

Dare to Inspire

The adrenaline rushing through my body gives me comfort. I wait for the next class session to arrive, eager to know what I am to learn next. Each movement is precise, strenuous, and of course, beautiful. The blood rushes to my head every time the music turns on and I can feel the dance moves coursing through my veins. It is what I look forward to each week. Strange enough, it gives me a feeling of danger *and* security. Chinese dance is what I call living life.

I can remember the first time I had a solo dance for a competition. Being only in the 5th grade, I was extremely excited for finally having my own spotlight. During practice, I would never smile. My teacher never failed to tell me to smile. "Smile! It gives your face kindness and sweetness. It should be natural. Don't force it." Though it was somewhat menacing at times, I knew it was good advice. Those words, in fact, helped me so much during the actual competition. Maybe it was because I was so eager to do my own dance that I didn't even remember there would be judges there, but when I saw them, I almost froze. Then I remembered what my teacher had said to me. I did as she had told me and I saw some of the judges smile in return. That, in itself, gave me some type of comfort. With that little comfort growing, I was able to complete my dance proudly. That experience influenced me to keep a smile no matter how stressed and frightened I was.

Chinese dance not only taught me to always smile but it helped me to build my character. It influenced me to be myself when and wherever I was. There was a time when I was very shy and couldn't speak to anyone without someone to back me up. Then my teacher told me, "You have to open up. Dance isn't going to express itself without you *opening* up. The only way to truly show the feelings of this dance is to be *open*." With that in mind, I felt like every day was a dance. My daily life slowly became more open to trying new things and to the world itself. I

practically became a new person—I had a better view on life and a better personality. I met new people, spoke with more confidence, and even learned to dance better. My life at school became easier as did my life at dance. Chinese dance truly helped me to develop my personality and open my eyes as an individual.

The beauty and grace of Chinese dance relates to my personal life in so many ways. The numerous things it influenced into me also relates to my personal life. The friends I have today, including the ones in dance class, know that I am a very open person. I have strong opinions about many topics and they accept me as I am. They accept me because I am myself, and I am myself because of what Chinese dance has taught me. At school, I am on the tennis team. Chinese dance has even helped me through tennis. I know that during matches, I have to be friendly and courteous to the opponents no matter what the circumstances are. Whether I am winning or losing a match, my duty is to keep my head held high and to be friendly. If Chinese dance and my dance teachers had never influenced me to always smile and open up, I wouldn't be able to keep my head whenever I lost a match. Some of the opponents are rude much like some of the competitors in dance competitions. Chinese dance has taught me that rude people are to be looked past. They have no influence on me as long as I smile and be myself. These little lessons have influenced me more than they probably intended to in my life.

All in all, Chinese dance has really taught me how to learn. I've changed in many ways since I began to dance. My character has become more open and friendly. My smile comes naturally and is not forced. More importantly, Chinese dance in AATF has taught me that there is always room to learn. I am still young and I am still so very eager to learn more from dance. Chinese dance is my adrenaline. It is my life.