

香港劇場年鑑2016

舞蹈・戲曲・戲劇

HONG
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Xiqu

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編輯及統籌: 陳國慧

執行編輯及資料統籌: 羅靖雯、巫書祺

專題論述編輯: 朱琮愛、黃進之、楊寶霖*

專題論述校對: 葉懿雯

專題論述及資料統籌（舞蹈）: 林奕玲

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資料搜集統籌（神功戲）: 張文珊

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香港灣仔港灣道2號香港藝術中心12樓1201-2室

電話: (852) 2974 0542 傳真: (852) 2974 0592

網址: <http://www.iatc.com.hk> 電郵: iatc@iatc.com.hk

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Editor and Coordinator: Bernice Chan Kwok-wai

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Tel: (852) 2974 0542

Fax: (852) 2974 0592

Website: <http://www.iatc.com.hk>

Email: iatc@iatc.com.hk



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香港舞蹈交流活動的觀察與淺析

謝嘉豪

作為國際大都會，香港舞蹈的文化交流活動非常活躍，而且交流活動對促進香港舞蹈發展起了關鍵作用。有見及此，「香港劇場年鑑」編輯部及「香港舞蹈界聯席會議」合作組織了一次座談會，邀請了六位本地舞蹈組織代表，就本地舞蹈各個界別的交流活動情況，互相交換意見及看法；是次座談會主要是探討民間舞蹈團體及舞者進行交流活動的現況，並了解其運作以及所遇到的問題。本文按是次座談會內容輯錄及整理。

出席嘉賓：

伍曾慶寧（香港芭蕾舞學會主席）
杜紹樑（香港舞蹈聯會行政總監）
羅廖耀芝（香港舞蹈總會行政總監）
馮杏美（香港舞蹈總會理事）
黃建宏（香港舞蹈聯盟副主席）
林奕玲（香港舞蹈界聯席會議行政統籌）

從學習到切磋：香港舞蹈交流活動的演變

綜觀香港舞蹈生態，大部分舞蹈種類都是由外地傳入，致使本地舞者透過交流活動達到了學習的目的，這似乎是香港舞者舉辦及參與交流活動最常見的原因；而以學藝為主的交流活動，在上世紀五六十年代尤多。與會者之一、香港舞蹈聯盟代表黃建宏表示，從一個舞蹈口述歷史的計劃內容中了解到，在五六十年代一些本地舞蹈老師，經

常到中國內地學藝，主要是學一些「名師選段」，回港後，再把所學授予本地學生，這是當時香港的中國舞老師主要的教學來源。而香港舞蹈總會代表羅廖耀芝則補充：「在五六十年代，並不是每個人都可以返中國大陸，然而能夠回去的人，都是來自親中學校或團體，所以其實只有幾位（舞者）有這樣的機會。當時香港政府對於跳中國舞的人和團體有些顧忌，所以一九六五年之前，中國舞團體及舞者大多很低調，或者是選擇跳從台灣傳過來的民族民間舞，例如山地舞、鳳陽花鼓之類的；之後到了中國文革時期，親中背景的舞者老師走到國內學習樣板舞，例如採茶撲蝶、洗衣歌、半邊裙子等，當時，這些樣板舞作品都出版了教學手冊，但你只看著書本學習並不傳真，所以這些舞蹈老師都紛紛到國內學習，然後回港將所學的傳授下去。」

西方舞在香港也是廣泛流行的舞蹈種類，而這界別在交流活動的情況，與中國舞有相似的處境。資深西方舞者、香港舞蹈總會代表馮杏美認為，西方舞一直是以大眾化舞蹈的形態發展，很少有西方舞團體組織對外的交流活動。然而，卻有一些熱衷西方舞的愛好者，獨自走到海外進行學習與交流。「七八十年代，有一些西方舞導師，例如蓓蕾舞蹈社前社長高鑑泉，自付經費到美國參與大型的舞蹈營，之後再把所學的傳授給舞社的

學員。但在此之前，大家都只能憑唱片和刊物來依圖文學習。到了九十年代，不少人轉移到歐洲學習。可喜的是，近年情況有所轉變，因為『一帶一路』政策，香港西方舞團有機會到東歐或相關國家進行交流，除了帶自己的演出製作出去，同時也學習當地的舞蹈。」馮杏美說。

黃建宏則認為，對當代舞界別來說，外出交流活動比較容易，獨立舞者小型製作需要的資源相對少，所以交流活動的發展比較其他舞蹈類別活躍。他分享了一個案例（備註）。二〇一六年由本地資深舞蹈家梅卓燕牽頭，藝術發展局策劃及資助，組織了多個本地民間舞團及獨立舞者，總共六個演出，以及十五舞者，前往德國杜塞爾多夫參與「國際舞蹈博覽會」，此交流活動得到了不少迴響，亦令一些參展舞團／舞者取得了國外交流的機會。黃表示，雖然本地節目未必即場洽談成功，但參展經驗對大部分參與的舞者都帶來正面的影響，「現在環球經濟低迷的狀況下，很多地方都不會邀請現成的演出製作，反而會個別從不同地方邀請編舞或舞者到當地，與在地舞者合作。好處是，經費相對便宜，而且提供機會讓在地舞者與來自不同地方的編舞家合作，而編舞家亦可把自己的經驗和想法帶到別處。這是雙贏局面，」黃建宏說。

尋找意義：從舞蹈交流反觀自身

本地舞者通過交流活動得到了專業培訓，提升技巧，對香港舞蹈發展確實有很大助益。香港舞蹈聯會代表杜紹樑說：「不同於現代舞，傳統舞蹈來說，香港沒有本土舞蹈，我們需要學習別人的東西，所以一直以來，出外交流主要都是以學習為主，到當地採風，體驗當地人民的文化，吸收在地的生活經驗。」而馮杏美則表示，本地西方舞者曾經舉辦過一些交流項目，先邀請歐洲西方舞大師來港教授本地學員，然後到訪當地表演，她說：「對於那些老師來說，他們樂意不遠千里來港教學，並把本地舞者帶回本國進行演出交流，因為他們覺得自己的文化受到尊重。」雖然香港舞蹈大都不是原生的，但只要能找到本土特色，我們還是可以提起「話語權」；羅廖耀芝說：「香港曾是一個在國家外面的城市，經歷過很多文化衝擊，吸收了不同的文化，所以現在很多（本地）中國舞編舞者的手法都帶有現代的氣息。譬如說，在第四屆（2011年）、第五屆（2016年）《全國少數民族文藝會演》上，我們提交了一些節目給主辦單位篩選，最後他們選定的節目，風格都是國內少見的，特別具有香港的氣色，所以你知道其實他們渴望看到一些與國內風格不一樣的演出。」而黃建宏認為，雖然交流活動通常都以推廣文化為主要目的，但同時它也間接提供了其他可能性，

他說：「以本地當代舞來說，在香港（民營舞團）製作一台演出，普遍情況下只會公演兩三場，觀眾量只得三四百，花了那麼多時間排練，花錢做了戲服、道具，舞團或創作者當然想多做幾場，但香港沒有空間，沒有觀眾（量），沒有機制能幫助你重演，所以交流演出幫助到作品接觸到更多觀眾，令作品可以多做幾場。藝術上，交流活動製造重演機會，重演即是一個讓藝術家完善自己作品的機會。在香港很難找到讓藝術家進步、改善作品的機會。」他進一步指出，交流經驗可以帶給本地舞者很大的文化自省，曾有本地舞者與他分享交流經驗時，認為「在交流活動中，最大的得著並不是學懂了別人的東西，而是當我需要向別人解釋自己文化的時候，我需要重新了解及閱讀自身文化的內涵是甚麼？譬如說，雲手，大家都很清楚是甚麼，但當要向外國舞者解釋甚麼是雲手時，其實那是甚麼呢？它的動律是甚麼？手指要如何擺動？它背後隱藏甚麼文化符號？對於舞者來說，這是很好的機會讓他們重新思考自身文化到底是甚麼。」黃建宏說。

除了反思自身文化外，香港舞者進行交流活動亦有一些實際需要，特別是民間舞團大部分都以舞蹈教育為營運的主要收入，所以在尋找教學資源上有很大需求。杜紹樑認為，香港人好奇心很大，渴望追求更多新知識，

為了藝術可以上山下鄉去尋找，「（交流活動）豐富了香港舞蹈文化，譬如說少數民族舞蹈，以前流傳的沒有幾多支，大家對中國少數民族都只有十分籠統的認知；但到了現在，交流的人多了，開始明白到，原來不同少數民族裡面，都分開不同的山頭、不同部落，他們之間的舞蹈、服飾、習俗都有所差別。所以去做交流，就是對這些舞蹈及其文化有更深入的理解，」他說。羅廖耀芝表示，本地編舞者大多兼任老師，因為要應付不同賽事及演出，而不同學校又要有不同的編舞，所以這些編舞老師對教學素材有很大的需求，「再者，她們到國內交流、採風，一定會接觸到當地的舞蹈院校、舞蹈隊，或者民間團體，從而豐富了自己的知識，」她說。

困時覓路：舞蹈交流的窒礙

雖然交流活動對本地編舞者以及舞團的發展有積極的幫助，但民間舞團籌劃一次交流活動又談何容易呢？在席的與會嘉賓都異口同聲地表示，民間舞團難以取得官方資助進行交流活動。羅廖耀芝說：「譬如說，香港舞蹈總會較早前組織了一個大型交流演出到北京，那次總共有八十個人員隨團出行，開支約一百萬左右，（香港）藝術發展局沒有資助，民政事務局批給的資助，只佔總數五分之一，幸好，後來找到另外兩個機構，資助



謝嘉豪、黃建宏、羅廖耀芝、林奕玲、馮杏美、杜紹樑、伍曾慶寧（左至右）

了其他開支，但舞蹈總會還是要補貼一部分餘額。」但這些開支之中，並沒有包括舞者的演出費。據與會者的反映，因為舞團財政困難，而舞者放棄收取演出費，對於大部分民間舞團來說，是十分普遍的現象。

那麼，除了恆常的資助機制外，（例如香港藝術發展局、康樂及文化事務署等），還有甚麼資助門路可供考慮嗎？黃建宏表示，現時中港兩地官方機構正積極推動兩地青年人進行文化交流，所以近年政府機構，例如青年事務委員會等，愈來愈願意資助相關活動，例如帶領本地青年到國內交流，民間舞團是可以考慮這種交流方式。香港舞蹈界聯席會議行政統籌林奕玲則補充，青年事務委員會主要是資助學校或青少年機構，「對於中小型舞團來說，雖然大家有很多青年團員適合去國內交流，但很多舞團還未懂得如何跨領域合作去尋找資源，（例如跟青少年服務機構或學校合作舉辦交流活動），」林奕玲說。不過，她和其他與會者都認為，現時民間舞團缺乏專職行政人員，若果要策劃一項交流活動，甚至是跨領域合作的活動，面對繁雜的行政工作，依賴舞團老師、編舞者及學生是不勝應付的。這或許是一直以來本地民間舞團難以獲得政府或基金會資助，所以較少舉辦出外交流活動的原因。

作東會友：在地交流的景況

綜合以上討論，本地民間舞團舉辦出外交流活動遇到的困難，主要是資金及行政資源等問題。那麼，若舞團舉辦「在地交流活動」，例如以舉辦舞蹈藝術節形式邀請外地舞團、舞者來港，作展演、工作坊交流，這種在地交流活動所面對的障礙會否較少呢？

黃建宏指出，現時民間舞團自營的舞蹈藝術節相對較少，主要也是欠缺資源的問題。他舉例近年來持續舉辦的自營舞蹈藝術節，包括「多空間」主辦的「i-舞蹈節」，每屆i-舞蹈節主辦方都邀請了不同國家的藝人前來香港參與，內容包括演出、工作坊等，但因為資助撥款的問題，每一屆的規模都不一樣。除了邀請舞者來港作演出交流外，黃建宏亦分享了一個「雙邊在地交流」的個案。他表示，本地編舞許俊傑曾聯同一位本地舞者前往馬來西亞作交流，與當地白沙羅表演藝術中心合作進行交流創作計劃，由許俊傑為該中心成員排演其舊作，而該中心藝術總監黃志雄則排演了一個短編作品作為回應，以之進行對話；之後，黃志雄回訪香港，並為香港舞者排演其舊作，而許俊傑則排演新作回應。「這種交流方式比較深度而有趣，同時運作成本比較低，」黃建宏說。此外，綜合其他與會者所提供的資料及經驗，各個舞蹈界別也曾舉辦過各種不同類型的在地交流活動，例如兩岸四地舞蹈匯演、大型

會議，以及各項不同類型的比賽，當中不乏國際性的項目；然而，民間舞團舉辦在地交流活動卻沒有因為「自己地方」而障礙減少。「場地最重要，你沒有場地，就算有資金也沒法演出，」杜紹樑說；他透露，原本打算引進一個著名的兩岸四地大型舞蹈匯演來香港作為其中一站，但奈何場地問題沒法解決，所以遲遲未能進展。而林奕玲認為，除了場地問題外，舉辦在地交流遇到另一大關節點，就是外地藝人來港簽證的問題；她表示，對於一個中小型的民間舞團，要求他們依足所有入境條例去為外地藝人申請演出工作許可，是十分困難的事，無論是資金抑或行政上，都受有限條件所障礙，於是造成很少民間舞團主動邀請外地藝人來港交流的現象。即使有，也未必會以公開形式進行，只能維持在個別圈子裡發生，長遠來說，有礙整體舞蹈發展。另一方面，有些舞蹈類別，例如街舞、芭蕾舞、社交舞等，通常都是以競賽形式與外地舞者進行交流，從比賽當中互相吸收對方的技巧和意念。這與表演傾向較重的舞蹈，例如現代舞、中國舞等，有著本質性的差別。

總結

綜合以上各與會嘉賓的意見及經驗分享後，我們看到本地民間舞團在策劃、籌備、運作舞蹈及文化交流項目上，仍然遇到不少困難。對於出外交流活動，民間舞團往往面對資金的問題而窒礙了外出交流的計劃，同時，策劃交流活動的行政工作，也為民間舞團帶來不少麻煩，因為一般舞團難以聘請全職行政人員專責開展相關項目。然而，在地交流活動亦遇到了障礙，場地缺乏、外地藝人簽證問題等，都造成了困局，令民間舞團難以主動籌劃交流活動，增進舞蹈藝術視野及接通國際。生活在香港這個國際城市，我們自有擔當文化交流的任務；對於香港舞者來說，交流活動對於本地舞蹈發展有著重要的意義及影響，要如何繼往開來讓香港的舞蹈融匯東西，發揮文化軟實力？有望文化決策相關機構，能梳理出更適時的政策，協助本地舞團有機且持續發展。

備註：

香港藝術發展局（藝發局）於二〇一六年八月三十一日至九月三日期間，率領由香港當代舞蹈藝術家及藝術行政人員組成約六十人的代表團參與德國杜塞爾多夫國際舞蹈博覽會2016（下稱Tanzmesse），展示香港當代舞蹈的多元及活力。藝發局是次率領代表團以「Hong Kong Spins」為題參與Tanzmesse，期望藉此機會牽動香港舞蹈向國際旋轉躍動，讓香港舞蹈界與海外同業作更多交流及深化彼此溝通，並尋求更多機會讓香港當代舞藝術家於國際舞台上發揮。藝發局於為期三天的博覽會展覽部分中設置攤位介紹香港出色的當代舞團、舞蹈藝術家及其作品予世界各地的藝術節總監、編舞家、監製及策劃人。展覽攤位為香港舞蹈界提供一個重要的交流平台，與國際同業展開對話並建立聯繫網絡。除了展覽外，藝發局亦帶領六位本地年輕編舞家，包括陳凱、楊浩、馮樂恆、黃靜婷、林俊浩及曹德寶分別於Tanzmesse的「舞台演出」和「示範展演」環節展演其作品，讓舞者吸收更多國際經驗。[以上資料來自藝發局。]

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謝嘉豪

生於香港。畢業於聖若瑟大學哲學系。從事文字及編輯工作外，亦兼具多年表演經驗，現任舞踏藝團「以太劇場」團長。

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Observations and Brief Analysis on Hong Kong Dance Exchange Programmes

Tomas KHTse

As a metropolis, Hong Kong has a thriving dance scene that is actively engaged in cultural exchange. Exchange activities also play a crucial role in fostering the development of Hong Kong dance. In view of this, the editorial team of Hong Kong Theatre Yearbook and Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference (HKDSJC) co-organised a roundtable discussion, and invited six representatives of local dance organisations to share their opinions and views on the exchanges between different sectors of Hong Kong dance. The discussion mainly focused on exchange activities undertaken by community dance companies and dancers, with a view to understanding the implementation of these activities and the difficulties encountered. This article offers an overview of the topics discussed during the roundtable.

Roundtable participants:

- Helen Tseng Wu
(Chairperson, Hong Kong Ballet Group)
- To Siu-leung
(Executive Director, Association of Hong Kong Dance Organizations)
- Virginia Lo Liu Yiu-chee
(Executive Director, Hong Kong Dance Federation)
- Fung Hang-mai
(Council Member, Hong Kong Dance Federation)
- Kevin Wong
(Vice Chairman, Hong Kong Dance Alliance)

- Elaine Lam Yick-ling
(Administrative Coordinator, Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference)

From one-way to two-way learning: development of Hong Kong dance exchange

Looking at the ecology of Hong Kong dance, one sees that most dance genres found in Hong Kong were imported from foreign regions; therefore, it appears that the most common reason to organise and undertake exchange programmes for Hong Kong dancers is to learn through these exchanges. Exchange programmes centered on learning the craft were particularly prominent during the 1950s and 1960s. Kevin Wong of Hong Kong Dance Alliance notes that as he understood from the content of an oral history project, some Hong Kong dance teachers in the 1950s and 1960s frequently travelled to Mainland China to study the craft, mainly by learning “selected segments by the masters”, which they then taught to local students upon return. This represented the main source of knowledge for instructors of Chinese dance in Hong Kong at the time. Virginia Lo Liu of Hong Kong Dance Federation adds, “Going to the Mainland was not an option for everyone in the 1950s to 1960s. Those who were able to do so had a background in pro-China schools or organisations,

which means that such opportunities were available only to a few [dancers]. The Hong Kong government was somewhat wary of these Chinese dancers and organisations, so in general Chinese dance companies and dancers kept a low profile up until 1965, or else they switched to ethnic and folk dances from Taiwan, like aboriginal dances, *Fengyang* flower drum dance and such likes. During the Cultural Revolution, dance teachers with a pro-China background went to the Mainland to learn *yangban* (model) dances like *Pick Tea and Catch Butterfly*, *Laundry Song*, *Half a Skirt*. Although there were available publications of training manuals for these model dances, it was not easy to learn the real thing just from reading, so these teachers travelled to the Mainland to study the dances, and taught what they had learnt back in Hong Kong.”

Western dance is also widely popular in Hong Kong, and exchange activities in this sector are faced with similar conditions to those of Chinese dance. Being a veteran dancer of Western dance, Fung Hang-mai of Hong Kong Dance Federation opines that while Western dance has always developed in the forms of popular dance genres, there have been few external exchange programmes organised by Western dance organisations. However, certain enthusiasts of Western dance would travel overseas for learning and exchange independently. “During the 1970s and

1980s, some Western dance instructors, for example Ko Kam-chuen, former director of Budlet Folk Dance Club, took part in large scale dance camps in the US out of their own pocket and later taught what they had learnt to members of the dance clubs. Prior to that, most of us could only learn from records and published materials. Later in the 1990s, many people went to Europe instead for learning. Fortunately, due to One Belt One Road, this situation has changed in recent years. Western dance companies in Hong Kong have the opportunities to take part in exchange in Eastern Europe or other related countries, bringing their own productions overseas while learning the local dances.”

Kevin Wong believes that, in the field of contemporary dance, taking part in overseas exchange programmes is comparatively easy. Since independent dancers and small productions are less demanding in terms of resources, more active developments can be seen in cultural exchange programmes in this sector. He relates a case ^(Note) in which a delegation of community dance companies and independent dancers was organised in 2016 under the lead of veteran dancer Mui Cheuk-yin, with planning and sponsorship by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC); together they brought six performances and 15 dancers to Dusseldorf, Germany to take part in the internationale tanzmesse nrw

(Tanzmesse). The exchange gained positive acclaim and offered participating companies and dancers an opportunity to engage in overseas exchange. Wong observes that the exchange experience has had positive impact on most participating dancers, even if negotiations about bringing Hong Kong productions overseas might not be immediately successful. "Amid the gloomy global economy, many places are reluctant to give out invitations to readymade productions, but would rather invite choreographers or dancers from different places on an individual basis to collaborate with local dancers. The advantages are lower budget required, and that local dancers can benefit from collaborating with international choreographers, while the choreographers can bring their experience and ideas to other places. It is a win-win situation," says Wong.

Making sense: self-reflection through dance exchange

As Hong Kong dancers receive professional training through exchange activities and improve their skills, it offers great stimulus to the development of Hong Kong dance. In the words of To Siu-leung of Association of Hong Kong Dance Organizations, "Unlike contemporary dance, there is no local dance to speak of for traditional dances in Hong Kong, and we need to learn from others. Therefore, exchanges

abroad have been motivated mainly by learning and experiencing local cultures, getting cultural exposure and absorbing native experiences." On the other hand, Fung Hang-mai points out that there have been certain exchange programmes organised by local dancers of Western dance that invited great Western dance masters from Europe to teach local students, before the students visited the masters' home countries to perform. She says, "These masters were delighted to come to Hong Kong to teach classes despite the distance and to bring our dancers to their countries for performance and exchange, because they felt their own cultures were respected." Although most of the dance genres in Hong Kong are not native to the place, we can still lay claim to "authority" by identifying the local characteristics of these dance genres. Virginia Lo Liu says, "As a city formerly external to the nation, Hong Kong has had a wide range of cultural exposure and is itself a cultural melting pot. Therefore, many [local] Chinese dance choreographers carry a contemporary vibe to their style. For example, for the 4th (2011) and the 5th (2016) editions of Joint Performance of National Ethnic Minorities, we submitted a number of performances for the main organiser to choose from. The performances they selected were of a style quite uncommon in the Mainland, with a particular Hong Kong flavour to them. So from that you know they want to see something different from what is typical



Tomas KHTse, Kevin Wong, Virginia Lo, Liu Yiu-chee, Elaine Lam Yick-ling, Fung Hang-mai, To Siu-leung, Helen Tseng Wu (from left to right)

in the Mainland.” Kevin Wong believes that, although the main objective of exchange programmes is often cultural promotion, they also make other possibilities available in an indirect way. “For local contemporary dance, producing a performance in Hong Kong (for community dance companies) usually comes down to two to three shows with no more than 400 audiences. While the companies and dancers would no doubt like to stage a few more shows with all the time and money spent on rehearsals, costumes and props, there is simply not enough space, expected audience, and no mechanism to help you stage more shows. Exchange performances are a great way to have our works reach more audiences and increase the number of performances. From an artistic perspective, exchange programmes also offer a pretext for rerun, which is an opportunity for the artist to perfect their work. In Hong Kong there are simply not many chances for artists to refine themselves and their works.” He further points out that exchange prompts local dancers to dive into cultural introspection. A local dancer sharing his exchange experience once said, “During the exchange, the biggest takeaway is not necessarily the learning, but the moment when I need to explain my own culture to others. I need to comprehend and interpret afresh the substance of my own culture. Let’s say, everyone knows what “Cloud Hands” is, but to explain that to a foreign dancer, what is it actually?

How does it groove? How do we move our fingers? What kind of cultural symbolism is at work? It is a great opportunity for dancers to rethink their own culture,” says Wong.

Besides cultural introspection, it is a practical necessity to engage in exchange activities for Hong Kong dancers, especially when dance education represents the main source of income for most community dance companies in Hong Kong, which in turn generates huge demand for teaching materials. To Siu-leung believes that Hong Kong people, who are extremely curious in nature and constantly yearning to acquire new knowledge, are willing to go to great lengths for the sake of the arts, and “[exchange activities] enrich the dance culture of Hong Kong. To cite an example, the presence of ethnic dances was quite limited in the past with only a few of them doing the rounds, and most of us only had a vague understanding about ethnic minorities in China. But now, with more people having taken part in exchange activities, they started to understand that different ethnic minorities come from different regions and clans, with different dances, costumes and customs. So, exchange is a way to acquire deeper understanding of these dances and the cultures.” Virginia Lo Liu states that since most local choreographers are also dance teachers, they need to prepare for various competitions and shows, and create different choreographies for

different schools. As a result, there is great demand for teacher's manuals among these choreographer-teachers. "Furthermore, as they travel to China for exchange and exposure, they come into contact with local dance studios and troupes or even community organisations, which enriches their knowledge."

Finding a way: hurdles for dance exchanges

While exchange activities are conducive to the development of local choreographers and dance companies, it is no easy task for community dance companies to organise an exchange programme. All roundtable participants concur that there are difficulties for community dance companies to obtain official sponsorships required to engage in exchanges. Virginia Lo Liu says, "Just to give an example, when Hong Kong Dance Federation was organising a large scale exchange performance in Beijing with some 80 members signed for the trip and costs of around HK\$1 million, there was no sponsorship from the HKADC, and what we received from the Home Affairs Bureau made up for only one fifth of the total cost. Fortunately, some of the other expenses were paid for by sponsorships from two other organisations, but in the end Hong Kong Dance Federation had to cover the deficit." Of these expenses, however, performance fees for dancers were not included. As

stated by the roundtable participants, chronic financial difficulties make it the usual practice for dancers from most community dance companies to forego performance fees.

Are there any other means of obtaining sponsorship apart from the usual channels (such as the HKADC and Leisure and Cultural Services Department)? Kevin Wong points out that as authorities in the Mainland and Hong Kong are actively promoting cultural exchange programmes for youths from both regions, there is greater willingness from governmental organisations like the Commission on Youth to support related activities such as bringing local youths to exchange in the Mainland, a mode that community dance companies may consider. Elaine Lam, Administrative Coordinator of Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference, adds that the Commission on Youth mainly sponsors schools or youth organisations. "Many small to medium sized dance companies, with many young members suitable for partaking in Mainland exchanges, nonetheless do not have the know-how to get resources through cross-sector cooperation (such as co-organising exchanges with youth service institutes or schools)." But she and the other roundtable participants agree that, given the absence of a designated administrator in community dance companies, dance teachers, choreographers and students are not sufficient

manpower to deal with the complex administrative work required to plan an exchange programme, let alone a cross-sector one. This may be the reason why local community dance companies have difficulties getting funded by the government or other funds. As a result, they organise overseas exchanges on a less frequent basis.

Hosting friends: exchanges in Hong Kong

In conclusion, the major hurdles to overseas exchanges for local community dance companies revolve around limited funding and administrative resources. Will organising exchange activities in Hong Kong pose fewer challenges for these companies, such as inviting foreign dance companies and dancers to Hong Kong for performance and workshop in the form of a dance festival?

Kevin Wong explains that the lack of available resources still limits the number of self-organised dance festivals by community dance companies. Speaking of the i-Dance Festival organised by Y-Space, one of the continuous self-organised dance festivals in recent years, he points out that the organiser invited artists from different countries to Hong Kong expecting a variety of contents including performance and workshop. Due to the issue of funding, however, the scale of the festival has varied

from one edition to the next. Besides inviting dancers to Hong Kong for performance and exchange, Wong also relates a case of “bilateral local exchange”, where local choreographer Cyrus Hui joined a local dancer on an exchange trip to Malaysia. In cooperation with Damansara Performing Arts Centre, they engaged in a creative collaboration with Hui training the centre members to perform his earlier work, whereas Huang Zhixiong, the artistic director of the centre, performed a short piece in dialogue with Hui. Later, Huang visited Hong Kong and trained Hong Kong dancers to perform his earlier work, while Hui staged his new work in response. “This mode of exchange is more in-depth and interesting, and the operating cost is lower,” says Wong. Besides, based on the information and experience shared by other roundtable participants, each dance sector has organised different types of local exchanges such as China-Hong Kong-Macau-Taiwan joint dance performances, major conferences and competitions of various kinds, with many being international events. However, in organising local exchanges, the localness did not afford the community dance companies any convenience. “The venue is the most important. Without a venue, you cannot perform even if you have the money,” says To Siu-leung. He reveals that he originally intended to bring a well known major China-Hong Kong-Macau-Taiwan joint dance performance to Hong Kong, but little progress has been made due to the lack of venue. Elaine Lam

also thinks that, besides the venue, obtaining a visa for foreign artists to enter Hong Kong poses another major challenge. She says it is very difficult, in terms of funding and administrative procedure, for a small to medium sized community dance companies to abide by all the immigration laws and apply for a work visa for foreign artists. Therefore, it is rare for community dance companies to extend invitations to foreign artists for exchange in Hong Kong. Even when such exchanges take place, they may not be open to public and may be restricted to a particular circle. Meanwhile, for some dance genres such as street dance, ballet and ballroom dance, competition represents an important form of exchange with foreign dancers, where the participants assimilate one another's techniques and ideas during the contest. That is fundamentally different from other more performance intensive dance genres like contemporary dance and Chinese dance.

Conclusion

Based on the opinions and experiences shared by the roundtable participants, we may see that local community dance companies encounter quite a few difficulties in planning, preparing, and managing dance and cultural exchanges. For going abroad, these companies often face funding shortage which could put an end to planned overseas exchange programmes. On the other hand, the administrative work required

for planning exchange activities is another source of troubles for community dance companies which find it difficult to employ a full-time administrator to oversee the project. However, local exchange programmes also face various difficulties, including the lack of funding and venue, and the visa issue for visiting artists. They complicate the companies' efforts to coordinate exchanges to enhance our artistic vision for dance and reach out to the international dance scene. As residents of this metropolitan city, we should take up the mission of fostering cultural exchange. For Hong Kong dancers, exchanges have important significance and impact on the development of Hong Kong dance. How shall we build on previous labour to open up a cosmopolitan future for Hong Kong dance upon which we develop our "cultural soft power"? The hope is laid upon related authorities in charge of cultural policy making to formulate timely measures, and assist local dance companies to achieve organic and sustainable development.

(Translated by Wayne Yeung)

Note:

From 31 August to 3 September 2016, the HKADC led a delegation of around 60 people consisting of contemporary dance artists and art administrators from Hong Kong to take part in internationale tanzmesse nrw 2016 (Tanzmesse) in Dusseldorf, Germany, in display of the diversity and vitality of Hong Kong contemporary dance. The HKADC hoped, in spearheading the delegation themed "Hong Kong Spins" to take part in Tanzmesse 2016, to lead Hong Kong dance in spinning towards an international stage, enhancing and deepening mutual communication between Hong Kong dance and its overseas counterparts, while locating more opportunities for Hong Kong contemporary dancers to demonstrate their talent to an international audience. For three days, the HKADC set up booths in the exposition section of the festival to present prominent contemporary dance companies, dancers and their works from Hong Kong to the directors of art festivals, choreographers, producers and curators from around the world. The exhibition booths provided an important platform for exchange for Hong Kong dance workers to converse and network with their international peers. Apart from exhibition booths, HKADC also led six young choreographers including Chen Kai, Yang Hao, Victor Fung, Chloe Wong, Ivanhoe Lam and Hugh Cho, to stage their works in Performance Programme and Open Studio in Tanzmesse, enriching the international

profile of the dancers. [This information is provided by the HKADC.]

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Tomas KH Tse

Born in Hong Kong, Tse graduated from the Department of Philosophy of University of Saint Joseph. In addition to writing and editorial work, Tse has many years of experience in performance. He is the leader of the dance company Theater Aether.

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