

香港劇場年鑑 2016

舞蹈・戲曲・戲劇

HONG
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YEARBOOK

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Dance

Xiqu

Drama

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打破悶局：與梅卓燕談香港舞壇

尉璋

二〇一六年的香港舞壇，不論是官方還是民間，都竭力打破悶局。

大團不甘故步自封。如「香港舞蹈團」，就用《中華英雄》與《紅樓·夢三闖》展示舞團突破原有路徑的渴望。前者繼《風雲》後再次示範中國舞與流行文化的雜糅如何能夠不落窠臼；後者則從一個最為傳統的經典文本出發，呈現三位編舞迥異的當代視野與角度，也藉機磨礪舞者，碰撞出新的表演狀態和身體質感。

在有限的資源下打開局面

藝術家更加進取地利用有限資源，尋求發展機會。對於香港的年輕編舞來說，有很長的一段時間，一直糾結於該如何爭取機會到外面交流、學習或展演。資助的缺乏、訊息的不充分、關係網絡的不足，都帶來重重阻礙。然而在去年，不少藝術家都拋下包袱勇敢出發——與其抱怨大環境支援的不夠，不如自己「撐」自己。不論是藍嘉穎在沒有香港藝術發展局（藝發局）資助下前往參加香港京都舞蹈交流計劃，又或是梁儉豐所策劃的《身體印記——後殖民的青鳥》計劃，都在有限的資源下努力打開局面，促成交流，也促成自我的成長。

舞蹈交流深化，積極擁抱藝術市場。二〇

一六年的舞蹈界，令人印象深刻的幾件大事，都與舞蹈交流有關。西九文化區（下稱「西九」）由二〇一四年開始舉辦《新作論壇》系列，請來不同的外國舞蹈家參與討論和主持工作坊，與本地舞者交流，亦讓不同界別的藝術家與舞蹈碰撞。來到二〇一六年，活動藉由「多媒體與舞蹈創作」、「舞·樂互碰」等主題，發掘新的創作、表演方法。藝發局則於二〇一五年開始，組織本地藝術家與藝術行政人員參與首爾表演藝術博覽會（下稱PAMS），初試藝術市場的水溫。二〇一六年，藝發局首次率領超過六十人的代表團奔赴德國杜塞爾多夫國際舞蹈博覽會（下稱Tanzmesse），稍後又參加澳亞藝術節，將本地藝術家帶入國際藝術市場。而香港藝術中心，亦於二〇一六年與布魯塞爾Les Halles de Schaerbeek合辦藝術家配對創作計劃，進一步探索了跨文化舞蹈作品的委約及創作方式。

官方的國際交流活動大刀闊斧地打開局面，民間自己的交流亦日趨頻繁，所有的這些，讓本地舞壇的一池水，活泛起來。

舞蹈家梅卓燕由二〇一四年開始擔任藝發局舞蹈組別的民選委員，她用《黃帝內經》來比喻藝術生態的有機發展——只要五臟通達、陰陽調和，哪怕無為而治，活水亦能自

然流轉，催生新機。過去的三年任期，她在政府固有體制中左突右突，喜見外部環境終於有所鬆動，卻也讓一些固有頑疾更加浮上表面，展望未來的三年，責任更為艱巨。

「在沒有進入藝發局之前我就感覺到，香港的舞蹈，或者說表演藝術面臨一個很大的問題——我們所有的演出製作基本上演期只有那麼兩場、三場，然後就放抽屜底了。投入那麼多，燈油火蠟，兩場之後就全部扔掉，多麼浪費。再來，沒有人可以在那麼短的一個製作中達到理想的創作。就算當時我們和 Pina Bausch（翩娜·包殊）聊天，她的舞團用了三個月的時間去做一個新作品，臨首演前她也還是覺得不行，甚至連名字都沒有想好。大師都是這樣，我們何德何能，作品一次就能成為可以留下來的作品？」

梅卓燕說，如果檢視香港表演藝術進入專業階段的歷史，從八十年代到今日，究竟留下了多少作品可堪「經典」之名？「經典是要經歷時間的打磨，是要這個城市 be proud of（以）這個藝術家（為榮），慢慢儲下來一些東西。」而我們這個城市最缺的，恰恰就是時間。

加入藝發局，梅卓燕頗有點破釜沉舟的英雄氣，「我們要做一些東西，不然大家只能一起死。」從參加 PAMS，到出訪 Tanzmesse，

改變在慢慢發生，新的項目和計劃也陸續有來。「我們是推動了一些東西，只希望它不要停。」

藝術經紀與製作人角色的缺失

二〇一六年九月，藝發局首次率領代表團參加 Tanzmesse，讓藝術家與藝團在這個當今世界最重要的舞蹈藝術市場中增加曝光率、尋求未來合作的機會。緊湊的行程讓不少隨團藝術家大呼刺激、過癮、眼界大開，卻也暴露了舞蹈界在推廣、遊說、洽談方面的短處。

「在推廣方面還有很多東西可以做，但是目前而言可能是有些難度的。」梅卓燕說，「比如，我會看到 curator（策劃人）的角色，在香港的表演藝術方面是缺失的。那麼多年來，有沒有一些專門做藝術中介的團體呢？Producers（製作人）呢？歷史上是有一些人，但是遠沒有成為一個氣候。在這一行中，最成功的可能就是張輝和鄭為立了，但是他們二人都有特定的背景為後盾。張輝除了 manage（協調）香港的藝術家，還 manage 大陸的藝術家，而大陸的戲劇在九十年代開始被西方所注視，所以他很快地打入了這個網絡。鄭為立則曾在香港藝術節和『城市當代舞蹈團』任職，這些經歷背景，以及他們的關係人脈，不是一隻手就可以打出來的。有

沒有一些人真的base在香港（作基礎），主力為香港做這方面的東西呢？很遺憾，可能有很多想入行的人，但最終沒有辦法。」

梅卓燕說，製作人有很多種，香港最為常見的製作人角色，仍停留在為一個製作「跟頭跟尾」，鮮有製作人專門去和別人商談，或是去藝術節中做遊說工作。這類遊走於藝術市場中，為作品和藝術家作推介的專業中間人，是世界藝術市場中不可缺少的「狠角色」，卻是香港藝術界一直空缺的。「這些人對藝術家和作品足夠瞭解，更重要的是，他有足夠的connection（連繫），知道甚麼作品應該去找哪一類的劇場，甚麼作品應該去聯繫甚麼藝術家。我們需要很多人在這中間去穿插，但舞蹈方面，目前你看到的，可能是西九的陳頌瑛（西九文化區管理局藝術發展主管〔舞蹈〕）。但西九無法完成所有的東西，而且它也有它的本位。所以我們需要大量的獨立的producers，未來這也是一個艱巨的任務——如何令它成為一個行業？」

搭建人脈：「給夠喝咖啡的時間」

培養藝術經紀與製作人，需要足夠的專業培訓，卻不能只停留在象牙塔中。梅卓燕說，所謂的藝術行政課程中大致已經包含了這部分內容，「但它最巧妙的地方在於你不是有那個技術就行，而是要有connection，要有

network（網絡）。」而人脈的搭建，又豈是一時之功？「人脈怎麼來？你也許在這個行業中很久，或者在一些藝術節中做過買手，這樣就很自然；又可能你曾經在很有名的團中工作，離開後自己成立了中介公司。」

這兩種情況在香港現今而言都不大現實。經驗豐富的資深人員大多棲身於各大藝術機構，新進人員進入機構又很快出來，並未能累積足夠的經驗與人脈；至於第二種情況，遺憾地說，香港現今的藝團似乎並沒有太多可以達到這個規模與標準。

「我九十年代隻身去闖各個藝術節的時候，已經一直向政府申請，可不可以給我一筆錢帶一個人出去專門make connection（搭建聯絡）。當時他們告訴我這是不需要的。但我帶他去，不是幫我這一個製作，而是希望這個人未來可以做這方面的工作，積累長線的connection。當時沒有人覺得這是重要的。我後來停止了my tour（巡演），我的connection也完全斷開了。現在我還想去重新聯繫的時候，已經不是那回事。人脈不是即時有的，而是長時間的積累。」

來到今日，切不能再如此短視。對於梅卓燕而言，放遠目光，從現在開始為未來的藝術經紀和製作人澆築土壤，刻不容緩。她記得自己曾問過張輝成功的秘訣，「他說：『你



攝影: Janet Sinica



攝影: Janet Sinica

要給足夠的時間和人喝咖啡。』」

檢討資助政策

具體而言，藝發局在未來應如何制定相關方案？梅卓燕認為，首先應該重新檢視現有的資助政策。她指出，一直以來，藝術資助大多針對製作，於是乎，所有人做製作就拿到一點點錢，也催生許多不上不下的製作。「這樣的模式是死路一條！這個餅只有那麼大，入行的人越來越多，用這個模式，表面上是人人都有飯吃，實際上，這筆錢是吃也吃不飽，餓也餓不死，半天吊。我們最終要重新考慮，我們的資助到底是要做甚麼？Funding（資助）是可以催生很多東西的，對一個城市的面貌的塑造有著重要作用，包括看到一些藝術家現在還沒有看到的東西，然後提供一個環境。」

梅卓燕笑言，就如同《黃帝內經》所說的，首先將五臟六腑的環境調理好，讓他們恢復自己的功能，「它自己就會行了。」我們現在的情況卻是本末倒置，「可能有些器官已經塞住了，壞死了，但是沒有人理它，然後在僅有的資源條件下拚命去補它。最後不就是大家一起死嗎？我們進藝發局，我們的委員要和業界來共同研究我們生態到底如何，在這個生態中去發現長久以來已經不work（有效），或者沒有發揮功能的部分。這是很艱巨的工作，希望在未來三年中，我們盡量去做。」

具體到藝術經紀，梅卓燕認為，既然現在已有很多獎學金支持本地的藝術行政人員去外國的藝術節中做實習，為甚麼不考慮將他們放到自己的業界中打磨？「比如讓一些實習生每年跟著香港藝術節的節目總監梁掌璋，又或是跟著西九的陳頌瑛，用跟mentor（導師）的形式，貼身學習一年。聽別人怎麼sell（營銷）節目，怎麼去商談。這是一個training（訓練），上一屆時我們propose（建議）了這個，但做不到，希望這次可以做到。」

改善創作環境：源頭活水來

對於「藝術市場」這個概念，香港接觸得很遲，然而對藝術家而言，這是一個重要的入門窗口，「看到世界的現狀，知道自己的位置，也尋找合作的機會與發展的契機。」要在市場上嶄露頭角，藝術經紀和製作人的角色固然重要，但回歸根本，最為關鍵的仍然是作品本身。

「在藝術市場，你的作品夠有趣，一定有人會來找你。」梅卓燕說，「我進藝發局，說白了最想做的就是兩件事情：我們的內部環境和外在的環境。外在環境現在開始動；內在的，如何能有一個很好的藝術創作環境？五臟的機能如何健全，有足夠的養料和健康的藝術家流動機制？當有一個健康的環境，這個人你不用管他，他自然就動了。」



《人間·獨·白》（編舞：黃靜婷）（2016）
攝影：Janet Sinica



梅卓燕（左）
攝影：Janet Sinica

她直言現有的創作環境很「無趣」，如何改善很「棘手」。「創作不是現在這樣我賣一個產品得一塊錢，你做一個作品也不只是為了那一塊錢，是通過這個作品要很多東西。例如現在看演出有很多有趣的題目，但是你看這些題目被做得『生勾勾』（不成熟）的。你知道他完全沒有時間去做research（研究）。我們真的很需要dramaturge（戲劇構作），很需要藝術家有條件可以集中精力在創作上。現在呢，你發現藝術家是做很多周圍的東西，最終進去studio（工作室），大廚要開鑊炒這碟菜的時候，就不夠時間炒了，然後飯都沒煮熟就拿出來給你吃。那就算有再多的材料再好的餐廳給你又有甚麼用？我吃過也不會想再吃咯！」

梅卓燕強調，環境固然可以努力催生，但藝術家自己也要作出選擇。「不是說每個人都要犧牲，但要有一個選擇。你究竟入行，是要生存，還是想做其他東西？」她說，藝術需要時間沉澱、思考，藝術是「熬」出來的，但也正因為這過程，藝術家才能成長。

近年來，業界意識到創作上的危機，為避免青黃不接的困局，皆落力打造新進編舞的創作平台，全力「造血」。例如「香港芭蕾舞團」每年的「編舞家巡禮」與城市當代舞蹈團的「舞人習作」，都在小巧的場地中展示新進編舞家的原創作品。香港舞蹈團經營了十年的實驗劇場「八樓平台」去年則特別策劃了一連兩個星

期的節目，讓來自港日台韓的藝術家一起切磋舞藝，交流、觀摩、創新。「香港舞蹈聯盟」也在去年舉辦了首屆香港舞蹈年獎獎學金，為獲獎者提供財務支持、藝術行政協助及演出平台，讓得獎者可以心無旁騖地鑽研創作，將短小的概念發展成完整的作品。至於康樂及文化事務署文化節目組的「舞蹈新鮮人」系列和香港藝術節經營數年的「香港賽馬會當代舞蹈平台」系列，也都令到不少年輕編舞家有機會展露頭角，為舞蹈界注入新血。

這些不同的平台，逐漸搭建起自小型至中型作品的展演階梯，為新人提供創作機會之餘，也令得作品的流通更為有機，正如梅卓燕所說：「路徑打通後，水又回來了。」但僅有中小型作品的發展平台還遠遠不夠，有趣的點子只有在經過精良打磨後形成完整作品，才能成為藝術家的立世之本。「但再大型些的足本作品由誰來委約呢？這一塊我們暫時沒有辦法。去藝術市場的作品大多短小、片段式，方便展示，但發展到更大些的完整作品才真正讓別人看到你的實力。未來三年，我們會主力做這一塊。」至於舞蹈的委約與製作方式，這兩年也有一些新的思考。例如「不加鎖舞蹈館」與法國編舞家艾曼紐·汀結緣於西九的《新作論壇》後，將舞者送到法國跟隨編舞家學習，前後花費一年半時間合作出的作品《西門說》，以及香港藝術中心與布魯塞爾 Les Halles de Schaerbeek合辦的配對創作計劃，

都為未來舞蹈的創作及製作模式提供了新的靈感。

路猶長。所幸風已起，只望微瀾不止。

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Breaking through Stagnation: Conversation with Mui Cheuk-yin on Hong Kong's Dance Scene

Wei Wei

In 2016, whether it be governmental or in the community, there was some real effort to break through the stale status quo in the Hong Kong dance scene.

The big companies were discontent to be trapped in their old ways. For example, Hong Kong Dance Company presented *Chinese Hero: A Lone Exile* and *Reveries of the Red Chamber* to convey their desire to break away from the path they were on. The former served to show — once again, after *Storm Clouds* — how Chinese dance can be coalesced with pop culture to lift itself above stagnation. The latter worked its way up from a most classic text, to manifest the modern vision and perspectives of three choreographers, at the same time making use of the opportunity to challenge the dancers to new performance levels and physical textures.

Making headway with limited resources

Artists were more proactive with their use of the limited resources to look for opportunities for development. Over a very long period of time, Hong Kong's young choreographers were stuck on how to fight for chances to go overseas for exchanges, learning or performances. There was a lack of funding, information and networks, all of which posed major

challenges. But in the past year, a number of them have decided to boldly go forward; there is no point in complaining about the lack of support in the greater environment, and it is time to help ourselves. Whether it was Blue Ka Wing going ahead to take part in the Hong Kong x Kyoto Dance Exchange Project without funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), or the Body Code - Post Colonial Blue Birds project curated by Kenny Leung, these were all forged under the restriction of limited resources, bringing about exchanges as well as self growth.

There has been a deepening of dance exchange, and an active embrace of the art market. A few major events that left deep impressions in the dance circle in 2016 were all related to dance exchanges. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD) launched the New Works Forum series in 2014, where a number of international choreographers were invited here to hold workshops and discussions, allowing for an exchange with local dancers and bringing together a mix of different genres and artists. In 2016, the series began uncovering new ways of creation and performance through themes such as "Multimedia and Dance Dialogue" and "Choreographer & Composer Lab". The HKADC began organising trips with local artists and art administrators in 2015 to the Performing Arts Market in Seoul (PAMS) to test the waters. In 2016, the HKADC led a delegation of

more than 60 people for the first time to Germany's internationale tanzmesse nrw (Tanzmesse), and then also to the OzAsia Festival, propelling local artists out into the international art market. And the Hong Kong Arts Centre co-produced in 2016 with Les Halles de Schaerbeek an artist pairing programme, which further explored the modes of commission and creation for cross-cultural dance pieces.

Government initiated international exchanges charged ahead boldly, while among the community, exchanges also became more frequent. All of this started bringing to life the still pool that was the local dance scene.

In 2014, dance artist Mui Cheuk-yin was elected as a HKADC Council Member, representing the dance sector. She uses the ancient Chinese medical text *Huangdi Neijing* as an analogy for the organic development of the art ecology: If the flow between the five vital organs is smooth, the *yin* and the *yang* in harmony, then there is always a cure; water can course through to bring new life. Over the past three years at the HKADC, Mui has continued to prod and push at the established government mechanisms, and happily reports seeing a relaxing at least in the external environment. Nonetheless, deep-rooted ills are also surfacing — a sign of the major challenges in the three years to come.

"Even before entering the HKADC, I felt as though Hong Kong dance or performing arts faced one major problem: Our productions are basically only performed two, three times, before it is forever stashed away at the bottom of the drawer. All that time and effort put in, and everything is thrown away after two showings. It is an awful waste. On top of that, no one can achieve their ideal creation in such a short period of production. Even back then, chatting with Pina Bausch — her dance company took three months to create a new work, but up to the day before the premiere she still did not think it was working yet. In fact, they did not even have a name set for it. If not even the master can handle it, who are we to think we can create a lasting piece with this kind of schedule?"

Looking at the history of Hong Kong's performing arts turning professional since the 1980s, Mui questions: How many pieces could we really consider "classics"? "A classic requires the polishing of time. It is when a city is proud of the creator of the work, and preserves its essence over time." Yet what we lack most in this city is exactly that — time.

On joining the HKADC, Mui seems to have a heroic determination about her: "We have to do something, or we will all just perish together." From taking part in PAMS, to visiting Tanzmesse, change is slowly taking

place, with new projects and plans coming along. "We drove something into movement, now we just hope it does not stop."

A lack of agents and producers

In September 2016, the HKADC led a delegation to Tanzmesse for the first time, allowing artists and art groups to gain exposure in the world's most important dance art market and find future collaboration opportunities. The tightly packed schedule excited participating artists, who said they had fun and their horizons broadened. But it also exposed the dance circle's inadequacies in terms of promotion, persuasion and negotiation.

"On promotion, there is a lot more to be done, but for the time being this might be a little difficult," Mui says. "For example, I see a lack of curatorship roles in Hong Kong's performing arts. Over the years, have we had any groups that specialise in being art agencies? And producers? We have had some over time, but it has never come close to gaining enough momentum for creating the right atmosphere. In this industry, the most successful ones are probably Cheung Fai and Kwong Wai-lap, but both of them have specific backgrounds that prop them up. Apart from managing Hong Kong artists, Cheung Fai also managed Mainland ones, and because Chinese

theatre began to catch the eye of the West in the 1990s, he was able to establish a network very quickly. As for Kwong Wai-lap, he worked for Hong Kong Arts Festival and City Contemporary Dance Company. That kind of experience, background and network cannot just be whipped up out of thin air. Do we have anyone who is really based in Hong Kong, focusing on doing this kind of work here? It is regrettable that there may be a lot of people who wanted to join the industry, who just could not find a way."

Mui says there are many types of producers and the most common roles in Hong Kong are those that just help with odds and ends. It is rare to see a producer who specialises in negotiating, or brokering deals at arts festivals. This kind of professional middleman who travels through art markets and promotes artworks and artists is an influential role that the global art market cannot do without; yet it is one the Hong Kong art industry has long been missing. "These people know enough about the artists and the arts, but more importantly, they have enough connections, they know which kind of theatre to approach for what production, what artist to nail down for which work. We need a lot of people in between to make things happen, but in dance, all you can currently see is probably Anna CY Chan of the WKCDA (Head of Dance, Performing Arts, WKCDA). But the WKCDA cannot do everything, and it has its own missions. So



Photo: Janet Sinica



Photo: Janet Sinica

we need a large number of independent producers, and this will be a hefty task in the future: How do we turn it into a career?"

Building networks: "Give me enough time for coffee"

It takes ample professional training to nurture art agents and producers, but it is crucial that one does not simply stay in an ivory tower. Mui says the so-called art administration courses on offer generally include this part, "But the key thing is that it is not just about your skill; you need connections, a network." And we all know that making connections is not something that happens overnight. "How do connections come? Perhaps you have been in the industry for a long time, or you were involved in some art festivals. Or you worked in a well known art group, and set up your own agency afterwards."

Neither of these situations are particularly realistic in Hong Kong today. Those with plenty of experience are mostly tied to the big art organisations; newcomers often enter these institutions only to exit shortly thereafter, before garnering enough experience and connections. As for the latter situation, it seems Hong Kong does not have too many art groups that reach this scale and standard.

"In the 1990s, when I flew solo through all sorts of arts festivals, I tried to apply for government funding: Could I have some money to bring someone with me just to make connections? At the time they told me that was not a necessary move. But I was not bringing someone along to help me on my productions. I was hoping this person would be able to do this kind of work in the future, and build up long term connections. Back then, no one felt this was needed. Later, when I stopped touring, my connections ended. Now when I want to try and reconnect, it is not the same thing anymore. Connections do not come overnight; they come over time."

Today, we must not be so short-sighted. To Mui, it is imperative to look ahead and begin paving the way for future art agents and producers. She remembers asking Cheung Fai for his secret to success. "He told me, 'You must allow for enough time to have coffee with people.'"

Reviewing funding policies

How should the HKADC set relevant policies in future? Mui believes first on the agenda should be a review of current funding policies. She points out that art funding has all along largely focused on productions, which means everyone who creates a production gets a little bit of money, leading to a



Heaven Behind the Door (Choreographer: Chloe Wong) (2016)
Photo: Janet Sinica



Mui Cheuk-yin (left)
Photo: Janet Sinica

whole swathe of average productions. "This is a dead end road! The pie is only so big, and there are more and more people entering the industry; with this model it looks on the surface as though everyone is getting paid, but in reality, while you will not starve on this money, you can barely eat a full meal either. At the end of the day, we must reconsider what the funding is really for. Funding can bring about a lot of things, and can play a crucial role in shaping a city's facade. That includes creating an environment for artists to inspire things they cannot even see yet."

Mui quips that it is similar to the *Huangdi Neijing*: First you create a good environment for your innards so they can regain their own functions, and then the body will work itself out. Right now, we are doing it in the opposite fashion. "It may be that some of our organs are clogged or rotting, but no one is dealing with it. And then we use what little resources we have to try and save them. Is that not just a recipe for death? In joining the HKADC, our council members have to work with the industry to figure out our ecology, and find the parts that have long stopped working, or parts that are not able to shine within this ecological system. It is a massively difficult job, but hopefully in the next three years we will try our hardest to do it."

Specifically on art agents, Mui believes since there

are already a lot of scholarships to support local art administrators to intern at overseas art festivals, why not consider putting them inside their own art circle for experience? "For example, let some interns follow the Hong Kong Arts Festival Programme Director Grace Lang, or WKCDA's Anna CY Chan, under a mentorship model, for a year. Listening to how someone sells a programme, how they negotiate, it is a form of training. I proposed this last time, but we could not do it. Hopefully we can do it this time round."

Improving the creative environment

The concept of the "art market" has come to Hong Kong very late. Yet to an artist, it is an important entry point to "see the world's current status, to understand one's own positioning, and to find opportunities for collaboration and development." To stand out at all in the market, the roles of art agent and producer are of course pivotal, but going back to the roots, it all comes down to the work itself.

"In an art market, if your piece is interesting enough, someone will come find you," says Mui. "When I joined the HKADC, I clearly stated that there are two things I most want to deal with: our internal environment and our external environment. We are

now starting to see movement on the outside; as for the inside, how can we build a good environment for creating art? How do we make our organs healthy and how do we feed our artists the right nutrients to make a move? When you have a healthy environment, one will just get up and move."

The creative environment, she bluntly puts, is really "uninteresting", and how to improve this is a "tricky situation". "Creativity is not like now where you just sell this product for that amount of money. You are not creating just for the money; it is for a lot of things. For example, there are a lot of shows these days with interesting topics, but you can see the way they do it is totally hollow. You can tell there was no time at all for research beforehand. We really need a dramaturge, and let the artist focus on creating. Right now, you see artists doing a lot peripheral things, and then when they finally take it into the studio, it is like a chef with no time to cook up the dish. You end up with a plate of cold rice. What is the point of having lots of ingredients and a great restaurant location? I still would not want to eat there!"

Mui stresses that the environment can be nurtured with effort, but artists have to make a decision themselves. "I am not saying everyone has to sacrifice, but you do have to make a choice. Are you entering this industry just to survive, or do you want to do

something else?" She says, art requires time for settling, for ruminating. She likens it to a slow-cooked casserole — it is through this gradual process that artists can grow and develop.

In recent years, the industry has sensed a creative risk. To make sure the dance circle does not fail to pass the torch, it has begun working very hard to put in place creative platforms for young choreographers, pumping in new blood at full strength. For example, Hong Kong Ballet's annual Choreographers' Showcase and City Contemporary Dance Company's Dancers' Homework: Both are putting on original productions by up and coming choreographers in small venues. Hong Kong Dance Company has run for a decade its experimental theatre 8/F Platform; last year it curated a special two-week programme that brought together artists from Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and Korea to learn from each other, exchanging, observing, innovating. Hong Kong Dance Alliance also launched a dance scholarship last year, offering awardees financial and art administration support and performance platforms, allowing them to focus on nothing else but creating. As for the LCSD's New Force in Motion series and the Hong Kong Arts Festival's Hong Kong Jockey Club Contemporary Dance Series, they gave quite a number of young choreographers chances to flex their muscles and pump fresh blood through the dance circle.



These different platforms have gradually built up a performance stairway for small to medium scale pieces. Apart from providing newcomers with creative opportunities, it also makes the mobilising of works more organic. As Mui says, "After forging a channel, the water can flow right through." But there is still a serious lack of platforms for the development of small and medium sized performances. The catch is that only works that have been through careful polishing can become the foundation for an artist to make a stand in the world. "But for larger scale, full length pieces, who will commission those? In this case, there is little we can do for now. Works headed for the art market are mostly short, segmented, easily shown. But you can really only show your potential when you can develop some larger scale, full length works. In the coming three years, this is what we will be focusing on."

On the modes of commission and production for dance, there have been some new ideas these couple of years too. For example, after the WKCD's New Works Forum brought together Unlock Dancing Plaza and Emmanuelle Vo-Dinh, the dancers were sent to France to learn from the choreographer, altogether spending a year and a half to create *Simon Says*. There was also the Hong Kong Arts Centre and Les Halles de Schaerbeek collaboration in their artist pairing programme, which provided new sources of inspiration for future dance creation and production.

There is a long road ahead. We are delighted to feel the wind rising; we only hope the ripples will keep spreading.

(Translated by D.T.)



Wei Wei

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