

## The Other Side of Me

“Remember...Smile with feeling!” “Gracefully! Take small steps!” said my dance teachers during our evening practices. I have heard these few phrases for my entire life, as soon I started dancing at the age of 5. Annoyance and anger gets to me once in a while, as my teachers made us practice until near perfection. But as the years went by, I have learned that within every dance, there is a different story and meaning behind each one, and that practice makes perfect; or *almost* perfect. My participation in Asian Arts has not only taught me what the meaning of this cultural dance is all about, but it has also taught me self-confidence, determination, commitment, and the beauty within.

Most people express how they feel through singing, writing, or playing sports. Asian Arts dancing is my way of expressing my feelings through body movements. As a young and naïve girl, I was always the quietest one in my class, always afraid to speak up. When I step foot onto the dance floor and begin dancing to the Chinese music, I would always feel relieved, as I let my heart and body movements speak for me instead of my mouth. I started dancing around 10 years ago, contributing in ballet classes, Chinese cultural dancing, and modern dancing. I have taken ballet and Asian dancing at the same time together for about four years, both practices taking place on the same day. However, it was a lot of work, because it meant double the performances and triple the practices. As a result, I stopped taking ballet a couple years ago because it became too much work, but I am proud of my decision because Asian Arts has made me become who I am today, as my dance friends, teachers, and the art itself has intertwined into my life.

Taking part in AATF has shown me what commitment is all about, inside and outside of dance. Aside from my school and social life, the other part of my life (dancing) was still taking place as well. But as they both collided at one point, this is where commitment to dancing comes

in. Ever since I was young, I have missed many events, including birthday parties, services, and get togethers. Nevertheless, dance has taken over half of my weekends, and sometimes even all of it, as I attend class every Saturday. I show my commitment to dance by attending practices every week, and in the end, I realize it was all worth it because the practices would result in greater performances. Commitment is also very important in our dance lessons because if someone was absent, the other students had to sacrifice learning it over again the following week, and thus, using up an extra day to learn something new. I have learned and showed my full engagement to my 4<sup>th</sup> solo Asian arts dance for the competition recently this year. Although I had only two weeks to perfect a new dance, I showed my commitment to it by practicing both at home and at the studio whenever I was free. And what do you know? I earned platinum for my solo dance! But the award wasn't as important as what I had learned at the end; that dancing and life in general can never be perfected at once, but trying and practicing will lead you to your destination.

“Deep breaths... and smile!” my teachers would always say before we went on stage. One of the best parts of Asian Arts dancing for me is performing for others, as I not only get to share the dance that I have been practicing for so long, but I am able to share the beauty of Asian Arts itself. I have had about 10 years of experience in dancing and counting, as I performed in gatherings, socials, parades, theatres, parties, on television, and more. Happiness and joy would always fill me as I performed for others because I felt free and didn't have to care about anything else at the moment. Performing before others has influenced me to become more confident in myself in dancing and in life. So, after many years of performing, I'm glad to say that I have earned my confidence to do other things such as trying out for volleyball in high school, and competing in piano competitions. My confidence in myself has led me to become one of the few

winner in the 2010 Bach festival competition winner for piano and making it into the frosh team for volleyball! I was also one of the two people that have been awarded a scholar's award/plaque for volleyball! In conclusion, I feel fortunate to be part of a life-provoking situation to participate in music and sports, and to be in a dance group outside of school. This allows others to see the connection between music and dance.

The best part of AATF is sharing the beauty of Asian Arts with friends and teachers that I have met along the way after 9 years. Dance has also influenced my life as it allowed me to have a good fitness health, and it has also made me more flexible. However, I have often isolated my dancing life with my school life, afraid of what others might think of me. Separating these two lives has enabled me to have the best of both worlds, as I didn't have to worry about what others thought of me. But now do I learn from the words of my dance friends that I have nothing to hide from my classmates, and that I should be a proud participant of doing what I love the most. I figured that if people should know me, they should also know another big part of my life that makes me who I am today; Asian Arts dancing, the other side of me.