was over, I was in the right place at the right time to witness an act of Grace. The Energy of the Universe was showing me that sometimes you don't need an invitation to enjoy the party. And her guest list was a whole lot more restricted than was mine: For although she was not invited to my party, neither was I invited to hers. In fact, if you think about it, I was the one on the outside looking in; for she was the Princess of Tianjin, belle of the ball, proudly practicing her ballroom two-step with her imaginary Prince Charming, dancing in the street. Happiness is what you make of every moment, pauper or princess.

