

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF PERFORMING ARTS

舞蹈藝術的社會影響力

Dance for Positive Social Change in the Community

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(Translation of Chinese Transcript)

Hello Principals and Teachers.

I am frequently asked about how to give advice and guidance to students who are interested in joining the performing arts industry, and how to help them to craft a good life plan. If your students or children come to you and say, “I want to study dance in the university and I want to have a lifelong career in dance,” then what are the career prospects and new development in dance?

To students who like dancing and are thinking of a career in dance, I believe their general understanding of dance will be mostly coming from their dancing class or dance studio. Perhaps you may think that a career of dance is short-living and has narrow job options. The prospects are likely only being dancers, choreographers, or dance teacher, etc. Have you ever thought that dance can also have great contributions to other fields and even the society?

Dance as a specialised art subject

The School of Dance of the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts offers dance as a specialised art subject. We do not only nurture artists specialised in dance performance and choreography. Our programmes also contain many related subjects such as Academic Studies, Dance Pedagogy, Dance Creation, and Dance Science these four learning areas so as to equip our future young artists.

For example, from dance science’s perspective, dance can train up muscles, tune up the body, improve blood circulation, postures and balance, enhance hand-eye coordination and improve fine motor skills which will promote greater physical flexibility. This flexibility training is especially useful for active children and elderly to help reduce their chances of falling.

Our brains need oxygen and water to operate normally. Dance, as a form of exercise, can help to provide one of them which is oxygen. When you exercise, the brain produces a neurochemical called endorphin. This chemical can arouse the sense of energy which can keep our mind concentrated and enhance learning abilities.

Our programme is strengthened with the knowledge of dance science and our graduates can take jobs as mentioned previously and also pursue a career of physical fitness, such as becoming yoga, Pilates, Feldenkrais movement trainers. Furthermore, our graduates are equipped with dance science knowledge. So they can become knowledgeable dance teachers with higher standards. We also have graduates pursuing other related research and postgraduate programmes such as psychology in performing arts, dance science research, etc.

With the development and changes in the society, I believe professionals in these areas will continue to be sought after.

(Showing video clip)

How dance can change people

Let me take this as an example. Our School recently received the Jockey Club Charities Trust 3-year funding to launch “Dance Well” Project. This project integrates dance analysis, art appreciation, dance pedagogy, dance science and dance creation. This is a range of interdisciplinary knowledge. This Project incorporates successful cases from overseas and allows Hong Kong dance artists to bring together dance and social inclusion to a community of patients with Parkinson’s Disease. In this Project, dance is not only a therapeutic medium that facilitates the communications with the patients and their families, but also is an artistic medium that integrates their body and mind, social well-being, aesthetic and emotions, which will help them regain self-confidence and self esteem.

First of all, our students need to understand dance and other art forms, so they can analyse different art forms such as visual art and music and discover the inner values of arts. Then using their knowledge in dance science, our students can design different body movements with reference to their understanding of Parkinson’s Disease and its symptoms and prepare dance classes and workshops appropriately. At the end, our students will use their knowledge in dance creation and lead the participants to create dance together and demonstrate the power of art during the process. In this way, we will once again infuse art into the lives of the participants so that they will be embraced by the society and feel included, being cared, once again. Dance can help the students and artists to be more sensitive and understanding to others to better appreciate others and be more empathetic so that they can exert their share of contribution and effort to the society.

Technology magnifies the power of dance

The development of technology nowadays has fully integrated into every single aspect of our lives. Therefore, our programmes also use technology to enhance teaching flexibility and student interests and to guide students to create art with technology. For example, we utilise 3D motion capture, animation, virtual reality, dance movement capture technology, and other software and system with dance creation in order to break through the creative space for dance performance. This year, our graduating class had a chance to work with a UK choreographer and multimedia artist and created a digital dance performance together.

Recently, two students from the graduating class were invited to participate in an AI and VR dance creation performance. Their performance will be presented in this year’s Affordable Artfair. Our students are equipped with the ability to collaborate with other technological fields and therefore they are open for wider career options.

Conclusion

The future prospect of having dance as a lifelong career is no longer the same as the past. There are lots of job opportunities available to our dance graduates. Ultimately, the most important thing is whether these young people can take their talents in dance their interests and passion in dance and their knowledge and skills learnt from the Academy to prepare better plans for their lives.

Thank you.