

Carmen Huang

An Asian Arts Journey

“One two step, one two jump...” said my dance teacher as she demonstrated the correct dance moves. “Small steps, girls.” “Remember, with feeling!” Although these advices have been deeply rooted into my mind (probably for the rest of my life), I never tire of hearing them over again and again; with every new dance come new steps and different feelings. But not only do these words reverberate with every beat of the music I dance to, they also influence the way I hold myself up in life: take everything step by step and complete every task and challenge with feeling. No doubt, my participation in the Asian Arts has shaped a great part of the person I am today.

The best part about AATF is the way we are all exposed to the diversity of dance. Since the first time I’ve stepped foot into the dance studio, we’ve learned nearly everything between hip-hop and Asian cultural dance, including ballet. But it’s not the literal dance that affects my life; it is the challenges, practices, and people I meet along the way. After all, it’s not the destination, but the road to that destination that counts. So, I’m glad to say that after four and a half years of dance class, I’ve met the greatest array of friends and teachers who have created a life full of constant education and culture.

I started out dance class with my best friend in the 7th grade and we continued taking it together until halfway through sophomore year in high school. She had joined Alhambra High’s renowned Drill Dance Team while I joined the Alhambra High Mighty Moor Marching Band, two completely different paths. Halfway through sophomore year, she felt that she didn’t have time for the outside dance class after the load of dance practices she must attend for the school dance team, and so she left. But dance constantly

creates bonds. I'm happy to say that I've made new great friends along the road towards dance achievement. Dance requires constant communication, not in the literal sense of talking and writing, but in the sense of body language; this inevitably created a sense of bonding between everyone in class.

Each of my dance teachers teaches in their own way, but from each of them, I learn something new about people, order, and practice-and-perfection. At first, Donna's sundries style of teaching frustrated me: it seemed that she changed dance moves on a whim. But then, I realized that that was just what dance was; it was free to move and change. Even though we had already learned moves for a particular piece of music, nothing was ever permanent, above all not dance. Ling Mei is very patient and she never got angry. When she got mad, we really knew to pull our act together; this rare display of disapproval evokes a guilt in us that cannot be created by a person who constantly lost patience over an err in dance. Jennifer caused me great distress in the beginning because of her high expectations and nitpicky ways. I was irritated for a while before I realized that criticisms allow for improvement. These little details contributed to conveying the complete connotation of dance. I definitely learned perfection of posture in each lesson. But the list of teachers doesn't end there. We also have Julie who teaches us to "dance outside of the box" and Emma who tells us to "dance and listen to the music." And as all we all constantly learn things from each other in dance class, it's easy to see that we are all teachers of one thing or another.

I feel extremely auspicious to be in the situation I am. To be a part of a band in school and a part of a dance group outside of school allows one to see the connection between music and dance. How many other people do I know can claim to have

competed and performed for both forms of art? Who can claim to have gone to San Diego and Palm Springs to compete in band performances while performing for City Council Inaugurations and prospective Olympic competitors? I'm glad to say that I can and did. Each performance leads can only to more experience and knowledge. When I reach my destination, I can look back at the journey and relish in the memories of fun times and achievement. I know that I can smile at the audience in true pride and that they will know one thing for sure: I am completely enjoying life.