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Hong Kong Dance Company
Inaugural Artistic Interdisciplinary Research Study
**Research study on Chinese martial arts and Chinese dance Plant a
Seedling Today - Reap A Body Reborn Tomorrow**



(29th October, 2019) Starting from the horse stance, a group of dancers are now journeying into the realms of Martial arts. By studying martial arts rudiments and thus better understand its underlying spirit and intent, these choreographical pioneers hope to find new synergy and breakthroughs between the two art forms. The 'Research study on Chinese martial arts and Chinese dance' is the Hong Kong Dance Company's inaugural interdisciplinary research study and spans for three years (2018-2020). At the conclusion of the first two phases, the study now enters its creative stage, as it now puts learning into practice.

The 'Research study on Chinese martial arts and Chinese dance' is funded by the Contestable Funding Scheme for the Major Performing Arts Groups of the HKSAR government, Home Affairs Bureau. The research team comprises a group of talented dancers, Kungfu masters, academic researchers, and experts from various fields. The goals of the study are to explore new dance forms and themes developed through the research practice, as well as seeking new directions for the traditional Chinese dance training system.

Capture the Truth - Surmount our Norms of Beauty

This project is headed by Mr. Yang Yuntao, the Artistic Director of the Hong Kong Dance Company. During a martial arts workshop, alongside other dancers, Yang said, "I wish we can dispel our preconceived norms of 'beauty' in body movement and again to redefine its concept. Beauty can and does occur in ballet, classical dances, as well as contemporary dance. There is unspeakable energy in the beauty of martial arts. It is very



tangible, like the penetrating punch when one smashes a log of wood – this is power. Your feeling stems from this energy and not merely by the action or its imitation. It is a challenge to redefine the criteria of beauty.” The dancer and researcher, Mr. Ong Tze-shen, also reflects on the matter. “The conversation in martial arts is candid and direct. There is no room for the pretentious. This sincerity is what draws me towards it.”

Traversing 120 Hours of Martial Arts Training

This project is made up of three phases. The First (2018) and Second (2019) Phases are ‘Dance and Martial Arts Interdisciplinary Exchanges in Learning and Training’ workshops which comprise of approximately ten dancers learning the martial arts in a research capacity. The upcoming Phase Three puts the learning of the past phases into practice and begins the Experimental Immersion Phase (2020). The fruits of this research project shall be presented to the public in the form of a series of workshops, seminars, performances, etc. In the first two phases, 52 martial art workshops have been completed under the instruction of our project’s martial arts instructor and the masters provided by our partnering organisation, the International Guoshu Association. Our researchers have respectively learned the ‘Hung Kuen’, ‘Choy Lei Fat’, ‘Fujian White Crane’, and ‘Bague’ Chinese martial art styles, and have thus absorbed and gained comprehension of the styles, methods, principles, and virtuosity of the various disciplines. Phase Three shall explore the ways and means that allow for breaking new ground in the synthesis between Chinese dance and Chinese martial arts.

Remolding the Body – Experience the Texture of Energy and the Discharge of Force

The dancers who have been participating in this project have all received long years of Chinese dance training. Therefore, their bodies are accustomed to a particular form of exercise. From countless leaps and turns, these dancers have seared the repetitions into memory and etched its imprints into their body and soul. There has been a consensus amongst the dancers after their martial arts training, of the evident improvements to their physical fitness and body strength. They are also able to understand their bodies better and are now opening up its use to a new form of experimentation and imagination. Like a nourished seed in the soil, they are now reborn anew and prepared for a brand-new experience. Mr. Yang Yuntao hopes that a different mode of body movement will thus emerge from this innovative creation.

The discharge of force and energy is filled with erudition. Its diverse execution can be reflected in both the hard and the soft. Dancer and Researcher, Mr. Pan Zhenghuan, shares his thoughts on the matter. “I feel the sensation most strongly when the explosive force of action has been patently increased. As a major characteristic of the martial arts is in its combativeness, it requires the initiator to discharge the force with speed and subtlety. Whether it is ‘one-inch punch’ or the natural ‘automated punch’, it both requires one to direct the energy to the extremity at the last possible second. This type of training is rare in dance. Martial arts practice has helped increase my movement control during the dispelling of rapid force. It now allows me to become more flexible in my dance movements. I look forward with great anticipation to apply what I have learned from the first two phases into the Third. The application phase should prove to be most exciting and filled with challenges.”



Devoid of Distraction – Captivation of Both Heart and Mind

In the sea of Arts, one chooses the martial arts as a research topic not only because of its unique use of the body but also its spirit and intent. The enthrallment possessed by the essence of the martial arts stems from the following: its focus of the present, its awareness of the surroundings, and the fleeting instances where energy aggregates. All of which presents an ultimate form of beauty. The dancer and researcher, Mr. Ho Ho-fei states, “Martial arts require a form of concentration that only becomes the art when the essence flows. Otherwise, it is merely a set of bodily movements. I think that the presence of the essence is an important measurement of the aesthetics of martial arts.”

It has been a great honour and pleasure to have Mr. Hing Chao, the Executive Director of International Guoshu Association, in collaboration with our company’s Artistic Director, to design and develop the learning outcomes and content for needs of this project. We are also indebted to Mr. Hing Chao for personally instructing us in the ‘Hung Kuen’ style. He predicates, “The martial arts are living thing. It contains vitality and is forever changing. Therefore, it is unnecessary to be fixated with its form. A routine may contain the same core elements and logic. Nonetheless, it will display different shades and colours through different persons and bodies, including in style, dischargement of force, angle and fist force etc.” Therefore, while the martial arts have its governing rules, it is also malleable. This enduring life force is a treasure of fluid experimentation and most compatible with the dancers’ flowing movements on stage. We are certain the synthesis of the two will generate much creative inspiration.

The ‘Research study on Chinese martial arts and Chinese dance’ Project will soon be entering its third Experimental Immersion Phase. We welcome all to learn more about the path and outlook of our research project, and more importantly, to share the journey of our dancers/ researchers as we witness the fruits of our labours and unveil the result of our in-depth immersions and boundless creations.



Hong Kong Dance Company

“Dancing across East and West, Moving to the Tempo of Hong Kong”

Mission Statement

We are nurtured in the cultural tradition of China, combining with the creativity of contemporary art, to impress the world with Chinese dance of Hong Kong character.

Established in 1981, the Hong Kong Dance Company (HKDC) was incorporated in 2001 as a charitable and non-profit-making institution, and is financially supported by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. As one of the nine flagship performing arts companies in Hong Kong, its mission is to promote Chinese dance with contemporary artistic visions and Hong Kong character. Since its inception, HKDC has staged over 100 productions, many of which were highly popular with critical acclaim. Recent productions include *The Legend of Mulan*, *Red Poppies*, *Spring Ritual · Eulogy*, *The Butterfly Lovers*, *Storm Clouds*, *L'Amour Immortel*, *Dream of the Past: Ancient Chinese Court Dances*, *Reveries of the Red Chamber*, *Chinese Hero: A Lone Exile*, *Vipassana*, *Lady White of West Lake*, *Tale of Three Cities*, *Waiting Heart*, *Liu Sanjie*, *Ode to the Silk Road* and *Dance of Strings*.

As a cultural ambassador of Hong Kong, HKDC constantly brings the city's unique artistic style to the world by touring to different cities across the globe, engaging local audiences and encouraging cultural exchange. In recent years, it has brought its award-winning productions to the Lincoln Center in New York, Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., The Sony Centre in Toronto, the Concourse Theatre in Sydney, the Southbank Centre in London and The Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre in Minsk, among others.

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