

香港劇場年鑑 2016

舞蹈 · 戲曲 · 戲劇

HONG
KONG
THEATRE
YEARBOOK
2016
Dance
Xiqu
Drama



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二〇一六外出的見聞和啟迪

岑偉宗

「演戲家族」在香港以「音樂劇旗艦劇團」作招徠，二〇一六年，他們應西九文化區管理局的邀請，開展了外訪考察計劃，分別在三月和七月到了紐約，我有幸參與其中。本文闡述我在紐約觀察到的現象，及從中得到的感受。

首次踏足紐約

我自一九九四年開始在香港參與音樂劇填詞工作。那個年代流行的音樂劇宣傳說法是「百老匯式音樂劇」。紐約「百老匯」是音樂劇勝地，能夠躋身於百老匯上演的都非泛泛之輩。於是，那年代在香港做音樂劇，不少都喜歡掛上這稱號。我那時就覺得應該這是指像在「百老匯」裡面上演的音樂劇一樣「高水準」吧？

年齡漸長漸漸看透「百老匯式音樂劇」這個詞組。越看得多美國或英國的音樂劇發展歷史，越會覺得這個詞組，是在普羅戲劇觀眾還未成熟的時候，用來把事情說得「簡單」的方法。其實，音樂劇就是音樂劇，百老匯只是上演音樂劇的地方。而且，美式音樂劇（即是俗語裡的「百老匯音樂劇」）無論風格和內容都有很多種，可以有佈景簡約的《歌舞線上》，也可以有機關複雜的《女巫前傳》；可以是搖滾叛逆的《吉屋出租》，

也可以是反斗嬉鬧的《摩門之書》，真是不一而足。因此，近十多年行內行外對音樂劇的認識都提高了，再用「百老匯式音樂劇」這個詞組去宣傳，我的感覺就是某些人用來迷惑不懂行情的外行人。

這次考察是我人生第一次踏足美國紐約，站在時代廣場，傳說中的「百老匯」大街就是一街之隔，有種不知人間何世的感覺。在廣場一端的「TKTS」的「半價亭」，專門出售當天百老匯各大小劇院的特價門票，亭前的人龍就如「打蛇餅」。

香港票價與價值觀

據deadline.com的資料，百老匯在二〇一四至二〇一五年度的票房收入是十三億六千萬美元，觀眾人數達一千三百餘萬人次。這個數字其實是甚麼概念？即是每個去紐約看戲的人，平均付了104美元去買一張票。

香港的平均票價肯定比紐約的低，香港的商業劇場，在逾千人的劇院演出，最高票價是780元，勉強可攀比紐約的平均票價。香港的票價是否還有上升空間？這真不好說。這是場「價值觀」之戰，戰場所在就是普羅大眾的價值觀。上海文化廣場的製作人費元洪曾說，大陸的音樂劇發展要面對的競爭，不是

來自其他音樂劇，而是電視、KTV、麻將耍樂等其他娛樂消閒形式。比拼的是——到底看音樂劇可以帶給觀眾的快樂多，還是唱KTV給他們的快樂更多？當然，要再深究的是，到底普羅大眾如何定義「快樂」？

這樣思考下去，我覺得香港的音樂劇之路還是漫長。中間要做不少教育工作，這是個「價值觀」的轉移工程，不是一兩句「豪言壯語」的宣傳標語就可得到的結果。

香港目前標舉「音樂劇」之名而賣得最多場數的是《雪狼湖》。一九九七年在紅磡香港體育館演了四十二場，近四十萬觀眾。我買的座位在「山腰」，當年價碼是680港元，貼近巡迴版本的《貓》在香港的票價。假如沒有了張學友，《雪狼湖》還會再是一樣嗎？

有些朋友說，外國劇團的教育部門，其實是由市場推廣部門運作。這其實也不無道理。

凝聚觀眾的方式

尤幸科技先進，在紐約不想往半價亭排隊，又不想逐間劇院東跑西跑找門票，可以用手機應用程式。有個叫「TodayTix」的程式，只要登記了身分，就可以看到未來一周可供購買的演出，有百老匯的，也有外百老匯的，

各種類型均有。票價及座位所在的範圍也有標明，有時有大特價，甚至可以參加當天的特選戲碼幸運抽獎，中獎者可以原價一至兩成的價錢購買門票；早上報名參加，大約開場前兩至四小時會用電郵通知抽獎結果。

這些方式既方便觀眾購票，有助凝聚觀眾。前提是，整個市場要有足夠的「產品」。若果市場上的戲碼，對觀眾來說都是可看可不看的，搞這類玩意也無意義。香港現在的市場生態，演期所限，也搞不起這類長線推廣，只能做一鼓作氣式的宣傳。我以前很渴望香港有長演的劇目，令本來抱觀望態度的觀眾會因開演後的口碑而入場。現在，我覺得長演期並不是良方，因為若果一個長演期的作品，原來只是爛戲，固然真正的票房無法推得上去，主辦方即使不斷吹噓催谷票房，也是「獻世」。

最理想的做法，應該是經過工作坊、試讀、試演，然後才正式搬上劇場。不論創作人，還是觀眾，都在以上階段吸收經驗，提出意見，屢試屢改，改到合適才演出。口碑也可以在此其間風傳，市場推廣也可以伺機觀察目標觀眾層。若果香港最大的戲劇節目主辦者——康樂及文化事務署能改變方針，把資源多點投放在工作坊或試演上，鼓勵藝團多參與，情況也許會改變。

演員的生態

演員其實是個沒有保障的行業。香港的自由身演員同一時間要接幾個工作來維持生計，因此也迫於無奈要犧牲某些排練時間。我以為紐約會不同，雀屏中選者，應可幾年都不愁收入了吧？但朋友告訴我，不少演出為免演員演滑，會不時更換演員，保持演員的「演出新鮮感」。即使你正在參演長壽劇目，也可以隨時給劇組「叮」走。而在劇院以外，大量跟你能力相當的演員在等候進組，想起來壓力也不少。勤力的演員就會不斷進修，增強實力。劉榮豐曾談起他在澳洲當職業演員的生涯，就是不斷付錢去上形體、聲線的課程，學費全是自掏腰包。我們看著人家那邊的市場多大多大，也要知道演員在背後的付出和他們的慘烈境況。

有一晚我曾到位於Grove Street上的Marie's Crisis Café。這酒館滿場顧客，可以隨著駐場琴師齊聲引吭高歌，唱的全是音樂劇的歌曲。令人稱奇的是，全場顧客都熟記歌詞，不止顧客唱，中途琴師特別點其中一位胖胖的侍應獨唱。他的唱功未必一流，但自我陶醉則無疑，全場客人屏息靜聽。

紐約真是音樂劇的英雄地，音樂劇文化濃得化不開，我們來看戲像在「朝聖」，對他們來說卻是尋常生活。

參與音樂劇工作坊

七月份我再到紐約留了十天，參加了「Broadway Teachers Workshop」，同行的還有黃旨穎，她是繼高世章後第二位由紐約大學學成回港的音樂劇作曲人。我們在三天之內，看了四個演出，還聽了八節講座。

主辦工作坊的組織名為「Broadway Teaching Group」，他們有跟大學合辦課程，而這個在紐約舉行的工作坊，只是他們其中一環業務。這個工作坊開放給全美國各中學及社區學院的教師參加，給他們接觸戲劇教學、戲劇製作等知識，同時促進教師與百老匯專業人員之間的交流。中休時我跟一位來自愛荷華的中學教師交流，他說對他們來說，「到紐約旅行是很有意思」的事。而工作坊請來的一眾嘉賓講者，都是現職在百老匯工作的演員、製作人及主創人，情況有如近距離與「明星」接觸，怪不得這個工作坊同期開了四組，工作坊連四齣戲的門票，收費六七百美金，都滿座。

這幾天的「工作坊」，對我來說像是大商業機構辦的「精英」講座。當然，戲劇人演講，多少都會有些「互動」，又或者說得比較生動。但總體來說，在教學法上，還是「chalk and talk」那類。吸引我的，還是嘉賓和內容。



黃旨穎（左）與岑偉宗（右）
照片由作者提供



「Broadway Teachers Workshop」安排參加者欣賞音樂劇《漢密爾頓》，散場後並在劇院跟製作人、演員等會面。
照片由作者提供

事實上，我們參加的那組，主講的嘉賓都來頭不少，例如有音樂劇《Show名係最難諗喫！》的創作者Susan Blackwell，不少大型音樂劇如《媽媽咪呀！》的舞台監督Sherry Cohen，還有應屆東尼獎的得獎者，在音樂劇《漢密爾頓》裡演Angelica的Renée Elise Goldsberry等等，認真星光熠熠。聽他們講如何受前人啟迪，一路走來，又或者講現時在百老匯工作的情況，如數家珍，饒富趣味。

另有一節講座由「Music Theatre International」主持。這公司專門代理不少經典音樂劇的「少年版」版權，可供中學搬演，還有安排便捷的售票系統，方便偏遠地區的學校。當天這公司還帶來了新劇的選段示範。

教育的重要

我看的四個演出包括《Fun Home》、《Shuffle Along》、《On Your Feet》和《漢密爾頓》。《漢密爾頓》取材美國首任財長亞歷山大·漢密爾頓，講美國的立國精神，以hip-hop等曲風寫成，把古裝和時裝的風味融為一體，是個非常嚴肅卻又十分有趣的作品，成為去年東尼獎的大贏家，熱潮方興未艾，並且正向高中學生開展「Hamilton Education Program」。由高中學生取材漢密爾頓的文獻資料，自編音樂劇，有的甚至安排到音樂劇《漢密爾頓》的舞台上演

出。這種結合教育、歷史、藝術的推廣計劃，的確令我佩服。

試想像，如果我們有一台音樂劇，以孫中山在香港的習醫時代做題材，有好的劇本、歌曲、導演，並且在某劇院長期演出，一票難求。然後，劇中的歌曲又給學校裡的學生自動傳唱。同時學校老師也用這個戲的內容做學校教材；上演的劇院，在平常或假日沒有演出時間，就把空出來的劇院（佈景還在舞台上）用來做「孫中山音樂劇教育計劃」。由戲劇教學藝人帶領來參加的學生，在「孫中山」音樂劇的舞台上即興演出，諸如此類。「孫中山」這個音樂劇在青少年心目中會產生怎樣的效應？《漢密爾頓》就是這樣的一回事情。

《漢密爾頓》的歌曲現在幾乎是美國中學生的周年晚會的表演項目，可見這齣音樂劇的教育及市場推廣做得如何成功。這些因Hamilton Education Program或因為在學校看過、唱過這音樂劇歌曲片段的學生，當中總會有些認識了音樂劇，甚至有可能成為音樂劇的基礎觀眾。當然，前提是《漢密爾頓》要是好貨色。

我覺得這些教育計劃之所以重要，因為這是培養音樂劇觀眾群的主要途徑。人人都說百老匯是表演藝術之中心，但這個中心是怎樣形成的

呢？其實表演藝術人都可以參與，不設門檻，但為甚麼有些人會攀至人人仰望的高度，有些人卻安於成為捧場的看客？在準備西九文化區的匯報時，我回憶此行見到的人和事，曾以「P.A.P.E.心態模式」去初步概括。

健康的表演藝術生態，需要有「公眾」（Public）支持，他們是票房命脈。有些人會從公眾變成「票友」（Amateur），偶爾會粉墨登場。有些人投入感越來越大，或者技藝越趨精進者，就有機會變成「從業員」（Professional），提供節目給公眾觀賞。從業員的表現或有高低，為了令表演藝術成為公眾留意、讚揚，並且引以為傲的象徵，就需要有「楷模」（Elite），即是精英。「楷模」是公眾談論的對象，如百老匯的音樂劇，不止紐約市的人會知道，就是紐約以外的人都會視到紐約看音樂劇是「必做的事」。



反躬自省，到底我們在香港的同行，是否可以從這個「心態模式」之中找到自己的角色定位？有多少人是立志要成為眾人的「楷模」？還是做一日和尚敲一日鐘，但求資助或職位沒有給砍掉就算數？事實上，立志十分，能做到的往往只有七八分。志在「楷模」，但往往只能到「從業員」而已。設想，若無成「楷模」之志，分分鐘只得「票友」的水平。如果我們沒有足夠的意志去成為別人的「楷模」，那結果就只有因循苟且而已。

（本文部分內容曾分兩期刊於《星島日報》2016年4月及2017年1月的「半步人間」專欄，現經增潤。）

岑偉宗

現職作詞人，主力創作音樂劇、詞作亦散見電影及電視等媒介，同時也翻譯戲劇及歌詞。曾三度獲得香港舞台劇獎最佳原創曲詞獎，兩度獲CASH金帆音樂獎，亦曾獲台灣金馬獎及香港電影金像獎。新近出版《粵寫粵順戲——岑偉宗劇本選集》。

Sights and Inspirations from Abroad in 2016

Chris Shum

Actors' Family positions itself as the flagship musical theatre company in Hong Kong. In 2016 the company was invited by West Kowloon Cultural District Authority to participate in an overseas cultural exchange which headed to New York City in March and July of that year. I was honoured to have been part of those trips and the following article illustrates some of my observations and reflections gleaned from my experience in New York City.

First time in New York City

I started writing lyrics for musicals in Hong Kong in 1994, when the stock phrase for promoting musicals was "Broadway styled musical". Since Broadway, New York City was practically synonymous with top quality musicals, producers of musicals in Hong Kong were only too happy to attach the Broadway label to their productions. I thought that might be simply used, in terms of quality, to suggest that the musicals in question were on par with the ones performed in Broadway.

As I grew older, the catch-all of "Broadway styled musical" lost its appeal for me. The more I learned about the development of musicals in the US or the UK, the more I felt this phrase was a simplifying ruse to appeal to the general audience who was not yet attuned to the art form. Musicals are

musicals, and Broadway is a place where some of them are staged. Furthermore, American musicals (or "Broadway styled musicals" as they are popularly known) represent a wide spectrum of style and content which defy easy characterisation; they may range from the minimalist set in *A Chorus Line* to the complex setting of *Wicked*, from the rock-inspired rebellion in *Rent* to the downright frivolity in *The Book of Mormon*. As both theatre professionals and the general audience in the past decade have gained greater knowledge about musicals, using the phrase "Broadway styled musical" in order to promote a show has become, to my mind, a shallow gimmick to entice those who are unfamiliar with the genre.

This trip was my first visit to New York City. As I was standing in Times Square, with the legendary Broadway just one block away, I was overawed. At one end of the square is the TKTS half-price booth which sells discounted tickets for different Broadway shows of the day, and which is easy to locate as there are always long lines in front of the booth.

Ticket prices and values in Hong Kong

According to deadline.com, in the year 2014/2015, Broadway boasted an annual box office of US\$1.36 billion and an audience of over 13 million people. What does this figure suggest? It means that every

show goer in New York paid, on average, US\$104 for a ticket.

Compared to New York City, ticket prices are certainly lower in Hong Kong. For commercial theatre in Hong Kong, the top ticket price for a play performed in a theatre with a seating capacity of over 1,000 is HK\$780, which is roughly the same as the average ticket price in New York City. It is difficult to tell if there is room in Hong Kong for an increase in the price of theatre tickets. It is a battle of values, and the battlefield lies mainly in the values of the general public. Fei Yuanxiong, a producer from the Shanghai Cultural Square, once said that the competition faced by musicals in the Mainland comes less from other musical productions but instead from television, karaoke, mahjong and other forms of entertainment. The question is: Does going to a musical or singing karaoke provide greater happiness for the audience? It begs the deeper question of how the general public defines "happiness".

From this vantage point, I see a long road ahead for the development of musicals in Hong Kong, for which immense educational work will be required. It takes much more than market slogans to reshape public values.

Boasting 42 performances and a total audience of close to 400,000 at the Hong Kong Coliseum in Hung Hom, *Snow.Wolf.Lake* is the longest running musical in the history of theatre in Hong Kong. My ticket was in the middle section and it was priced at HK\$680, which was at a similar level as tickets for the Hong Kong tour of *Cats*.

Would *Snow.Wolf.Lake* be the same without Jacky Cheung? Some friends of mine quip that the educational departments of overseas theatre companies are run by the marketing departments. There may well be some truth in this remark.

Ways to pull in audiences

Thanks to technological advances, a mobile app allows the consumer to avoid the trouble of lining up at half-price tickets booths or running from one theatre to the next for tickets to shows in New York City. There is an app called TodayTix, which allows registered users to view all performances available in the coming week, including both Broadway and off-Broadway shows. Ticket prices and seating areas are clearly marked, and substantial discounts are sometimes on offer. There are even ticket lotteries for selected performances for the day, and winners can purchase tickets at 10%-20% of the original price. One may enter the lotteries in the morning.

and learn of the results by email two to four hours before the start of the show.

These new sales channels offer customers greater convenience and help attract audiences. Yet it is only effective if there are enough “products” on the market; if the available shows are not particularly attractive to the audience, these new sales channels would have limited impact. This kind of long-term promotional strategies are not feasible in Hong Kong. Given the ecology of the Hong Kong market, and the limited runs of local productions, producers could only invest their resources in brief and intensive marketing campaigns. In the past, I often hoped there would be some long-running theatre shows in Hong Kong, which would draw audiences who were otherwise hesitant to attend the theatre through word-of-mouth recommendations. I no longer think a long-running performance is the answer. That is because if the production is poor in quality, the length of its run would do nothing to boost ticket sales, and the presenter boasting about the box office would only cause derision.

The best approach would be to organise workshops, readings and test performances prior to the official run. Both the creators and the audience are absorbing the experience and formulating opinions at these stages, while the work is refined through

multiple rounds of revisions until a satisfactory version is born. Throughout this process, the work may emerge as a word-of-mouth sensation, while the marketing efforts can be focused on the target audience. If the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the biggest presenter of theatre programmes in Hong Kong, can change its directions and invest more resources in workshops and test performances, and encourage greater participation from art organisations, the situation could change.

Actors' livelihood

Being an actor is a profession with no safety net. Freelance actors in Hong Kong are often juggling several jobs simultaneously in order to make ends meet, which takes time away from rehearsal. I had thought things would be different in New York City: Wouldn't the actors who had made the cut be free from worrying about income for a few years? Yet a friend told me that many productions make frequent changes to their cast, in order to keep things fresh for the audience and prevent actors from feeling too cozy in their roles. Therefore, getting cast for a long-running show is no guarantee for job security. Outside the theatre, many equally competent actors are waiting for their chance, which puts pressure on those who are performing in the show. Serious actors also engage in continuous training to improve

themselves. Speaking of his career in Australia as a professional actor, Rick Lau mentions the movement classes and vocal classes he takes, all paid out of his own pocket. While we admire how sizeable the overseas markets are, we also need to understand the dedication of the actors working in these markets and the hardships they go through.

One evening, I went to Marie's Crisis Café on Grove Street, a lounge filled with customers who could sing along to the songs from any musical that the pianist was playing. What amazed me was that every customer knew the lyrics by heart, and it was not only the customers who were singing. The pianist singled out a chubby waiter for a solo. The waiter's vocals might not be marvelous, but he was immersed in the pleasure of singing and his performance elicited the rapt attention of all customers.

New York City is the place to go to for musicals, as the culture of musicals is deeply ingrained in the city's imagination. Seeing a musical in the city is a pilgrimage for us, yet it is just a normal day for many New Yorkers.

Participation in musical workshops

I took another ten-day trip in July to New York to attend the Broadway Teachers Workshop with Cynthia Wong, the second composer of musicals, after Leon Ko, who had graduated from New York University and then returned to Hong Kong. In three days, we watched four performances and attended eight talks.

The main organiser of the workshop is called Broadway Teaching Group, which runs a variety of joint programmes with different universities. This workshop held in New York City is a part of their business. It is open to all high school and community college teachers from anywhere in the US; it is designed to provide these teachers with knowledge about teaching drama and theatrical production, and to foster exchanges between educators and Broadway professionals. During the break, I talked to a middle school teacher from Iowa, who told me that travelling to New York City was a very meaningful experience for him. The guest speakers invited to the workshop were all actors, producers and major creative minds currently working on Broadway, all "stars" who were suddenly within our grasp. It is little wonder that the four concurrent sessions of the workshop, each commanding a fee of US\$600 to US\$700 including tickets for four theatre shows, were fully booked.

To my mind, the workshop is somewhat similar to the “talking to elites” kind of seminars held by large business organisations. With theatre practitioners leading the workshop, however, one could expect some interactions or at least a livelier presentation. In general, the teaching method is more “chalk and talk” but the meat of the workshop is still the invited guest speakers and the content of their talks.

In fact, the guest speakers for the group we were in were all big names, such as Susan Blackwell, the mastermind of *[title of show]*, Sherry Cohen, stage director of many large scale musicals such as *Mamma Mia!*, and the 2016 Tony Award winner Renée Elise Goldsberry, who played Angelica in *Hamilton*. It was fun listening to them talk about how they were inspired by their predecessors and their own career development. They spoke about their experiences on Broadway in great detail.

One session of the workshop was hosted by Music Theatre International, a theatrical licensing agency granting high schools in the US the rights to perform the young adult versions of a range of classical musicals. They offer a ticketing system that offers fast and convenient ticketing services for schools in remote areas. On the day of the workshop session, the company brought excerpts from new plays for demonstration.

The importance of education

The four performances I watched were *Fun Home*, *Shuffle Along*, *On Your Feet* and *Hamilton*. *Hamilton* is based on the story of Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury of the US. The play portrays the founding spirit of the US and blends hip-hop, classical and contemporary sensibilities. It is a solemn yet highly engaging work. It topped the Tony Awards in 2015, and its popularity is still gaining momentum. The *Hamilton* Education Program was also launched for high and middle school students. The students can create their own musicals by drawing inspirations from the literature about Hamilton, and the work may even be presented on the same stage on which *Hamilton* is performed. This promotion programme combining education, history and art truly impressed me.

Imagine if we had created a musical about Dr Sun Yat-sen when he was studying medicine in Hong Kong, a production that was provided with a great script, songs and director; the musical then had a long run at a certain theatre, and tickets for the show were often sold out. Finally, students began performing the songs from the musicals at school, and teachers included the content of the musical in their teaching materials. On weekdays or when there were free timeslots on the weekend, the theatre house staging the musical



Cynthia Wong (left) and Chris Shum (right).
Photo courtesy: Chris Shum



As part of the Broadway Teachers Workshop, the participants attended a performance of *Hamilton*, and met the producers and actors of the musical at the theatre after the show.
Photo courtesy: Chris Shum

(with the setting still on the stage) was used for the “Sun Yat-sen Musical Education Programme”. Artists specialising in theatre education could lead participating students in improvised performances on which the Sun Yat-sen musical was based. What kind of impact would the musical have on young people? That is what *Hamilton* is about.

The songs of *Hamilton* are now the staple of prom performances, which is proof of the success the musical has achieved in terms of education and marketing. Students who have watched and sung the snippets from the musical from the Hamilton Education Program or at school become better familiarised with, and regularly attend musicals. Of course, it is the quality of *Hamilton* which makes all this possible.

The importance of these education programmes, I think, lies in the fact that they are an important means to cultivate audiences for musicals. Everyone knows Broadway is a hub for the performing arts. Yet how did the hub come about? In fact, there is no threshold for taking part in the performing arts. Why do some people attain admirable heights, while others are content with just watching a good show? In preparing my presentation at West Kowloon Cultural District, I reflected on my experience on the trip and try to make sense of it with the P.A.P.E model.

A healthy ecology of performing arts requires Public support which props up the box office. Among this public, some people turn into an Amateur who makes occasional appearances on stage. As their involvement and craftsmanship develop, they may become a Professional who performs for the public. As they differ in standards of performance, the Elites are needed to turn the performing arts into something that attracts public attention and acclaim, something which we all can take pride in. The Elite is what the public talks about, like Broadway musicals, well known not only to New Yorkers but also deemed essential by people from outside New York City.



Turning these reflections upon ourselves, could the industry practitioners in Hong Kong find their position in this model? How many people are determined to become an Elite? Or how many of them simply want to maintain the status quo, clinging to their allotted funding and regular position? A goal set is not always a goal accomplished. Many people aspiring to the elite status only manage to be a mere professional. Those who do not aspire to be an elite are probably just going to be an amateur. If we are not determined enough to become an elite for others, we are not giving it our best effort.

(Parts of this article were published in April 2016 and January 2017, respectively, in my column in *Singtao Daily*, which are now augmented.)

(Translated by Wayne Yeung)

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