

Enjoying Each Step

As the music starts playing, I begin to lose control of my body. I am consumed by the music, and the music only. The dance that I have dedicated so much time and effort into has now become a collection of involuntary movements. An explosion of adrenaline overcomes my body as each motion is released with feeling and energy. Only when the music wanes and the audience applauds do I realize what I have just accomplished. Chinese Folk Dance allows me to gain more knowledge about my culture while providing me with an outlet to express myself.

Several years ago, I would show up to dance practice, not as a student, but as an onlooker on the sidelines. I watched with fascination as my older sister immersed herself in an enchanting dance. Soon, I met some girls my age who tried to convince me to join the Asian Arts Talent Foundation. Although attending dance class promised a joyful time, I was not fully enticed. The real reason I eventually enrolled was seeing how beneficial it was to my sister and how happy it made her.

Despite having been at the AATF studio countless times, butterflies still fluttered in my stomach as I entered my first day as an actual student. All the other girls leaped and glided across the room smoothly with seemingly little effort. I attempted to imitate their steps, but instead of graceful movements, I felt as if I was stumbling clumsily. It took some weeks of frustration and embarrassment, but I got the hang of our weekly routine.

Later on, dance grew in importance to me, and I longed to be the lead in a dance. I practiced multiple hours a week, whether it was at the studio or at home. Aches and pain tried to turn me away from advancing, but my determination and perseverance came on top as I developed into a proficient dancer. Furthermore, when someone was needed to take the position

of the lead role in one of the dances, I accepted the challenge. Thus, a new era of my dancing emerged.

As Wayne Dyer once stated, "When you dance, your purpose is not to get to a certain place on the floor. It's to enjoy each step along the way." Although this quote may not refer uniquely to dance, it definitely applies. Each week I look forward to my dance class on the weekend. There, I get to socialize with my friends, and together, we unveil new interpretations from the dance choreography. Every dance that has been taught to me is a story in which I am able to portray a character and express its emotions and feelings through each movement. As I take each step, I become enraptured with feelings of happiness and pride.

All in all, Chinese dance has had a significant part of sculpting the person I am today. Presently, Chinese culture in the United States has been diminished by American customs. By participating in my weekly dance class I learn to stay grounded to my Chinese roots as I discover one of the most beautiful arts of my heritage. I have acquired skills in teamwork, as well as how to stay unique as an individual. The skills I take from Chinese dance will undoubtedly stick with me for my entire life.