

CONTEXT STATEMENT

Dance and Dance Education

Developing Dance Education in Hong Kong and in the Mainland China

For DProfBy Public Works Application Middlesex University

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I Introduction

I am applying for a Doctorate in Professional Studies by Public Works. The areas that form the basis of my public work are:

Dance Education – evidenced by education work in

- Western Theatrical Dance.
 - Natural Movement (re-titled knowledge through dance)
 - Western Folk Dance
 - Ballroom and Latin American Dance
1. Repositioning dance within the culture of Hong Kong and China through dance promotion and advocacy—evidenced by
 - production of the weekly half-hour Rediffusion Television program *Let's Dance* from 1965 to 1967
 - Choreography for local musical films
 - serving in advisory capacities for professional dance companies, organizations, and publications
 - productions in Hong Kong and China of Ballroom and Latin American Dance demonstrations, competitions (both amateur and professional) and performances,
 - work as impresario/coordinator of productions of traditional cultures of China and internationally
 - development of funding strategies and donors for non-profit events and organizations
 2. Developing understanding of Chinese culture at home and abroad, and Western culture in Hong Kong and China---evidenced by
 - Development of working relationships, links, networks, and partnerships between Hong Kong, the Mainland, and internationally.

II Background

1. English Education

During the four years of English education, in addition to gaining a solid technical foundation in various form of dance that lead to my being qualified as a teacher, I learnt valuable lessons in respect of character building, integrity, sincerity and consideration which broadened my conceptions about life, and was vital to the success of my career.

In life one just has to make the most of what one is given. Soon after my English education began, I realized that because of my physique and my psyche, I was not suitable for a career as a stage performer; no matter how hard I worked I would be doomed to fail. My only option was to change to a teaching career and make the best of it. I learnt to let go the impossible.

2. Different Cultural Background

I was fortunate to be brought up in quite affluent circumstances. As a child I had a personal maid and was not allowed near the kitchen. When I first arrived in London I was advised to get a whistling kettle, so that I would know when the water was boiling.

My college Head Mistress, Miss Anita Heyworth did not approve when I paid other students to do my chores for me, such as washing, laundry, and setting my hair. I also did not like the college food, so I went out to restaurants for dinner every night. My parents did not give me a set amount of allowance each term like other students, I just asked for more when the money ran out, and they provided everything which went into the college account. Traditional Chinese believe in giving daughters the best, because when they got married, they would be the husband's family's daughter-in-law, and who knows what lie ahead for them. I was told that many of the other students at my college were on grants and had little pocket money. Miss Heyworth told me my spending habits had a bad effect on other college girls and hurt their feelings and that although I had the ability to become a teacher, my behavior showed a lack of important qualities that a teacher must possess—consideration, respect for other cultures or experiences and an ability to reflect on these. From this I learn to consider other's feeling and the need for tack in all situations, especially where differences arise. Most of all the different cultural history and back ground is vital.

When Miss Heyworth retired and learnt of the work I did for the promotion of dance in Hong Kong and China, she gave me her set of photographs of Miss Madge Atkinson's Natural Movement to assist me in developing children's dance. At that time there were only two sets of these photographs. She gave the other set to Surrey University.

3. A Different Education System

In the 1950s the education system in Hong Kong was rather static, rote learning was the norm and students memorized everything by heart, word by word, but there are two sides to every coin. I was not by nature a good student and do not do well academically, because I was trained to memorize things, fortunately I managed to achieve passing grade in five GCE within a year which enable me to enter the London College of Dance and Drama. During three years of study at the College I always received a decent grade in the History of Dance, and always passed Anatomy and Physiology examinations with satisfactory result.

In those days there was no career counseling in Hong Kong, even my Ballet teacher did not tell me what life would be like for someone embarking on a Dance career. I learn it the hard way. In order to be a dance teacher, one must lead a very antisocial life. In Hong Kong we start work after normal school hours and work on weekends and holidays. Like Athletes, dancers' income decrease as they get older, unless one is able to embark on a second career. This led me to the realization that career counseling is very important to allow youngsters to make the right choice.

4. Adaptation to Situation and Environment

During my second year of college, I was sent to the London branch of the Arts Education School for teaching practice, the School is famous for training children and students for performing arts. For these Tuesday classes, I was not given any specific class standard or a specific form of dance to teach, and therefore, I was not able to make any kind of plan for the lessons. I had to wait in the staff room with other senior staff and waited for someone to come in and tell me which class was without a teacher and therefore needed me to teach it, I was then been given the class' standard, age and the form of dance. This turned out to be the best training I ever had; I had to face a classroom of strangers, adapt my teaching strategy on the spot and respond to their needs and reactions accordingly. This proved to be the most valuable training for my future as an impresario and as the on sight coordinator of Ballroom and Latin American dance championships. Unforeseen circumstances arise any time!

5. Life Long Learning

When I arrived at Arts Education School in Tring, Hertfordshire at the age of 17, I realized that my standard of education and dance were far behind the other students of my age. I only received training in Ballet in Hong Kong, but in Tring and College we had to learn all forms of dance. I had to have a lot of private lessons in dance and elocution to improve my speaking English. I studied hard and managed to gain the basic qualification for Dance teaching. I learned things that changed my personal character. I also learnt the importance of Education. These are among the reasons I have kept on studying over the past fifty years. I believe in Lifelong learning to keep up with the changing and progressing standards of the dance world, to keep my knowledge and skills at the leading edge of practice, and to keep abreast of changes especially those brought about by globalization. (Appendix 1 Qualification)

6. At the end of 1961, I returned to Hong Kong after graduating from teacher training at London College of Dance and Drama, whether in my dance studio, my own TV programmes or my choreography for local films; I have fully utilized my knowledge of various form of dance that I gained in my English education. More important, I have used this knowledge in synthesizing new approaches and formulating solutions to situations, which often have elements that I have not encountered before.

The dance scene in Hong Kong was rather under developed at that time. In order to gain experience and get the bearing of the dance situation, I taught ballet at the Carol Bateman School of dance for two years.

Ballet is a high art form that also develops poise and grace. Due to the charging of expensive tuition fees it only catered to the upper class and was limited to high society. These circumstances led me to realize that to develop dance, it should be relevant to community and should be an activity available to all, rather than limited to certain sectors of the society. It was at this stage of my life I formulated ideas about achieving these aims through dance education and dance advocacy and promotion.

I was lucky to be equipped with knowledge and qualifications of all the major forms of Dance; Ballet, Modern Stage, Natural Movement, National (European Folk) and Ballroom.

7. Career Counseling

In those days there was no career counseling in Hong Kong, even my Ballet teacher did not tell me what life would be for someone embarking on a Dance career. I learnt it the hard way. As a dance teacher one had to lead a very antisocial life. We started work after normal school hours and worked through the weekends and holidays. Like athletes, dancers' incomes decrease as they get older, unless one is able to embark on a second career. This led me to realize that career counseling is very important to allow youngsters to make the right choice.

8. English Contact

I was lucky in many ways being the first and only Chinese girl studying all forms of dance in London in the late 1950s. As a result of this uniqueness, I was given all the help and opportunities to ensure that I would be groomed into being a good teacher. Many of my senior teachers in those days have later become heads of dance institutes in England in 1960s. Like Miss Phroso Pfister (principal of London College of Dance and Drama), Mrs. Patricia Hutchinson-Mackenzie (principal of London Contemporary Dance School, where I was trained for my Licentiate Modern Stage examination. Later when she became the principal of the College of Royal Academy of Dancing, and with her permission, I was accepted as a part-time student of National Branch for one year to prepare for my Fellowship Examination), Mr. Anthony Twiner (who later became the conductor of the English National Ballet Company, coached me on the characteristics of European Folk music), Dame Beryl Grey (President of both the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and the Vice President of the Royal Academy of Dance, realizing the amount of work I did for the promotion of dance, presented me to the Duchess of Kent), Dr. Peter Brison (who was twice commissioned by the Hong Kong Government to write the two white papers for dance development for Hong Kong in 1980s and with whom I became very good friends. Whenever I visited London he would take me everywhere he went and as a result I got to know a great many of the celebrities of art community in London), Miss Anita Heyworth (Principal of London College of Dance and Drama) gave the materials of Natural Movement dance from which I developed my Creative Educational Dance syllabus), and Mr. Bill Irvine (13 times World Ballroom and Latin American Dance Champions, was my advisor for the Ballroom events in Hong Kong, Macau and China. (Appendix 2 photos of Dance celebrities)

Miss Grace Cone and Mrs. Olive Ripman (Directors of Arts Education and London College of Dance and Drama) gave me all the chances to prepare me for my dance career. On one occasion, when the musical “The Flower Drum Song” was first put on the West End, starring Nancy Kwan was looking for Chinese dancers, I was sent for an audition and got the part of a nine year old girl. Miss Grace Cone was ready to allow me to be absent from College for a year to join the show. I turned it down as I was so looking forward to finish my training and get back to Hong Kong. It also was the College tradition for the Head girl to teach and to enter outside children classes for Royal Academy examinations. During my third year I was given the teaching of these classes to make sure I knew the procedure of entering students for examination. I was also chosen to dance in the Hampstead Arts Festival in order to gain some performing experience. I am deeply grateful to all their helps, otherwise, I would not have been able to achieve the work I have.

During my college days, Laban dance methods was not included, Dr. Marion North and Dr. Bonnie Bird gave me special private lessons to assist me in the understanding of the Laban Dance theory.

My Contribution to Dance development in Hong Kong

Television

Hong Kong Rediffusion Television was established in 1957. In 1965, the station planned to start a weekly Dance Programme, I was interviewed and was chosen to coordinate and host the programme on the basis of my encompassing knowledge of various forms of dance. “Let’s Dance” a 30 minute of educational, entertainment programme was scheduled on Sunday from 5.30 pm to 6.00 pm. In the programme I introduced the history, characteristic and basic techniques with demonstration and performances of each form of dance. I also invited other local dance teachers to participate in the show, thus extended Dance as an art form to another local horizon. Although at that time Television was still a novelty and a luxury not available to every family. “ Let’s Dance “ was still an important pioneering project and because of its success I was entered in Hong Kong University Cultural development archive as the first person to introduce Dance Education in the territory. (Appendices 3, TV programme’ show).

The Movie Industry

On the entertainment side during the 1950s and 1960s American dance movies were very popular for the affluent class, dance musical films such as; “Singing In The Rain”; “Daddy Long Legs”; “An American in Paris”; “The Wizard of Oz”; “Brigadoon”; “Seven Brides for Seven Brothers” etc. starring Gene Kelly, Leslie Caron, Cyd Charisse were amongst my favorite film stars. Like many of my age group, I really liked those films and still enjoy them on Turner Classic Channel.

In those days Hong Kong main industries were exports and many young men and girls around the age of twenty worked at one form of factories or another. Their form of entertainment was local films and their idols were Siu Fong Fong and Chan Bo chu. (It is funny Hong Kong has three Chinese girls with the same Chinese name, we are all in what people in Hong Kong considered as entertainment show business. Even now people can only identify us by our English names or by our profession. I am Chan Po Chu Pearl, dance sector; the Cantonese Opera and movie star Chan Bo chu Connie; Former Television Broadcast executive Chan Po chu Sophia.) The movies themes in those days were (Cinderella Chinese version) always poor girls end up falling in love and marrying rich, handsome husband. This was the girls’ dreams and motivation in life.

Since I was the only local girl who had knowledge of various forms of dance and there were not many trained choreographers around at that time, I was asked to do the choreography for Siu Fong Fong “I Love Ago-go”; Fong Fong has a perfect figure for dance, very quick in learning, this film was a smash box office success in South East Asia. As a result the investor Mr. Kwan Chi kin of Kin Shing Film Company invested in a film studio and I was employed as their dance director; my job consisted of dance choreography, design sets and costume, and the training of dancers. This was not easy as the dancers had no basic training and had to look good in the films. The best part of the job was that I had a complete free hand in the production, money was no problem as long as the box office return was lucrative. Again, I utilized my knowledge of various forms of dance. I did not like the music lyric writer of the Kin Shing Company, I thought his lyrics were what I considered of a dubious taste.

I asked my friend Mr. James Wong whom I met in Rediffusion Television, he was the host of the Youth Programme to be my musical director. His original profession was teaching at a secondary school. It was James first job with the film industry. He became the music director of all my dance films. A very talented song and lyric writer later became one of the most prominent figures in the show business of Hong Kong. We became very good friends and compered a great number of TV shows together. It was sad he died at the age of 63. It is great loss for Hong Kong both the cultural and musical sectors. I utilized all forms of dance in my choreography of films, including Ballet, Modern Stage, Ballroom and Latin American, European folk dance and popular dances of the time. Thus dance reached to a much wider sector of the local community (Appendices 4, poster of the musical films, DVD of will be available).

I seemed to have foresight on the trends of Hong Kong's entertainment world. After five successful box office sales of my local musical films, I withdrew from that side of my career. It is always my belief that too much of the same things, no matter how good they are it will suffocate the market. Why be part of failure. I refuse to be labeled as a failure, this is not my character. This is also why I am taking this degree. I was offered honorable degree by various universities and the title of outstanding achievement of World Chinese by paying a certain sum of money. I just turned down the offers, there is no value in it, if I can buy it, it means anybody can, any Tom, Dick or Harry! (Appendix 5 Cultural Mass)

Through my television programme and choreography of films I was known in the entertainment world. As a result I was always involved whenever there is something connected with dance promotion whether in the media or TV.

My public services for Dance in Hong Kong

According to the **Hong Kong Dance History** published by the Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference in 2000, funded by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

- On 12th September 1995 Hong Kong Dance Sector Joint Conference was established by members of four representative organizations in Hong Kong community.
- The Hong Kong Ballet Group established in 1964 by a group of local ballet teachers as a non-profit organization to promote and popularize ballet education and to cultivate an appreciation for ballet.
- Hong Kong Dance Federation established in 1978 with the help of Physical Education Sector under the Education Department; the Recreation and Sport Department and the Government Information Service Department. The aim object was to promote Chinese Dance activities.
- The Association of Hong Kong Dance Organizations established in 1992 by many Chinese dance companies with the aim of speeding up the cooperation among these companies in order to promote the development of Chinese dance in Hong Kong
- The Hong Kong Dance Alliance established in 1994 with the aim of encouraging Dance creation; performance, research, education and criticism.

I am a founding member of and held prominent positions in all three organizations and advisor of the Association of Hong Kong dance organization. During my terms of office as Chairperson of the Hong Kong Dance Joint Sector Conference, we published the Hong Kong Dance History funded by Hong Kong Arts Development Council. This is vital and is the only one book recorded the dance history in Hong Kong. I was also served as advisor of Hong Kong Dance Company and advisor of the Dance School of Hong Kong Academy of the Performing Arts; Also served as adjudicator for the Hong Kong School dance festival for over 20 years; Teacher training courses for the Education Department. (Appendix 6 Hong Kong Dance History)

Ballet Development in Hong Kong

According to Hong Kong Dance History, Ballet was given a strong push in Hong Kong in 1922 when the world famous ballerina Anna Pavlova performed classical and modern ballet with her company in Hong Kong. Her performance altered the idea of what the Chinese considered indecorous for well brought up Chinese girls to expose her legs in public.

1920, Violet Capell became the first full-time ballet teacher in Hong Kong. At the beginning, all of her students were westerners, but by 1937 about half of her students were Asians.

In 1949s and 1950s more ballet schools were set up in Hong Kong. Most of the teachers were Westerners, namely: Carol Bateman; Patricia Cook; Larissa Tesar and Jean Filshie from England, with Helen Marques from Russia; Nike Hurley from America. At this time many well off families enrolled their daughters to learn ballet. It was regarded as a symbol of social status and artistic appreciation of the family.

1954 Miss Carol Bateman invited Mrs. Joan Campbell to teach at the Carol Bateman School of Dancing at Garden Road. Mrs. Campbell introduced the grade examination of Royal Academy of Dancing to Hong Kong. Lady Grantham the wife of the Governor of Hong Kong gave her support by attending the first demonstration by the successful candidates. Raymond Liao, Jean Wong and I were the first three Chinese from this school that went to London for further training and returned to Hong Kong to teach after graduated.

Hong Kong Ballet Group

1955 the Royal Academy of Dancing established children's and major examinations in Hong Kong. In 1964, a group of Hong Kong Ballet teachers joined together to form Hong Kong Ballet Group with the aim to promote interest in ballet and stage an annual performance each year for Hong Kong Ballet students with invited professional dancers as guest performers. There were many Ballet teachers and schools in Hong Kong by the time of the 1970s, apart from the existing schools operated by Western teachers, there are also a great number of second generations of Hong Kong students returned from London to start their own ballet schools. Also quite a number of ballet teachers came from Mainland China. Since there was a limited existing market and frankly I am not good in publicized myself, I find it rather embarrassing.

My student mainly came from middle class families, their parents were mostly from the educational sector. This provided a strong link with Hong Kong biggest education organization "The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union". This laid the ground for my teachers' training development of National -Western Folk Dance and Creative Dance for Children.

In 1964 I established London School of Ballet apart from teaching Ballet, later Pearl Chan School of Ballet, I did not take a very active part in the Hong Kong Ballet Group. In 1974, Dame Margo Fonteyn and Heinz Bosl came to Hong Kong to give fund raising performances at the Lee Theatre, and raised more that HK\$150,000 for the Ballet group's operation fees. Many Hong Kong trained ballet dancers became well known in the world of dance internationally, such as Jenny Chiang, Ravenna Tucker, Cliff Lui and Yuri Ng etc. The number for children and major examinations of RAD in 2011 was over 6000 participants.

My Contribution to Ballet in Hong Kong

For the promotion of arts, money is vital. My role as a fund raiser seemed to work well in this area. I was very lucky to gain the trust of Dr. Stanley Ho, known as the gambling king who supported all my projects. When I first met him he was the President of Hong Kong Ballet Group in 1989. Now I have become a close friend of the family. (Appendix 7 Dr. Stanley Ho's introduction)

In 1989, for the Hong Kong Ballet Group's 25th anniversary I was the chairperson of the committee, during my term in office, I managed to link up cooperation between Hong Kong Ballet Group and Beijing Dance Academy. Beijing sent two of their choreographers and the principal dancer for the production for the full length ballet "The Match Girl". This is the first link between China and Hong Kong in Dance.

In 1981 Hong Kong Ballet Group annual the full-length Ballet "The Nutcracker" was broadcast by Television Broadcasting Ltd. This is due to my friendship with controller Mr. Clarence Cheong, it is the only time that a local non professional ballet was shown on television. Thus, Ballet reached even a wider sector of the Hong Kong community.

I am one of the Trustees of Hong Kong Culture and Arts Foundation, under the umbrella of the Liaison Office of the Central Government People Republic of China in Hong Kong Special Administration Region. I was the coordinator for the Foundation inauguration event "The World Ballet Competition". This was first world Ballet competition in Hong Kong.

Through Dr. Ho I met his 3rd wife Ms. Ina Chan Un Chan whom through me became the life long sponsor of Hong Kong Ballet Group. Ms. Chan donated HK\$1,000,000.00 for Ballet scholarship and HK\$50,000.00 with a piece of antique for auction for our 30th anniversary Gala dinner. Ms. Chan also contributes towards the expenses of adjudicators and principal dancers from the National Ballet of China to participate for Ballet Group's annual performances and competitions

When I became the Special Advisor of the National Ballet of China, Ms. Chan became one of the main sponsors of The National Ballet of China. I also managed to secure Dr. Stanley Ho's sponsorship for the performances of the National Ballet of China annual performances in Macau for the past 10 years. This has a strong effect on the artistic value in the gambling city of Macau.

In 2009, I was appointed the Hon. Advisor of Royal Academy of Dance's Genee Award in Hong Kong, I secured both Dr. Stanley Ho and Ina Chan sponsorship for this successful event. The event put Hong Kong's Ballet on the map of the world.
(Appendix 8 RAD Genee Award)

2010 was the 50th anniversary of the National Ballet of China, many of us in the Hong Kong Ballet circle were invited to their Gala performance. October 2011 the theme of Leisure and Cultural Department's Festival is ASISAN ARTS FESTIVAL. My proposal of National Ballet of China has been accepted for the opening event. We are going to show the development of Chinese Ballet in the past 50 years with three different programme : showing excerpts from Company's renounce works; The Red Detachment Army and Swan Lake, also there will be an exhibition in the concourse of The Cultural Centre, showing the three major phrases of the development of Ballet in China. This will enable Hong Kong audiences to have an understanding how closely political situations affect the development of arts.