

Carmen Huang

The Influence of Chinese Cultural Dancing

RING! RING! RI! I slapped my alarm clock with the palm of my hand. I turned over and sighed. Another Saturday had crept up upon me and yet, I still had nothing to look forward to. Wake up, eat, homework, computer, shower, eat, TV, sleep. That was the prosaic Saturday routine I muddled through before I was introduced to the Asian Arts Talents Foundation (AATF) by one of my best friends; joining was probably the greatest decision I've ever made. Suddenly, my tedious Saturdays became a stunning mosaic of dance, music, friendship, and laughter. I've been given many opportunities to discover the many wonders of Asian arts, which consequently created the characteristics I now encompass; this included my love of performances and pride of my culture.

I've been interested in music at a young age and was amazed by the delicate sounds of the Chinese instruments I danced to. It was extremely different from the music I was used to playing on my flute at school and even more diverse from the music I listen to in my leisure time. Its soothing notes caught me off guard. The notes of melody and harmony rose and fell as they ascended from the different types of Chinese instruments. The notes formed a smooth rhythmic blend that I can't help, but want to move my body to. Here at AATF, there was a combination of my two favorite forms of art: music and dance. One couldn't do without the other. Hearing music would prompt me to jump to my feet and dance.

Dancing is my porthole to a place where no words are needed to convey my thoughts and feelings. If there ever was a time in life that I was inarticulate, it was not while I was dancing. Every Chinese dance taught a lesson. With a single glance of my eyes or the sly smile sneaking onto my lips, the audience would understand my meaning. As I swayed and moved to the music, the moral of the dance is instantly expressed through my body language. Not only did the audience understand the meaning of the Chinese cultural dance, but as a

performer, I did as well. When dancing on stage in front of a crowd with the spotlights on, I would feel majestic and free. The world has quietly slipped away and all would seem surrealistic up until the very end. I would *become* the beautiful princess I enacted or the malevolent spider I portrayed. The audience's unbridled enthusiasm would break the moment of tension at the end of the exhilarating performance and I would become myself again.

Being in AATF has given me countless advantages over those who aren't in it. The most evident of all is that each time I rehearsed a dance I learned something new. A second advantage is that I've met many great people; two of them are my teachers Mrs. Donna Chen and Mrs. Ling-Mei Lein. I didn't start dancing at an early age like most dancers did, but they have taught me well to compensate for what I have missed. From them, I have been given the motive to be more than just a mediocre dancer. They have educated me about numerous things that I couldn't have learned otherwise and I value them a great deal for doing so. Also, not only have I met new friends, but the friendship between my best friend and I have only strengthened as we danced together. Moreover, I've had multiple chances to be involved with the community including performances at the LA Zoo for Lunar New Year and being in the Lunar New Year Parade in Alhambra. Unquestionably, many of my friends at school don't have these opportunities to have fun and laugh while consistently learning about their culture.

To me, dancing is the universal language; you don't have to know Chinese to understand what is going on during the Chinese Cultural Dance. This unique type of dance creates an atmosphere of music and dance to which I can convey my thoughts without trouble. I am not an outspoken person and quite timid, but Chinese Cultural Dancing allows me to show my feelings. I obtain the feeling of being invigorated each time I danced. New friendships have been made while old friendships have strengthened. To say that I am not influenced by my participation in the Asian arts is a lie.