

Chance to perform in Beijing lures Denver's Kim Robards dance troupe

By [Marc Shulgold](#), Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

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The irony is inescapable, Kim Robards admitted - an American modern-dance company performing in communist China.

"It's a curious thing," the Denver choreographer observed of her troupe's upcoming appearances during the Beijing Olympics.

"After all, what we as dancers express is *freedom*."

The China visit by the 11 members of Kim Robards Dance, one of only two American companies performing at the Booking Dance Festival, has exciting potential, Robards said. "It's one of the few opportunities in our history to reach people from around the world."

Still, getting there was hardly half the fun.

"It was a strict process," she said of the steps necessary to receive clearance from the Chinese government. "We had to send them DVDs and written summaries of each work that we'll be performing, along with detailed descriptions of the costuming, the makeup, everything."

And that was the easy part. The company, which completed its 21st season, has been busily beating the bushes for corporate and private sponsorship to defray the expected \$50,000 in expenses.

As for the tiresome paperwork that comes with such a venture, that's already been completed by Jodi Kaplan, who arranges engagements for the troupe. Kaplan heads the New York-based BookingDance agency, which explains the peculiar title for the Beijing festival. It also underscores the fact that the shows at the Nine Theatres in China's largest city are completely independent of the Summer Games taking place not far away.

"I discovered that there are plenty of cultural events going on in Beijing the entire year," Kaplan said. "But they're all before and after the Games."

"When I was attending a national dance conference, I learned that there are 500 theaters in Beijing - and they're all dark (during the Olympics). So, I got a flash of an idea."

The plan was to send over three companies she represents (a number later reduced to two). They would share the bill with three Chinese dance troupes, creating an East-meets-West program that would honor the international flavor of the Olympics.