UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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Choreographing “One Country, Two Systems”:

Dance and Politics in (Post)Colonial Hong Kong

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Culture and Performance

by

Ellen Virginia Proctor Gerdes

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

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Professor Susan Leigh Foster, Chair

This dissertation analyzes choreographic negotiations of Hong Kong’s (post)colonial political situation of “one country, two systems” since the end of British colonialism in 1997 to the present. Each chapter addresses a distinct institution and its particular navigation of this political proposal for semi-autonomy in relation to Chineseness, British colonialism, Western imperialism, and the international. Chapter one analyzes the development of the dance curriculum that trains each dancer major in Chinese dance(s), modern/contemporary dance, and ballet at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. I argue that this dance education expresses overlapping colonial, Chinese national, Cold War, and Western imperialist ideologies. The curriculum cultivates neoliberal bodies that can shift easily between cultural forms and can be hired across the globe, mirroring the city’s branding as “Asia’s World City.” Chapter two

asserts that Hong Kong theater director Danny Yung levels the playing field for China and Hong Kong through collaborations with Nanjing kunqu artists. Yung's work presents the flexible intercultural Chinese body on the Hong Kong stage by employing postmodern pedestrian movement and Western avant-garde methods of excerpting, subtracting, and reversing gender roles alongside traditional kunqu movement vocabulary. Via Yung's curation of the Toki festival in Nanjing, kunqu performers participate in inter-Asian exchanges that allow both Hong Kong and China to participate in Chinese cultural heritage, thereby subverting nation-state heritage logic. Chapter three argues that the i-Dance improvisation festival deploys Somatic training of the "natural body" and its discourse of pre-culturality as a strategy for connecting Hong Kong to the international. Through collective workshops and improvised performances, dancers who cultivate this natural body experience a reorientation of their national identities whether from Hong Kong, China, or Taiwan. The festival neither emphasizes Chinese-Hong Kong collaboration nor neglects China completely, but rather, incorporates China into its vision of precultural harmony. It also permits pre-devised choreographic presentation that critiques Chinese cultural sources and expresses ambivalence about Chineseness, thereby undermining the strength of "one country" and Chinese masculinist agendas. The epilogue gestures to the future of dance in Hong Kong after the national security law of 2020 and the subsequent end of "one country, two systems."

The dissertation of Ellen Virginia Proctor Gerdes is approved.

Anurima Banerji

Daphne P Lei

Sean Aaron Metzger

Janet M. O'Shea

Susan Leigh Foster, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Danna Frangione, who knew I would be a dance scholar long before I did. Her interest in Chinese dance and cross-cultural education have forever influenced my life. I will always strive to be the intuitive dance educator that she was.

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Candidate, Culture and Performance, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Graduate Certificate, Urban Humanities, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
Ed.M., Dance Education, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA
B.A., Dance, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Gerdes, Ellen. "Persistence in Pedagogy: Teaching Failure, Empathy, and Citation." in *Lateral Journal of the Cultural Studies Association,* Issue 6.2, 2017.

Gerdes, Ellen. V.P. "Mediated Meditations: Choreographies of Shen Wei and Kun-Yang Lin" in *Contemporary Directions in Asian American Dance.* Ed. Yutian Wong, University of Wisconsin Press, 2016, 145-173.

Gerdes, Ellen V.P. and Teresa VanDenend Sorge. "Building Humans and Dances: Exploring Cultural Relevancy as Teaching Artists." in *Journal of Dance Education*, Volume 15, Issue 2, 2015.

Gerdes, Ellen. V.P. "Shen Wei Dance Arts: Chinese Philosophy in Body Calligraphy," *Dance Chronicle,* Volume 33, Issue 2, 2010: 231-250.

Kolcio, Katja and Ellen Gerdes. "Faking it: The Necessary Blind Spots of Understanding*," Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies,* Volume 9, Number 2, 2009: 559-569.

Gerdes, Ellen. V.P. "Contemporary Yangge: The Moving History of a Chinese Folk-Dance Form,*" Asian Theatre Journal,* Volume 25, Number 1, Spring 2008: 138-147.

SELECTED BOOK REVIEWS, CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS, AND ESSAYS:

Gerdes, Ellen. V.P. "Toward a Transnational Understanding of Chinese Dance" a Book Review of Shih-Ming Li Chang and Lynn E. Frederiksen's *Chinese Dance: In the Vast Land and Beyond*. Dance Chronicle, Volume 40 (2), 2017: 217-220.

Gerdes, Ellen. "i-Dance: Tradition, Technology, Memory, and Presence" in *dance journal/hk*, Hong Kong, Volume 19 (1), 2017. http://www.dancejournalhk.com/.

Gerdes, Ellen. "Dancing Diaspora: Chineseness as a Moving Concept" a Book Review of SanSan Kwan's *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*. *Dance Chronicle*, Volume 36, 2013: 386-391.

Gerdes, Ellen. Review of *Eiko and Koma: Choreographing Spaces Apart in Asian America* by Rosemary Candelario. Dissertation Reviews. May 30, 2013. http://dissertation reviews.org/archives/4408.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Selma Jeanne Cohen Award for Graduate Student Paper, Dance Studies Association, May 2020.
Mellon Summer School for Theater and Performance, Harvard University, Summer 2017.
World Arts and Cultures/Dance Chair's Discretionary Fund Award, UCLA, 2014, 2015, 2016.
School of Arts and Architecture Fine Arts Trust Award, UCLA, 2015.
Emerging Scholars Award, Association for Asian Performance, July 2007.

FELLOWSHIPS

University Fellowship, UCLA, 2019-2020.
Collegium of University Teaching Fellowship, UCLA, 2017.
International Institute Fieldwork Fellowship, UCLA, 2016.
Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship: with mentor, Susan Leigh Foster, UCLA, 2015-2016.
Urban Humanities Initiative Student Research Grant, Mellon Foundation, UCLA, 2014.
Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Fellowship: with mentor, Janet O'Shea, UCLA, Summer 2014.
University Fellowship, UCLA, 2013-2015.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Temple University, Philadelphia, PA: Adjunct Faculty, Dance Department
- Concepts of Culture, (graduate seminar)
- Foundations of Dance Pedagogy (BFA)
- Making Meaning in Dance, (BFA writing intensive)
- Global Dance Traditions (BFA studio)
- American 20th Century Dance History (BFA writing intensive)
- Embodying Pluralism (gen-ed)
- Non-Western Dance Forms (BFA studio)

University of California, Los Angeles, CA: Teaching Fellow, World Arts and Cultures/Dance
- Chinese Performance in Sinophone Cities (writing intensive)
- Art and Social Action (gen-ed)
- Theories and Methods in Dance Composition: Movement Languages (BFA studio)
- Theater Preparation in World Arts and Cultures (graduate seminar)
- Teaching Assistant Seminar (graduate seminar)
- Theories and Methods in Dance Composition: Locations (BFA studio)
- World Dance Histories: Choreographing Colonialism
- Introduction to World Arts and Cultures

Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA: Adjunct Assistant Professor, Dance Department
- Dance Appreciation (writing intensive)

Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ: Adjunct Instructor, Dance Department
- Introduction to Dance (gen-ed)

Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA: Adjunct Instructor, Dance Department
- Introduction to dance (gen-ed)

Introduction

This dissertation centers an under-researched subject, concert dance choreography in Hong Kong,[1][2] and asks how it navigates Hong Kong's brief political situation of "one country, two systems" between 1997 and 2020. This exceptional semi-autonomous structure has permitted free-market capitalism and has encouraged cultural pluralism, all the while promoting Chinese unification. Hong Kong's (post)colonial status as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China under "one country, two systems" has put the city in constant flux since the end of British colonialism in 1997. "One country, two systems" is an agreement that asserts Hong Kong is part of China yet is not required to adopt socialism. The "two systems" compromise carries with it a potential for democracy, that is, thus far, unfulfilled; the leader of Hong Kong, called the Chief Executive, is elected by a committee that is appointed by the Chinese central government.[3] Hong Kong has been described as a "liberal autocracy" or as "liberal

[1] Much writing on Hong Kong cultural studies focuses on visual and film production in Hong Kong. See the following:
Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Esther Cheung, *Fruit Chan's Made in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).; Ou Fan Lee, "Two Films from Hong Kong: Parody and Allegory" in *New Chinese cinemas: forms, identities, politics*, ed. Browne, Nick. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).; Poshek Fu, and David Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).; Wing-Fai Leung. *Multimedia Stardom in Hong Kong: Image, Performance and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2015).; Kam Louie, *Hong Kong Culture Word and Image* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).; Thomas Luk and James Rice, *Before and after Suzie: Hong Kong in Western Film and Literature* (Hong Kong: New Asia College, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002).; Laiwan Pang and Day Wong, *Masculinities and Hong Kong cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).; Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[2] SanSan Kwan has written the only English-language monograph that includes a chapter on Hong Kong's identity in relation to dance. In it, she analyzes Falun Gong social protest and Helen Lai's choreography as resistive to the handover of power to China. See: SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance And Movement In Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[3] William Case, "Hybrid Regime and New Competitiveness: Hong Kong's 2007 Chief Executive Election," *East Asia* 25 (December 2008): 365–88.

authoritarianism"[4] due to its combination of ostensible civil liberties[5] without democracy.[6] Just in the time of writing the last chapter and this introduction, I have seen Hong Kong's identity shift radically. Over just the past few years, Hong Kong has experienced an erosion of the semi-autonomy offered by this "one country, two systems" contract to the point of the demise of "two systems" under the 2020 National Security Law.[7] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully address the ongoing effects of this law, but I do gesture to Hong Kong's future in the epilogue.

Throughout the dissertation, I draw from dance scholar Randy Martin's conceptualization of dance as a theorization of political action, not just an activity of politics. Like Martin, I recognize that there is not a one-to-one relationship between dance aesthetics and politics, but rather, choreographies are the means through which I can observe simultaneity of oppressive structure and agency, subjectivity and objectivity, and bodily/political inscription and creation.[8] I recognize multiple strategies for how choreographies respond to, reflect upon, and undermine Hong Kong's (post)colonial political situation by explaining several choreographic permutations of interaction between the two systems—a vision for compromise between capitalism and

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[4] Hsin-chi Kuan and Siu-kai Lau, "Between Liberal Autocracy and democracy: Democratic Legitimacy in Hong Kong," *Democratization* 9 (Winter 2002): 58–76; William Case, "Hybrid Regime and New Competitiveness."

[5] Freedom of speech and press, for example, are protected by the Hong Kong British Basic Law, still in effect.

[6] Pro-democracy groups in Hong Kong critique the elections of the Legislative Council for giving power to corporations and organizations designated legal entities to elect 30 out of 70 seats (called a functional constituency). Business and professional communities tend to favor a pro-Beijing stance because of Hong Kong's growing dependence on Chinese economic success.
For more in-depth explanation, see:
Ngok Ma, "Hong Kong's Democrats Divide." *Journal of democracy* 22, no. 1 (2011). 54-67.

[7] Jennifer Williams, "China's New National Security Law Is Already Chilling Free Speech in Hong Kong." Vox, July 1, 2020, accessed January 10, 2021. https://www.vox.com/world/2020/7/1/21309990/china-hong-kong-national-security-law-protests-arrests.

[8] See: Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory And Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

socialism that has led to the exchange of Western and Chinese cultural production—and varying degrees of support for the unification of Hong Kong and China. Each of the examples in this dissertation illustrates in a different way how dance has been implemented, related to the body politic and to specific government policies, regarding cultural as well as economic production.

During my research visits to Hong Kong, I was often asked about how I developed an interest in Hong Kong dance. My research perspective is influenced by my experience as a dancer. I first studied Chinese classical dance as a high school student with professor Hu Er-Dong in my hometown in rural Pennsylvania, where I became curious about the transmission of Chinese classical dance outside of China. Inspired by my interest in Chinese dance, I studied dance and Mandarin Chinese at Wesleyan University and when studying abroad in Beijing. There, I first began learning Chinese folk dance forms with older women in public parks.[9] After I graduated from college, I moved to Shanghai and studied codified folk dance forms at the Shanghai Theater Academy and other studio settings. I also learned how to salsa dance in social dance settings. While living in Shanghai, I became aware of my own biased assumptions about what constituted Chinese dance. Since then, I have researched dance in the Sinophone world—Chinese dance in Philadelphia, dance education in Taiwan, and Asian American choreography.[10] I was first introduced to performing arts in Hong Kong while living in Philadelphia, where Hong Kong director Danny Yung and Chinese opera performer Xiao Xiang Ping presented a lecture-demonstration at a Fringe Festival in 2011. A funding organization, Dance Advance by the Pew

[9] Ellen. V.P. Gerdes, "Contemporary Yangge: The Moving History of a Chinese Folk-Dance Form," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 138-147.

[10] Ellen Gerdes. "Eclectic Lessons from Taiwan: Hard-Working Dancers at Tsoying High School," *Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship* 1, no. 1 (2013).; Ellen V.P. Gerdes. "Mediated Meditations: Choreographies of Shen Wei and Kun-Yang Lin" in *Contemporary Directions in Asian American Dance ed.* Yutian Wong, (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).; Gerdes, Ellen. V.P. "Shen Wei Dance Arts: Chinese Philosophy in Body Calligraphy," *Dance Chronicle* 33, no 2 (2010): 231-250.

Charitable Trust, sent me to Yung's forums on Intangible Cultural Heritage later that year. At these forums, I learned how Yung conceptualized "one country, two systems" as an opportunity for cultural exchange, and also about the complexity and precarity of Hong Kong's semi-autonomous state. For the dissertation project, I continued my inquiry of Yung's work and researched two other institutions that differed significantly in their approach to Hong Kong's semi-autonomous situation.

On Chineseness

Is Hong Kong Chinese? The People's Republic of China (PRC) asserts that Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are all political entities of China. *Zhongguo*, the word for China, is translated as "center state or kingdom" and is closely tied to Han ethnicity and the Yellow River northern region of China. The "One China Principle" claims the sole sovereignty of the PRC while including Taiwan as the Republic of China (ROC), and Hong Kong and Macau as Special Administrative Regions (SARs) that maintain some degree of political and economic autonomy, all in the conception of a unified China. As performance scholar Daphne Lei writes, "modern China and Chinese ethnicity were from the beginning politically constructed concepts of unity."[11] Since the beginning of modern China—Sun Yat-sen's 1912 revolution that ended the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)—Chinese ethnicity was defined as the Han majority and several ethnic minorities through the term *Zhongguo minzu.* In 1949, civil war erupted, and the Nationalist Party, the KMT or Kuomintang/Guomindang, moved to Taiwan, and the PRC was founded by the Communist Party in Mainland China. Since 1949, there have been fierce debates on both the political and cultural level as to whether Mainland China or Taiwan have maintained

[11] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization Performing Zero*, 11.

more legitimate Chineseness.[12] When the United Nations recognized the PRC in 1971, Nixon visited the PRC in 1972, and then statesperson Deng Xiaoping initiated the Open Door Policy in 1978, the ROC lost political influence around the globe. Both the Chinese nationalist party in Taiwan and the PRC recognize a 1992 consensus on "One China" but interpret it differently; the Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan does not recognize the consensus and many Taiwanese residents also believe the consensus implies Taiwan and China are two separate countries.[13]

The political hegemonic conception of "One China" neglects the cultural distinctions among Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. These Chinese political entities have different histories of colonization, which have affected their cultural developments. Taiwan has an early history of Dutch colonization in the 17th century and brief settlement by the Spanish. It then became part of the Qing Chinese empire and part of the Japanese empire after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. Macau was a Portuguese colonial settlement from 1557-1999. Hong Kong was colonized from the British between 1841 to 1997, and also occupied by the Japanese briefly between 1941 and 1945. Furthermore, Lei argues that these Chinese political entities cannot be unified partially due to linguistic difference. Mainland China and Taiwan share the spoken language of Mandarin; whereas, Hong Kong and Taiwan share the written language of traditional Chinese characters. Mainland China uses simplified Chinese characters. In Hong Kong, the main language is Cantonese, while English and Mandarin are also very common; the trilinguality in Hong Kong makes it unique. Cantonese is not just a different dialect, but a distinct language,

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[12] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization Performing Zero*, 14; see: Ya-Ping Chen, "Dancing Chinese Nationalism and Anticommunism: The Minzu Wudao Movement in 1950s Taiwan," in *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice: Dignity in Motion*, eds. Naomi Jackson and Toni Shapiro-Phim (Plymouth, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008), 34-50.

[13]"What Does the 1992 Consensus Mean to Citizens in Taiwan?" Austin Wang, K.S. Wu, Yao-Yuan Yeh, and Fang-Yu Chen, November 10, 2018, accessed March 7, 2021, https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/what-does-the-1992-consensus-mean-to-citizens-in-taiwan/.

unintelligible to Mandarin speakers.[14] Scholar Ien Ang similarly critiques the "imagined community of cultural China" that neglects diverse experiences and languages, highlighting the persistent myth of a "Chinese race" that supposedly unites people across a diaspora regardless of language or culture.[15]

Sinophone scholars Rey Chow and Shu-mei Shih both suggest that, in fact, the notion of a "Chinese race" began, in part, as a reaction against Western imperialism.[16] In fact, the racial notion of "Chinese national characteristics" was first proposed by Western missionaries, then used for Chinese self-determination, and also deployed to suppress non-Han peoples during the 20th century. Shu-mei Shih's well-known theory of the Sinophone (akin to Lusophone or Francophone) as a re-conceptualization of diaspora depends on the presence of Sinitic languages, but not on China as homeland. Shih critiques the Sinochauvinism surrounding the concept of "One China" and writes that the Sinophone concept allows her to acknowledge Chinese continental colonialism.[17] The May 4th intellectual and socio-political movement (1917-1921) sought to strengthen China through re-interpretation of Chineseness—accomplished through a denouncement of Confucianism and a Westernization of culture. Victimization and ghettoization by the West inspired self-strengthening and Sinochauvinism. Chen Kuan-Hsing similarly expresses concern about the Chinese self-strengthening in contemporary Asia but cautions that

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[14] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization Performing Zero*, 15.

[15] Ien Ang. "Can One Say No to Chineseness: Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm in *Modern Chinese Literary And Cultural Studies In The Age Of Theory: Reimagining A Field,* ed. Rey Chow (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 285.

[16] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality And Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across The Pacific*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).; Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem" in *Modern Chinese Literary And Cultural Studies In The Age Of Theory: Reimagining A Field*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

[17] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific*.

the process for de-imperializing and undoing the Cold War in Asia should not only occur along East/West binary lines.[18]

Rather than language as the object of analysis and connection, I research dance and movement in Hong Kong in relation to Chineseness. This project builds upon the connections between global circulations of Chineseness and kinesthesia/movement put forth by performance scholars SanSan Kwan, Daphne Lei, and Sean Metzger. Metzger studies sartorial signifiers of Chineseness in order to develop a new methodology, referred to as the *skein* of race. Even in his analysis of the act of looking, he understands it as an act of the senses; he explores how Chineseness "might be felt."[19] Along the same lines, Kwan employs kinesthesia as a frame for writing about her individual kinesthetic experience moving in the city spaces of Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, and New York, and her kinesthetic sense as an audience member in contemporary concert dance. She argues that identifications with and disavowals of Chineseness occur on a bodily scale via choreographic methods—physical mobilization and stillness.[20] Likewise, Lei describes Chinese opera as a product of globalization and the concept of "operatic China" to refer to "an imaginary Chinese nation existing in opera performances in different times and spaces."[21] She develops a theory of "performing zero" to mean that "Chinese opera" and "Chinese" can be empty signifiers—"multivalent Chinese operas both endow and disavow

[18] Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 266.

[19] See: Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014).

[20] SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic City: Dance And Movement In Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

[21] Daphne P. Lei *Alternative Chinese Opera In The Age Of Globalization: Performing Zero* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 15.

national meanings from the center."[22]

Just as Chineseness is plural and sometimes contested, Chinese dance and opera forms are complex and multiple. In this dissertation, I use the term Chinese dance as it is used at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, dance studios, and professional dance companies in Hong Kong to mean both Chinese classical dance (*zhongguo gudianwu*), Chinese folk dance (*zhongguo minjian wudao*), and ethnic minority folk dance (Zhongguo shaoshu *minzu wudao*)—forms which were established in the 1950s to express "Chinese national characteristics." As explained by Chinese dance scholar Emily Wilcox, Chinese dance, as it is categorized in the PRC can also include a myriad of other genres: Chinese military dance (*zhongguo junlu wudao*), Chinese revolutionary ballet (*Zhongguo geming baleiwu*), Western dance (*xifang wudao),* which includes: ballet (*baleiwu*), modern dance (*xiandai wu*), international-style competitive ballroom dance (*guobiaowu*), jazz (*jueshiwu*), and hip-hop/street dance (*jiewu*). [23] In addition, I use the term Chinese Opera, following performance scholar Daphne Lei, with the caveat that the term is incomplete. As a failed translation of *xiqu*, the English term "Chinese Opera" includes all regional, interdisciplinary Chinese opera forms: Beijing opera, Cantonese opera, Kun opera, and hundreds of Chinese indigenous theater forms, thereby failing to connote the specificity of each regional form. The term also over-emphasizes the musical aspect, but Chinese opera is interdisciplinary—complete with speaking, singing, dancing, and, even, acrobatics. Lei notes that the term "opera" is a "mistranslation of Western categorization of performing arts" and that the term was first used in the 1920s in the United States.[24] I follow her lead in using the term as

[22] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization*, 16.

[23] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness in Contemporary Chinese Dance: Sixty Years of Creation and Controversy," *Asian Theatre Journal* 29, no. 1 (2012): 213.

[24] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization*, 9.

a reminder of the transnational nature to the forms, despite its inadequacy. In the dissertation, I focus mostly on the individual genre *kunqu* (kun opera), naming it specifically with its Mandarin Chinese term.

Hong Kong's (Post)colonial Status: One Country, Two Systems

In order to understand my analysis, it is necessary to detail the meaning and implications of Hong Kong's political contract, "one country, two systems." Hong Kong is an exceptional geo-political space. It is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China located on the southern part of China in the South China Sea. It is a metropolitan area geographically attached to the landmass of Mainland China, but it is also comprised of several other islands. What is referred to as Hong Kong island is known as the business center of the city. Hong Kong island is known as the business center of the city. It is one of the densest cities in the world with a population of 7.5 million in 426 square miles of land, which has determined its architecture of dizzying skyscrapers. The official languages are Chinese and English with spoken Cantonese nearly ubiquitous across the city.[25] It is a cosmopolitan location where higher social status offers the means for consumption of expensive shopping and international cuisine. Hong Kong is what scholar Aihwa Ong refers to as "fundamentally in a state of political exception" due to its "one country, two systems" political status—including its free market and its accommodation of civil liberties.[26] This state of political exception has depended upon the geopolitical and economic

[25] Juliana Liu, "When Hong Kong Languages Get Political," *BBC News*, June 29, 2017, sec. China, accessed January 21, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-40406429.

[26] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 110.

benefits to Mainland China garnered from Hong Kong, which is advertised by the Hong Kong SAR government as the "world's freest economy" and as "China's global financial center."[27] Hong Kong also demonstrates an exception to the liberation-after-colonialism model. Scholar Rey Chow makes the case that Hong Kong exemplifies why colonialism cannot be only analyzed along West/East binary lines; Hong Kong is distinctly characterized by what she calls a "double impossibility" of submission to either British colonialism or Chinese nationalism.[28]

The extent to which China has the right to rule Hong Kong is contested. Through several forced treaties in 1841, 1860, and 1898, Hong Kong became a British crown colony during the first opium war (1839-1842). Great Britain via "gunboat diplomacy" provoked the Chinese, who had angered the British by illegalizing opium. Almost 150 years later, the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 outlined the political concept of "one country, two systems" that would follow the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997 and propose semi-autonomy to Hong Kong until a deadline of 2047. This contract has permitted Hong Kong's capitalist economy to coexist with Mainland socialism (the two systems). Since 1997, Hong Kong has managed its own legal system through the British Basic Law, monetary currency, and police force; the Beijing Central government was supposed to control only international affairs and military defense. The impending loss of semi-autonomy in 2047 has concerned many Hong Kong residents who see Hong Kong as distinct from China and fear suppression of rights under the rule of the Chinese nation-state. In July 2014, when the National People's Congress Standing Committee denied universal suffrage reform for the 2017 Chief

[27] "Hong Kong for Business," accessed September 24, 2020, accessed January 21, 2021. https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/AboutHongKong/HongKongForBusiness.html.

[28] Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism: Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

Executive election, pro-democracy students launched protests that developed into the world's longest running Occupy protests—the eighty-day Umbrella Movement. The identity expressed at these protests aligned with the growing percentage of the population that identifies as Hong Konger, versus Chinese.[29] The months-long Anti-Extradition Law protests in 2019 also questioned the actualization of semi-autonomy. At the time of this writing, the 2020 National Security Law threatens the independence of Hong Kong's legal and judicial systems as well as freedom of the press and academic freedom.[30]

"One country, two systems" initially permitted Hong Kong's global cosmopolitanism while foregrounding Chinese nationalism. In Deng Xiaoping's writing in the early 1980s,[31] on the heels of the Cultural Revolution, he emphasized that Hong Kong's and Taiwan's sovereignty was non-negotiable. Deng sought Hong Kong's and Taiwan's reunification with the Chinese motherland above all else; adopting socialism or Communism was not required in this political

[29] In an oft-cited 2015 survey, when asked to note how they identify, 63.7% of respondents chose "Hong Konger" or "Hong Konger in China" over "Chinese" or "Chinese in Hong Kong" or "Mixed Identity."
See: "HKU Pop Final Farewell: Rift widens between Chinese and Hongkong identities, national pride plunges to one in four" The University of Hong Kong, accessed October 26, 2015, https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/release/release1594.html.

[30] See: "Every Person on the Planet, Hong Kong Free Press HKFP. Affected: Hong Kong Security Law More Draconian than Feared, Say Analysts," July 1, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2020/07/02/every-person-on-the-planet-affected-hong-kong-security-law-more-draconian-than-feared-say-analysts/.; Matthew Henderson "The Day Freedom Died in Hong Kong." The Telegraph, June 30, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/30/day-hong-kongs-freedom-died/. "Hong Kong Makes First Arrest Under New National Security Law – Bloomberg," accessed September 1, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-01/hong-kong-makes-first-arrest-under-new-national-security-law?fbclid=IwAR2KC6UUdz8MVG7aFSZFfEATwV-aYqUVE4M2YnLjRwsAsA2sgdvwOy5X5Kk.; Jennifer Williams, "China's New National Security Law Is Already Chilling Free Speech in Hong Kong," Vox, July 1, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021. https://www.vox.com/world/2020/7/1/21309990/china-hong-kong-national-security-law-protests-arrests.; "'Worse than the Worst-Case Scenario': Lawyers Dismayed at Hong Kong National Security Law," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, July 2, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021., https://hongkongfp.com/2020/07/02/worse-than-the-worst-case-scenario-lawyers-dismayed-at-hong-kong-national-security-law/.

[31] *Deng Xiaoping on the Question of Hong Kong*. Selected works of Deng Xiaoping. (The Bureau for the Compilation and Translation of Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin Under the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. Foreign Language Press, 1993.)

configuration. The text of the Sino-British Joint Declaration document of 1984 highlighted the preservation of Hong Kong as an international financial center and free port as well as the maintenance of capitalist "lifestyle."[32] In a famous quotation, Deng said that horse-racing and social dancing could continue (*mazhaopao, wuzhaotiao*) after 1997.[33] This compromise matched Deng Xiaoping's approach to southern China overall, where he opened up capitalist possibilities in special economic zones (SEZs), such as in Shenzhen (near Hong Kong).[34] Ong calls Hong Kong a space of "sovereign exception" due to China's clever zoning strategies that created exceptional capitalist spaces for experimentation with market reform.[35] In addition to this economic flexibility, these zoning strategies permitted a tolerance for a range of civil liberties.[36]

In 1984, when Great Britain and the People's Republic of China agreed on this 1997 arrangement for Hong Kong (without local Hong Kong representation present), the rulers of the two nation-states prepared Hong Kong to shift from arguably one of the last colonies of the British Empire to part of the Chinese nation-state. In fact, in 1972, China (along with British compliance) rejected the UN's decolonization proposal to decolonize Hong Kong and grant independent nationhood.[37] Deng Xiaoping clarified that even with the exception for capitalism,

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[32] Ralf Horlemann. *Hong Kong's Transition to Chinese Rule: The Limits of Autonomy*. (New York, NY: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 98.

[33] See a reference to this quotation here: "Now's the Time for Confidence in Changes Ahead," South China Morning Post, accessed August 15th, 2016., http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1424671/nows-time-confidence-changes-ahead.

[34] Scholar Aihwa Ong observes that China rezoned regions, including Hong Kong, through its market-driven exceptions, thereby creating graduated sovereignty across the country. The effects of neoliberalism are not unique to Hong Kong, but certainly amplified there. See: Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press), 2006.

[35] Aihwa Ong. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, 25.

[36] Aihwa Ong. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, 112.

[37] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization Performing Zero*, 77.

"one country, two systems" expressed "Chinese national characteristics"[38] because China originated the concept of "one country, two systems." For him, this concept invented a new socio-spatial relationship between China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in order to reassert the strength of the Chinese nation-state. In its conceptualization, therefore, "one country, two systems" could still grant Hong Kong a Chinese identity. This perspective, however, conflicted with the actions of the British colonial administrators who had posed local culture against Chinese nationalism as a means for garnering support for the colonial government.

Hong Kong faced a cultural phenomenon of anxiety related to becoming associated with the Chinese nation-state, especially after the 1989 Tiananmen Square killing of students. As Lei writes:

> Hong Kong's conditional freedoms—no voting, but freedom of expression, travel, choice of profession—allowed the city's residents to regard themselves as superior. The martyrdom of the students was a wake-up call: Hong Kongers felt a renewed cultural and ethnic affinity with Chinese people, but felt threatened by the Chinese regime.[39]

Above, Lei points to what Abbas calls the "double trauma" of the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre that led to an "unprecedented interest in Hong Kong culture" due to the specter of its "disappearance."[40]

As Hong Kong approached the 1997 mark, the cultural anxiety forced British colonial administrators to reconsider options for democracy and a Bill of Rights. Partial democracy in Hong Kong occurred only after the Sino-British Joint Declaration, as if setting up China to be

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[38] Shu-mei Shih argues that the racial notion of "Chinese national characteristics" was first proposed by Western missionaries, then used for Chinese self-determination, and also deployed to suppress non-Han peoples during the 20th century. See: Shu Mei Shih, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007.

[39] Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera in the Age of Globalization Performing Zero*, 77.

[40] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7.

blamed if democracy unraveled; yet, the British are equally responsible for the lack of universal suffrage. Chow argues that Hong Kong's partial democracy was an outgrowth of British colonialism and capitalism.[41] During colonial rule, the British governed through authoritarian "law and order" frameworks without a Bill of Rights—which was often deployed by the British empire and even became a colonial office policy by 1962—as a mitigation strategy for peaceful transfer during decolonization processes.[42] In the 1980s and 90s, discourses about citizenship rights emerged more and more as residents anticipated the shift from colonial government to the People's Republic of China. Scholar Agnes Ku[43] asserts that Hong Kong society is fueled by two conflicting discourses of "law and order" and "civil society," where the former is about controlling the citizens (especially via self-discipline) and the latter is about democracy and rights. Catalyzed by pro-democracy movements and solidarity with the Beijing students in Tiananmen Square in 1989, the Bill of Rights within the British Basic Law was finally put into effect in 1991. This acknowledgement of human rights occurred immediately before the shift of power from Great Britain to the People's Republic of China. Thus, Hong Kong's current lack of universal suffrage can be attributed to Great Britain as well as to China. In addition to Chow, scholar Law Wing Sang also undermines a narrative that Hong Kong crumbled under China's governance after a stable British colonial rule; Law views British colonialism in Hong Kong as a collaborative colonialism with Chinese elite locals and in relationship to Mainland China's

[41] Rey Chow, "King Kong in Hong Kong Watching The 'Handover' From the U.S.A," *Social Text* 16, no. 2 (1998): 55.

[42] For a discussion of the British Empire's use of Bill of Rights during decolonization, see:
Charles Parkinson, *Bill of Rights and Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[43] Agnes Ku and Ngai Pun. *Remaking citizenship in Hong Kong: Community, Nation, and the Global City* (London: Routledge, 2004).

modernization efforts.[44]

Hong Kong's local identity has often been associated with anti-China or anti-Chinese sentiment, which has only been magnified during "one country, two systems." Scholar Iam-Chong Ip argues that a sense of a "local social imaginary" first developed in the 1960s in response to several aspects of British colonial governance: local language promotion in school, media, and government; social welfare programs; immigration and border policy; and local Chinese senior civil servants.[45] By the 1970s, a local Hong Kong consciousness could be seen in cultural production, such as the increase in Cantonese-language film.[46] This local consciousness laid the groundwork for the local identity currently claimed by Localists, mostly young people who were born after 1997. The Localist political movement has grown out of "transition fatigue" (or disappointment in lack of democratic reform post-1997),[47] and encroaching domination from the central Chinese government, which is perceived as beyond the terms of the semi-autonomy offered by the Sino- British Joint Declaration. Localists complain that the status quo has not been maintained (issues of health, housing, work, population growth).[48] Protests to preserve cultural heritage and to discourage physical links between Hong Kong and China have

[44] Wing Sang Law, *Collaborative colonial power the making of the Hong Kong Chinese*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

[45] Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization and the Rise of Right-Wing Nativism," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Hong Kong*, ed. Tai-lok Lui, Stephen W.K. Chiu, Ray Yep (London and New York: Taylor and Francis, 2019), 463.

[46] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," in *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema,* ed. Poshek Fu (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 17.

[47] Ngok Ma, "Hong Kong's Democrats Divide," *Journal of democracy* 22, no. 1 (January 2011): 54–67.

[48] Iam-Chong Ip. "Political De-Institutionalization," 467.

galvanized Localists.[49] The Localist movement has manifested in several new political organizations[50] that range from desires to reform the Basic Law to independence from China.

The Localist movement in Hong Kong can be viewed as a nativist/anti-immigration movement. At the heart of this movement are demands for universal suffrage, but also a perspective that Hong Kong needs "liberation" from the authoritarian Chinese state.[51] The movement follows anti-China sentiment in Hong Kong that has grown during the "one country, two systems" era.[52] In fact, many Hong Kong people acted sympathetically to Chinese refugees (including many dancers) who crossed the border during the "May Exodus" in 1962, which was caused by the consequences (famine) of the Great Leap Forward in China. By the 1980s, however, Hong Kong residents supported a new colonial policy that allowed less mainland immigration and perpetuated a stereotype of Mainland Chinese as outsiders. Pop culture also represented them as country bumpkins.[53] Different from immigration debates in some countries, the movement is not about race, given that 92% of Hong Kongers are ethnically Chinese, but rather stems from spatio-cultural conflict. After 1997, in response to increased tourism from

[49] For example: 2006-07 protests that sought to preserve Hong Kong's history, protecting the Star Ferry Pier and Queen's pier from demolition. In addition, the 2009-10 development of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, which physically links China and Hong Kong, encouraged Localists to protest.

[50] New Democrats, Proletariat Institute, Civic Passion, Hong Kong Resurgence, Youngspiration, Hong Kong Indigenous, Hong Kong Nationalist Party

[51] "'Liberate Hong Kong; Revolution of Our Times': Who Came up with This Protest Chant and Why Is the Government Worried?" South China Morning Post, accessed October 25, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3021518/liberate-hong-kong-revolution-our-times-who-came-protest.

[52] Kwong, Ying-ho, "The Growth of 'Localism' in Hong Kong: A New Path for the Democracy Movement?" *China Perspectives*, no. 3 (2016): 63–68.

[53] Gordon Mathews, Dale Lü, and Jiewei Ma. *Hong Kong, China: learning to belong to a nation*. (London: Routledge, 2008).

Mainland China,[54] the term "locusts" emerged to describe Mainland Chinese who use up Hong Kong's resources, whether for birth tourism or goods, such as baby formula.[55] Ip critiques the Localist movement in Hong Kong for appealing to populism[56] and for being exclusionary and segregationist.[57] He writes that the Localist or "nativist" movement creates "a confusion between democracy and ethnocracy."[58]

As much as Hong Kong is defined by its complicated status and its relationship to Mainland China, it is also a global city of inter-Asian and transcultural flows, and it is this identity that undergirds its other multiple identities as a city and contested political space. Hong Kong functions at the scale of the global with one of the highest foreign investment rates across the world; the compromise of "two systems" permitted Hong Kong's free-market capitalism to thrive. In 2015, Hong Kong was the 2nd largest recipient of foreign direct investment after the United States and before China. In 2019, even after months of social unrest, it was the 4th largest recipient and 4th largest investor world-wide.[59] Scholar Saskia Sassen defines it as a global city due to its disproportionate number of international financial transactions, population and information system density, land competition, and class restructuring.[60] Just as globalization

[54] After 1997, Mainland tourists to Hong Kong increased again; they tripled between the years of 2002 and 2015 (45.8 million per year). Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization," 464.

[55] See: Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization."; Kwong, Ying-ho. "The Growth of 'Localism' in Hong Kong"; Cai, Yongshun. *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong.*

[56] Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization," 466.

[57] Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization," 467.

[58] Iam-Chong Ip, "Political De-Institutionalization," 472.

[59] "Santander Trade Markets," accessed May 1, 2019, https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/establish-overseas/hong-kong/foreign-investment.

[60] Saskia Sassen, *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

is "yet another source of geographical uneven development, and thus of uniqueness of place,"[61] Hong Kong is similar to other global cities because it suffers from growing socio-economic disparities (as shown by the rising Gini Coefficient) as well as its increasing number of billionaires.[62] Affordable housing is an exceptional challenge for the younger generations in Hong Kong, a symptom of the neoliberalism that accompanied "one country, two systems," and an issue that has frequently been tied to the pro-democracy social movements.

Noting Arif Dirlik's astute commentary on the coevalness of (post)colonialism and global capitalism,[63] scholar Zhu Yaowei writes that Hong Kong, "is shaped by its role as a neoliberal global city on the one hand…and its lack of political autonomy on the other."[64] Due to its global city status, Hong Kong government officials have been keen to support international business operations. In 2001, the branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City" led to a campaign to attract international tourists and business people to Hong Kong as the more liberated version of Mainland China.[65] When Donald Yam-Kuen Tsang took over the Chief Executive position (2005-2012), he identified a set of values for Hong Kong, nicknamed "Central Business Values": "the observance of the rule of law, the free flow of information, a non-corrupt government, and a

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[61] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 156.

[62] "Beyond the Umbrella Movement: Hong Kong's Struggle with Inequality in 8 charts," Forbes, October 8, 2014, accessed October 26, 2015. https://www.forbes.com/sites/liyanchen/2014/10/08/beyond-the-umbrella-revolution-hong-kongs-struggle-with-inequality-in-8-charts/?sh=720b06844639.

[63] See: Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2, (1995): 328-56.

[64] Yaowei Zhu, *Lost in transition: Hong Kong culture in the age of China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 65-66.

[65] "Brand Hong Kong (BrandHK) | Asia's World City," accessed September 30, 2020, https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/index.html.

level playing field."[66] Zhu contends that the "Donaldization" of Hong Kong proceeded not unlike the McDonaldization of the globe by promoting similar values of growth, efficiency, and prosperity. Zhu attributes strong governance, disaster capitalism, failed creative capitalism, lack of attention to heritage projects, and environmental neglect to this capitalist Donaldization. The Hong Kong SAR government's prioritization of economic success and shaping of urban citizens as *enterprising individuals* follows the global capitalist patterns of decentralization, privatization, and individualization.[67]

In summary, the concept of "one country, two systems" thus initially preserved Hong Kong's global and financial connections at the same time it claimed Hong Kong as part of China, which later led to several consequences. First, this political compromise between China and Britain opened up the potential for democracy, although not cultivated by the British, and for civil liberties protected by the Basic Law. Pan-democrat politicians have advocated democracy in the city to little success. Second, it also permitted more Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong, a phenomenon that interacted with British anti-Chinese sentiment and amplified feelings of local identity. Third, at the same time, the Hong Kong SAR government promoted Hong Kong as an international business hub where international capital flowed easily. Hong Kong has suffered from neoliberal land competition, widening class gaps, privatization, and housing density. The continued lack of democracy, encroaching Chinese control, growing cultural anti-Chinese sentiment, and the failure of the city government to support its populations and environment over financial interests, led to the Localist movement, an influential aspect of Hong Kong's political milieu during "one country, two systems."

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[66] Yaowei Zhu, *Lost in transition: Hong Kong culture in the age of China*, 44.

[67] Agnes Ku and Ngai Pun, *Remaking citizenship in Hong Kong: Community, Nation, and the Global City.*

Dancing Colonial Hong Kong

This section shows how British colonialism, Western imperialism, and trans-Asian cultural exchange laid the groundwork for the professionalization of dance in Hong Kong. Like their actions that delayed democracy, the British colonial government did little to support local Hong Kong culture and arts until the anticipation of the transfer to Chinese power in 1997. Before dance professionalization in Hong Kong in the 1980s, Western dance forms—social forms, folk forms, and ballet—reflected British cultural colonialism and the civilizing mission of Western imperialism. These trends in dance matched the role of colonial-era English that became a marker of class, even for the Chinese elite.[68] For example, in the 1950s and 60s, upper-class Western social dance could be found at social functions such as "tea dances" at hotels (dancing to a band and having English tea in the afternoon).[69] In addition, extra-curricular Western folk dance could be found at YMCAs,[70]universities, and K-12 schools. The Hong Kong University folk dance club[71]specialized in European folk dances, such as Scottish highland

[68] As an example of his theory of collaborative colonialism, Law contends that after a push from late 19th century missionaries for English language schools, the Hong Kong-based Chinese elite colluded with British colonialism by supporting segregated schools. English became a marker of class, an aspect of cultural capital for the Chinese elite; English education, therefore, ultimately created tension among the ethnic Chinese population, not simply between Chinese and Europeans. See: Wing Sang Law, *Collaborative colonial power the making of the Hong Kong Chinese*, 70.

[69] "The Peninsula Hong Kong," accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.hshgroup.com/en/media/media-library/images/the-peninsula-hong-kong---afternoon-tea-dance-1930.

[70] "The Society of Folk-Dance Historians (SFDH) - Rickey Holden," accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.sfdh.us/encyclopedia/holden_r.html.;
"Rickey Holden," accessed March 22, 2020. http://www.socalfolkdance.org/master_teachers/holden_r.htm.
"An Oral History of Hong Kong Dance (1950s-70s) | Chronology," accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.dancehistory.hk/chronology/?lang=en.;
Ricky Holden, an American, taught square dance and Western folk dance for a month at the Chinese YMCA in Hong Kong in 1958. In 1959, the Chinese YMCA established a club, Fong Yuen club, devoted to Western folk dance.

[71] This club began at Hong Kong University in 1960 under the mentorship of Tania Teng. See: "20th Annual Performance Folk Dance Club HKUSU," Program, 1980, p. 10.

dances and Norwegian dances. The K-12 schools dance festival[72] also stressed Western dance forms; it included Western folk dance, "modern educational dance" and creative dance categories, but did not have a Chinese dance category.[73] In the private sector, ballet studios emerged for Hong Kong elite[74]rooted in the British Royal Academy of Dancing graded ballet curriculum.[75] As a precursor to professional companies, the Hong Kong Ballet Group formed in 1964, supported by patron English prima ballerina, Margot Fonteyn. In the 1970s, three hundred school teachers learned how to teach Scottish, English, and Irish folk dances via training in the Imperial Society of Teachers Dancing (ISTD) curriculum imported from England.[76] Some of the Hong Kong University folk dance club members also took the ISTD training.[77] Therefore, the British standards of dance learning dominated amateur dance in Hong Kong under British colonial rule.

Like many colonial governments, the British did not initially cultivate local Hong Kong culture in order to discourage a strong local identity. During the mid-twentieth century, when

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[72] Began in 1964.

[73] Although Oriental dance was added in 1965, Chinese dance was not added until 1982.

[74] "Sixty Years of Blessing. Joan Campbell," accessed March 22, 2020, https://www.dancehistory.hk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/en_10_cb.pdf.
Campbell admits that in the 1950s and 60s, ballet was for the upper class or the "rich girls."

[75] Although in the 1920s-1950s, dancers from Shanghai, Russia, and the United States all opened ballet schools, in 1954, British dancer Joan Campbell moved to Hong Kong and changed the landscape of ballet teaching. She introduced the Royal Academy of Dancing Graded Ballet curriculum initially to 120 students at the Carol Bateman School of Dancing.
"The Woman Who Taught Jean M. Wong Ballet and Her Hong Kong Memories," South China Morning Post, accessed March 24, 2020. https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/arts-music/article/1992356/woman-who-taught-jean-m-wong-ballet-and-her-hong.

[76] Chan, Pearl. Interview with Author. May 2016. Hong Kong.
With an interest in dance education, Pearl Chan studied with Bonnie Bird, former Martha Graham dancer, at the Laban Centre in London. While there, she picked up the ISTD training. In 1976, Hong Konger and cultural pillar Pearl Chan imported the Imperial Society of Teachers Dancing (ISTD) curriculum from England.

[77] "20th Annual Performance Folk Dance Club HKUSU," program, 1980, pg. 10.

British curricula dictated ballet and Western folk dance as civilizing projects for the youth of Hong Kong, the British colonial government did little to support Chinese arts. In the 1940s and 50s, amateur Chinese dance existed only in small amateur club organizations[78] and in movies. Many of Hong Kong's first Chinese dance performers worked in the movie industry and performed in Chinese ethnic folk dance scenes of movies by Great Wall Movie Enterprise company, Feng Huang Motion Picture Company, and Sun Luen Film Company. In Mainland China, the founding of the Communist People's Republic of China spurred on codification and professionalization of Chinese classical and folk dances, especially through the founding of the Beijing Dance School (later Beijing Dance Academy) in 1954. Before an influx of dancers during the Cultural Revolution, however, very few Mainland dance teachers came to teach in Hong Kong and almost no staged Chinese dance performances were brought in.[79] In the absence of Chinese dance teachers, a very few Hong Kong dance teachers taught Chinese classical and folk dances based on written instruction manuals from Mainland China.[80]

Besides Chinese ethnic folk dance in films, transnational movement forms such as latin dance forms, martial arts movement, and Chinese opera movement made important contributions to Hong Kong's movement milieu in cinema during the 1950s and 1960s. Actors and actresses in Hong Kong popular cinema presented international social dance forms to large audience numbers via musical films, such as Grace Chang's dance performance of cha cha in *Mambo Girl* (1957), calypso in *Air Hostess* (1959), and flamenco in *Wild, Wild Rose* (1960). In addition,

[78] In 1948, the Kowloon Spinning, Weaving, and Dyeing Trade Union set up a song and dance troupe for Chinese ethnic dances. In 1949, Chinese dance was also included in the Hok Yau dancing club, Hong Kong Chinese Reform Association, and The Hong Kong and Kowloon Musical Education Research Institute.

[79] "An Oral History of Hong Kong Dance (1950s-70s) | Chronology," accessed March 24, 2020. https://www.dancehistory.hk/chronology/?lang=en.
In 1963, the China Arts Troupe visited Hong Kong for performance.

[80] Lo, Virginia. Interview with Author. June 2016. Hong Kong.

Mandarin-language Chinese opera films, sung in the style of *huangmei* opera of Hubei and Anhui province, such as the Shanghai Film Studios' *The Heavenly Match* (1955) and The Shaw Brothers' film *The Love Eterne* (1963) were extremely popular for a short time in Hong Kong. In these films, actresses cross-dressed as is consistent with the huangmei opera tradition, associating the films with the Chinese feminine. Although the cinematic elements added realistic settings, the films maintained stage opera gestures and singing styles. These Chinese opera films as well as Cantonese opera films were supplanted by *wuxia*, or martial arts, films that celebrated movement of masculine machismo.[81]

After a series of riots and boycotts (1966-67) that coincided with the start of the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China, the Hong Kong government began actively supporting arts and culture as a strategy to keep Hong Kongers content. In the late 1960s, the Urban Council, which began almost 100 years earlier as the Sanitary Board, added museums and art galleries to its list of responsibilities that already included public health and sanitation.[82] The government council that attended to dairy and meat safety, consequently, also supported the arts, thereby framing the arts in terms of public health for Hong Kong residents. The MacLehose governorship (1971-1982) constructed a number of buildings[83] for arts and leisure activities and made social policy changes in order to meet "the demand for leisure" and to "build a sense of belonging."[84] This

[81] Stephen Teo, "The Opera Film in Chinese Cinema: Cultural Nationalism and Cinematic Form," in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, ed. Carlos Rojas (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2013), 8.

[82] Vicki Oii. "The Best Cultural Policy is no Cultural Policy: Cultural Policy in Hong Kong" in Cultural Perspective Hong Kong. *Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron.* 23-35. (1995): 24.

[83] Town halls in Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, and Tuen Mun; multi-purpose facilities like Queen Elizabeth Stadium in Wan Chai; Hung Hom coliseum; Ko Shan Theatre.

[84] Lilley, Rozanna. *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition*. ConsumAsiaN. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. 53.

logic of the arts as leisure and joy inspired several arts festivals that also brought international performing arts to Hong Kong. In 1973, the first Hong Kong Arts Festival took place.[85] Two years later, the Urban Council organized the first festival of Asian Arts,[86] thus solidifying Hong Kong as a location for presenting Asian, not just Western arts.

Besides colonial intervention, the films produced by the Shaw Brothers Studios in the 1960s and 70s involved trans-Asian cultural exchange. Originating in Shanghai in the 1920s, by the 1930s, the Shaw Brothers Studio had linked Hong Kong and Southeast Asia through British colonial networks, much like business flow at the time.[87] Although many Shaw Brothers properties in Hong Kong and Singapore-Malaya were destroyed by the Japanese during World War II, by the 1950s, the studio became what Fu refers to as a "trans-Asian empire,"[88] including 130 theaters in Southeast Asia. After World War II, the studio also began hiring personnel from Japan and sending directors to Japan for training, as well as establishing an Asian Film Festival with Japan.[89] The popularity of the idyllic *Love Eterne* (1963) helped the Shaw Brothers Studio dominate the Taiwan film market as well.[90] Film scholar Poshek Fu argues that the Shaw Brothers Studio Chinese opera and martial arts films appealed to diasporic Chinese audiences, such as Taiwanese, vis-à-vis the films' portrayal of an unchanging China. He writes:

> This imagined changeless China held enormous appeal to ethnic Chinese audiences around the world. They found in Shaw Brothers films a China forever in the midst of all

[85] "An Oral History of Hong Kong Dance (1950s-70s) | Chronology," accessed March 24, 2020, https://www.dancehistory.hk/chronology/?lang=en.

[86] "Festival of Asian Arts," accessed March 24, 2020. http://www.silkqin.com/13pers/myfaa.htm. The festival took place from 1975 to 1998.

[87] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," 2.

[88] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," 3.

[89] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," 10-11.

[90] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," 14.

> the political turmoil and personal displacement and with which they could continue to identity despite their life in the diaspora.[91]

Fu maintains that the 1970s Shaw Brothers martial arts films "sought to capture the modern ethos of the new Hong Kong" via themes of male bonding and loyalty, fighting in search of self-expression and social justice, and cinematic devices that conveyed a de-historicized, mythical China.[92] In contrast, May Joseph contends that the transnational (United States-Hong Kong) Bruce Lee Kungfu films use a "technology of frugality" of the body, of minimal action and efficiency, and critique conventional masculinity by privileging speed over strength through the form of Wing Chung fist, initially invented for females and people with smaller frames.[93] The importance of martial arts narratives and movement to Hong Kong can still be seen in productions by the Hong Kong Dance Company.[94] Moreover, Hong Kong continues to be a locus for trans-Asian cultural production, which was partially supported by the British.

In addition to appeasing the local population, the last British colonial government in Hong Kong deployed the arts as a way to enhance Hong Kong's global reputation. Hong Kong theater professor Vicki Oii writes that the British government focused on improving Hong Kong's image through arts and culture as preparation for transferring power to China, as if to show any future weaknesses of Hong Kong were not Britain's doing. She writes, "MacLehose's brief was to alter the public perception of Hong Kong rather than to effect any political

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[91] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," 14.

[92] Poshek Fu, "Introduction," in *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 19.

[93] May Joseph, *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minneapolis, 1999), 65.

[94] As an example, the 2014-2015 season featured *Storm Clouds*, a martial-hero dance drama developed from a martial-hero comic by Fung Wan. For an explanation of the company's recent study of martial arts, see: "Here's What Happened When Hong Kong Dance Company Trained Its Dancers in Martial Arts," Dance Magazine, January 27, 2021, https://www.dancemagazine.com/hong-kong-dance-company-2650129851.html?rebelltitem=2#rebelltitem2.

changes."[95] She argues that the British government spent more on public spending, including supporting the arts to an unprecedented degree, rather than leave a surplus for the Chinese government. Then, in the early 1980s, Hong Kong performing arts began to professionalize around the time of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the legal agreement that Hong Kong would transfer power. Western classical music was the first to develop, followed by Western art and ballet.[96] Oii argues that the British government "favoured a Western cultural and language orientation and aimed at an international, but not local or experimental, perspective."[97] She asserts that the British colonial government at the end of its rule built the multi-venue Hong Kong Cultural Centre[98] to mimic the Sydney opera house as a visual symbol of Hong Kong's global status as a modern and civilized city. As an extension, the late British Colonial government embraced displays of multiculturalism as a means for showing its colonial success. As an example, in 1986, dancers from the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts participated in the display of happy multicultural colonial subjects for a performance for Queen Elizabeth II. Archival footage shows conservatory dance students performing American modern dance[99]alongside martial arts, lion dancing, ballet, and the singing of the Disney Song, "It's a Small World."[100]

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[95] Vicki Oii, "The Best Cultural Policy is no Cultural Policy: Cultural Policy in Hong Kong" *Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron,* (1995): 26.

[96] Vicki Oii, "The Best Cultural Policy," 14.

[97] The Urban Council funded pioneer performing arts companies Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, the Hong Kong Dance Company, and the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre. See: Vicki Oii, "The Best Cultural Policy," 30.

[98] Built in year 1989.

[99] Nikolais technique, choreographed by American Phyllis Haskell of Ririe-Woodbury training.

[100] "Royal Fireworks Dance," HKAPA Video archives. 1986. Video recording.

The professionalization of dance in Hong Kong (covered in more detail in chapter one) thus grew out of the British attempt to appease colonial subjects and to project Hong Kong as a successful British colony and relevant global city. The founding of the performing arts academy coinciding with the Sino-British Joint Declaration aligns the professionalization of performing arts with the conceptualization of "one country, two systems." In 1997, therefore, professional dance had existed for just over a decade; dance had served Hong Kong society as leisure and acted as symbol of inter-cultural harmony to the rest of the globe. To this day, all performing arts still receive government funding; the Leisure and Cultural Services Department still funds the Hong Kong Ballet, the Hong Kong Dance Company, the City Contemporary Dance Company, and Zuni Icosahedron, which are the largest dance and movement companies in Hong Kong. This funding agency stresses performance products[101] and is responsible for all proscenium stage dance venues in the city.[102] Dance was not and is not placed in Hong Kong education as integral to academic learning at the K-12 level or at the university level. In addition, the British left Hong Kong with the Orientalist legacy that privileged Western cultural forms over Asian forms, and a dearth of Chinese dance and opera development. Moreover, the colonial government had determined Western colonial divisions of arts genres—separating music, dance, theater, and Chinese opera—divisions which are still maintained. When Hong Kong shifted to Chinese rule under "one country, two systems," therefore, dance was connected to Hong Kong's status as a global city, yet not fully integrated into Hong Kong local development. Hong Kong currently houses main-stage companies, free-lance artists, and myriad

[101] "Hong Kong, The Facts: Leisure and Culture," accessed September 25, 2020, https://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/leisure.pdf

[102] See full list here: "Performance Venues," accessed September 25, 2020, https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/facilities/facilitieslist/pvenue.html.

dance competitions and studios for children in various genres.[103]

Negotiating and Navigating "One Country, Two Systems"

At the most foundational level, the political arrangement of "one country, two systems" is about one) asserting Chineseness; two) encouraging interaction with capitalism/neoliberalism, and, by extension, the global; and three) permitting liberal freedoms in Hong Kong not allowed in China (such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly). I chose each of the dissertation examples because they differently negotiate the political compromise of "one country, two systems" through various conceptualizations of interactions—between teachers and students, between genres, and between geographies (Hong Kong with China, Hong Kong with Asia, Hong Kong with the West, and Hong Kong with the globe). Each chapter centers on a unique institution: the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (conservatory education for dance learners), Danny Yung (high-profile mainstage venue director), and the i-Dance festival (marginal space for free-lance dancers). Each chapter also focuses on distinct dance genres and bodies produced to negotiate the political experiment of "one country, two systems." Throughout the chapters, I explain how these institutions interact with multiple and overlapping ideologies that exist in Hong Kong, including: Chinese nationalism, Cold War

[103] Outside of professional dance, children study dance across the city in private studios and adults participate in dance socially, from hip hop to salsa. Competitions abound as a way for dance students to showcase their skills. In K-12 schools, some students have the opportunity to take dance, but it is not a compulsory subject. Each of the flagship companies has their own educational wings that teach a host of children's studio classes. Some smaller contemporary dance companies[103] developed by single artists have also found success in gaining governmental support and attracting audiences. Independent contemporary dance artists, like Mui Cheuk-Yin and Daniel Yeung, also find funding and traction in the city, and set an example for young freelance dancers who cannot obtain a spot in the companies. In addition, many dancers are also employed by Hong Kong Disneyland. Besides dance, Hong Kong supports a wide range of movement education via Chinese opera initiatives, especially Cantonese opera, which is the regional form. There are educational outreach programs in Cantonese opera for K-12 schools as well as an undergraduate major at HKAPA. Besides school outreach, most dance and Chinese opera performances occur in high-tech. government supported theater spaces around the city. The most elite performing space for either dance or Chinese opera is the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

ideology, American imperialism, British colonialism, Chinese cultural heritage, Asianism, neoliberalism and globalization. Each chapter represents a different approach to Chineseness, to relationships established between the local, the global, and the Western, and to notions of what freedom might mean in Hong Kong.

In regard to its relationship to Chineseness and Chinese nationalism insisted upon by the mandate of "one country," each institution navigates the use of Chinese aesthetics differently and the promotion of "Chinese national characteristics" uniquely. At the Hong Kong Academy for Peforming Arts (HKAPA), Chinese nationalism and Chinese multiculturalism from the Communist era are reproduced by the Chinese dance curriculum that is adapted from Beijing Dance Academy. The multicultural bodies that can also dance Chinese classical and folk dance forms alongside ballet and modern dance, preserve foundational repertoire in the canons of Mainland Chinese dance. Conversely, Danny Yung experiments with pre-Communist Chineseness via Western avant-garde theater methods and traditional Chinese opera performers that have already been formed through years of specialized training. In this way, he distances himself and his company from Communism, unpopular in Hong Kong, but also asserts Chinese culture heritage as an important source for Hong Kong's cosmopolitan culture. The i-Dance festival, on the other hand, cultivates collaboration with China differently by including Mainland Chinese dancers and some Chinese choreographic source material, but without defining China as a special partner. The festival does not explicitly advocate for China or Chinese cultural heritage, but rather includes Chineseness in its conception of an international dance improvisation network. It does not make presentations of codified Chinese dance and opera techniques; instead, it cultivates a presumably culturally unmarked and natural body through Somatics training and contact improvisation. Taken together, these examples all demonstrate

how Hong Kong undermines the strength of the Chinese nation-state because Chineseness is not the sole focus of meaning, if even a part.

Without the option of framing their work in terms of the national, these institutions all explicitly work in relationship to the international, to the global, and, to the Western-read-as-universal. By combining Chinese dance, modern dance, and ballet, the institution of HKAPA is very much stuck in East-meets-West colonial frameworks that gloss over cultural specificity. Whereas HKAPA collaborates across institutions, Danny Yung prefers a philosophy of pairings between artists and cities; he chooses the term and concept "cross-cultural" to describe his own collaborations with *kunqu* (kun opera) artists and their collaborations with other Asian artists. Lastly, the i-Dance festival works with a glocal logic, attempting to support and develop the local via global connections and savviness with Western genres. Sometimes, these institutions conflate the Western with the universal. At HKAPA, ballet and modern dance, as well as other courses such as dance science and Laban movement analysis, are treated as universally successful foundations for studying dance, learning to express oneself, and becoming a professional dancer. Likewise, Danny Yung sees less codified, less scripted, Western avant-garde performance as more universally understood than traditional Chinese kunqu. Further, the i-Dance festival draws on the presumption of the universal natural body based on anatomical science justification. In the absence of a national identity for Hong Kong, these choreographic examples engage differently with Hong Kong's global status and all elide the Western with the universal at times.

Within these various framings of Hong Kong's relationship to the Western and the global, these chapters evidence different approaches to importing and exporting cultural production. In order to create dancers who can be exported as products of Hong Kong's multi-

cultural success, HKAPA imports its curricula from China, Great Britain, and the United States as authoritative sources as well as invites international guest artists and adjudicators as experts. Instead of importing teachers and curriculum to local students, Danny Yung imports Chinese performers from Nanjing to the Hong Kong stage. Although he most often represents the Chinese body on the Hong Kong stage, he sometimes then exports his work from Hong Kong to Europe, thus placing Hong Kong on the global stage via the Chinese body. Yet another approach, the i-Dance festival imports international dance artists, including but not singling out Mainland Chinese artists, who have expertise in improvisational forms that are marginalized in Hong Kong. Unlike HKAPA, the international guest artists do not judge the standards of local dancers nor create their own choreographic vision on local dancers, but rather teach workshops and join collaborative improvised performances, thereby forming low-stakes connections for future teaching and performance opportunities.

Through these imports and exports, the directionality of power differs among institutions. HKAPA demonstrates a top-down vertical relationship between the West and Hong Kong, and between China and Hong Kong, via imported dance curricula and teachers to transmit knowledge to local dancers. The prevalence of modern dance epistemologies and Chinese dance pedagogies are particularly exemplified by the Euro-American and the Mainland Chinese adjudicators who judge the students' course progress. The Western-centric leaning of non-technique dance courses show the Euro-American dominance in the dance program. Conversely, Yung attempts a horizontal relationship between Hong Kong and China through aesthetic mingling—leveling traditional kunqu and postmodern dance—and festival collaborations that position Nanjing and Hong Kong as partners. His deconstructions with kunqu and curations of an Asian city-to-city festival decenter the Chinese state and assert his own power as a contemporary artist in a global

city as well as declare Hong Kong's capacity to cultivate progressive politics. Moreover, the i-Dance improvisation festival exhibits rhizomatic flows from artist to artist, thereby diffusing the power of a single institution and of Mainland China. By relying on Somatics pedagogy, improvised collective experiences, and pre-devised choreography that questions Chinese source material, the i-Dance festival establishes low-stakes relationships between artists that re-orient their national identities.

These three approaches to Hong Kong's power within the semi-autonomous structure of "one country, two systems" project a local Hong Kong to varying degrees. HKAPA struggles to invest in local educators and administrators while serving as the sole training ground for local Hong Kong professional dancers. Yung employs very few Hong Kong performers, and instead, focuses on cultivating creativity among Chinese performers in order to complicate Hong Kong's identity. Unlike HKAPA, he frames interaction in the context of Asianism, instead of East/West communication. Of all the institutions, the i-Dance festival is most concerned with investing in, producing, and presenting the local. The festival produces local choreographers, both extremely influential and recent graduates of the academy, and curates the relationships as a sharing between the international and the local, rather than solely showcasing the expertise of the international guest artists. Compared to the other two institutions, the i-Dance festival uniquely takes dance into urban and rural sites around Hong Kong to further propose what might make Hong Kong exceptional; at the same time, it accomplishes this through a glocal logic by employing global somatic and improvisation movement forms.

The conceptualization of "two systems" has always granted Hong Kong more liberal freedoms than the authoritarian Mainland China, and each institution of my analysis has its own way of reading Hong Kong through the lens of freedom and liberal individualism. At HKAPA,

the genres of modern and contemporary dance are most closely linked to students' creative license as choreographers, following modern dance's claims to freedom of expression and individualism. Of course, this problematically associates modern/contemporary dance with liberation. Danny Yung also believes in Hong Kong as an exceptional site for freedom of expression,[104] a belief he evidences by directing Nanjing kunqu performers to perform outside of the boundaries of their rigid training. He does this particularly by asking them to strip away characterization and to perform across gender roles. The i-Dance festival, which fosters the most egalitarian collaborations of any of these institutions, conceptualizes artistic freedom via aesthetic and physical choice during improvisation. The non-hierarchical relationships that form express the potential for democracy in Hong Kong while the dancers can feel liberated from audience and choreographer expectations; yet dancers are not free from the Western cultural capital and technical expectations of these forms, nor the festival's promotion and branding.

Chapter one analyzes the development of the dance curriculum that prioritizes the three genres of Chinese dance, modern/contemporary dance, and ballet at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts (HKAPA)—the only institution in Hong Kong to offer a degree in dance. I argue that dance education at HKAPA expresses overlapping colonial, national, Cold War, and imperialist ideologies. Based on initial consultation with British and American dance educators, the dance department established that each student majoring in dance would study all three dance genres. At its founding in 1984, American Carl Wolz, the first dean of dance, led with a vision of the universal benefits of dance and the importance of multicultural learning. In the early years, American modern dance teachers transmitted classical modern dance technique and repertoire while Beijing Dance Academy (BDA) graduates taught Chinese classical and folk

[104] Danny Yung, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, November 2016.

dances based on the highly codified BDA curriculum. This curriculum continues to be imported from China as the authority on Chinese dance, representing the institution's adoption of "one country." The inclusion of ballet demonstrates British colonial emphasis on civility as well as ballet's cultural imperialism. While the modern dance curricula have shifted to an Australian contemporary dance influence, the dance program continues to cultivate neoliberal bodies that can shift easily between cultural forms and can be hired across the globe. HKAPA mirrors the city's branding as "Asia's world city" via its rubric of East-meets-West.

Chapter two asserts that Hong Kong theater director Danny Yung levels the playing field for China and Hong Kong through experimentations with Nanjing kunqu artists. Although Yung views theater as a microcosm for politics and as a subversive space, his partnership with the Nanjing performers is also opportunistic; it depends upon their specialized skills that present Chineseness and his expedient process of assembly. Yung's work with kunqu performers presents the flexible, adaptable Chinese body on stage in Hong Kong. By using postmodern pedestrian movement and Western avant-garde methods of excerpting, subtracting, and reversing gender roles alongside traditional kunqu movement vocabulary, Yung pairs the "one country" and the "two systems." Similarly, via Yung's curation of the Toki festival in Nanjing, kunqu performers dialogue with other Asian performers through "one table, two chairs" duet structures in an exploration of cultural heritage that allows both Hong Kong and China to participate in the discourse about Chinese culture. This collaboration represents a model of anti-Western Asianism, where Hong Kong is a key player, distinct from China. The low-stakes festival is framed as exchange from city-to-city, in contrast to the UNESCO project of nation-state promoted cultural heritage, thereby downplaying the Chinese nation's power. In the context of

Yung's creative and curatorial work, therefore, China is not necessarily hegemonic compared to Hong Kong because of his cultural capital and Hong Kong's global city status.

Chapter three argues that the i-Dance improvisation festival deploys Somatic training of the "natural body" and its discourse of preculturality as a strategy for connecting Hong Kong to the international. Rather than adapting nationalist Chinese dance curriculum or producing the traditional Chinese dancing body, this festival depends on Somatics pedagogy—along with related genres: contact improvisation, postmodern dance, and site-specific dance—in order to portray Hong Kong as anywhere. Through the sharing of these genres between local and international artists, the festival positions Hong Kong in an international improvisation network. Directors Victor Choi-wa Ma and Mandy Ming-ying Yim aspire to egalitarian and empathetic group experiences, as well as support free-lance artists in Hong Kong, mostly dancers who have graduated from HKAPA and seek more experience with improvisation. Through collective workshops and improvised performances, dancers who train in producing a natural body participate in a re-orientation of their national identities whether from Hong Kong, China, or Taiwan. The festival neither emphasizes Chinese-Hong Kong collaboration nor neglects China completely, but rather, incorporates China into its vision of pre-cultural harmony. Furthermore, I contend that its presentation of pre-devised choreography that engages with Chinese source material by female choreographers, Wen Hui, Helen Lai, and Mui Cheuk Yin, expresses ambivalence about Chineseness and critiques the Chinese masculinist state, thereby undermining the strength of "one country." I end this chapter with a discussion of how the i-Dance festival relates to the "international" differently than Danny Yung or HKAPA.

Methodology

In this dissertation, each chapter begins with historical context for that particular chapter, then delves into the way that dancers are being shaped through the institution (HKAPA, Danny Yung, or i-Dance). Then I question how each interacts with "one country" and takes the "two systems" as an invitation for various interpretations of interaction. Throughout the dissertation, I recognize that global connections are formed through people, through individual artists and educators. I link these disparate movement forms and spaces by the analytical frame *choreography*. According to Susan Leigh Foster, the act of choreography is an act of theorizing. [105] Like O'Shea,[106]I use choreography as a framework that includes "decision making" required by codified repertoire and improvisation alike in the settings of education, rehearsal, and presentation. Furthermore, for Sally Ann Ness[107] and Yutian Wong,[108] the concept of choreography describes participant-observation research methods and ethnographic writing from bodily memories. Thus, my project's analytical frame of choreography brings together Chinese classical and folk dance, dance improvisation, and avant-garde Chinese opera all in relation to Hong Kong's political structure; at the same time, it also suggests my own bodily engagement with the research materials through my own participant-observation and dancing. At the end of the dissertation, I offer an epilogue instead of a conclusion, in order to acknowledge the unpredictable nature of Hong Kong's political future and gesture toward a post- "one country,

[105] See: Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Gender," *Signs*, (Autumn, 1998): 1-33.

[106] Janet O'Shea. *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2007, 11.

[107] Sally Ann Ness, "Dancing in the Field: Notes from Memory," in *Corporealities: Dancing, knowledge, culture, and power* ed. Susan Leigh Foster (London: Routledge, 1996).

[108] Yutian Wong. *Choreographing Asian America.* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2010).

two systems" Hong Kong.

Each chapter has required a range of methodological approaches. For the first chapter, I sought to analyze the curriculum at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts (HKAPA) to highlight the ways in which dance is learned, not only performed by professional companies. Here, I align with dance studies scholars who assert that the practice of dance technique is a transfer of knowledge and that dance curriculum is both cultural and political.[109] With limited access granted by the institution for foreign researchers, I found evidence of coursework, performance, and international festivals in the form of archival videos of course final exams and performances. I watched and notated videos, dated from the 1980s to present day, in the library at HKAPA. I also interviewed dance faculty who were willing to speak with me there. Some faculty members were nervous about publicly representing the institution, especially in light of the 2014 Umbrella Revolution/Occupy Movement, so I have kept their names out of the dissertation. I am indebted to several long interviews I conducted with the late Tom Brown, who acted in teaching and administrative roles with the dance department for thirty years. Because most Hong Kong dancers have attended the institution, I asked most interviewees about their experiences at HKAPA, whether or not HKAPA was the focus of the interview. In total, I interviewed upwards of thirty Hong Kong dance artists of various ages who graduated from the institution. I completed my interviews in English and Mandarin Chinese, and translated the Mandarin Chinese interviews myself. Moreover, I analyzed promotional materials and annual

[109] Susan Leigh Foster. "Choreographies and Choreographers" in Ed. Foster, Susan Leigh. *Worlding Dance*. Studies in International Performance. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; Susan Leigh Foster. "Dancing Bodies" in Ed. Desmond, Jane. *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997; Randy Martin. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998; Stacey Prickett. *Embodied Politics: Dance, Protest and Identities*. Hampshire, United Kingdom: Dance Books, 2013; Spatz, Ben. *What a Body Can Do: Technique As Knowledge, Practice As Research*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

reports published by the institution to gather information about the way the institution frames itself, especially in relation to its alignment with the SAR government.

For the second chapter, I attended countless forums, rehearsals, and performances directed by Danny Yung in Hong Kong and in Nanjing between 2011 and 2016. In 2011, I also performed experimental kunqu movement with a group of young Hong Kong artists at one of the cultural heritage forums curated by Yung. Although Chinese opera content is more often studied by ethnomusicology and theater scholars who privilege sound and script analysis, I apply choreographic analysis[110]to Yung's performance product; I analyze what bodily gestures and dancing signify in personal, communal, and political contexts, particularly in live performance. I also viewed videos of Yung's large repertoire of earlier works in the archives at the Zuni Icosahedron company offices. Drawing from scholars who value ethnography for dance and rehearsal contexts,[111]I looked at choreography in process, not just as final product. Meaning, I paid close attention to his rehearsals, particularly the relationships he developed with performers, but also how he worked with kunqu as a source. In Nanjing and Hong Kong, I conducted interviews with upwards of twenty performers and administrators for Zuni Icosahedron. In Nanjing, also I conducted research at the Jiangsu performing arts kunqu troupe, watching rehearsals and performances, and accompanying performers on lecture-demonstrations for K-12 and university students. Again, I completed my interviews in English and Mandarin Chinese, and translated the Mandarin Chinese interviews myself. These interviews served to provide further insight into the creative process and the experience of the performers, which is absent

[110] See Foster's outline of choreographic analysis here: Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of protest," *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (2003): 395-412. 397.

[111] See: Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

from much research on intangible cultural heritage and intercultural performances. In addition, I analyzed company publications, ranging from Youtube.com lecture series, to conference proceedings, to annual reports.

For the third chapter, I attended and participated in the 2015 and 2016 i-Dance festival, run by Y-space (founded by Victor Choi-wo Ma and Mandy Ming-yin Yim in 1995). Although I also viewed videos of the earlier festivals in the Y-space office archives, my ethnographic experience as participant-observer led much of my analysis. I used choreographic analysis to write about pieces I viewed live while attending the festival, but also about the process of learning alongside other dance artists during workshops. If I had not participated myself, I would not have realized the extent to which this festival cultivates a collaborative community. Throughout the dissertation, I utilize discourse analysis: How are the genres in my study (Chinese opera, ballet and modern dance, improvisation, and Chinese folk dance and Chinese classical dance) marketed and circulated in Hong Kong's local and global contexts, and historically? Furthermore, I examine how the examples I have chosen relate to rhetoric surrounding Hong Kong as a city, such as the government's branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's world city."

Contributions: What Are the Stakes of Researching Choreography in Hong Kong?

This dissertation contributes to both Sinophone studies and dance studies disciplines by focusing its inquiry on Hong Kong's contemporary politics through the lens of choreography and corporeality. Drawing from Sinophone scholars, my project assumes multiple Chinesenesses that do not spread neatly in a diasporic paradigm and inquires about dis-identifications with

Chineseness.[112] In contrast to Shu-mei Shih's theory of the Sinophone that depends on a logic of language, I explore connections among corporeality, culture, and politics asserted by dance studies scholarship.[113] I maintain that an emphasis on choreography in Hong Kong allows alternative conversations about Chineseness than does a focus on written text or spoken language. Whereas an emphasis on language might identify Cantonese, Chinese, and English as distinct cultural products that symbolize various cultural influences in Hong Kong, analyzing Hong Kong concert dance choreography reveals overlapping cultural ambiguities, Chinese ambivalence and critique, and relationships between bodies-on-the-ground, colonial ideologies, and institutions. Centering the body and corporeality elicits discussion of the identity and agency of colonial subjects and the relationship between the Hong Kong subject and Hong Kong's socio-political status as a global city; this dance studies approach acknowledges both the action and observation of bodies, and both living dancers and their representation.

Focusing on movement and dance also aligns content with method in regard to the transnational and transcultural flows of Hong Kong as a global city. Dances, capital, fashion, cultural objects, films, cuisine, and both businesspeople and lower class migrant laborers flow into and out of the city of Hong Kong. As anthropology scholar Arjun Appadurai writes, the

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[112] Rey Chow. "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem" in *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in The Age of Theory: Reimagining A Field*, ed. Rey Chow (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).; Chen, Kuan-Hsing, *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 266.; Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness: Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm" *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in The Age of Theory: Reimagining A Field,* ed. Rey Chow (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

[113] Halifu Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Marta Savigliano. *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1996); Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).; Linda Tomko, *Dancing Class: Gender, Ethnicity, And Social Divides in American Dance*, *1890-1920*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Yutian Wong. *Choreographing Asian America.* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2010); David Gere, *How to Make Dances in An Epidemic: Tracking Choreography in The Age Of AIDS*. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Goldman, Danielle, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as A Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Gender."

body is intrinsically tied to the commodity culture of consumer capitalism, deterritorialization and mass migration of labor, and, even, transnational spread of disease.[114] Cultural studies scholar May Joseph builds on Appadurai's argument in order to highlight performances of citizenship within urban contexts, locating connections between migrant bodies, immigrant bodies, and local, urban ideas of national and international. As Joseph writes, "Movement as a conceptual tool resists easy notions of community or nation"—relevant to Hong Kong where the national scale is contested.[115] For Joseph, citizenship is cultural, legal, and bodily as she centers "the live body and its unmediated struggle to achieve democratic participation in the city."[116] In a study of Hong Kong's political circumstance, therefore, it is imperative to identify multiple cultivations, stagings, and negotiations of moving bodies in this global city.

As I have asked how these case studies interpret "one country" or one unified China, this dissertation makes apparent the extent to which bodily actions can identify and dis-identify with Chineseness. The Chineseness of Hong Kong has often been debated at the level of language—Cantonese (the local dialect) versus Mandarin language; scholars have noted the decline of Canto-pop music, the protest of Mandarin education, and the decline of Cantonese-language movies since 1997.[117] Rather than analyzing straightforward mandates by the Chinese

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[114] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 50, 67.

[115] May Joseph, *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minneapolis, 1999), 8.

[116] May Joseph, *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship*, 8.

[117] See: Yaowei Zhu, *Lost in Transition: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China*.
In terms of film, the industry has moved to financing film—from "made in Hong Kong" to "financed by Hong Kong." Zhu examines financial structures and the rise in co-productions with Mainland China. He identifies the prominence of Mandarin-language films in terms of a switch toward more "Chinese" films.

government in Hong Kong, such as Chinese patriotic curricula or Mandarin-language news,[118] this dissertation examines how several movement forms—Chinese classical dance, folk dance, and opera—that have long been considered quintessentially Chinese are molded in the Hong Kong context. The identifications and dis-identifications with these forms occur in the face of local and global marketing machines that essentialize the difference of Chineseness both in Hong Kong and abroad; yet, all of these forms have developed in conversation with Western forms. In addition to exploring genres that read as Chinese, my research shows the way that educational partnerships and artistic exchanges bring together Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese dance artists as a means for Hong Kongers to move alongside Chineseness, even if not aligning with it. Furthermore, these three chapters offer alternatives to these Chinese national forms—the possibilities of moving as Chinese and/or as Hong Kongese via other movement vocabularies.

In addition to arguing how these examples relate to "one country," I highlight the imbrications of British colonialism, American imperialism, and Chinese nationalism found in the navigation of "two systems." When I started this research, I expected to write about an obvious interaction of Chinese nationalism and British colonialism; however, I later realized that the "two systems" opened up Hong Kong to many more structures of power and cultural interactions. Hong Kong identity is not as simple as a compromise between capitalism and socialism, or a hybridity between Chinese and British cultures. The role of American imperialism and Western aesthetic hegemony has dictated the prominence of many movement forms in the city. The popular desire for democracy in the city, moreover, represents both fears about China's foothold and concerns about the way the rest of the world has exploited Hong Kong as a business hub for

[118] Sarah Wu, "China Wields Patriotic Education to Tame Hong Kong's Rebellious Youth," Reuters, November 27, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-security-education-insight-idUSKBN2861GE.

China. The opportunity that "two systems" created for Hong Kong to remain a large player in global finances has meant that forces of Cold War ideology, late capitalism, neoliberalism, and globalization have shaped Hong Kong just as much as British rule of law and Chinese nationalism. The transcultural flow of dance and movements practiced/produced in Hong Kong make apparent the complexities and interplay of agency and hegemonic structures.

This research outlines several options for sociality in a (post)colonial and ever-evolving, precarious socio-cultural space. In addition to examining what bodies can do in terms of their movements and techniques, my project demonstrates what bodies can do together. Dance and Chinese opera forms and repertoire circulate within larger political economies of cultural heritage and multiculturalism, yet also depend on the person-to-person contact of teaching and learning. Artists across these chapters form relationships and collaborations in various permutations on-stage and off. The dance department at HKAPA partners with other institutions in order to foster relationships among dance educators, choreographers, and students, and in order to strengthen its own curriculum and placements for students after graduation. Danny Yung forms alliances with other Asian directors and cultural policy makers in order to fund projects that center Hong Kong's identity and lift Chinese artists to the global spotlight. At the i-Dance festival, dancers explore egalitarian pedagogical structures and group improvisational dance-making in order foster a sense of community and to re-orient their national identities, regardless of geo-political tensions.

By attempting to answer how these case studies choreographically negotiate "one country, two systems," I contend that the Hong Kong people are more than victims of double colonization. When one looks closely to these institutions' approaches to dance learning and teaching as well as modes for presenting choreography, Hong Kong emerges as a site for

possibility and potential, rather than just mourning and loss[119] often ascribed to its (post)colonial condition. No matter the encroaching hegemonic forces of China before 2047, the examples in this dissertation show the ability of dance and movement artists to produce work that innovates on existing aesthetics and challenges the status quo during times of upheaval in the city. Furthermore, this research shows that the city should not only be defined by its corporate reputation and consumer culture, wrought by "one country, two systems," but also by its residents' ability to collaborate locally and globally, and mobilize in action together. The political situation in Hong Kong right now is very volatile because the New Security Law of 2020 essentially marks the end of "one country, two systems." During this time, the world is also suffering from the COVID-19 global pandemic, which has caused frequent shutdown of Hong Kong's spaces where performing arts are learned, shared, and appreciated. This reality demands that dancers use creative problem-solving in order to practice their art and maintain community in the city. The epilogue offers my thoughts about how the strategies evinced in this dissertation might fair in the future and about the role of choreography to carve out city space for community and dissent.

[119] For a discussion of Hong Kong's culture of disappearance, see: Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

Chapter One
Training the Multicultural: Dance Curriculum at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the Bachelor of Fine Arts dance program at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) has navigated the 1997 shift in rule from British to Chinese: by placing "one country" and "two systems" alongside one another in the form of a multicultural dance curriculum. The HKAPA BFA dance program attempts parity among Chinese dance, modern dance, and ballet education by teaching all three genres to each dancer, thereby appealing to a (post)colonial multiculturalism and seemingly universal understandings of dance. Chinese dance professionalization in Hong Kong incorporates Chinese Han folk dance, Chinese ethnic minority folk dance, and Chinese classical dance—all forms constructed in the 1950s in Mainland China—a range of forms that represent another layer of multiculturalism, that of Han-centric dance education in Mainland China. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek critiques multiculturalism as:

> Respect[ing] the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which he, the multiculturalist, maintains a distance rendered possible by his privileged universal position…[T]he multiculturalist respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority. [1]

The global north decides what is universal, so the adoption of a universal logic at HKAPA could be self-Orientalization as a survival tactic. In the context of this institution, its multiculturalism also becomes proof of global status, sought by Hong Kong, but also by the Chinese nation-state.

As the only performing arts institution and only institution to offer a major or degree in dance in Hong Kong, HKAPA produces the majority of the performing artists as well as arts

[1] Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review*, no. 225 (September/October 1997): 44.

administrators and educators in the city, thereby constructing dance knowledge for the entire city. Here, students practice both Chinese nationalism and the supposed progress and freedom of Westernization, implicit in the three dance genres taught. Thus, the "one country" proposition as well as the hybrid negotiation of "two systems" play out in each dancing body. The curriculum produces an adaptable dancing body that excels at flexibility, strength, and learning choreography, promoting a seamless multiculturalism in a city fraught with (post)colonial conflict. The dance program overall promotes a homogenization of cultural difference and a neoliberal approach to dance export that corresponds with lack of efforts by the Hong Kong government to develop local Hong Kong arts. Like Hong Kong's response as a global city to the shift in power to Chinese rule, the institution of HKAPA since 1997 has prioritized international recognition and interaction. Dance students at HKAPA perform each genre proficiently and get hired by dance companies in Hong Kong and around the globe[2] after graduation.

Through many structural changes since HKAPA's founding in 1984, the emphasis on dance technique and the three genres of modern dance, Chinese dance, and ballet has remained. HKAPA began as a vocational training institution with departments in music, dance, and theater, then shortly after added technical arts, and film and TV, and finally added a department in Chinese opera in 1999. Currently, the dance department resides in the College of Allied Arts with the music and Chinese opera departments. The dance program at HKAPA began as a vocational diploma program with the distinct aim of preparing dancers for the three flagship

[2] Akram Khan Company (United Kingdom), Alabama Ballet (United States), Art Fission Company (Singapore), Ballet Jorgen (Canada), Ballet Gran Canaria (Spain), Chong Qing Ballet Company (China), Cloud Gate 2 (Taiwan), Contemporary Dance Company Hawaii (United States), Ecnad Project LTD (Singapore), Guangzhou Ballet (China), Guangdong Modern Dance Company (China), House of Dancing Water (Macau), La La Human Steps (Canada), Les Ballets (Sweden), Manassas Ballet Theatre (Ballet), National Ballet of Portugal (Portugal), Nederlans Dans Theatre (Netherlands), Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (United States), Royal Swedish Ballet (Sweden), Scapino Ballet (Netherlands), Wayne McGregor's Random Dance (United Kingdom), Guangzhou Opera House (China), Singapore Dance Theatre (Singapore)

companies that had formed just years earlier (Hong Kong Ballet, Hong Kong Dance Company, and City Contemporary Dance Company). Based on the professional structure of three genre-specific dance companies, HKAPA's dance program was designed with three majors, or streams: ballet, Chinese dance, and modern dance. The program started as a three-year diploma, then later (in 1992) transitioned into a 5-year BFA degree with liberal arts courses incorporated into the five years. Then the BFA program transitioned from a 5-year British model to a 4-year American model, as did Chinese universities (since 2013).[3] Drawing from dance studies scholars[4] who focus on the practice of dance technique as the transfer of knowledge and dance curriculum as both cultural and political, I explore the three majors (Chinese dance, ballet, and modern) as sites of knowledge construction, value production, and socio-political navigation by the institution.

The leadership and funding structure of HKAPA dictate its values and the emphasis of the dance program. The institutional values align with the values of the local Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government. Founded the same year as the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984), the institution has always received government funding, and the Chief Executive of Hong Kong has always served as the President of its Board of Directors. The institution is funded through the Home Affairs Bureau, which is responsible for leisure activities, rather than the Education Bureau, due to a legacy of British colonial rule; the British colonial

[3] Tom Brown, Interview with Author, May 2016, Hong Kong.

[4] Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies and Choreographers" in *Worlding Dance: Studies in International Performance*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).; Susan Leigh Foster. "Dancing Bodies" in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*. Post-Contemporary Interventions, ed. Jane Desmond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).; Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).; Stacey Prickett. *Embodied Politics: Dance, Protest and Identities* (Hampshire, United Kingdom: Dance Books, 2013).; Ben Spatz. *What a Body Can Do: Technique As Knowledge, Practice As Research* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015).

government treated arts as a means for keeping the local population happy with the status quo.[5] The Home Affairs Bureau seeks to improve community relations and sets policy on sports, leisure, arts, and culture. As an effect of this funding distinction, HKAPA is not defined as a research university and initially granted only diplomas, not degrees, which affects the responsibilities of the faculty. The faculty, by and large, focus their work on teaching heavy course loads and contributing to student productions and tours, instead of written publications. They previously taught a six-day week and about 12 classes per week; they now teach five days a week.[6] Furthermore, given its connection to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government, HKAPA supports a close relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong. This can be seen in the language of its official promotional materials and annual reports[7] and also in the welcoming of faculty and students from Mainland China. Both the ballet and Chinese dance departments hire many faculty members who were trained in Mainland China. HKAPA also promotes student performance tours to Mainland China and facilitates exchanges between faculty adjudicators for exams and competitions.

Although HKAPA has built a strong connection with China to bolster Hong Kong's "one country" relationship, the dance education at HKAPA has also depended upon Euro-American influence, which is reflective of Hong Kong's "Two systems" plurality that allowed for British legacies to easily continue during Chinese rule, such as through British basic law and free-market capitalism. British consultants assisted in the design of the dance program: Peter

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[5] Vicki Oii. "The Best Cultural Policy is no Cultural Policy: Cultural Policy in Hong Kong" in *Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron* (2015): 23-35.

[6] Tom Brown, "Day Trip," in *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, eds. Ruth Solomon and John Solomon (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 150.

[7] I read annual reports (years 2001-2019) available at the institutions' website. See: "Publications - About – HKAPA," accessed March 21, 2020, https://www.hkapa.edu/about/publications.

Brinson, a British dance educator, and Robert Cohen, the American former Graham dancer who started The London Contemporary Dance School. Besides Cohen, the first Dean of Dance, Carl Wolz, was an American hired from the University of Hawaii, where he had pursued an interest in Japanese dance forms. He designed the HKAPA curriculum modeled after American dance programs, and in particular, Juilliard, where he had studied dance under esteemed modern dance educator, Martha Hill.

In this chapter, I first review relevant historical context for dance professionalization in Hong Kong, especially the three dance genres and their relationship to "one country" and "Two systems." Next, I analyze how the institution has choreographed curriculum that places modern dance, ballet, and Chinese dance in each dancing body— "one Country, two systems" in each body. HKAPA touts multiculturalism and East-meets-West rhetoric while maintaining colonial Eurocentric bias. Finally, I assert that these curricular choices create highly skilled multicultural "hired" bodies that are effectively mobilized for globalization, as both HKAPA and its alumni have gained global recognition since its humble start in 1984. In this way, I show that the curriculum attempts a parity and dialogue among Chinese dance, ballet, and modern (and later contemporary dance.) This chapter explains how HKAPA embraces the Chineseness of "one country" while taking "two systems" as a proposal for multiculturalism and affirmation of Hong Kong's participation in global neoliberalism.

Professionalizing Hong Kong Dance

Why these three dance forms? In order to understand the design of the dance curriculum at HKAPA, this section of the chapter explores the history and professionalization of each of these dance forms in the city of Hong Kong. Although ballet and modern dance are not solely Western dance forms, I argue that HKAPA has centered these dance forms in the curriculum in

order to represent Western notions of elite culture and freedom, thereby connecting to the Western holdover of "Two systems." The exception Deng Xiaoping made by allowing "Two systems" in Hong Kong enables holdovers from British colonialism, including British law and, also, everyday life.[8] Although Hong Kong was not colonized by the United States, the "Two systems" conception has also allowed the United States to maintain its close political and financial relationship with Hong Kong; the United States has always had an exceptional relationship with Hong Kong as a non-Communist China and gateway to and window for China.[9] British colonialism and the era of "Two systems" has promoted Euro-American culture, including modern dance and ballet, as part of Hong Kong culture. By the 20th Century, ballet had come to represent the European upper class;[10] early 20th Century modern dance had connoted "the trope of freedom through self-transformation" with the claim that it is a "distinctly 'American' art."[11] During the mid-twentieth century, Chinese classical and folk dance forms were created specifically to symbolize Chinese national characteristics.[12] The inclusion of Chinese classical and folk dance in the curriculum at HKAPA signifies a Mainland Chineseness,

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[8] Ralf Horlemann. *Hong Kong's Transition to Chinese Rule. The Limits of Autonomy* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 222. Article 5 of the Basic Law reads:
"The socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years."

[9] Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 33. Mark writes of the 1950s: "Because of its strategic location, Hong Kong became a principal US listening post on the periphery of the PRC, at a time when Washington had no formal diplomatic contact with Beijing and lacked even a formal base for operations inside the mainland."

[10] For a survey of ballet history, see: Selma Jeanne Cohen and Katy Matheson, *Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book, 1992). The ballet dancer became a symbol of enchantment: "when a dancer rises on her points, she breaks away from the exigencies of everyday life, and enters into an enchanted country--that she may thereby lose herself in the ideal" (117).

[11] Randy Martin. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*, 151.

[12] Wilcox, Emily, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness in Contemporary Chinese Dance: Sixty Years of Creation and Controversy," *Asian Theatre Journal* 29, no. 1 (2012): 206–32. 213.

and, therefore, an acceptance of "one country." Each of these dance forms carries with it multiple legacies of power and resistance, and their own histories within Hong Kong, some of which has been written above in the dissertation introduction.

The founding of HKAPA is most clearly linked to the professionalization of ballet in the city. By 1969, the first semi-professional dance company, named Ballet for All,[13]gave dancers like Helen Lai (now one of the most productive modern dance choreographers in Hong Kong) an opportunity to perform in concert-stage dance, rather than television entertainment. In 1978, the Hong Kong Academy of Ballet, both a school and performance company, arose as a precursor to HKAPA. It had a three-year professional ballet program. After a few years, the school closed and this institution became the Hong Kong Ballet company.[14] HKAPA opened in 1984; the ballet program drew from the Royal Academy of Dance curriculum (RAD) curriculum, pervasive in the city.[15]

The legacy of British colonialism in terms of ballet promotion has persisted well beyond the end of British colonial rule as ballet has been used to exemplify Hong Kong's global city status. Although ballet represents European aesthetics and culture,[16] ballet masquerades as universal foundational dance technique worldwide. In 1990, Peter Brinson, British dance educator and consultant for Hong Kong's Department of Recreation and Culture stressed the standard of ballet in his report on the state of dance in Hong Kong. In the report, Brinson

[13] Co-directors: Tania Teng (who studied at the Royal Ballet School and was a Royal Academy of Dance examiner) and Henry Man (a Hong Konger who toured Europe with ballet companies).

[14] The company was renamed Hong Kong Ballet in 1983, and the school closed in 1985. See: "An Oral History of Hong Kong Dance (1950s-70s) | Chronology," accessed March 24, 2020, https://www.dancehistory.hk/chronology/?lang=en.

[15] British dancer Amanda Olivier, who graduated from RAD headed the founding ballet program at HKAPA.

[16] See: Joann Kealiinohomoku, "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance," in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 33–43.

emphasized the ballet reputation at HKAPA, implying that a strong ballet program would strengthen the dance program overall. He wrote of ballet as an indication of civil society— "a possession of most mature industrial societies";[17]here, he presented ballet as foundational for global reputation. He suggested that improving ballet standards[18] at HKAPA would result in a stronger professional dance education and more global recognition for the city. Brinson critiqued the situation in which the Hong Kong Ballet supported international star dancers without a potential for local dancers to move up in the company, leading to high rates of dancer turnover. Although HKAPA and the Hong Kong Ballet have improved their relationship through guest artist residencies and internships, the Hong Kong Ballet still hires fewer Hong Kong dancers than non-local (both Mainland and other international) dancers.[19] Moreover, the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) British standards still shape ballet knowledge and practices in the city and at the institution.[20] Thus, in Hong Kong, ballet continues to be associated with British elite culture and global progress, rather than with local Hong Kong culture.

Whereas British colonial officials purposely neglected promoting Chinese culture, Chinese dance emerged as a professional art form in Hong Kong due to the anticipation of, then transition to, Chinese rule. This phenomenon occurred through Mainland Chinese dance

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[17] Brinson, Peter, "Dance and the Arts in Hong Kong. A Consultancy Report by Peter Brinson," 1995, 54.

[18] He suggested hiring more skilled teachers from professional ballet companies; more cooperation with the Hong Kong Ballet company; and opening a pre-vocational school for children ages 10 and older.

[19] "Sixty Years of Blessing. Joan Campbell," accessed March 22, 2020.https://www.dancehistory.hk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/en_10_cb.pdf
"Dancers | Meet HKB | HK Ballet," accessed April 8, 2020, https://www.hkballet.com/en/meet-hkb/artistic-leadership-and-dancers/dancer.

[20] By 2016, 35,000 young students were taking the RAD exams with 24 international examiners. See: "The Woman Who Taught Jean M. Wong Ballet and Her Hong Kong Memories,"| South China Morning Post, accessed March 24, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/arts-music/article/1992356/woman-who-taught-jean-m-wong-ballet-and-her-hong.

teachers teaching of codified Chinese dance forms in Hong Kong, presentation of Chinese dance, and the founding of the first Chinese dance company in Hong Kong. Chinese dance professionalization in Hong Kong incorporates Chinese Han folk dance, Chinese ethnic folk dance, and Chinese classical dance, all forms created in the 1950s. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a large influx of professional dance teachers came to Hong Kong from Mainland China seeking artistic freedom; these dancers taught in the 1970s and 80s across the city of Hong Kong, making possible the teaching of the Beijing Dance Academy syllabus to children for years to come.[21] In 1978, the Hong Kong International Arts Festival presented the first professional and large-scale Chinese national dance drama by the Hong Kong Experimental Song and Dance Theatre. Then, in 1981, the Urban Council founded and funded the Hong Kong Dance Company, hiring non-local directors,[22] thereby demonstrating Hong Kong's void of knowledge about Chinese dance. Immediately before the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and with anticipation of the transfer of power, Chinese dance became a category in the K-12 schools dance festival, as well.[23] In addition, Hong Kong hosted more Mainland Chinese dance companies in the decade prior to the transfer of power than it ever had before.[24] Currently, the Hong Kong Dance Company hires both dancers from Mainland Chinese dance conservatories and from HKAPA, leaving fewer spots for HKAPA graduates each year. It also

[21] Virginia Lo established the Hong Kong Dance Federation in 1978; this organization now leads the Beijing Dance Academy's Chinese dance children's graded exams across the city, and holds many classes, performances, and competitions.

[22] Hong Kong Dance Company's first directors were: Chiang Ching (Chinese American), Shu Qiao (Shanghainese), and Ying E-Ding (Shanghainese).

[23] 香港舞蹈歷史*Hong Kong Dance History*, Hong Kong Sector Joint Conference (Cosmic Books, LTD, Hong Kong: 2000).

[24] Mainland Chinese Dance Companies performed in HK; Chinese Dance Artists Troupe (1987), Winners from Peach and Plum Cup (1989, 1991), Tujia Nationality's Folk Arts Troupe from Hubei Province (1995), China National Ballet Red Detachment of Women (1994), White Haired Girl (1995)

employs graduates from both Hong Kong and the Mainland to teach for its numerous children's dance classes in Chinese dance. The company utilizes Mandarin Chinese in rehearsal to accommodate all the Mainland dancers.[25] Thus, the development of Hong Kong Chinese dance directly reflects the shifting political relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong.

Although ballet and Chinese dance professionalization occurred earlier in Mainland China than in Hong Kong, modern dance professionalized in Hong Kong before Mainland China likely due to the anti-Western imperialism stance of the Mainland Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The modern dance learned in Hong Kong initially emerged from the exchange of knowledge with American, British, and Australian dance educators. Before modern dance professionalization in Hong Kong, a small group of Hong Kong dancers studied modern dance in the US and Great Britain,[26]and a number of modern dance companies toured to Hong Kong.[27] According to a textbook sponsored by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Hong Kong Sector Joint Conference, when the colonial government increased funding for the arts, it also sent educators abroad to Australia and Britain to learn about "modern educational dance."[28] Some of the first modern dance classes began as a series of recreation and sports courses, supported by the government. The first semi-professional modern dance company (1977) drew

[25] Interviews with dancers and administrators of the education department. Hong Kong Dance Company, Hong Kong, 2016.

[26] Helen Lai studied modern dance at London Contemporary Dance School in 1971, returned 1973, and has choreographed modern dance for many companies in Hong Kong. Other teachers: 1972, Chen Tian-lin studied modern dance at Nebraska University, prepared Hong Kong teachers for modern dance in Hong Kong Schools Dance Festival; Julie Ng studied at London Contemporary Dance School (1973); Daryl Ries taught at Hong Kong Arts Centre in 1977, had studied with Graham, Limon, Nikolais.

[27] Visiting modern dance companies in the 70s: Ailey, Cloud Gate, Siu Cha Hong (NYC), Pina Bausch, Philippines Cultural Centre Dance Company, Bill T. Jones.

[28] "Modern educational dance" was added to the Hong Kong Schools Dance Festival in 1970.

upon American Graham, Limon, and Nikolais techniques.[29] The modern dance program at HKAPA began with the directive to prepare dancers to work in the City Contemporary Dance Company, founded in 1979 by Willy Tsao, who also helped found the Guangdong Modern Dance Company 13 years later—the same year the Beijing Dance Academy began teaching modern dance.

As the first modern dance company in Hong Kong/China, the City Contemporary Dance Company (CCDC) was instrumental in development of modern dance in Hong Kong and Mainland China. In the beginning, Willy Tsao financed CCDC with a personal loan and rehearsed in a factory space; now, the company is one of the nine performing arts companies supported by the Hong Kong local government in mainstage venues.[30] The company started by rehearsing Graham, Cunningham, Limon, and tai chi techniques taught by Tsao, and grew to a multi-choreographer repertoire company, with rotating artists-in-residence. Over the years, Tsao has contributed to the establishment of several modern dance companies in Mainland China[31] and developed exchanges between CCDC and Mainland modern dance companies. At the same time, CCDC continues to direct the local development of modern dance in Hong Kong. Currently, nearly all of the dancers with CCDC have graduated from HKAPA. Some dancers have stayed with the company almost their entire careers because the company provides the dancers a living wage through government funding; this situation leaves only rare spots each

[29] In 1977, Daryl Ries, a New York-based dancer taught modern and jazz classes at the recently opened Hong Kong Arts Centre and began a semi-professional company. She had trained in Graham, Limon, and Nikolais techniques. See: 香港舞蹈歷史*Hong Kong Dance History,* 289.

[30] Simon Cartledge, "Willy Tsao: Hong Kong's Dance Pioneer Embraces the Mainland," *Zolima City Magazine* (blog), November 6, 2019, https://zolimacitymag.com/willy-tsao-hong-kongs-dance-pioneer-embraces-the-mainland/.

[31] 香港舞蹈歷史*Hong Kong Dance History,* 293. Tsao has developed strong connections to Mainland China by advising Mainland companies: Beijing Dance/LDTX and Guangdong Modern Dance Company. He also started Beijing Dance/LDTX, China's first independent (not state-run) modern dance company.

year for a graduating HKAPA senior.[32] Besides the company, the institution of CCDC mediates the acceptance of modern dance in the city by providing K-12 dance education in the form of school workshops as well as children and adults dance studio classes, also taught mostly by HKAPA graduates. Administrators with the dance education component of the company have said that, given the lack of a dance secondary school in Hong Kong, the education arm of CCDC aims to prepare students for training at HKAPA.[33] Thus, CCDC and HKAPA remain interconnected.

In the early 1980s, having a professional company devoted to modern dance (CCDC) and modern dance training (HKAPA) set Hong Kong apart from Mainland China, signifying the freedom and openness of expression allowed in Hong Kong as compared to Mainland China, thereby fulfilling Hong Kong's image as a modernized global city under "two systems." As dance scholars have argued, modern dance, through its claims of freedom and universal emotional expression, has become part of the project of American cultural imperialism.[34] Tsao rejects this criticism, opting for the belief in modern dance as universal emotional expression and justifying its presence in Hong Kong:

> The misconception that modern dance is strictly a Western art form has prevailed for so long that some Chinese government officials are led to believe that the modern dancers in China might defect to the West if given the chance. But we believe that modern dance is a universal art form which expresses the human spirit, and is therefore beyond any national, ethical or political boundary.[35]

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[32] Noel Pong, Interview with author, Hong Kong, June 2016.

[33] Ronly Kong and Kevin Wong, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, June 2016.

[34] See: Martin, Randy. *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics*; Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2015); Rebekah Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2010).

[35] Quoted in Daryl Ries, "Hong Kong's Changing Cultural Image," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 62, no. 9 (1991): 52–56. 56.

Although Mainland China and Hong Kong both currently support modern dance development,[36] Hong Kong gained a reputation during the 1980s and 1990s as a leader in modern dance in Asia, in no small part due to the training dancers received at HKAPA.[37] The exception for Western culture ensured by "two systems" enabled this close relationship between modern dance and Hong Kong.

In this section, I have shown how HKAPA's three dance genres became prominent in the Hong Kong cultural milieu by the end of the twentieth century. Ballet accompanied colonialism and became associated with global city status and dance professionalization. Chinese dance forms, initially suppressed by British colonialism, gained traction as part of a British strategy to grant leisure to colonial subjects. Due to the anticipation of the transition of power to Chinese rule and the influx of Mainland dance teachers to Hong Kong, Chinese dance began a process of professionalization after ballet. Modern dance, and its discourse of postwar American individual universalism, took foothold soon after as a distinction from the anti-modern dance position in Mainland China (due to its association with Western imperialism). The City Contemporary Dance Company in Hong Kong and its founding artistic director Willy Tsao became advocates and arbiters of modern dance in the city. The next section analyzes how the combination of these three dance forms in each dancing student's body creates malleable bodies that leads to a homogenization and tokenization of dance forms.

Cultivating the Malleable Multicultural Body

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[36] Tsao's connection with China is so strong, that as of 2019, he is set to leave City Contemporary Dance Company due to Hong Kong politics and anti-Chinese sentiment, which he sees as untenable. See: Simon Cartledge, "Willy Tsao: Hong Kong's Dance Pioneer Embraces the Mainland."

[37] One of the pioneer modern dance teachers in Hong Kong, Daryl Ries portrays this perspective in 1991. See Daryl Ries, "Hong Kong's Changing Cultural Image," 56.

Since its founding in 1984, the BFA dance curriculum at HKAPA continues to integrate three technique "streams" or majors —modern (now contemporary) dance, ballet, and Chinese dance (the title of the major is "Chinese Dance" even though it teaches multiple Chinese dance forms). In this section, I conduct a choreographic analysis of the training of each of these genres in order to show commonalities among training, but also to highlight the different physical embodiments and pedagogies asked of each student. The HKAPA students study multiple genres of dance during a single day, which means they must switch often among various physical mandates, means of aesthetic and emotional expression, and pedagogical learning methods. After analyzing the training in technique classes, I address how these three genres, along with the other non-technique seminar courses in the major, skew toward a Western understanding of dance, propagated by British administrators and American and Australian modern dance educators. Western hegemony rationalizes the combination of these three distinct cultural forms as the training glosses over cultural difference. In the specific case of Hong Kong's contested identity, these dancers excel at literally shape-shifting among cultural forms, portraying Hong Kong as malleable and flexible to serve a host of colonial interests. The local Hong Kong distinctiveness offered by HKAPA, therefore, is manufactured through a culturally-malleable dancing body, which then becomes accessible and commodified across the globe without recognition of Hong Kong's own struggles for self-determination.

HKAPA's dance program has navigated "one country, two systems" with an approach to various aesthetic and cultural forms from the Chinese nation-state and from Euro-America that promotes an illusion of social and aesthetic harmony. I am referring to this strategy as multiculturalism; it is also the term that founding Dean of Dance, Carl Wolz, chose to use.[38]

[38] Wolz relies on the term "multicultural" for describing the education at HKAPA and compares it to a "mosaic" or "patchwork." See: Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and Some Thoughts on

Defined broadly, multiculturalism, whether or not state-issued government policy, can be used as a term that claims rights for minoritarian groups, which can occur through philosophical, legal, or political means. In Hong Kong, however, this multiculturalism incorporates Chinese culture, which can be considered majoritarian culture currently. Multiculturalism has a particular history in the context of British colonialism. The term initially emerged after World War II to address the challenges of social diversity.[39]

> The postwar unraveling of imperialism therefore set the stage for contemporary multiculturalism by foregrounding hollow aspects of the West's self-understanding and causing a huge increase in its demographic diversity. Decolonization thus posed problems for liberalism and democracy at the level of both Europe and her former colonies. These reconstitutions of the state—and the self-understandings of the nation often conflated with it—resulted in the series of social dilemmas we refer to as 'multiculturalism.'[40]

Theater scholar Rustom Bharucha asserts that multiculturalism is less voluntary than interculturalism due to its associations with official cultural policies in Western democracies, including Great Britain.[41]

During Hong Kong's process of British decolonization (between the Sino-Joint Declaration in 1984 and the official passage of power in 1997), HKAPA developed its dance curriculum to include Chinese dance forms as if to incorporate the non-white colonial subjects. At the same time, the curriculum requires both ballet and modern dance that claim universal applications. As dance scholar Anusha Kedhar writes, "Multiculturalism needs an otherness that

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International Networking," in *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, in eds. Solomon, Ruth, and John Solomon (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 99.

[39] Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, "What Is Postwar Multiculturalism in Theory and Practice?" in *Multiculturalism in the British Commonwealth*, eds. Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019), 1–24. 1.

[40] Richard Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, "What Is Postwar Multiculturalism in Theory and Practice?" 7.

[41] Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of* Globalization (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 33.

is legible but not so legible that it loses its exoticism."[42] At HKAPA, the dancers are both exotic and legible, and also both particular and universal, a characteristic Kedhar attributes to British (post)colonial dance practices.[43] Therefore, multicultural logic can be critiqued as superficial diversity; philosopher Slavoj Žižek argues that multiculturalism is "racism with a distance" because it asserts the multiculturalist's superiority while respecting the specificity of the Other's identity.[44] Furthermore, as another layer of multiculturalism, the multiculturalism proposed by the Chinese nation-state with a Han Chinese-centric view exists at HKAPA in the form of the Chinese folk dance curriculum that focuses on dances of ethnic minority populations in China.

This late 20th century multicultural educational approach at HKAPA was largely influenced by two key educational figures, Peter Brinson and Carl Wolz, both of whom played a large role in the design of the department. They presented Euro-American thinking on how dance supports multicultural dialogue, especially through its ameliorative capacities as "primitive" communication. Peter Brinson, the British consultant for the dance program, argued for dance as a corrective to society's failings, including appreciation of diversity.[45] Although he asserted the value of all arts education, he wrote that dance, in particular, "uses the most fundamental mode of human expression—movement. The body as the instrument of expression

[42] Anusha Kedhar, *Flexible Bodies: British South Asian Dancers in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 20.

[43] Kedhar, Anusha, *Flexible Bodies,* 3.

[44] Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review*, no. 225 (September/October 1997): 44.

[45] In Brinson's book, he makes a case for dance curriculum in the K-12 schools for every child as a corrective to dance education as physical education in Britain (a legacy also seen in Hong Kong). See: Brinson, Peter. *Dance as Education: Towards a National Dance Culture* (London; Falmer Press Library on Aesthetic Education, 1991).

is unique in its accessibility."[46] In his argument for dance in schools,[47] he called dance an "aid towards a better society" that helps students with moral purpose, self-esteem, social confidence, and cross-cultural understanding.[48] In Brinson's 1990 report, he affirmed East-meets-West approaches to Hong Kong arts development. In his analysis, an East-meets-West strategy expressed Hong Kong's "unique identity" and "local culture" as it was branded in a competitive global market.[49] He wrote that the city benefited from, "the unique balance of Chinese and Western forms of music and dance which has evolved as a principal element through which Hong Kong can project its cultural identity to itself and to the world."[50]Brinson's thinking about a harmonious East-meets-West identity as a stand-in for a more complex local identity persists at HKAPA, as represented in the curriculum and institutional rhetoric, such as found in the annual reports.[51] Thus, a particular East-meets-West multiculturalism is portrayed as an avenue to global status for the academy and city.

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[46] Brinson, Peter. *Dance as Education.* 163.

[47] Anna Chan, current Dean of Dance at APA, told me that Hong Kong still suffers from the legacy of dance as physical education in the schools. In her report (with consultants: Hong Konger Ronly Kong, American Tom Brown, and Australian Susan Street) on dance in schools, almost all responding Hong Kong schools included dance as an "extracurricular" activity and not as "Arts Education". The report reveals the product-oriented approach of most schools toward performance and competitions. See: Chan, Anna. "School Dance Education Research and Development Project: Report of the Questionnaire Survey & Summary of the Interviews," Hong Kong Dance Alliance with the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Commissioned by the Hong Kong Development Council (2003), 22; Anna Chan, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, May 2016.

[48] Brinson advocates for a dance education in primary and secondary schools that includes dancing, making dances, learning about dances, and viewing dance, or rather the Dance as Art model—performance, composition, and appreciation. See: Brinson, Peter, *Dance as Education. 163.*

[49] Peter Brinson, "Dance and the Arts in Hong Kong. A Consultancy Report by Peter Brinson," (1995), 40-41.

[50] Peter Brinson. "Dance and the Arts in Hong Kong. A Consultancy Report by Peter Brinson," 7.

[51] In the 2003-2004 HKAPA Annual Report, the Council Chairman Anna Pao Sohmen wrote:
"We need to provide our students with an edge so that they can compete better with graduates of other world-class institutions. Here is where our ability to blend East with West comes to our advantage" (6).

Like Brinson's influence on the program, founding dean American Carl Wolz envisioned multicultural dance education as ameliorative to cross-cultural conflicts.[52] He made claims for dance as "a basic and universal human activity which has existed in all societies"[53]and shared his aspirations for dance as a healing art for discrimination and prejudice.[54] In a keynote speech for a 1997 conference at HKAPA, Wolz stressed global cooperation as well as the "kindly contagion"[55] of dance to improve the quality of life, thereby using HKAPA as a model for bringing together various cultural aesthetics. Therefore, American dance education ideals[56] of easy multiculturalism and dance as universal communication have affected curricular design at HKAPA since its founding.

HKAPA stands out among other globally recognized conservatories, and among Chinese conservatories, for its method of integration of these three dance genres. Each dance student

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[52] Wolz writes of dance leading to the understanding of diverse cultures in terms of "curiosity," "appreciation," and "respect." He relies on the term "multicultural" for describing the education at HKAPA and compares it to a "mosaic" or "patchwork." See: Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts," 99.

[53] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts," 114.

[54] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts," 115-117. "We must find a way to combat this intolerance, especially in the young people of our societies, for they will inherit the earth. We can only change ideological or thought pollution through education. Part of that education can be achieved through dance, the art form that gives deeper meaning to the basic ability and needs of humans to move. For the human body in motion is not only an important factor in communication; it is also a significant aspect of what makes us different from one another. The study of dance is a vital part of understanding and appreciating human differences...Having modern conveniences is wonderful, but not at the expense of losing what makes us unique as individuals and distinct as cultures...In closing I would like to propose that an important goal for the next century be that dancers of the world unite in declaring that through dance we learn mutual respect and understanding, and contribute to a healthier, safer, and saner world."

[55] Wolz, "Keynote Address: The Value of Dance in the Contemporary World," *Dance on '97 Conference*, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, 1997.

[56] Dance education communities in the United States still promote these arguments made by Brinson and Wolz—that dance is primal, that dance is universal communication, and that dance helps students understand diversity and leads to cross-cultural healing. For example, the 2019 call for papers for the National Dance Education Organization in the United States, an American organization, reinforces the same sentiments as Wolz around dance as a universal language and method for cultivated kindness, tolerance, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding. See: "Conference 2020 - National Dance Education Organization," accessed March 27, 2020, https://www.ndeo.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=893257&module_id=369920.

majors in one and minors in the other two genres, which means that each student spends significant study time learning each of these three dance forms, a curricular structure that differs from Mainland Chinese dance conservatories. The curriculum at HKAPA differs from Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), which was founded 30 years earlier in 1954, and is considered the standard of professional dance in Mainland China. Notably, Beijing Dance Academy separates Chinese folk dance and Chinese classical dance into two distinct departments; whereas, these two forms of dance are combined in the Chinese dance major at HKAPA, a much smaller institution.[57] This difference is partially due to the fact that Hong Kong does not have secondary dance institutions, which means that the HKAPA dancers have considerably less training by the time they reach college level than do the BDA dancers, who start their professional track as secondary students. Also different from HKAPA, BDA modern dance (not added until 1992) and choreography are housed under the School of Creative Studies, separated from the ballet and Chinese dance programs; BDA students spend time in one program.[58] Compared to BDA, therefore, the HKAPA dancers have considerably more cross-genre study and less expertise in one form.

Besides the technique courses in the dance department, "academic" seminar courses based upon Euro-American dance curriculum round out HKAPA's dance curriculum. Carl Wolz, first Dean of Dance at HKAPA, entered his position likely shaped by American Martha Hill's[59] modern dance teachings, sourced from a Laban/Dalcroze emphasis on reducing dance to

[57] Because the dance program at HKAPA is housed in a small institution devoted to all performing arts (about thirty dance students in a graduating class), the HKAPA students also have the opportunity to select electives in other arts disciplines.

[58] "Beijing Dance Academy," accessed March 21, 2020, https://en.bda.edu.cn/schoolsdepartments/index.htm.

[59] Hill shaped American modern dance education in the 20th century. She studied with Martha Graham and taught at University of Oregon, Bennington College, and NYU, before serving as the Director of Dance at Juilliard from 1951 to 1985.

shape, rhythm, and force as well as her training with dance educator Margaret H'Doubler, who saw dance as a modernist emotional expression led by kinesiological understanding.[60] He modeled the HKAPA curriculum after the Juilliard curriculum, where he studied. The dance technique at HKAPA is bolstered by courses called "Contextual studies,"[61] akin to liberal arts studies in American university dance programs. These courses are dance history, aesthetics and criticism (now called Dance Perspectives), dance science, Laban movement analysis and notation (now Choreological Studies), music theory (no longer required), dance technology (added later), and dance education (added later). They are required of all dance students.

At HKAPA, the training in three distinct cultural dance techniques molds each dancer's body, cultivating both the Chineseness of Chinese dance and the Westernization of "two systems" in each dancing body. Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster writes that dance training classes, often referred to as technique classes, involve communal repetition and regimentation as means for "*creating the body*."[62] Metaphors used in instruction help dancers develop their "bodily consciousness,"[63] sometimes shaped by the pedagogical tool of the mirror, which Foster argues encourages a narcissistic enthrallment with the body that is mitigated by continual criticisms of its failings.[64] Dancers attempt to achieve an ideal body based on self-evaluation, or judgment by a choreographer, style, or tradition.[65] Foster observes that each technique

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[60] Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies and Choreographers," 107.

[61] "Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) Degree in Dance - Study Programmes - Dance – HKAPA," accessed October 24, 2019. https://www.hkapa.edu/dance/study-programmes/bachelor-of-fine-arts-honours-degree-in-dance.

[62] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Desmond, Jane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 239.

[63] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 241.

[64] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 240.

[65] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 239.

constructs a unique body and, moreover, an "expressive self".[66] She contends that it is difficult for dancers of one genre to transfer the style and skills of one genre to the next. At HKAPA, however, students mold their bodies to several ideal bodies shaped by the three genres they study very seriously. In the course of one day, they take their bodies through several genres, switching physical emphases, but also mental schema and rules of aesthetic expression. Below, I draw from Foster's specific analysis of dance technique and "structures of authority"[67] in order to show the adaptability of the HKAPA dancers to move back and forth among training in modern, ballet, and Chinese dance.

Even though prominent educators in both modern dance and Chinese dance have also sought to distinguish their genres from ballet, ballet training set a precedent for the dance training of these 20th century concert dance forms. This pedagogical alignment aids in the HKAPA students simultaneous learning of all three forms. Professionalized Chinese folk and classical dance borrowed from Mainland pedagogies, adapts Soviet ballet pedagogy and technique, Chinese opera pedagogy and technique, and field research in Chinese folk forms. Although it was a controversial creative choice to include ballet, 1950s Chinese dance educators saw ballet as "scientific," effective for training of bodies and as a universal yardstick for artistry and choreography.[68] Despite anti-Western sentiment, "practical necessity"[69]permitted the inclusion of ballet pedagogy such as piano accompaniment, barre work, and exercises that isolate

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[66] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 241.

[67] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 252.

[68] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 223.

[69] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 223.

the training of specific body parts.[70] For example, although modern dance did away with the barre work ubiquitous in ballet classes, Chinese classical dance, developed in the 1950s, utilizes practice pliés, développés, rond de jambe, kicks called grand battement, etc., all akin to ballet barre warm-ups. In contrast to ballet, however, Chinese dancers do not maintain pointed feet, turned-in-palms, and turned-out positions from their hips, but rather, practice spiraling movements, and flexed feet and palms. Inventors of the form intended to express the Chineseness of the form as movement citations of *xiqu* (Chinese opera) vocabulary.[71]

Although there are some similarities between forms, the Chinese classical dance training shapes the body differently than the ballet training, which means the HKAPA dancers' bodies must mold to both linearity and circularity. Chinese classical dance emphasizes the "three curves" at the neck, waist, and knees, which give an S look to the posture of the dancers' torso.[72] This posture differs from the way ballet uses the torso as a "taut and usually erect center."[73] Ballet's aesthetic of "linear shapes"[74]is absent from Chinese classical dance. In Chinese classical dance as well as some Chinese folk dance forms, like Dai folk dance, dancers allow their heads and hips to go off-center from their spine, seldom seen in ballet technique. Rather than moving in a more squared-off position as ballet demands, Chinese classical dancers reach on a diagonal, twisting their torsos. The Chinese classical dance plié borrowed from Chinese opera, called the *woyu*, utilizes crossed legs and knees tucked into each other as opposed to the symmetrical ballet

[70] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 217.

[71] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 215.

[72] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 216.

[73] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 243.

[74] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 243.

plié. A separate common Chinese classical dance training technique called Shen Yun from the 1980s[75]incorporates dancing on the floor with a special attention to breathing, torso, and hand gestures, unlike the upright dancing and uniform hand gestures of ballet training. Again, these aesthetic differences stem from the self-conscious invention of Chinese dance as a symbol of Chinese nationalism.

Both ballet and Chinese dance classes (both folk and classical) separate male and female dancers and teach gender-specific vocabulary, representing gender as binary and stereotypical, which affects the overall choreography of maleness and femaleness in the HKAPA dance program. In both ballet and Chinese dance, a female movement might be taught to male dancers but with an emphasis on jumping and turning skills. Moreover, as borrowed from the gender-specific movement in *xiqu* (Chinese opera), Chinese dance teaches male students' wider stances versus female vocabulary that stays closer to the midline of the body. In Chinese dance, male and female hand gestures also differ, again an effect of xiqu; male dancers use a flat palm when female dancers use the orchid finger position (middle finger and thumbs touching, with all fingers extending) even if performing the same movement. In both Chinese dance forms and in ballet, therefore, HKAPA dancers train in performing maleness as broad and bold and femaleness as ornate and delicate. Partnering work at HKAPA in these forms, is frequently gendered; the male role acts as support and the female acts as the supported.

Chinese dance (both folk and classical) and ballet also share an ideal body type of thinness and an authoritarian structure of learning. Both ballet dancers and Chinese dancers start training young in order to develop a body that is lithe and flexible enough for the demands of the technique. In Mainland China, Chinese dancers start around age 12 in professional schools.

[75] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness," 218.

Teachers imply through their words, often shaming, that Chinese dancers, like ballet dancers, should be thin and beautiful.[76] Moreover, as in ballet, teachers of Chinese dance are considered to have "unchallenged authority."[77] They frequently stand or sit at the front of the room while teaching, acting as constant evaluators of the movement they see. Although the classroom environment feels tense due to the observing teacher, Chinese dance teachers often use the command for "relax" in order to describe both the conception of *qi* energy moving freely in the body and the effortless aesthetic the bodies should achieve. They provide tactile feedback, sometimes forceful, and often accentuate the rhythm of the movement by clapping or drumming. They do not, however, perform much themselves. Similar to ballet, the codification of Chinese classical and folk dance allows the teachers to call out words to describe the movement sequences, which necessitates less dancing from the teacher. In the Chinese dance and ballet classrooms, therefore, the student shows obedience to the authority and dances in unison with classmates as precisely as possible.

Whether by incorporating chance procedures or emphasizing personal interpretation, modern dance teachers often stress individuality much more than ballet and Chinese dance teachers, as if to liberate the dancer from the teacher's authority.[78] Because modern dance classes do not have a codified system to the same extent as ballet and Chinese dance, the classes are much more dependent on the individual experience of the teacher. Without a verbal vocabulary to name the movements, the modern dance teacher performs the movements in order

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[76] I experienced this pedagogy when I studied dance at Shanghai Theater Academy in 2005-2006.

[77] Susan Leigh Foster. "Dancing Bodies," 243.

[78] Note that modern dance has still been taught with authoritarian pedagogy. See:
Robin Lakes, "The Messages behind the Methods: The Authoritarian Pedagogical Legacy in Western Concert Dance Technique Training and Rehearsals," *Arts Education Policy Review* 5 (2005), 3-20.

to indicate the movement they want to see their students perform. The modern dance teacher often shows movement first, then has students perform the same sequences as the teacher calls out suggestions or qualitative corrections through the use of metaphorical language or through hands-on touch. Depending on the teacher, the mirror is sometimes rejected as a pedagogical tool that is too product oriented. Founding modern dance teacher at HKAPA, Tom Brown, writes that he often faced students away from the mirror, as taught by his Cunningham technique teacher, in order to cultivate their sense of internal alignment.[79] Dance students at HKAPA, therefore, must adjust in a single day to these various pedagogical approaches, whether molding movement and expression to verbal cues, imagery-based description, sensations of internal alignment, or tactile feedback.

Given the individuality of the modern dance teacher's technique background and teaching style, it is impossible to describe all possible modern dance classes at HKAPA, but I will make some generalizations below based on my viewing of archival videos from 1986 on. In the beginning of the modern dance program, modern dance classes drew from classic modern techniques based on a choreographer's vision: Graham, Limon, Humphrey-Weidman, Cunningham, and Horton. Students learned a mix of these techniques with one teacher or focused on one technique like Cunningham Technique with Asian American Mel Wong or Graham Technique with Japanese American Takako Asakawa. Most of this era of modern dance technique utilized floor-work, especially in the beginning of class, instead of barre-work. Modern dance classes do not generally separate students by gender in terms of class or vocabulary. Most modern dancers train in falling to the floor, rolling on the floor, and otherwise finding themselves oriented to space differently than the verticality of ballet. Although each

[79] Tom Brown, "Day Trip," in *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, eds. Solomon, Ruth, and John Solomon, (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 145.

technique engages the spine and torso slightly differently—for example, Graham flexion and extension called contractions, or Horton flat back spine exercises that involve keeping the spine straight while bending at the waist—modern dance employs more range in the spine and torso than the upheld posture and delicate back-bends of classical ballet. Unlike ballet and Chinese dance, modern dance classes require the students to dance barefoot (or in socks), a legacy of Isadora Duncan's barefoot dancing and the alignment of modern dance and the "natural."[80] The range of movement and the emphasis on individuality mirror the values of freedom and natural-ness espoused by 20th century American modern dancers.[81]

Without the model of choreographers who trains their company in one technique, training in current modern or "contemporary dance" (the term currently used at HKAPA) depends even more on the individual training and interests of the teachers. The term contemporary dance is multi-valent and used by many British and American dance conservatories.[82]Dance scholar SanSan Kwan notes that "contemporary" can mean "post-postmodern" or "contemporary

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[80] Susan Leigh Foster. Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 145.

[81] Foster writes: "Duncan and St. Denis, in particular, believed that one learned to move naturally and freely by ridding oneself of the tension and artifice of society. This disburdening necessitated a return to such basic patterns as walking, skipping, running, falling, and turning and to movements based on breathing...Even Graham and Humphrey, for whom technical competence entailed a more formal cultivation of the body, believed that their study began with a return to the basic sources of movement" (154).; Foster delineates the difference between the expressionist modern dance and objectivist modern dance. American modern choreographers (Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham) via Delsarte system for analyzing movement and German expressionist choreographer Wigman via Laban system for analyzing movement aimed: "to clarify both the intention of their movement and its universality" (159). As Foster states, this led to an emphasis on a "character's psyche" versus the complex narratives of the 19th-century story ballets. Cunningham "turned expressionist dance inside out" by arbitrarily creating connections between music, movement, and meaning. Rather than symbols of inner emotions, his movements "took on a concrete, material existence" (168). See: Susan Leigh Foster. *Reading Dancing*.

[82] See Kwan's illuminating discussion of the multiple uses of "contemporary dance" in concert, commercial, and world dance conceptualization. SanSan Kwan. "When is Contemporary Dance?" *Dance Research Journal* 49, no. 3 (2017): 38-52.

modern"[83] and acknowledge a "high art, conceptual avant-garde concert dance"[84] lineage; or, in a commercial context, "contemporary" can mean dance that is "emotive, dramatic, and virtuosic."[85] Like modern dance, contemporary dance is associated with the West and dominated by Euro-American dance artists, what Kwan calls the "universalizing hegemony of contemporary dance technique."[86] The contemporary dance practiced at HKAPA values the floor-work and spinal flexibility of early modern dance but also stresses visual appeal and dramatic expression of dance performance over the more quotidian movements and matter-of-fact expression found in much postmodern dance. Contemporary dance teachers still draw from modern dance pedagogy of floor-work, across-the-floor, and learning set choreography, but the choreography can be totally idiosyncratic. Teachers might even incorporate some improvisation into the class, whether as warm-up or to learn sharing weight with a partner. A contemporary dance student learns key movement skills: inversions (various forms of handstands), an orientation of space that stresses multi-directionality, and dramatic shifts in dynamic energy, such as slow, sustained movement transformed into quick bursts of energy. Contemporary dance students often wear socks instead of bare feet to produce quicker spins and a look of gliding across the floor. Just like ballet and Chinese dance, contemporary dance (especially that with a commercial influence) values an aesthetic of ease more than quotidian forms of postmodern dance.

Due to the training in these three separate dance forms at HKAPA, the dancers excel at dance performance that stresses visual design in highly presentational, as opposed to intimate or communal performances, and highlights the highly specialized movement in which the dancers'

[83] SanSan Kwan, "When is Contemporary Dance?" 40.

[84] SanSan Kwan, "When is Contemporary Dance?" 43.

[85] SanSan Kwan, "When is Contemporary Dance?" 42.

[86] SanSan Kwan, "When is Contemporary Dance?" 46.

train. The dancers have a uniform physical appearance of litheness and thinness, which adds to the overall visual emphasis of their student performances. They move with incredible speed, strength, and flexibility; the grace of their movements hides the muscular hard work it takes. Their legs extend into breath-taking extensions, their spines act exceptionally pliable, and they leap high into the air with precisely shaped arm and leg positions. Few of the dance concerts I have viewed from the archives include pedestrian movements and few of the pieces involve improvisation or slow, durational aspects. Moreover, the dancers are not well-versed in performances that require postmodern multidisciplinarity, such as speaking and singing while dancing. Rather, HKAPA dancers present a crisp and precise version of dancing, especially in unison of large numbers (around twenty dancers on stage) in geometric formations, across the three genres. In the performance of all three genres, the dancers exhibit shape-oriented movements, in contrast to exploratory or sensual movement. The proscenium orientation of ballet, contemporary dance, and Chinese dance preparation means that the students succeed in large venues with high-tech capabilities, including set pieces, complex lighting design, and audiences sitting far from the stage.

The training at HKAPA prepares dance students to transition fluidly among these three dance genres and pedagogies, which produces some overlap, but does not encourage much investigation outside these genres. The dancers rarely perform vernacular jazz or hip-hop forms, consistent with their lack of training in these forms. In my viewing of videos in the archives, the infrequent performances of jazz or musical theater-style (when HKAPA briefly attempted a musical theater concentration), showed less student proficiency in grasping the expressive methods of these forms. Other genres, such as bharatanatyam or hula[87] have been taught at

[87] "International Festival of Dance Academies," Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Library. Video recording. 1989.

HKAPA during one-off artist residencies or workshops, but the fluidity the students develop to shift among Chinese dance, ballet, and modern/contemporary does not extend to other genres. Nevertheless, one phenomenon that has developed out of this tri-genre training is that students frequently perform non-classical versions of Chinese dance and of ballet, both choreographed by HKAPA faculty members and by guest choreographers. In the city, there is a reputation that Hong Kong Chinese dance is influenced by modern dance, which could be the result of HKAPA's curricular choices.[88] The influence of modern/contemporary dance overall on the dancers' training has shifted from classical modern dance technique (Graham, Limón, Humphrey-Weidman) to a contemporary style that values sequentiality through the body, inverted orientations in space, extreme flexibility, and quick shifts of speed. Perhaps due to the Chinese dance and ballet influence, the dancers do not seem to perform much floor work in their student performances; their dancing is often upright, which highlights the shape-oriented and limber quality to the movements. The partner work they exhibit stresses duets using impressive lifts akin to ballet partnering more than weight-sharing that occurs in contact improvisation.

HKAPA dancers spend much of Monday through Friday in repertoire and technique classes, which means they not only train their bodies to be limber and strong, but also train their quick learning of choreography. In technique classes, the dancers must remember short sequences of movement that are routinely repeated, such as warm-ups and foundational exercises, as well as new, short choreographies, taught at the end of classes across the three genres. They excel at memorizing sequences in various genres taught to them by visual cues and verbal commands across languages (English, Mandarin, and Cantonese); thus, they train in skills

[88] Interviews at Hong Kong Dance Company, 2016. During these interviews, I spoke with almost twenty members of the company who echoed this sentiment and also claimed that their love for dance was a love for all dance, not a love specifically for Chinese dance.

useful to working with the many guest choreographers who work in brief stints at HKAPA. By some international instructor accounts,[89] the students respect authority easily and rarely challenge the instructor or the choreographer in the learning process. This kind of easy pliability in terms of physicality, but also in terms of obedience, makes the dancers convenient canvases upon which many choreographers can quickly set repertoire material. Furthermore, these dancers gain experience in high-tech stages and video projects[90] due to the technological capacity at the institution as well as Hong Kong's overall emphasis on technological intersections with performance.[91] Along with the multiple genres of study, the various interactions with numerous educators and choreographers produces dancers who are physically adaptable and strong at learning new material.

Across the dance majors at HKAPA, the dancers generally exhibit the same physical skills, which leads to a homogenizing of the dancing body and dance forms, thereby promoting an ideology that glosses cultural difference. The capability of the bodies differs only in repertoire. The Chinese dance majors excel at acrobatics and at prop use (ribbons, fans, handkerchiefs, long sleeves), and the ballet majors excel on pointe; but, overall, the dancers can transition among these dance forms in both training and in performance. In recent years, the program has increased what they refer to as "cross-stream" opportunities for dancers from each of the three majors to dance together for guest choreographers and HKAPA professors. As a

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[89] Tom Brown writes of the challenge of encouraging HKAPA dance students to speak in class. See: Tom Brown. "Day Trip." 151; Betsy Fisher writes about HKAPA dance students not asking many questions as respectful of teacher's authority. See: Fisher, Betsy. "From Helsinki to Hong Kong," in *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in the Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, eds. Ruth Solomon and John Solomon (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 119-125, 120.

[90] Gleaned from HKAPA Annual Reports.

[91] I make this claim based on my experience as an audience member in Hong Kong performances in the years 2011-2016.

testament to their fluidity, they are hired by contemporary dance, ballet, and Chinese dance companies, and sometimes by a company that focuses on a genre that was not their main major. For example, the Chinese classical dance major who gets hired by a ballet company.[92] Furthermore, dancers do not limit their career development to the genre of their major; for instance, Mandy Ming-yin Yim and Victor Choi-wo Ma, after their graduation from the first cohort as ballet and Chinese dance majors, opened their own space for improvisation and contemporary dance. The result of the attempted parity among Chinese dance, ballet, and modern/contemporary dance in the name of multiculturalism is the homogenization of these dancing bodies and a tokenizing, buffet-style programming. In this way, HKAPA has interpreted "one country, two systems" as an invitation to display Hong Kong dancers as malleable and general, rather than specific to its local culture and socio-politics. In so doing, HKAPA both denies Hong Kong's colonial relationship with both Britain and China and neglects its prominent protests for local self-determination.

Within this multicultural dance education, the structure and emphasis of the faculty-choreographed student performances demonstrate this tokenizing approach, where the genres and the many pieces of dance repertoire lose their original specific contexts in the name of a harmonious "one country, two systems." In most concerts, the genres of modern/contemporary, ballet, and Chinese dance have been placed alongside each other in student performances, juxtaposed side-by-side. Even Wolz has admitted these performances in the first few years took on a "variety show"[93] feel. As an example, in 1992, a narrative shaped the entire student dance

[92] Gleaned from HKAPA Annual Reports.

[93] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and Some Thoughts on International Networking," 105.

concert around the concept of the “The Time Travelers," which invited the audience to this shift in genres as a “journey through time.”[94] Pre-recorded announcements in British-accented English and Cantonese described a re-staging of Doris Humphrey’s *Shakers* as an early American Shaker village, Chinese Classical Dance as a 568 AD China Buddhist Cave, and postmodern dance as a “romantic duet on the moon” in the future. The time-travel narrative attempted to excuse the jolt from one genre to the next. At the same time, the narrative of time-travel promoted postmodern dance as dance of the future and Chinese dance as dance of the past, reifying Western/modern and Eastern/traditional binaries. In another example, for a show listed in the archives as 1990 June Dance,[95] Wolz asked each faculty member to choreograph a section of a Mahler piece of music, resulting in an abstract dance that connected to the music, rather than a larger overarching emotional narrative. Each section, whether Chinese dance or modern or ballet, was clearly delineated by genre, thereby making evident that the sections were choreographed separately and then placed together as collage.[96]

Besides lacking cohesion, these concerts did accomplish something rare for the 1990s and do even now—bringing ballet, modern dance, and Chinese dance all on stage together as equally valuable as proscenium stage dance forms at the university level. For example, this approach contrasts the genre separations that occur at Beijing Dance Academy and the

[94] “The Time Travelers,” Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Library. Video recording. 1992.

[95] “June Dance,” Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Library. Video recording. 1990.

[96] The Chinese dance sections highlighted prop use—sleeves and long ribbons and back-bends, large leaps, and quick spinning, and martial movements accompanied percussive music. The ballet section displayed the ballet trope of performance within performance; several male/female pairings of duets observed and danced for one another, the women on pointe. The modern section showcased Limón dance technique: for example, leaps with a back leg bent, torso tilts to the side with a flexed leg, walking patterns with arms held at the side.

prominence of ballet and modern dance as foundational at Juilliard.[97] HKAPA's engagement of "one country, two systems" has meant valuing each of these genres as "high art." [98] Dancers at HKAPA have exhibited a high level of mastery in these three genres, and a range of aesthetic possibilities for each genre. In terms of ballet, pieces of classical ballet repertoire, such as from *Don Quixote* or *Swan Lake,* have shown a mastery of a canon well-respected by ballet educators the world over. Classical Chinese dance pieces in the same shows, such as those reconstructed by esteemed Beijing Dance Academy professor Liu You Lan, have demonstrated that these multi-talented dancers can handle the same repertoire as Mainland Chinese dancers. In a 1997 student production, rather than a presentation of original choreography by faculty, reconstruction of earlier works dominated the performance. Dancers performed Doris Humphrey's *Shakers*, Taiwan's Lin Hwai-Min's *Legacy* and excerpts from the classical Russian ballet work *Don Quixote*. These reconstructions in repertoire performances have given HKAPA students, and by extension, Hong Kong, an opportunity to participate in a wide canon of works to display mastery across the three genres.

At the same time, this presentation of the repertoire of three genres in the name of multiculturalism can dilute the initial politics of the repertoire. For example, during 1997, a defining year for Hong Kong's relationship with China, HKAPA students performed *Legacy* (1978), which essentially honors anti-Chinese consciousness. Taiwanese dance scholar Yatin Lin argues that *Legacy* represented an increase in Taiwanese consciousness as separate from

[97] "Dance at The Juilliard School," accessed March 27, 2020, https://www.juilliard.edu/dance?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIhYfA7vam6AIVlyCtBh19-gjBEAAYASAAEgIW3fD_BwE.

[98] As Wolz has said, the student performances aimed "to show that it is possible for dancers to achieve a high standard of performance in more than one style of dance" (105). See: Wolz, Carl, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and Some Thoughts on International Networking."

China just as the Taiwanese nativist (*hsiang-tu)* literary movement did. In *Legacy*, she highlights indigenous movements and movements representing physical labor that promoted Taiwanese uniqueness and stability in the face of the US decision to form diplomatic ties with Mao's China instead of Taiwan.[99] Including *Legacy* in a concert with Chinese dances, modern dances, and ballet dances, diluted the original context. It turns out that *Legacy* by Lin Hwai-Min, founder, choreographer, and former artistic director of Taiwan's Cloud Gate Dance Theater, was taught at HKAPA through a Labanotation score, by an American Ray Cook. [100] Learning from a Labanotation score that records movement as an object removes the choreography from the choreographer's original intent and socio-political context of creation. As a result, *Legacy* performed at HKAPA expressed politics lightly, but not explicitly, when a part of a concert that simply presented dances as a multicultural buffet. To take repertoire of these three genres out of context as evidence of mastery and multiculturalism dilutes the political potency of the choreographies.

The non-technique liberal arts dance courses in the HKAPA dance curriculum have also reflected a Western-centric approach to cultural difference as Western epistemologies remain arbiters for choreography and dance analysis. American modern dance factored heavily in dance history and choreography courses at the beginning of HKAPA's development. As told to me by HKAPA dance graduates, dance history courses in the first few years of the program focused on American modern dance history, thereby reifying American culture as modern and superior. I

[99]Yatin Lin, "Choreographing a flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan's changing identity" in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, eds. Carter, Alexandra., and Janet O'Shea (London; Routledge, 2010), 255-256.

[100] Ray Cook, "How I Survived as a Notator," *Library News* XI, no. No. 4 (Summer 2017): 1–11. 10.
Vassar College professor emeritus, Ray Cook, had notated Lin's *Legacy* after seeing it performed in Hong Kong in 1990, then joined Tom Brown in a cross-school production of *Legacy* for the World Dance Alliance Europe. Dancers at HKAPA, Taiwan National University of the Arts, SUNY Purchase College, and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts each learned a section.

was told that a "History of Chinese Dance in Hong Kong and China" course was attempted, but that it failed due to low enrollment. Given American cultural imperialism, it is not surprising that the history of Chinese dance would be under-valued by the institution and by the students. Currently, HKAPA no longer has a dance history course, but rather a course called "Dance Perspectives" that delves into topics in dance history and cultural studies; the content varies according to each instructor, so there exists the possibility to cover more local dance history or more Chinese dance history.[101]

Besides a Western bent to dance history courses, the choreography courses taught at HKAPA have been most closely tied to modern/contemporary dance, thus reifying these Western dance forms as creative. Due to the fact that Chinese dance and ballet educators tend not to teach these choreography courses at HKAPA, the program connects the act of creating dances, of individual artistry and decision-making, most strongly to modern/contemporary dance. In fact, dance scholar Foster shows that the conception of a choreographer as an individual artist emerged in the United States in the 1920s and 30s.[102] Carl Wolz, the first Dean of Dance has written that, in the beginning of HKAPA, dance composition in the curriculum was a new area of study for Hong Kong dance education, resulting in a "new Hong Kong style of creative dance."[103] Wolz, thus, demonstrates an Orientalist assumption that choreography courses from a Western perspective produced a local phenomenon of creativity. Even so, he admits to the failing that many of the students in the initial years felt they had to choreograph something

[101] Joy Cho Yi, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, September 2016.

[102] Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies and Choreographers," 106.

[103] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and Some Thoughts on International Networking," 105.

"Western" in composition classes.[104]According to Wolz, an awareness of this bias led to the inclusion of course content to problematize what it meant to choreograph in a Western or Asian style.[105] Although in Wolz' 1995 chapter, this complex issue seems resolved, as late as 2016 when I conducted interviews, I still heard it was a challenge for Chinese dance students to choreograph in Chinese dance idioms because the Chinese dance teachers were not the composition teachers.[106]

Related to this Western centrism, the dance science courses assume a Western scientific grounding that can be applied to all dancers/dance-forms. Over the years, HKAPA has developed a reputation for its education in dance science and dance conditioning, as evident in its hosting of the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science (IADMS) conference in 2016. Dance science was called an "area of strategic focus for the Academy" in the 2015/2016 Annual Report.[107] The dance science program encompasses anatomy as well as movement practices such as pilates, yoga, and Feldenkrais, that are all part of the Western Somatic movement, which assumes a universal natural body.[108] This program has the goal of "optimizing performance" which speaks to aims of movement efficiency and injury prevention for long-term dancing. When I spoke to the long-time head of Chinese dance, Sheng Peiqi,[109] she reflected

[104] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts," 109.

[105] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts," 110.

[106] Yu Pik Yim, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, September 2016.

[107] Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016, pg. 6.

[108] For a detailed and global analysis of the Somatics movement assumption of the universal natural body, see: George, Doran. Diss. *A Conceit of the Natural Body: The Universal-Individual in Somatic Dance Training*, University of California Los Angeles, 2014.

[109] Sheng Peiqi, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, November 2016.

that the dance conditioning practices do not always suit Chinese dance learning and longevity; Chinese folk dance and classical dance have their own pedagogies for training the bodies to safely perform the dances. The Chinese dance forms have not been well integrated into the dance science studies, revealing its Western centrism. Historically, western educators have been treated as the Dance Science experts. For instance, HKAPA dance instructors have studied injury prevention and dance science with Ruth Solomon, Professor Emeritus from the Harvard Medical Center and Marita Cardinal from Western Oregon University, Health and Science Division.[110] In 2015, the program set up an academic staff exchange for dance science between HKAPA and the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London, thus affirming a support of Western expertise on dance science.[111] In the Annual Reports up to 2020, I have noted no dance science partnerships with Chinese universities.[112]

The movement analysis courses at HKAPA also transmit Western-centric epistemologies, rather than Chinese movement epistemologies. Over the years, HKAPA has gained a reputation in China and Taiwan for its Laban Movement Analysis/Choreological Studies courses.[113] Although Laban Movement Analysis still is found in American dance department programs, Choreological Studies is primarily a British pedagogy. Both China and Taiwan currently have growing communities of scholars interested in Laban Movement Analysis/Choreological

[110] Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2001-2002.

[111] Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016.

[112] Note that as late as 2021, there was an exchange with a Taiwan Somatics group, called Mei Chu Liu, but they practice Body-Mind Centering, an American Somatics form developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen.

[113] During my 2016 interviews with former HKAPA modern dance educator and administrator, Tom Brown, he told me some master's students from Mainland China are very interested in studying LMA at HKAPA.

Studies.[114]At HKAPA, the Laban Movement Analysis courses, now Choreological Studies, draw from Rudolf Laban's[115]theorizations of the universal human mover. Choreological Studies is taught predominantly at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London. Carl Wolz has said that Labanalysis became the "theoretical framework"[116] for dance analysis at HKAPA because it already had a set of teaching materials, such as notated scores and teaching manuals, as well as the "widest international acceptance."[117] Wolz initially supported Labanotation as a method for cross-cultural understanding, evidenced by his commissioned notation the Chinese classical dance curriculum taught by the Beijing Dance Academy instructors.[118] The dance program also utilized Labanotation to assist in presenting HKAPA performances of canonical works of modern dance.[119]

Labanalysis was assumed a "comprehensive and broad tool" for all genres at HKAPA, thereby neglecting the Western-centric and modernist nature of Labanalysis.[120] Currently, dance

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[114] "China – LABAN/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies," accessed March 26, 2020. https://labaninstitute.org/china/.

[115] In the United States, Irmgard Bartinieff, a student of Laban's, framed dance analysis with these four categories: Body Effort, Shape, and Space. In Great Britain, Lisa Ullman, another of Laban's students, framed dance analysis with these four categories: Body, Effort, Space, and Relationship.

[116] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts,"105.

[117] Carl Wolz, "Dance at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts,"105.

[118] Unfortunately, this notation is unavailable at HKAPA. Beijing Dance Academy owns the copyright.

[119] Modern dance faculty Tom Brown, among other reconstruction projects, reconstructed Doris Humphrey's *Shakers* (1930), Jose Limon's *Missa Brevis* (1958), Merce Cunningham's *Changing Steps (1975)*, and Donald Mckayle's *Rainbow Round My Shoulder (1959)*, which was also supported by McKayle's artist residency at HKAPA.

[120] Rudolf Laban, a 20th century German expressionist dancer, on the one hand sought healing properties of dance for the modern industrial worker; on the other hand, he also controlled movement in the name of efficiency and nationalism. His 1920s movement choirs of groups of 50 to 500 performed in unison with very little improvisation, directed by his notation scores. In 1933, Laban was appointed Minister of Dance by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and created German nationalist dance curriculum until 1936 under the Third Reich. Although Laban sought to cultivate community through dance, his curriculum and notation system were authoritarian. See:

scholars debate Labanotation's usefulness as a non-neutral reflection of notators' own socio-cultural background. According to Swedish dance scholar Lena Hammergren,[121] during the Second International Congress on Movement Notation held in 1990 at HKAPA, this very topic was fiercely debated. Sociology of science scholar, Whitney Elaine Laemmli, argues that Laban's justifications via physics and physiology motivated the dissemination of Labanotation. Dance notators at the American Dance Notation Bureau in the 1940s popularized Labanotation, believing in its ability to objectively preserve dance against claims of its ephemerality and emotionality. By 1965, the bureau had used Labanotation to archive more than forty dance works. Laemmli writes that the post-war belief in scientific thinking and preservation permeated the bureau, and as a result, reduced dance to presumed objectivity.[122] Dance Notation Bureau members frequently referred to Labanotation as a "scientifically constructed method"[123]and argued it was superior to earlier notation methods because it produced a written documentation of dance.[124] Although the first cohorts of students at HKAPA studied Labanotation, the notation has since dropped out of the curriculum, replaced by Laban Movement Analysis and later, choreology, all in the same lineage.

During a lecture-demonstration in 1988, American HKAPA instructor, Janice Meaden, offered examples from her Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) teaching to international visitors

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Whitney Elaine Laemmli, *The Choreography of Everyday Life: Rudolf Laban and the Making of Modern Movement*. University of Pennsylvania, 2016, Diss. 54-60.

[121] Lena Hammergren, "Fifth Hong Kong International Dance Conference and Second International Congress on Dance Notation Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts," *Dance Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1991).

[122] Whitney Elaine Laemmli, *The Choreography of Everyday Life,* 61.

[123] Whitney Elaine Laemmli, *The Choreography of Everyday Life,* 68.

[124] Whitney Elaine Laemmli, *The Choreography of Everyday Life,* 66.

during a conference hosted by HKAPA.[125] In her class, the students learned Labanotation, motif writing of effort, body, shape, and space. Like many Laban Movement teachers, she also taught Bartenieff Fundamentals, which she explained teaches students to develop deep internal neuromuscular patterns, again with an assumption of scientific grounding. Moments of criticism by her to students implied that although Bartenieff Fundamentals aims to find freedom in the body, there is a correct way of doing things. Bartenieff Fundamentals, developed by Laban student Irmgard Bartenieff, assumed, based on a presumed scientific argument, that movements that mimic the development of babies and toddlers could correct maladaptive movement and expressive habits.[126] In this lecture-demonstration, Meaden stressed that beginning dancers could benefit from LMA in order to practice being better expressive performers, to work their inner motivation to the outside. LMA assisted in her teaching that dance is an expression of interior psychology—a value of American expressionist modern dancers.[127] This represents a legacy of Laban, who asserted a strong connection between psychology and body, claiming a curing capacity of the body on the mind and transformative possibilities in dance.[128]

In addition to encouraging expression akin to the modernist introspection of Euro-American modern dance, Meaden utilized the spatial logic of Laban to categorize ballet, modern dance, and Chinese dance distinctly. As a culmination to this lecture-demonstration, Meaden

[125] Viewed in video archives by author.

[126] "Bartenieff Fundamentals[SM] – LABAN/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies." accessed March 26, 2020. https://labaninstitute.org/about/bartenieff-fundamentals/.

[127] "For all the expressionist choreographers, representation based on replication began with a journey inward. The subject matter of dances and its corresponding vocabulary of movement could be found only in the psyche itself. Even movement adapted from existing lexicons—from social, ethnic, or theater dance forms—participated in, and was transformed by, the individual choreographer's search for authentic physical expressions" (153). See: Susan Leigh Foster, *Reading Dancing,* 1986.

[128] Whitney Elaine Laemmli, *The Choreography of Everyday Life,* 37.

brought out several large structures: a rectangle, a cube, and an icosahedron; against these structures, four students danced four genres to represent moving through various planes of space. One student performed cartwheels, understood to move through the vertical plane. Another student performed a modern dance movement bent over as if wiping a table with her upper body, understood as a horizontal plane. Still another student danced ballet, moving her leg through passés and arabesques and her arms through high fifth, second, and arabesque positions; her movements represent the points and directionality of a cube. The fourth student performed a Chinese sword dance. His torso and arms seamlessly reached several diagonals in succession as he lunged, flipped, twirled, and stabbed his sword through the air; his footsteps carried him in curvilinear patterns as his upper body swayed. Meaden explained that the Chinese classical dance, the sword dance, is the perfect example of the Icosahedron shape in space, blending horizontal, vertical, sagittal, and diagonal planes of space. Meaden's lecture-demonstration, therefore, exemplifies how Laban Movement Analysis at HKAPA presumes a systematic approach to both moving and observing movement that can be applied universally.

Although I am not contesting that these various genres utilize spatial pathways and planes differently, the way that Meaden has laid them side-by-side incorrectly implies that they can all be sufficiently understood through the Euro-centric lens of Laban Movement Analysis. For example, particularly due to Chinese opera influence, Chinese classical and folk dance forms pay close attention to finger gestures and facial gestures, such as punctuating a phrase with the look of the eyes, which is not well documented by Laban Movement Analysis. Many Chinese classical dances have a strong connection to literature as well,[129]which is context left out of

[129] This is due to the legacy of Chinese opera in Chinese classical dance. Chinese opera narratives stem from literature. Moreover, early Chinese modern dance has a strong connection with literature. See: Nan Ma. "Transmediating Kinesthesia: Wu Xiaobang and Modern Dance in China, 1929-1939," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2016): 129–73.

Laban Movement Analysis or notation of Chinese classical dance. The teaching advice that all beginning dancers should learn how to communicate their inner psyche outward is also Euro-centric and based on certain forms of dance, like the modern dance of Europe and the United States (Wigman, Graham). Furthermore, the descendent of Laban Movement Analysis still taught at HKAPA, Choreological Studies, still stresses the Western proscenium, creator and audience, in a way that excludes dance forms that might be communally created and performed without an audience. Dance scholar Sally Ann Ness argues that "On the level of foundational conceptual logic, the Laban Centre choreological approach replicates closely the classically modernist systematicity evident in Laban's work."[130] This LMA/Choreological approach, undergirding the curriculum at HKAPA, justifies joining together of the three genres of Chinese dance, ballet, and modern dance as various seemingly "neutral" combinations of space, effort, and time.

At HKAPA, like elsewhere in the world,[131] despite a multicultural agenda that acknowledges difference, it actually privileges Euro-centric epistemologies and pedagogies. The Western focus of movement analysis, dance science, composition, and dance history curriculum implies the superiority of the Western component of the East-meets-West equation in preparing dancers as educators and professionals. These persistent displays of Western pedagogies and epistemologies reflect that HKAPA has taken "two systems" as an invitation to produce multiculturalism as proof of Hong Kong's global status as a city. The dancing can come off as exotic, yet legible to the professional dance communities in Euro-American locations. By

[130] Sally Ann Ness, "Dance and the Performative: A Choreological Perspective—Laban and Beyond," *Dance Research Journal* 35/36, no. 2/1: 173-175.

[131] For a critique of the dominant Western participant in intercultural performance, see: Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000).

combining the three genres (Chinese dance, modern dance, and ballet) in each dancing body, the institution attempts a parity between the three genres; in so doing, the work produced exhibits a homogenization of cultural difference. This multicultural education, encompasses Chinese sources and two dance forms that masquerade as universal expressions of beauty and emotion (ballet and modern dance, respectively), neglects specific cultural relevancies. The mostly Asian dance students at the school express the difference required of a multicultural lens yet remain legible to the rest of the globe via foundations in ballet, modern dance, and Western dance choreography, science, and analysis. Through its strategy of teaching every dancer these three cultural dance forms in the name of multiculturalism, the academy implies that cultural difference is superficial and that Hong Kong as a cultural space is malleable to political influence. This way of treating difference upholds the global city status enabled by "two systems" initially as a financial strategy.

Choreographing the Curriculum of Cold War, Colonial, National, and Imperial Ideologies

By studying these dance techniques and non-technique liberal arts seminar courses throughout their time at HKAPA, the students fulfill HKAPA's particular navigation of "one country, two systems" by dancing the alleged re-union with Mainland China and the supposed freedom of Westernization. During the 1997 transition of rule and in spite of the anti-Chinese sentiment that has occurred since, HKAPA has boldly embraced Chinese dance, and by extension, China. Since its founding, more and more connections have been made between HKAPA and Mainland dancers (as detailed below). Moreover, the prominence of modern dance and other related liberal arts courses, such as Laban Movement Analysis, which originated in Europe and the United States, expresses a Western centrism to the dancing body and to Hong Kong. By emphasizing modern dance, HKAPA has forged strong connections with American,

European, and Australian educators and perpetuated the cultural capital of Western forms. Through its strategy of teaching every dancer these three cultural dance forms in the name of multiculturalism, the academy implies that cultural difference is superficial and that Hong Kong as a cultural space is malleable with regard to political influence. In the following section, I delve into the specific political resonances of these curricular choices, glossed over by HKAPA's claims of seamless multi-culturalism.[132] At a time when many residents fear that Hong Kong's semi-autonomy is on the line, the success of HKAPA dancers in taking on various cultural forms displays Hong Kong's imbrications in Euro-American and Chinese colonizing and imperial networks of power.

Referring to HKAPA's dance education as solely multicultural neglects HKAPA's engagement with "two systems" as a perpetuation of Euro-American colonialism/imperialism. The prominence of Euro-American education and lauding of Euro-American cultural forms at HKAPA shows how the "two systems" political structure has facilitated Hong Kong's exceptional Euro-American connections as well as the effects of Western cultural imperialism. First, the "two systems" exception has permitted Britain's continued investment in the city even after colonialism. British university infrastructures, such as the numbers of years to degree, as well as British administrators have always had power at HKAPA. The Directors or the CEOs of the academy have been predominantly British, which perpetuates Western epistemologies and pedagogies at the academy. It is the British system, too, that dictated an assessment of university education that matched the arts industry's needs. At the curricular level, the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) ballet training has served as foundational to ballet pedagogy at HKAPA. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Choreological Studies courses borrowed from a British

[132] Promotional Materials and Annual Reports consistently praise HKAPA for its multicultural approach.

pedagogical approach represent a universalizing understanding of dance analysis and choreography. [133]

Besides British influence, the prominence of Americans as well as Australians as both dance administrators and as modern/contemporary dance educators reflects the unique relationship Hong Kong holds with the United States and Australia, due to the cultural and financial openness of "two systems." From 1984 to 2018, all deans of the dance programs were American, British, or Australian. The first decade of modern dance teachers were predominantly American, led by revered teacher, Tom Brown, whose career at HKAPA spanned thirty years; more recently, Australian educators, such as John Utans, have headed the contemporary dance program, continuing contemporary dances' association with Western culture at HKAPA. At HKAPA, the freedom espoused by the Hong Kong government[134] takes form in modern dance curriculum. As mentioned in the last section, American modern dance and required courses (dance history, anatomy, movement analysis) modeled after the American Juilliard program initially took on the dominant role in the program, thereby mimicking common trends in East/West interculturalism whereby the West acts as dominant in the relationship.[135]

Cultural imperialism[136]and American post-war exceptionalism promoted American modern dance as innovative and liberatory—also characteristics that the Hong Kong government has claimed as a strength of Hong Kong under "one country, two systems,"—and have resulted

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[133] Tom Brown, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, May 2016.

[134] "Free: Hong Kong is an open society, where economic and social freedoms are cherished." "What Is Brand Hong Kong?" accessed March 25, 2020. https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/BrandHongKong/WhatIsBrandHongKong.html.

[135] Bharucha, Rustom. *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2000.

[136] Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

in the high value placed on modern dance in HKAPA.[137] During the Cold War, American cultural imperialism accompanied anti-Communism, American military intervention, and capitalist expansion.[138] As dance scholar Clare Croft explains, the United States, beginning with the Eisenhower administration, deployed State Department modern dance tours as a seemingly apolitical cultural policy; the United States government believed that the containment of Communism relied not only on military and economic efforts, but also the "image, prestige, and credibility" of the United States.[139] Consequently, modern dance became associated with Americanness. As Croft writes, "in identifying modern dance as a primary cultural export, the State Department claimed modern dance as quintessentially representative of and indigenous to the United States."[140] Likely due to this association between modern dance and Americanness, the dance program at HKAPA initially welcomed almost exclusively American dance educators to teach modern dance, not to mention the hiring of an American as the first Dean of Dance.

Besides the role of American modern dance in Cold War politics, the paternalistic political and financial relationship between the United States and Hong Kong has ensured a welcoming environment for American expats teaching at HKAPA. The political relationship between Hong Kong and the United States is a legacy of the Cold War era when the United

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[137] See the Brand Hong Kong website that lists Hong Kong's core values as "Free, Enterprising, Quality Living, Innovative, Excellence": "What Is Brand Hong Kong?" accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/BrandHongKong/WhatIsBrandHongKong.html.

[138] "The dancers' task on tour was to represent more than American consumer culture. Exporting only consumer goods threatened to foreground capitalism instead of democracy and freedom more broadly. During the Cold War, American cultural diplomacy ensured that US cultural exportation included not only cars, TVS, and refrigerators but also Robert Rauschenberg, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and jazz improvisation" (13). See: Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2015.

[139] Charlotte M. Canning, "Teaching Theatre as Diplomacy: A US Hamlet in the European Court," Theatre Topics 21, no. 2 (2011): 151-162. Quoted in Clare Croft, *Dancers as Diplomats,* 21.

[140] Clare Croft. *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange*, 16.

States viewed Hong Kong as a buffer and lookout post against Communist China.[141] The United States has continued to treat Hong Kong as a Westernized, more liberal version of China. In anticipation of the transition to Chinese rule, the US signed the 1992 Hong Kong Policy Act, which states that the US vowed to continue to treat Hong Kong apart from the People's Republic of China after the transfer of power in 1997.[142] This act supported business relationships between the United States and Hong Kong, desired because of Hong Kong's position as a strong capitalist economy.[143]The act also set goals for strengthening relationships between the two in terms of education and culture.[144]The Hong Kong Policy Act thus set up conditions for American dance educators in Hong Kong to feel at home at HKAPA and in the American expat communities. Hong Kong's semi-autonomy of "two systems" likely has attracted these educators due to the academic and artistic freedoms in contrast to Mainland China.

The current relationship between the United States and Hong Kong is a point of contention between the United States and Chinese governments, which further proves American

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[141] Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American Relations 1949-1957* (Oxford Historical Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 33.

[142] Summary of S.1731-102nd Congress (1991-1992), United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, accessed February 1, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/bill/102nd-congress/senate-bill/1731.

[143] "(1) the United States should seek to maintain and expand economic and trade relations with Hong Kong and should continue to treat Hong Kong as a separate territory in economic and trade matters; (2) the United States should continue to negotiate directly with Hong Kong to conclude bilateral economic agreements; (3) the United States should continue to grant Hong Kong nondiscriminatory trade treatment (most-favored-nation status) and to recognize certificates of origin for manufactured goods issued by the Administrative Region; (4) the United States should continue to allow the U.S. dollar to be freely exchanged with the Hong Kong dollar and U.S. businesses should be encouraged to continue to operate in Hong Kong…"

[144] "(1) the United States should seek to maintain and expand U.S.-Hong Kong relations and exchanges in culture, education, science, and academic research; (2) Hong Kong should be accorded separate status as a full partner in the Fulbright Program; and (3) the Librarian of Congress, upon the request of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong and acting through the Congressional Research Service, should seek to expand educational and informational ties with the Council."
Christopher H. Smith, "H.R.3289 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019." Webpage, October 16, 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3289.

investment in Hong Kong's semi-autonomy. In 2019, in response to months-long protests in Hong Kong, the United States passed a bill called the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act that again supports Hong Kong's semi-autonomy under "one country, two systems" and argued for democracy in Hong Kong. It upheld the exceptional relationship between Hong Kong and the United States and, essentially, threatened Mainland China to ensure Hong Kong's semi-autonomy.[145]Although many Hong Kong protestors celebrated this bill as the United States standing up to China,[146]which claimed the US was meddling in China-Hong Kong relations,[147] the bill should not be seen as entirely altruistic. The US has sought to protect its capitalist business interests in Hong Kong in the name of democracy and human rights, with Cold War values. These business interests ensure American stake in the autonomy of Hong Kong. As of May 2020, American President Donald Trump announced that the United States would end its exceptional relationship with Hong Kong, due to a new Chinese national security legislation that is viewed by governments worldwide as an erosion of semi-autonomy.[148]

During Hong Kong's anticipation and experience of "one country, two systems," it has also formed exceptional relationships with Australia in terms of politics, business, and

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[145] "This bill addresses Hong Kong's status under U.S. law and imposes sanctions on those responsible for human rights violations in Hong Kong. (Hong Kong is part of China but has a largely separate legal and economic system.) The Department of State shall certify annually to Congress as to whether Hong Kong warrants its unique treatment under various treaties, agreements, and U.S. law. The analysis shall evaluate whether Hong Kong is upholding the rule of law and protecting rights enumerated in various documents, including (1) the agreement between the United Kingdom and China regarding Hong Kong's return to China, and (2) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

[146] "As Beijing Seethes, Protesters Celebrate Trump Signing Hong Kong Act - Los Angeles Times," accessed March 25, 2020. https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-11-28/hong-kong-thankful-beijing-angry-trump-hong-kong-act.

[147] "Trump Signs Hong Kong Human Rights Bill, Ignoring China's Warnings," South China Morning Post, November 28, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3039673/donald-trump-signs-hong-kong-human-rights-and-democracy-act.

[148] Keith Bradsher, "China Approves Plan to Rein in Hong Kong, Defying Worldwide Outcry," The New York Times, May 28, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/28/world/asia/china-hong-kong-crackdown.html.

educational exchange, that, in turn, have encouraged Australian modern dance influence at HKAPA. Australia and Hong Kong, of course, share consequences of British colonialism, such as the English language, still one of the official languages of Hong Kong. Shared language makes for smooth business dealings as well as possible educational exchanges, thus fulfilling the capitalist promise of "two systems." According to the Australian Consulate-General in Hong Kong, six hundred Australian businesses have a presence in Hong Kong.[149] The Hong Kong government uses words like "transparency" and "integrity"[150] to explain why Australian businesses are attracted to Hong Kong as if to set it apart from Mainland Chinese business. In 2019, the Australian-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement and a new bilateral Investment Agreement were signed in order to solidify zero tariffs for Australian exporters, among other protections from Australian and Hong Kong investors. Besides these trade agreements, Hong Kong and Australia cooperate via educational opportunities: student and staff exchanges, research and academic partnerships, as well as study abroad.[151]As a result of these financial and educational relationships, there exists a large cultural infrastructure for Australian HKAPA educators to join, making it attractive for Australian dance educators to work at HKAPA, especially during periods when the Australian dollar drops. Australians are treated as experts in modern dance at HKAPA due to their Westernized cultural background.

What is the version of Chinese nationalism adopted at HKAPA? Whereas the importance

[149] Trade, Department of Foreign Affairs and. "Australian Consulate," accessed March 25, 2020, https://hongkong.china.embassy.gov.au/hkng/australia-hong-kong-relations.html.

[150] "Hong Kong Brief | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade," accessed March 25, 2020, https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/hong-kong/Pages/hong-kong-brief.

[151] "Hong Kong Brief | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade." In 2016, Hong Kong ranked as the 16th most popular study abroad location for Australian students. In 2017, Australia ranked as the 10th most popular location for Hong Kong international students.

placed on modern and ballet genres at HKAPA followed Euro-American colonial and Cold War trajectories, the Chinese dance taught at HKAPA represents the "one country" promise of re-unification with China. HKAPA teaches professional Chinese dance forms, Chinese classical dance and Chinese folk dance, which factored strongly in the People's Republic of China nation-building project after the Communist Party came to power in 1949. Both Chinese classical and folk forms were self-consciously designed to promote Chinese national characteristics. Sinophone scholar Shu-Mei Shih[152] contends that the West used Chineseness to justify semi-colonization; while for China, national Chineseness has been deployed to mobilize resistance to Western imperialism and semi-colonialism. Shih critiques the use of Han Chinese characteristics as adopting Western conceptions of Chineseness,[153]which resulted in the suppression of China's ethnic minorities. In the dance context, the self-conscious "invented traditions"[154] of classical dance and folk dance formed the first curriculum at China's first dance conservatory, the Beijing Dance School, in 1954. In 1978, a few years before the founding of HKAPA, Beijing Dance Academy became an official arts university affiliated with the ministry of culture. In 2000, the Beijing Dance Academy shifted to management by the Beijing Municipal Government. The current website emphasizes its prominent role in training teachers.[155] HKAPA, from the beginning has hired teachers from the Beijing Dance Academy to export Chinese classical and folk dance forms.

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[152] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 24.

[153] Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and identity*, 24.

[154] For the original discussion of "invented traditions," to which Wilcox refers, see: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[155] "Beijing Dance Academy," accessed March 24, 2020. https://en.bda.edu.cn/aboutbda/index.htm.

Students at HKAPA learn to embody "Chinese national characteristics," and therefore "one country," through their study of Chinese classical dance. Chinese dance scholar Emily Wilcox argues that dance educators have consistently aimed to develop Chinese classical dance with *minzuxing* (national character) since its establishment in 1949.[156] Several styles of classical dance have sought to represent "Chinese national characteristics." The initial form blended movement from Chinese opera, *kunqu* and *jingju* (considered the last bastion of ancient court dance that declined during the Tang Dynasty), martial arts, ballet pedagogy, and ethnographic research on indigenous Chinese performance. Aesthetic features include extreme back flexibility and leg extensions; circular movement pathways of locomotive movement as well as spiraling pathways within the body; an interplay of flexed and pointed feet and hands; an S posture; and punctuated endings of movement phrases. In 1957, the Beijing Dance School separated into two programs based on Chinese/European categorization.[157] Chinese classical dance was constructed as an "alternative to European classical ballet" to represent a "unified, elite image of Chinese culture" and a "shared cultural inheritance that in theory unites all Chinese people through space and time".[158] After the revival of dance following the Cultural Revolution, educators developed the *Hang-Tang* style, which excluded ballet, thought to better express Chineseness. Based on cave art, the aesthetic features still include curvilinear pathways in the body, as well as add syncopated rhythms of foot stomping, asymmetrical postures, a repetition of movements bilaterally, and flat hand positions. Both styles incorporate props and sleeves. Wilcox asserts

[156] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu' and the Problem of Chineseness in Contemporary Chinese Dance: Sixty Years of Creation and Controversy," *Asian Theatre Journal* 29, no. 1 (2012): 213.

[157] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu,'" 214.

[158] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu,'" 215.

that constructing a dance form characterized by "cultural distinctiveness"[159]refuted the universalism claimed by American modern dance at the time.[160] Thus, when students at HKAPA study the various strands of Chinese classical dance, they portray an acceptance of performing a unified, national China.

Chinese folk dance expresses multi-cultural Chinese unification. Folk dance taught at the conservatories in China encompasses both Han and ethnic minority dance forms that are the dance forms of colonized peoples. The ethnic minority folk dances span a wide range of aesthetics that develop from everyday movements thought essential to that culture, such as the bounce of horse riding that permeates Mongolian dance, or the curvilinear nature of flowing water in the fluid hip movements and outstretched palms of Dai dance. At the time of my research,[161] HKAPA students learn Han and Tibetan dance in their first year, Mongolian and Korean dance in their second year, and Xinjiang, Jiazhou *yangge*, and Korean dance in their third year. The content of the folk dance curriculum represents China's colonialism—ethnic minority culture claimed as Chinese national culture. Shih asserts that China practiced what she terms "continental colonialism" during the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Republican period (1911-49), and into the People's Republic of China (post-1949). She refers to the Qing empire as "boldly expansionist"[162] as it laid the foundation for China doubling in size; the boundaries were solidified by the People's Republic of China with the exception for Outer Mongolia. The

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[159] Emily Wilcox, "Han-Tang 'Zhongguo Gudianwu,'" 224.

[160] Kowal describes how sending "universal dance" abroad was important to the domestic anti-Communist Cold War Strategy. Kowal argues that postwar American modern dance was more politically significant than it let on or than it was understood at the time. See: Rebekah Kowal, *How to Do Things with Dance: Performing Change in Postwar America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2010).

[161] I conducted my ethnographic research in 2016 and 2017.

[162] Shu-mei Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," *PMLA* 126, no. 3 (2011): 709–18. 712.

People's Republic of China then re-colonized Tibet and Xinjiang and initiated linguistic colonization. By including dance forms from these colonized peoples in standardized national curricula and performances, China claims these cultures as its own. As elsewhere, the standardization of these folk dance forms de-contextualizes communal dance from various multiple ethnic and linguistic communities, then prepares it for the aesthetics of the proscenium stage, often adopting Western aesthetics.[163] While Hong Kong HKAPA students are dancing these standardized folk dances, they dance the myth of a harmonious unified nation. In so doing, this affirms the Chinese government's hope for Hong Kong—as if the Hong Kong people are ethnic minorities with a distinct culture to be folded into the Chinese empire.

In the case of the People's Republic of China, Han and ethnic minority folk dance came to symbolize a unified nation as China sought re-definition as a nation composed of multiple nationalities, not just Han.[164]The folk dance curriculum produces another layer of multiculturalism at HKAPA besides the synthesis of Chinese and Western forms. According to Chinese performance scholar Colin MacKerras,[165] the PRC state discourse as early as 1949 used images of dancing ethnic minority peoples to unify ethnic groups and push policy. *Long Live the People's Victory* (1949), in which Han performers danced ethnic minority dance forms, was the first large-scale performance that enacted this ideal. The next year, ethnic minority dancers appeared in the National Day tour with a purpose of "resolving tensions and inequalities among

[163] For a discussion of folk dance in the American and Canadian context and how it faces constrictions of presentation on-stage, see: Anthony Shay, *Choreographing Identities: Folk Dance, Ethnicity and Festival in the United States And Canada* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2006).

[164] Emily Wilcox, "Beyond Internal Orientalism: Dance and Nationality Discourse in the Early People's Republic of China, 1949-1954," *Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2 (2016): 378.

[165] Colin Mackerras, "Folksongs and Dances of China's Minority Nationalities: Policy, Tradition, and Professionalization," *Modern China* 10, no. 2 (1984):187–226.

ethnic groups in China".[166] Wilcox's research shows that professionalization of ethnic minority folk dance developed alongside Han folk dance via professional song-and-dance troupes in the 1950s, the First National Folk Music and Dance Festival of China in 1953, and the opening of the Beijing Dance School in 1954. Although some scholars[167]describe the portrayal of ethnic minorities in the 1980s and 90s as internal orientalism based on images of the primitive or the exotic, Wilcox counters that these arguments are ahistorical. Instead, she argues that ethnic minority folk dance helped construct a "multi-ethnic Chinese self"[168]unified against foreign, and especially, American imperialism. She shows that ethnic dancers were considered progressive and model citizens and treated as modern. For example, dances were attributed to individual artists as creators, not just to the ethnic cultures, during National Day minority dance tours. Within Wilcox's argument, then exists the potential for Chinese folk dance at HKAPA to not only represent Chinese nationalism, but also represent anti-American imperialism alongside American imperialism (modern dance).

Given the promotion of folk dance by the People's Republic of China in the name of multi-ethnic unification, the inclusion of folk dance at HKAPA in a city where Chineseness has repeatedly been contested carries forward the fraught ideal of "one country" unification. The Chinese dance forms at HKAPA have essentially been exported from Beijing Dance Academy as the authority. During the first few years of the program at HKAPA, teachers from the Beijing

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[166] Emily Wilcox, "Beyond Internal Orientalism," 368.

[167] Dru Gladney, "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 no. 1 (1994): 92–123;
Louisa Chein, "Multiple Alterities: The Contouring of Gender in Miao and Chinese Nationalisms," in *Women Out of Place: The Gender of Agency and the Race of Nationality*, ed. Brackette Williams (New York: Routledge, 1996), 79–102.
—— *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

[168] Emily Wilcox, "Beyond Internal Orientalism," 368.

Dance Academy emphasized folk dance more than classical dance. The teachers thought that because folk dance requires less ballet and Chinese opera training than Classical Chinese dance, untrained Hong Kong dancers could learn it more easily. This contrasts with the founding of the Beijing Dance Academy, where Chinese classical dance took priority.[169]At HKAPA, as the program has developed and as Chinese dance training for children via the Beijing Dance Academy syllabus has developed in the city, classical dance has received more attention at HKAPA as well.[170] Still, HKAPA maintains a curriculum that pairs classical dance and folk dance in tandem in their Chinese dance major, which represents them as equally Chinese. By studying and performing both genres of Chinese dance, HKAPA imports these displays of Chinese nationalism and unification, almost ceremoniously.

The language used in Chinese dance training at HKAPA further signifies its Mainland Chineseness. In archival videos of the student dance exams, the Chinese dance teachers all spoke Mandarin to the students. One of the Chinese dance students from the founding year told me, "It was awful. Our teachers only spoke Mandarin, and I couldn't understand them."[171] From 1984 to post-1997 Hong Kong, Mandarin has been more and more integrated into Hong Kong society in the form of music and film,[172] and school curriculum,[173] but still looked down

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[169] Emily Wilcox, "Beyond Internal Orientalism," 379.

[170] Anita Donaldson, Personal Communication, June 2016, Hong Kong.

[171] Billie Chan, Interview with author, June 2016, Hong Kong.

[172] Chu examines financial structures and the rise in co-productions with the mainland. In terms of film, the industry has moved to financing film—from "made in Hong Kong" to "financed by Hong Kong." The same transition of language occurred with the Cantopop market, which became overtaken by the Mandopop market. Cantopop has lost its status as trendsetter yet attempts to maintain its hybridity even of language (Cantonese-Mandarin). Chu refers to Cantopop's secular hybridity and maintains that Hong Kong cultural products are inherently hybrid. See: Yiu-Wai Chu, *Lost in Transition: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2013).

[173] See: Gordon Mathews, Dale Lü, and Jiewei Ma, *Hong Kong, China: learning to belong to a nation* (London: Routledge. 2008), 85.

upon socially.[174] When I asked Hong Kong local professor Yu Pik Yim if she uses Mandarin or Cantonese in her courses at HKAPA, she said that she speaks to the students sometimes in Cantonese, but the movements already have Mandarin names, so it is easiest to use these, and that a Cantonese translation would usually sound awkward and change the meaning. Thus, the Mandarin language is inextricably tied to the curriculum for Chinese classical and folk dances, regardless of the regional languages where the folk dances emerged. The Chinese dance classes at HKAPA, therefore, portray an association with China both via the danced movements and through the language used in the classes.

On the other hand, HKAPA also provides the opportunity for the Hong Kong dancers to re-appropriate these folk-dance forms and take them wildly out of their contexts. In recent HKAPA dance concerts, students perform gender-bending and tongue-in-cheek versions of some of the Chinese folk dances they have learned. In the YouTube.com video entitled *HKAPA Dance School Graduation Showing 2013*,[175]a student acts as Chinese dance teacher, speaking in Mandarin Chinese and physically correcting his students with very strict alignment details, then performs Han folk dance and Mongolian folk dance as if he does not know the steps very well. While performing (badly) the female part to a *jiazhou yangge* fan and handkerchief twirling dance, his peer audience cheers loudly. Alongside him, his pupils (several other student dancers) dance the choreography with precision, showing their expertise in the Chinese folk dance forms. They effortlessly perform the quick shoulder shrugs of Mongolian folk dance and the crossover

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[174] "Meet the Mainland Chinese Who Are Living in Fear in Hong Kong, South China Morning Post, accessed October 24, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3031883/meet-mainland-chinese-who-are-living-fear-hong-kong.

[175] "HKAPA Dance School Graduation Showing 2013 – YouTube," accessed March 25, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPbADSA9Gns.

stepping and hip twist (*niu*) of the Han *yangge*. In another youtube.com video, HKAPA School of Dance 2014 Graduate-Chinese Dance,[176] showcases both the students incredible flexibility in terms of Chinese dance genres, and a send-up of the gendered folk dance forms. Throughout the short ten-minute performance, the students show proficiency in a variety of folk dance and classical forms, collaged together (unlike most performances that keep the forms separate). Their audience of peers cheers for their incredible acrobatic movements such as: straddle jumps (*shuang fei yan*), traveling windmills of their arms (*chuan fanshen* and *diandi fanshen*), back handsprings, (*xiao fan*), and vertical leg holds (*chiao tian deng*).[177] Along with their proficiency, they perform Han yangge with handkerchiefs and fans (female role) and without (male role) as a cross-gendered parody with less proficient movements. Their peers laugh at these stereotypical portrayals. In these graduation performance examples, these students have created a space for agency within the fraught premise of the folk dances learned at HKAPA. While proving their skill at these dance forms, this group of students questions Chinese dance pedagogy and belies the happy, model minority who helps to unify China.

The students in these pieces also reject the detailed codification of Chinese folk dance and classical dance and the standardization of their pedagogies, a choreographic refusal that was allowed given the creative freedoms ensured by "one country, two systems." Although Hong Kong is not immune to censorship,[178] choreographic works I have seen in the city did question

[176] *HKAPA School of Dance 2014 Graduate - Chinese Dance*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6_ptjS5a6U.

[177] See here for examples of acrobatic movements in the Chinese Classical Dance technique: *Leaps, Twirls, and Flips in Classical Chinese Dance*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AiD_say5xk.

[178] See next chapter on Danny Yung's work in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's relationship to China, albeit abstractly.[179] Both Chinese folk dance and classical dance involve specific combinations of movement to specific accompaniment of musical pieces that can be seen across dance conservatory classrooms in China. Textbooks and DVDs (and now on-line resources) instruct teachers of the appropriate combinations of movement and positions of the body through text, diagram, and video.[180] In Chinese dance conservatories as well as at HKAPA, exams with the appearance of auditions check for students' progress; students dressed alike perform various movement combinations in unison for a board of examiners. The teacher, as much as the students, is judged by these exams.[181] Given the strict standards for progress in these forms, the HKAPA student choreography above cleverly proves the students' abilities to perform the movements, yet also protests the authoritarian pedagogy and gender proscriptions. In a way, the dancers highlight the performativity of Chineseness, that it is something that can be tried on and rejected, ironically, made possible by the rigidity of the forms (clear roles to push against).

Mainland dance teachers at HKAPA easily imported Chinese classical dance and folk dance to HKAPA the way it was taught at Beijing Dance Academy due to the codification of the techniques as well as the systematic educational training of the teachers. During the founding years of HKAPA, HKAPA and Beijing Dance Academy had an agreement whereby HKAPA paid Beijing Dance Academy to send teachers to HKAPA, where they would make a salary and have a place to live (based on their system of socialist hiring practices on the Mainland).

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[179] When I performed with the i-dance Festival (see third chapter), I was told that any video element of a performance was to first be reviewed by the Hong Kong government.

[180] When I asked Professor Yu if she ever re-choreographed these learned combinations, she answered that she did not need to because her teachers had already found the most effective way of choreographing them.

[181] I make this claim based on field research as a dancer at Shanghai Theater Academy in 2006.

Although Dean of Dance Carl Wolz ended this particular relationship to Beijing Dance Academy due to the lack of consistent teachers from semester to semester, HKAPA has continued to hire graduates of Beijing Dance Academy to teach in the Chinese dance program.[182]Even Yu Pik Yim, a local Hong Konger and graduate of the founding class at HKAPA, attended Beijing Dance Academy to earn her diploma in folk dance before returning to teach at HKAPA.

In addition to hiring Chinese dance teachers who have trained at Beijing Dance Academy, HKAPA has sought greater connections with Mainland China since the transfer of power to Chinese rule in 1997. Across the departments at HKAPA, administrators have worked on improving relationships with Mainland conservatories and companies.[183] According to the annual reports, HKAPA values increased connections with Mainland China in the form of tours, adjudications, competitions, and educational residencies. For example, HKAPA's annual reports show a growing relationship with Shanghai Theater Academy's dance department[184] and Central Academy of Drama[185] in terms of exchanges and residencies. The 2014-2015 Annual Report notes that the Beijing Dance Academy and HKAPA signed a formal agreement for partnership when HKAPA joined the celebration for the 60th anniversary of the Beijing Dance Academy. Mainland Chinese examiners also come to HKAPA for the dance exams at the end of courses, thereby further demonstrating the Mainland Chinese dance educators as arbiters for the quality of Chinese dance. In this way, Hong Kong both respects the dance forms, yet comes across as less authoritative on Chineseness. Furthermore, the small MFA dance program at HKAPA (although

[182] "Faculty - Dance – HKAPA," accessed March 25, 2020, https://www.hkapa.edu/dance/staff.

[183] Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2016-2017.

[184] Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2014-2015.

[185] Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2017-2018.

not the focus of this chapter), welcomes many Mainland dance students who seek more training in dance choreography, pedagogy, and technology. In some years, nearly 50%-90% of the small MFA class is composed of Mainland students.[186]

Over the years, HKAPA has shown a commitment to high quality Chinese dance mastery that passes muster in Mainland China and in Hong Kong, consistent with a growing closeness between HKAPA and Mainland China. In the years since 1984 when the department started, the Chinese dance majors at HKAPA have been required to take less ballet and modern dance classes total each week in order to perfect their skills in Chinese dance. In addition to folk dance and classical dance classes, they also take classes in acrobatic skills necessary for many Chinese dance performances. These curriculum changes illustrate that HKAPA has made a commitment to advancing the quality of Chinese dance despite the lack of secondary dance schools in Hong Kong. In 2008, the Annual Report boasts that HKAPA Chinese dancers joined the Hong Kong Dance Company and the Beijing Olympic games opening ceremonies.[187] Besides these performance opportunities, awards, such as prizes in the Tao Li Bei Chinese dance competitions[188] are lauded by HKAPA. The growing closeness between HKAPA and Mainland China reflects how Mainland China and Hong Kong have become more physically connected and financially dependent since 1997. Because HKAPA is a government-funded institution, it makes sense that it would express an acceptance of China's rule; the local HKSAR government is expected to prioritize the "one country" aspect of "one country, two systems" and the Hong

[186] Tom Brown and Yu Pik Yim, Interviews with Author, Hong Kong, June 2016; Hong Kong; "HKAPA - Facts and Figures - Student Enrolment," accessed November 14, 2019, https://www.hkapa.edu/page/detail/48755.

[187] Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2008-2009.

[188] For example, the 2003-2004 Annual Report boasts of the second price received at the Tao Li Bei competition for professor Yu Pik Yim's choreography.

Kong government seeks closer connections with Mainland China.[189]Even though Hong Kong might not be as financially stable as prior to 1997,[190] Hong Kong is still considered a strategic location for Chinese business.[191] Besides the financial connection,[192] seven physical boundary crossings exist between Hong Kong and the Mainland, including the controversial sea bridge built between China/Macau, and Hong Kong in 2018; at 55 kilometers, the longest sea bridge in the world.[193] The dance priorities and exchanges led by HKAPA echo these metaphorical and physical bridges that have grown between Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Thus, training HKAPA dancers in these three genres brings with them overlapping and, sometimes, conflicting ideologies. The British (post)colonial legacy can be seen in who is treated as expert at HKAPA and in pedagogical methods, such as the Royal Academy of Dance and the Choreological Studies approach. Ballet masquerades as universal but relays Euro-American cultural bias. The modern dance/contemporary dance curriculum as well as instructors echo the close political relationships between the United States and Hong Kong, and Australia and Hong Kong. The "two systems" compromise has made Hong Kong more attractive to

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189 "Closer Connections with Mainland of China" is one goal outlined by the Brand Hong Kong Campaign by the Hong Kong government that was clarified in 2010. "Since 1997, much closer connections and deeper exchanges have been forged with the Mainland in trade, commerce and finance, as well as infrastructure, innovation and technology, education, art and culture, environmental protection, tourism and public health."
See: "Connect & Excel," accessed March 25, 2020, http://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/Campaigns/ConnectAndExcel.html.

190 For an analysis of the post-1997 economic downturn, see: Kui-Wai Li, "The Political Economy of Pre- and Post-1997 Hong Kong," *Asian Affairs* 28, no. 2 (2001): 67–79.

191 As the government claims, "Hong Kong is the global leader in Renminbi business and the prime node of connectivity between the financial markets of the Mainland and the rest of the world."
See: "Connect & Excel," accessed March 25, 2020, http://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/Campaigns/ConnectAndExcel.html.

192 For instance, the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement in 2003 established that tariff-free Hong Kong goods could be exported to the Mainland.

193 "China Opens Giant Sea Bridge Linking Hong Kong, Macau and Mainland - The New York Times," accessed March 25, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/world/asia/china-bridge-hong-kong-macau-zhuhai.html.

visiting Western artists and more welcome to Euro-American cultural capital. Moreover, the discourse of freedom and post-war individualism surrounding American modern dance corresponds with American cold war democratic values—values that many Hong Kongers align with the freedoms promised by "one country, two systems." As significant support for the concept of "one country," HKAPA has adopted Chinese nationalist dance curricula, including Chinese classical dance and folk dance. The folk dance adds yet another layer of multiculturalism at HKAPA as it includes Chinese ethnic minorities while at the same time essentializing them. Even as HKAPA students have found ways to create choreographic resistance to the folk dance education, the institution continues to grow relationships with Chinese universities and has created a greater emphasis on Chinese dance training in order to parallel the deepening ties between Hong Kong and China as political entities.

Strategizing Internationalization and Exporting Neoliberal "Hired" Bodies

HKAPA's curricular choices affirm a unification with China at the same time as elevating Hong Kong's global status in the name of multiculturalism, both via the diversity of forms in Chinese folk dance and the synthesis of Chinese and Western forms. Not only can HKAPA dancers adapt to three genres and choreographers' unique styles, but they can provide East/West cultural harmony, all in one bodily package. Worldwide, since the 1980s and the decline of the company model,[194] the contemporary dancer is more flexible, more acrobatic, more able to shift in and out of movement approaches—what Foster calls the "hired body" that

[192] For a discussion of dancers working outside of a company model as free-lance dancers who can mold themselves to various projects, as well as the influence of somatic training, in contemporary American dance practices, see: Melanie Bales and Rebecca Nettl-Fiol, *The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

molds to various choreographers' visions. Foster writes:

> It homogenizes all styles and vocabularies beneath a sleek, impenetrable surface. Uncommitted to any specific aesthetic vision, it is a body for hire: it trains in order to make a living at dancing.[195]

HKAPA trains dance students' bodies as hired bodies, and, in particular, as neoliberal hired bodies that excel in adapting to flexibly blending movement styles and showcasing movement vocabularies that increase marketability.[196] Multiculturalism goes hand in hand with global capitalism.[197] As the HKAPA dance department became more established, it produced bodies that can move between techniques and move across the globe, meeting the call for pluralism permitted by: "two systems." The results of the curricula—the trained bodies—are effectively mobilized for globalization and East/West multicultural agendas. I contend that HKAPA's overall emphasis on artistic product, rather than process, cultivates hired bodies that can represent the Hong Kong government's aspirations of uncomplicated multiculturalism abroad, fulfilling the promise of "one country, two systems." Annual reports from 2001 to 2018 show that HKAPA has consistently strategized for internationalization and global reputation.[198] As performers at dance conservatories and dance companies, HKAPA dancers show the range their bodies can access, which portrays a malleable and consumer-driven version of Hong Kong. Dancers are taught and examined by many international guest teachers and examiners, then promoted as adaptable dancers who are "easy to choreograph on";[199]they fulfill choreographers'

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[195] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies," 255.

[196] Anusha Kedhar, *Flexible Bodies*, 4.

[197] Philosopher Slavoj Žižek argues that multiculturalism is the ideal form of ideology for global capitalism. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, (London: Verso, 2009), 46.

[198] I have read the annual reports available on-line from 2001-2018.

[199] An American artist-in-residence explained the dancers this way to me.

visions of technical standards and express a seamless cultural exchange that is desired by dance concert markets.

The HKAPA website notes that an increasing number of graduates find employment abroad or go on to Master's degree programs in Hong Kong or abroad.[200] Besides finding work at Hong Kong Disneyland and with the three flagship companies in Hong Kong, HKAPA dance graduates have been hired fulltime around the world in dance companies: Akram Khan Company (United Kingdom), Alabama Ballet (United States), Art Fission Company (Singapore), Ballet Jorgen (Canada), Ballet Gran Canaria (Spain), Chong Qing Ballet Company (China), Cloud Gate 2 (Taiwan), Contemporary Dance Company Hawaii (United States), Ecnad Project LTD (Singapore), Guangzhou Ballet (China), Guangdong Modern Dance Company (China), House of Dancing Water (Macau), La La Human Steps (Canada), Les Ballets (Sweden), Manassas Ballet Theatre (Ballet), National Ballet of Portugal (Portugal), Nederlans Dans Theatre (Netherlands), Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (United States), Royal Swedish Ballet (Sweden), Scapino Ballet (Netherlands), Wayne McGregor's Random Dance (United Kingdom), Guangzhou Opera House (China), Singapore Dance Theatre (Singapore), etc. Outside of performance contracts, graduates also gain admissions to postgraduate study around the world, especially at London Contemporary Dance School, as well as in Taiwan and in the United States.[201]

The HKAPA dance program, consistent with the values of the institution as a whole, emphasizes performance products and adjudications. The HKAPA annual reports repeatedly use words like "industry," "training," and "skills" to describe the education that will, ostensibly, help the students obtain a career. For example, HKAPA director Adrian Walter in the 2014-2015

[200] "Career Prospects," https://www.hkapa.edu/dance/career-prospects, accessed October 20, 2020.

[201] Gleaned from Annual Reports, 2001-2018.

annual report writes: "The academy has also continued its efforts in exploring new delivery methodologies, giving our students much-needed professional skills that will support them in establishing their careers in the performing arts industry."[202] Here, the pedagogy is described as "delivery methodologies," which connotes instructors instilling in students skills necessary for a job, rather than guiding them through creative processes to develop critical thinkers as is more characteristic of a liberal arts model for dance education. Moreover, annual reports highlight particular kinds of jobs, namely full-time dance company contracts, full-time Hong Kong Disney contracts (opened 2005), and international study and performance. Annual reports also laud student winners of domestic and international competitions, and stress the importance of performance overall, as is exemplified by the 2015 report. Director Walter writes:

> Performances and productions remain at the core of the Academy's educational work and over the last year students participated in some 330 performances gaining valuable experience and preparing them for the career paths they will follow as industry professionals.[203]

At HKAPA, then, the repeated act of performing is treated as practical experience for performing arts jobs in the future. Although annual reports do not mention part-time jobs, the 2019 School of Dance Admission talk[204] to prospective students and the dance department website[205] do list independent free-lance artists and dance teachers as potential career options. In this way, the original role of HKAPA to produce dancers for the three main companies in Hong Kong has shifted; yet, the institution overall does not consistently acknowledge the discrepancy between its

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[202] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2014-2015. Pg. 6.

[203] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2015-2016. Pg. 6.

[204] "*香港演藝學院 舞蹈學院 入學講座 / School of Dance Admission Talk, HKAPA*," accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHp-Rcfjm80.

[205] "Career Prospects - Dance – HKAPA," accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.hkapa.edu/dance/career-prospects.

training and what it actually means to be a dance "industry professional" in Hong Kong or abroad.

The academy's state-of-the-art facilities, as well as the highly produced nature of the performances, give the dancers an experience in performance that matches most closely the experience of performing with a well-funded company, thereby neglecting the global reality for free-lance dance professionals. In the 2017-2018 annual report, Director Walter writes, "Real world performance experiences are deeply embedded in the Academy's curriculum and are an essential part of the Academy's performing arts training." The "real world performance" to which he refers means highly produced performances in excellent facilities. The Wanchai campus (original campus), where the dance department is located, houses the Lyric Theatre (1181 seats), Drama Theatre (415 seats), Concert Hall (382 seats), Recital Hall (134-202 seats) and the Studio Theatre (120-240 seats). For the dance department, students enjoy ten dance studios, one of which doubles as a black-box performance space (Studio Theatre). In addition, they perform in the main-stage Lyric Theatre, and make use of the physiotherapy clinic, classrooms, computer labs, and library. The performances held at HKAPA are, for the most part, highly produced proscenium shows with complex technical capabilities, supported by the students of the Theater Entertainment Arts program, its own division within the school. These are the students that become lighting designers, costume designers, and stage managers in productions across Hong Kong. Unlike Hong Kong's free-lance dancers who rehearse in small studio spaces in old warehouse buildings or pull together costumes at the last-minute, HKAPA students rehearse in beautifully lit, spacious studios and perform in shows with costumes made specifically to fit them. For example, Theater Entertainment Arts students designed set and costume reconstructions for artist-in-residence, Diana Maddens, who set the Trisha Brown work

Set and Reset/Reset on HKAPA students in 2018.[206] The "real world" training at the academy prepares students for highly-produced and well-funded performance.

Although choreography is one part of the curriculum at HKAPA, the emphasis on performance at HKAPA communicates that choreography comes second to performance. The dance students do take courses in dance composition, but they cannot major in dance composition. Their production of their choreography in tandem with the technical arts students also highlights choreography as production, as opposed to a process of thinking through ideas. Of course, this phenomenon is not unique to Hong Kong, and is common in dance conservatory education. The graduation show at HKAPA is a performance of faculty choreography, as opposed to student choreography, as explained to me,[207]demonstrating what students have learned as dancers, not necessarily as choreographers. Specific to Hong Kong, the individuality often associated with choreography is connected to the East-meets-West colonial legacy. Recent promotional materials place the goal of cultivating student choreographers' individual voices at HKAPA in the context of East-meets-West rhetoric.[208] Sentiments like this carry forward the exploitative multicultural view offered by Peter Brinson's 1990 report—that Hong Kong choreographers must capitalize on an East-meets-West branding to make Hong Kong dance marketable to the world.[209]To the extent that the institution does associate choreography with individual growth, this creativity is in the service of East/West cultural harmony. Discourse

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[206] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2017-2018.

[207] Tom Brown, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, June 2016.

[208] "Acknowledging the place of Hong Kong at the crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures, the school also aims to produce creative dance artists who are able to develop their unique voice and identity." See: "Academy Pamphlet." 2019, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.hkapa.edu/files/about/publications/HKAPA_Academy%20pamphlet.pdf.

[209] Peter Brinson, "Dance and the Arts in Hong Kong. A Consultancy Report by Peter Brinson," 1995.

within HKAPA neglects to considers choreography not as research, but rather, as product to be marketed.

The city and institutional culture of competition and adjudication that objectifies dance also permeates HKAPA's measures of success and its relationship to international artists. As mentioned previously, children's dance studios in Hong Kong tend to emphasize the Royal Academy of Dance and Beijing Dance Academy syllabus, which both involve examinations and supposedly objective standards for success in the forms. The Hong Kong Schools Dance Festival[210] as well as many other competitions, such as the Bauhinia Cup,[211] judge secondary and post-secondary dance in objective terms. Most HKAPA dance students, therefore, have already participated in a dance adjudication culture before they attend the institution. In annual reports and on the HKAPA website, the dance "awards and achievements"[212] section lists countless awards to dance students who placed in local and international contests and competitions. As mentioned previously, even within the context of one course, dancers face adjudication; HKAPA dance students, partially based on the British system and also on the Chinese dance conservatory system, perform in examinations that resemble auditions to show what they have learned in a course. [213] They perform for a panel of examiners, often international external examiners (in recent years from Europe and Australia for the ballet and modern classes and from Mainland China for the Chinese dance classes). Furthermore, faculty participate in competition and

[210] "The 55th Schools Dance Festival," accessed November 21, 2019, https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/pe/references_resource/sdf/55sdf/index.html

[211] "The Bauhinia Cup Dance Championships 2018," HK Dance Magazine, accessed March 29, 2020. https://hkdancemagazine.com/whats-on/2018/8/7/the-bauhinia-cup-dance-championships-2018.

[212] "Awards & Achievements - Dance – HKAPA," accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.hkapa.edu/dance/awards-achievements.

[213] Tomb Brown, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, May 2016.

adjudication events around the city and abroad to demonstrate their expertise. Thus, both students and faculty prove their worth as dancers via competition and evaluation of their meeting presumed objective standards of success.

The relationship between the institution and research evidences a positivist approach to dance. When HKAPA began offering Master's programs (2006), the academy promoted the concept of practice-based research, which included: performing arts education, pedagogy for practitioners, use of performing arts as tools for therapy, seminar and debates about arts education, audience and market research, and research into the effect of the arts on human beings.[214] The Master's theses in dance that come out of HKAPA reflect these topics.[215] These research topics reflect a positivist or social scientific approach to researching performing arts and evade political connotation, perhaps strategically. When I approached dance faculty and administrators in 2016 about my research, the dance studies and performance studies topics I aimed to explore were considered politically sensitive. Because HKAPA is not a research university by design nor by funding allocation, the academy dance faculty members spend the bulk of their time on teaching and administrative duties. The dance faculty teach up to 12 classes a week.[216] The dance faculty do sometimes attend conferences such as the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science, but they do not tend to present.[217] HKAPA faculty generally show their expertise through adjudicating competitions and presenting choreography,

[214] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2004-2005.

[215] I perused master's thesis titles and abstracts using the library database.

[216] Tom Brown writes of the challenge of encouraging HKAPA dance students to speak in class. See: Tom Brown, "Day Trip," 151.

[217] I have come to this conclusion by reading the faculty accomplishments in the annual reports, 2001-2018.

but not through a presentation of written research.

Given this product-orientation, the HKAPA dance program has several strategies for displaying their dancers' abilities to a global audience. First, it fosters international dance tours that make its dancers more visible to a global audience outside of Hong Kong. HKAPA dance students usually participate in at least one international tour.[218] Students have performed in a wide variety of locations at competitions and dance festivals and summer intensives: Southern Vermont Dance Festival, Seoul International Dance Festival, Taipeidea Dance Festival, American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival, Alvin Ailey Summer School Intensive, Singapore Dance Theatre, Monaco Dance Forum, and Paris Conservatoire Dance de May Festival.[219] Some of these festivals also serve as publicity for the school and as auditions for artistic directors present at the festival. The prime example of this is the Monaco Dance Forum. As the school noted, this tour showcased the talented dancers, and, therefore, the institution:

> The tour was a public relations triumph for the School, with company directors and journalists from all over the world commenting on the excellent standard of the student performers (in performance, audition and solo presentations), the teaching staff, and the works presented.[220]

Annual reports note that several HKAPA dance students have been selected for international companies through the Monaco Dance Forum.[221] Another example of HKAPA dance students participating in the festival-cum-audition is at the ImPulsTanz Vienna International Dance Festival, which is one of the world's largest contemporary dance festivals and the largest

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[218] Tom Brown, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, May 2016.

[219] Gleaned from Annual Reports, 2001-2018.

[220] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2006-2005, pg.16.

[221] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2009-2010/2010-2011.

workshop festival in Europe (3,000 participants).[222] Many choreographers/artistic directors cast dancers for their companies here[223] because ImPulsTanz will host the audition for dancers coming from around the world.[224] In 2012-2013, HKAPA formalized a connection with the festival that had begun with the festival's founder, Ismael Ivo, who had taught as a Visiting Artist in the dance program.

This strategy of inviting international artists in as visiting artists and external examiners not only holds the students to a range of international standards, but also showcases the versatility of these dancers to a global audience of instructors and choreographers. HKAPA has several partner institutions for faculty exchange and student exchange: Paris Conservatoire (France), Purchase College (United States), Shanghai Theater Academy (China), London Dance Conservatoire (United Kingdom), and New Zealand School of Dance (New Zealand).[225] In addition, the dance program has a busy roster of international artists from Europe, the United States, Australia, and Asia (10-20 guest dance artists a year), who teach as Artist-in-Residence for a term or year or who set repertoire on the dancers during short workshop periods. When guest artists, such as Israel's renowned Ohad Naharin, set repertoire at HKAPA through guest artist residencies, dancers from the contemporary, ballet, and Chinese dance programs all perform together. This pedagogical approach, called "cross-stream" performances, allows more interaction among students majoring in different dance forms; at the same time, it also ensures that international artists see the capabilities of these dancers to move across genres, thereby

[222] "ImPulsTanz Festival info," accessed June 13, 2020, https://www.impulstanz.com/en/festivalinfo/.

[223] "ImPulsTanz Pro Scene," accessed June 13, 2020., https://www.impulstanz.com/en/proscene/.

[224] "ImPulsTanz Pro Scene - Auditions Info," accessed June 13, 2020, https://www.impulstanz.com/en/auditions/.

[225] Gleaned from Annual Reports.

showcasing the dance students for a global market. The physical and expressive flexibility of the dancers to move in and out of the three main dance techniques prepares them to acquire jobs in local and global markets that reward cultural diversity, especially expected as a result of Hong Kong's hybrid "one country, two systems."

HKAPA's cultivation of dancers for global export reflects the Hong Kong government's positioning of the city after the commencement of "one country, two systems." In 2001, a Brand Hong Kong[226] campaign attempted to establish Hong Kong as a first-rate international city with the motto: "Asia's World City." The brand lists the following as core values and attributes of Hong Kong: Free, Enterprising, Quality Living, Innovative, Excellence, Cosmopolitan, Secure, Dynamic, Diverse, and Connected. The government materials about the branding of "Asia's World City" stress that "one country, two systems" makes Hong Kong especially attractive to international business and expats, highlighting civil liberties, English as an official language, capitalism, business-friendly tax system, and Hong Kong's independent police force, immigration control, and legal system.[227] In a sense, this branding tells foreign investors and expats that Hong Kong will feel safer and more like their home country than Mainland China. When Donald Tsang Yam-kuen served as Hong Kong Chief Executive between 2005 and 2012, he prioritized business productivity related to this branding— "Central Business Values" of growth, efficiency, and prosperity. In an analysis of the decline of Hong Kong film and Cantopop industries, Chu Yiuwai attributes the failure of creative capitalism and the lack of attention to heritage projects and to the environment all to the neoliberal leanings of the

[226] "What Is Brand Hong Kong?" accessed April 1, 2020, https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/BrandHongKong/WhatIsBrandHongKong.html.

[227] "One country Two systems: Hong Kong Themes," accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/Campaigns/ConnectAndExcel.html.

"Donaldization" of Hong Kong (a play on the McDonaldization that has followed globalization). Chu writes that post-1997 Hong Kong "is shaped by its role as a neoliberal global city on the one hand... and its lack of political autonomy on the other."[228] Hong Kong's free market capitalism has ensured its relationship to the rest of the world, and "one country, two systems" has enabled claims to East-meets-West ease of living.[229]

After 1997 and the establishment of "one country, two systems," HKAPA has continued to position itself globally, not just in relation to China, which corresponds to the government branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City." The Council Chairman at the 20th anniversary mark (2004) for the institution identify a need to give students a competitive edge globally, saying: "Here is where our ability to blend East and West comes to our advantage".[230] Thus, multiculturalism is proof of the institution's global status. This statement reflects both the colonial values during the founding of the institution and the continued position of the Hong Kong government after 1997. For example, "Hong Kong, Asia's world city, is an open, cosmopolitan and pluralistic society that seamlessly blends east-and-west, new-and-old."[231] This verb "blend" implies that neither East nor West retains a separate identity and that multiculturalism occurs without conflict. In 2004, the then newly-appointed HKAPA Director Kevin Thompson stressed the importance of being "internationally renowned"[232] through the

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[228] Yiu-Wai Chu, *Lost in Transition: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China*, 65-66.

[229] "Hong Kong has a global outlook and combines the best of East and West. It is a world in a city." See: "What Is Brand Hong Kong?" accessed April 1, 2020, https://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/BrandHongKong/WhatIsBrandHongKong.html.

[230] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2003-2004. pg. 6.

[231] Hong Kong Asia's World City. Connect and Excel. Top Tourist Destination, "Connect & Excel," accessed March 29, 2020, http://www.brandhk.gov.hk/html/en/Campaigns/ConnectAndExcel.html.

[232] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2003-2004, pg. 8.

goals of developing exchange programs for both staff and students, finding new avenues for cooperation with like-minded institutions abroad, and introducing students "more fully to other cultures."[233] The further development and maturity of the institution was seen as dependent on building this global reputation and international connections.[234]In Director Thompson's career at HKAPA, he prioritized connections with universities in Mainland China and with the Juilliard School in New York City.[235]In the 2003-2023 strategic plan, both internationalization and Mainland China engagement are specific headings for building partnerships and exchange programs for the students.[236]

HKAPA's current mission statement with the tagline, "Cultivating 21st Century Performing Artists: An Asian Heart, A Global View," perfectly complements the Hong Kong government's post-1997 branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City." Under director Australian Adrian Walter, the academy had simplified its mission statement with that tagline that is still used on promotional materials. The full statement reads:

> The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts capitalizes on its position within a dynamic and diverse cultural metropolis and its strong industry and community partnerships to provide students with an innovative, multidisciplinary and globally focused education.[237]

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[233] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2003-2004. pg. 8.

[234] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2004-2005.
As represented by the following key terms and strategic concepts: "Imagine, internationality, institutional maturity, networked connectivity…enterprise and development...connectivity, new partners, an international faculty and a faculty internationally engage, reaching out, and extending our reach, will help fashion a commitment to quality and resolutely gear our curricula to the realities of the outside world.

[235] "Academy for Performing Arts Chief Kevin Thompson Speaks on Leaving His Post," South China Morning Post, accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1017345/academy-performing-arts-chief-kevin-thompson-speaks-leaving-his-post.

[236] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, "Strategic plan 2013-2023," 16-17, accessed March 28, 2020. https://www.hkapa.edu/files/about/publications/Strategic%20Plan.pdf.

[237] Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Annual Report, 2014-2015, pg. 1.

Like the city's branding, the academy's branding and practices promote Hong Kong as a supportive, safe, and creative international hub opened up by the "two systems" semi-autonomy. Both city and institution set Hong Kong in motion in the context of all of Asia, not just in relationship to China or "one country."

The branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City" has also led to a neglect of local performing arts development in the city, and, in turn, affected the prioritization of international hires at HKAPA. Hong Kong scholar Stephen Yiu-wai Chu argues that the government has treated Hong Kong art as products for export in the name of the "Asia's World City" branding. Chu writes that the HKSAR government treats "Creative Capital" as a marketing strategy for the city, rather than attending to the real development of creative industries.[238]In addition, Chu criticizes the local government for not taking interest in the development of creative education and packaging the local, to sell to the global.[239] Similarly, during late British colonial rule and since 1997, HKAPA has served as a multicultural meeting point for East and West with less investment in hiring local artists. Of course, because the institution is government-funded, this confluence makes sense. The "internationalization" of faculty has resulted in a situation where guest artists come to the academy for brief stints, for a semester or a year. Faculty, administrators, and guest artists are hired from the United States, Europe, Australia, and Mainland China. From the annual reports, it is apparent that these faculty positions turn over frequently as well. With change in sight, the first local Hong Kong dean, Anna CY Chan, was hired in 2018, after she had served as the head of the dance education program years prior. In parallel to the "Asia's World City" brand for Hong Kong as a business hub, HKAPA acts as a

[238] Yiu-wai Chu, "Brand Hong Kong: Asia's World City as Method?" *Visual Anthropology* 24, no. 1/2 (2010): 52.

[239] Yiu-wai Chu "Brand Hong Kong: Asia's World City as Method?" 54.

hub for international guest artists, administrators, and educators, which results in inconsistency for the students, lack of knowledge about local arts development, and an Orientalist value of Western epistemologies to shape the Asian students.

Through its status as a hub for international dance administrators, artists, educators, and scholars, HKAPA has hosted many high-profile international dance dialogues, first conceived by Carl Wolz. Wolz curated the International Festival of Dance Academies, starting in 1986, which still is ongoing, as a week-long cultural exchange between dance conservatories in the form of workshops, performances, and conference components. These conferences inspired well-respected dance conservatories, such as Julliard, the State University of New York at Purchase, and Taiwan National University of the Arts to connect through dance education and performance. The 1990 Fifth Hong Kong International Dance Conference "Contemporary Issues in Dance, A Global View,"[240] lasted two weeks and brought together 45 international dance organizations and 500 individuals for conference papers, performances, workshops, lecture-demonstrations, and even a parallel conference, the Second International Notation Congress. Dance scholar Chazin-Bennahum wrote a report on the conference that highlights conversations there: the practice of Western dance forms in Asia; issues of notation across various notation systems; issues of authority and authenticity; issues of free speech and censorship; and methodologies for writing about dance. As an American, she mentions attendance by several highly regarded Americans, including Roger Copeland, Jane Desmond, Selma Jeanne Cohen, and Genevive Oswald. Additionally, famous Asian choreographers and dance scholars participating included Dai AiLian, Ou Jianping, Feng Shuangbai, Chen Ya-Ping, Wang Yun-yu, and Lin Hwai-Min. Danny Yung, about whom I write in the following chapter, attended and

[240] Judith Chazin-Bennahum, "Fifth Hong Kong International Dance Conference, July 1990," *Dance Chronicle* 13, no. 3 (1990): 393–400.

expressed a desire for Hong Kong artists to join together during politically sensitive times. Swedish dance scholar Lena Hammergren also attended and reported on popular presentations, such as American Brenda Dixon-Gottshild's presentation on the contributions of African American aesthetics to ballet and American Foster's presentation on dance history methodology.[241] Although Wolz is often considered the founder of the World Dance Alliance,[242]this still-influential dance organization emerged collectively from conversations and research at this 1990 conference in Hong Kong.[243]Therefore, HKAPA has acted as an international meeting point for pioneers in the global dance studies field and stimulated future international networking.

During many international conferences, HKAPA has showcased the talents of its students and educators as it presents student performances and lecture-demonstrations. HKAPA has continued to host conferences, including a 2006 Dance Education Conference[244] and the 2016 International Association of Dance Medicine Conference, as a hub for international dialogue on dance research, education, practice, and education. These more recent conferences also demonstrate how HKAPA wants to be read internationally; the dance program currently positions itself as a global leader in terms of performance, dance education, and dance science.[245]

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[241] Lena Hammergren, "Fifth Hong Kong International Dance Conference and Second International Congress on Dance Notation Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts," *Dance Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (1991).

[242] "About | World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific," accessed March 29, 2020, http://www.wda-ap.org/about/; "History | World Dance Alliance," accessed November 5, 2019, https://www.wda-americas.net/about/history/.

[243] Stella Lau, on ballet faculty at HKAPA, currently sits on the World Dance Alliance Asia-Pacific Executive Board, continuing a connection between the institution and now well-established World Dance Alliance.

[244] Entitled: "Imagining the Future: Dance Education in the 21st century"

[245] A recent job call asks for the applicant to lead development in their dance science lab. See: "Job Opportunities – HKAPA," accessed March 29, 2020. https://www.hkapa.edu/job/senior-lecturer-dance-science.

Thus, HKAPA's preparation of professional dancers occurs in line with the local Hong Kong's government branding of the city as "Asia's World City." HKAPA trains dancers that can fit the requirements of the global market for professional touring dance companies. The institution's emphasis on performance over choreography and product over process is evidenced in the adjudications and touring. At the same time, bringing in international artists to adjudicate and connecting with international festivals and university partners showcases the HKAPA dancers to the globe. Conferences also serve as a means for highlighting dancers' skills and the institution, in addition to portraying Hong Kong as an international dance hub. The dance conferences provide the important service of fostering dialogue among Asian dance artists, educators, and scholars; yet, the institution also struggles to promote its own graduates into scholarly, professor, and administrative roles, neglecting the local dance talent and expertise. The institution has consistently hired Euro-American leaders into administrative roles and prioritized its global reputation. In the context of the dance department, the bodies trained in the three dance forms (Chinese dance, modern dance, ballet) are neoliberal bodies for hire who can shift in between multiple genres and who can offer difference while, at the same time, read as legible when framed by dominant Euro-American aesthetics.

Conclusion

In contrast to this dissertation's other two examples of negotiations of the "one country, two systems" political condition, HKAPA navigates the semi-autonomy of Hong Kong through its curriculum, by training "one country" and "two systems" into neoliberal hired bodies. The teaching and learning of ballet, modern dance, and Chinese dance at the institution extend each genre's historical and cultural legacies in Hong Kong. Dancing Chinese dance at HKAPA promotes an acceptance of Chinese-Hong Kong friendship; dancing modern dance at HKAPA

capitalizes on its perception as individualistic and liberatory; dancing ballet maintains the Euro-centric bias that it is foundational for professional dancers everywhere. At HKAPA, each dancer focuses on these three techniques (modern/contemporary, ballet, and Chinese dance) with less time for dancing other global forms, improvising, or choreographing their own work. The integration of these three dance forms into one body homogenizes the forms. Moreover, the academy concert programming has a history of tokenizing the dance forms in buffet-style selections that take the dances out of their socio-political contexts. Furthermore, the HKAPA dance program structures power in a top-down vertical relationship from the West down to Hong Kong and from Mainland China down to Hong Kong because Western pedagogies for choreography, analysis, and anatomy are still privileged, as are Chinese nationalist and multicultural dance agendas.

These choices by the academy fall in line with common colonial/(post)colonial rhetoric around Hong Kong as an East-meets-West intersection. Aligned with the Hong Kong government's branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City" and cultivation of creative industries for export, HKAPA trains dancers in technical skills, competitive experiences of dance, and highly produced performances. With an investment in upholding a global reputation among conservatories, many international guest artists, educators, and administrators serve as global experts for local students. The hiring of Hong Kong Anna CY Chan as the first local Dean of Dance indicates that the institution could further support local arts development by trusting more local artists as dance experts. With the motto "An Asian Heart, A Global View" and parallel actions, the institution has de-emphasized the local with a lack of creative vision for who can be expert to teach and how dance graduates contribute to the local economy (both in terms of creative capital and financial capital). Its promotion of multiculturalism as proof of

global status attempts an apolitical approach and ignores Hong Kong's enduring struggle for self-determination.

In the next chapter, I explore the work by director Danny Yung that deconstructs Chinese opera as his solution to the conundrum of "one country, two systems." Although both HKAPA and Danny Yung incorporate genres that convey Chineseness, Danny Yung pushes back more against the notion of "one country" as his creative and curatorial work reimagine Hong Kong and China as partners, or his favorite metaphor—two seats at the same table.

Chapter Two
Curating the Transcultural: Danny Yung's Kunqu Compositions and Festivals

Introduction

Just as the institution of HKAPA has shaped the dance landscape in Hong Kong through formal education during its transition to "one country, two systems," Danny Yung has expanded performance expectations and performing arts policy in the city. He has gained incredible prestige and respect[1]as Hong Kong's "cultural godfather" through his multidisciplinary company, Zuni Icosahedron (Zuni)[2], as well as through his arts advocacy and policy work. It is important to note that his work is movement-based, and that Zuni initially found funding as a dance company; earlier, the dance subcommittee of the Arts Development Council funded Zuni. Although Yung participated in the Hong Kong dance community and still does,[3] his work did not fit conveniently into the three-dance genre model of HKAPA due to his choreographic use of minimalist and pedestrian movement integrated with multimedia components. The company has always been difficult to categorize by discipline due to its transdisciplinary and transmedial forms.[4] Although it can easily be argued that Yung creates dances, he brands Zuni as an

[1] Based on my ethnographic research, many Hong Kong-based dance and theater artists still consider Yung a pioneer of experimental performance in Hong Kong.

[2] The name of the company references the Zuni indigenous people of the United States as a nod to marginalization and the geometric multi-sided icosahedron—multivalences of meaning. See: Zuni Icosahedron, About Us, accessed September 8, 2018, http://www.zuni.org.hk/new/zuni/web/default.php?cmd=about.

[3] For example, Yung attended dance conferences at HKAPA, such as in 1990. In 2016, he was a presenter at the i-dance Festival one-day conference session (this festival is analyzed in my next chapter).

[4] Ferrari writes: "Their creative interventions in theatre, dance, music, video, animation, illustration, installation, and performance art have routinely intervened in, or even elicited, debates on cultural policy making, institutional reform, gender politics, urban planning, heritage, and education. Among other areas. The twenty-sided polyhedron that gives the group its name, the icosahedron, is a suitable visual signifier for their multilayered praxis" Ferrari, Rossella, *Transnational Chinese Theatres* (Palgrave-MacMillan. Switzerland: 2019), 73.

"experimental theater company."[5] Later, Zuni became a flagship company funded by the Arts Development Council through the drama subcommittee. At this point, Danny Yung has been a cultural icon in Hong Kong for nearly forty years. He has constantly argued for the arts to inspire political questioning and intercultural dialogue—first from the fringes of society and now as an influential and internationally-recognized artist/administrator.[6]

Yung's position in the Hong Kong arts sphere has influenced the trajectory of performing arts, in terms of both aesthetics and management. As Artistic Director/Co-director of Zuni, he has been involved in over 100 staged productions, which have been staged in Hong Kong and frequently in other Asian countries, Europe, and North America.[7] Yung is also recognized as a pioneer of Hong Kong experimental film and video arts[8]; his films, video art, and installations[9] have been shown internationally.[10] Since his entrance into city-wide arts administration as a founding member of the governmental Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 1995, Yung has

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[5] Zuni Icosahedron, "About Us," accessed May 25, 2019, http://www.zuni.org.hk/new/zuni/web/default.php?cmd=about&locale=en_US.

[6] Zuni Experimental Theater Arts Archive, Danny Yung, accessed September 1, 2018, http://archive.zuni.org.hk/#/. The website lists the following awards:
2008, *Tears of Barren Hill*, Music Theatre NOW Award, UNESCO's International Theatre Institute; 2009, cultural exchange between Germany and Hong Kong, Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany; 2013, Respectable Person of the Year in Shenzhen and Hong Kong, Lifestyle Award by Southern Metropolitan Daily; 2014, Fukuoka Prize – Arts and Culture Prize; 2015, Hong Kong Arts Development Awards, Artist of the Year; 2016, Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

[7] Tokyo, Yokohama, Toga, Singapore, Taipei, Shanghai, Nanjing, Shenzhen, Brussels, Berlin, Munich, London, Lisbon, Rotterdam and New York, Ann Arbor (Michigan), Singapore, Paris, Milan, Washington DC, Seattle, Mexico City, Toronto

[8] In 1983, Zuni co-presented Hong Kong's first-ever video workshop and first Hong Kong International Video Art Exhibition at Hong Kong Arts Centre.

[9] In addition, Yung has exhibited locally and internationally his conceptual art *Tian Tian Xiang Shang* ("make progress every day")—comics, figurines, and sculptures of a person pointing to the sky designed as a blank canvas for others to decorate. He has a background as a cartoonist.

[10] Berlin, New York, London, Rotterdam, Copenhagen, Tokyo and Hong Kong

advocated for strong arts infrastructures in Hong Kong. He currently sits on a number of boards: Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture (non-profit), Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity (secondary school), School of Drama at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and the Bachelor of Arts program in Cultural and Heritage Management of City University of Hong Kong.

In this chapter, I explore how Yung navigates "one country, two systems" by choreographing deconstructed *kunqu* (Chinese kun opera) works and curating Hong Kong as a broker of multiple Asian partners through festivals. While the dance program at HKAPA makes curricular decisions, Yung makes compositional and curatorial decisions as an artist and arts administrator. HKAPA has chosen to combine proscenium dance traditions in each dancing body that is produced by the institution; whereas, Yung works to strip away kunqu from its traditional contexts without losing its Chinese signifiers. The Chineseness that reads from the vocabulary of the traditional performance form enables Yung to make work that abstractly addresses the relationship between China and Hong Kong. Unlike HKAPA's approach of training the multi-cultural body-for-hire through pedagogies and movement vocabularies of modern dance, ballet, and Chinese dance, Yung invites performers from Mainland China with highly specialized skills in kunqu technique, to present the Chinese body in Hong Kong. He capitalizes on the arduous training they have already undergone in their craft. He investigates Hong Kong's relationship to China by creating performances that incorporate a recognizably Chinese genre (kunqu) and structural elements of Western avant-garde theater and dance. His collaborators, mainland Chinese kunqu artists, courageously perform in the context of anti-Chinese sentiment in Hong Kong. Therefore, Chineseness is located both in their movement vocabulary and their citizenship.

This chapter explores how Danny Yung interprets "one country, two systems" as a proposal for equivalent interaction and "cross-culturalism" or "cultural exchange" between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Yung prefers the term "cross-cultural" or "transcultural"[11] to "transnational," seeing transnational as a politically exclusive term due to Hong Kong's status as a non-nation. His embrace of Chinese heritage and its placement as the foundation of these cultural exchanges symbolizes an acceptance of "one country"; yet, at the same time, his process attempts to keep Hong Kong and China as equals in the intercultural relationship offered by "two systems." I focus on Yung's curation of festivals and performance grounded in kunqu, with which he began to work during the time of Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule in 1997. After a summary of Yung's career and an introduction to how kunqu specifically molds the body, I examine Yung's compositional strategies to deconstruct kunqu as his proposal for a heterogeneous "one country" as he represents China as rigid, yet adaptable, and Hong Kong as intercultural, experimental, and free. He excerpts kunqu from its repertoire, stripping away costume and character, and choreographing bodies as a collage with music and multi-media components. He utilizes minimalism and cross-gender role performance in ways that show Hong Kong as a site for creative freedom with this artform.

In the last section of the chapter, I outline Yung's curation of partnerships between kunqu and the rest of Asia, and the cross-culturalism he hopes to structure between Hong Kong and China. Rather than the model offered by HKAPA of the guest international artist who sets work on conservatory students, Yung, based on his large network of connections, brings Asian artists together in conversational creative formats. Instead of organizing large festivals that highlight

[11] Although I have more often heard him use the terms "cultural exchange" and "cross-cultural," Yung uses the term "transcultural" for this site when he was a fellow in Berlin. See: "Danny Yung-Interweaving Performance Cultures, accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/v/interweaving-performance-cultures/fellows/fellows_2015_2016/danny_yung/index.html.

mainstream highly produced companies, Yung curates intimate performances of duets between artists, framed as representations of cities. Particularly through Yung's curation of the Toki Festival, where Hong Kong artists compose "one table, two chairs" duets with other Asian traditional and contemporary artists, Yung attempts to place Hong Kong on an even playing field with China by proposing collaboration between artists and between cities of Asia, not among nations. Thus, Yung places Hong Kong on the global stage via the potential of "two systems" to subvert nationalism. Yung is primarily interested in collaboration and exchanges across Asia, as opposed to HKAPA's investment in European, Australian, and American partners. Yung's compositional and curatorial strategies can be viewed as decolonizing, as they move away from East/West discourse; at the same time, however, his creative work depends upon the power of his own cultural capital and Hong Kong's global city status.

From the Basement Collective to the Hong Kong Cultural Centre: Danny Yung's Career

First, a brief look at Yung's history as an artist and the development of Zuni Icosahedron helps contextualize his artistic and political motivations with kunqu artists, especially because he tends to reproduce earlier works from his career. Yung received no formal training in theater, dance, or visual art; rather, his interest in the arts developed from his investment in politics and urban planning. Born in Shanghai (1943), he was raised in Hong Kong, and moved to the United States to study architecture at the University of California, Berkeley (1967). He then studied urban planning at Columbia University in New York City (1969), where he became deeply invested in the Asian American Movement as part of the Basement Workshop Artist Collective.[12] This interdisciplinary artist collective, including his sister, choreographer Eleanor

[12] Karen Ishizuka, *Serve the People: Making Asian America in the Long Sixties* (New York, NY: Verso, 2016).

Yung, protested the Vietnam War and advocated for Asian American rights, especially in New York City's Chinatown. At the time, Yung participated in the mediums of social protest and political cartoon. According to Yung, he treated his first performance work as moving image with semiotic possibilities just as he and fellow New York City activists had performed still gestures in protest of the Vietnam War.[13] Yung has said that, upon moving back to Hong Kong, he carried with him the feeling of fighting for the marginalized Asian American as an artist working on the margins of Hong Kong's business culture.[14]

When he began living and creating in Hong Kong in the early 1980s, Yung formed a collective performance group, called Zuni Icosahedron, with amateur performers and friends who sought to use performance as a platform for fostering dialogue about political issues.[15] The name of the company references the Zuni indigenous people of the United States as a nod to marginalization and the geometric multi-sided icosahedron—multivalences of meaning. In the beginning, with Yung at the helm, Zuni members collaboratively created performances with quotidian movement inspired by political images, particularly the images of revolution, such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution.[16] With an intent to provoke their audiences, rather than entertain their audiences, Zuni Icosahedron and Yung gained a reputation in the Hong Kong arts scene for politically subversive and daring work. The company did not fit neatly into dance or theater categories, and the performers did not meet the standards of professionally trained

[13] Danny Yung, Interview with Author, November 2016, Hong Kong.

[14] Danny Yung, "Hong Kong. Margins. Art," in *Cultural Perspective Hong Kong: Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron* (2015): 21-22. (reprinted from 1996 speech).

[15] Sub-titled (Eng) version of RTHK production featuring Danny Yung, accessed February 12, 2019.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g90WKjodv4o.

[16] When Yung speaks about creating the company Zuni Icosahedron in 1979, he speaks about it as the result of gathering friends together for political discussion after he returned to Hong Kong from New York City.

performers. When I spoke to founding Zuni members David Yeung and Cedric Chan (still performers and company administrators), they both said that they do not consider themselves people who love performing, which in their view implies a supply-and-demand relationship with the audience; instead, they see performance as a point of departure, not a product.[17] Their sentiments echo Yung's own desire to separate performance from consumer leisure and commodity.[18]

Although Zuni now presents its work at a mainstage venue—the Hong Kong Cultural Centre (its venue partner since 2009)—its audience remains small. Due to provoking his audience members to consider their role as observer and participant in society, his work does not attract large audiences who would enjoy performance as entertainment. He has developed a young following of college students and artists, especially graduates from HKAPA. Even though Zuni performances occur at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, which houses the Grand Theatre large enough for orchestra concerts (nearly 2,000 seats), Yung's audiences tend to be around 50 people and skew young; he reaches like-minded artists versus those in the general public who might prefer the more mainstream work of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra or the Hong Kong Dance Company. From my experience, his audiences[19] generally are the smallest audiences of any I have seen at that venue, and remarkably small for a city with a population of over seven million.

Hong Kong has been a space for Yung to investigate Chinese culture and politics with

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[17] Cedric Chan and David Yeung, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, June 2011.

[18] Danny Yung, "If the System Isn't Right, Why Can't We Change It? An interview with Suzanne Carbonneau at the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage," Dance Advance, Philadelphia, PA (2004): 1-24.

[19] Matthias Woo currently co-directs Zuni Icosahedron. His directed productions tend to bring in larger audience numbers.

freedom of speech beyond that allowed of the Mainland due to the semi-autonomy granted by "one country, two systems." It can be argued that freedom of speech in Hong Kong has always come under the watchful eye of British colonialism and now is threatened since the 1997 shift of power; however, officially, the British Basic Law (held over from British Colonial rule) legally allowed freedom of speech. Article 27 of the British Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China states that:

> Hong Kong residents shall have freedom of speech, of the press and of publication; freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration; and the right and freedom to form and join trade unions, and to strike.[20]

Yung has said that Hong Kong's position on the margin of the Chinese nation affords him the opportunity to push boundaries as an artist. Although he had been on a Chinese government watchlist early in his career,[21] his status as a Hong Kong artist, versus a Mainland Chinese artist, has permitted him to publicly ask questions about the Chinese government, Chineseness, and the relationship between Hong Kong and China without facing negative consequences.

Zuni first gained an anti-establishment reputation in the Hong Kong arts scene because of the political undertones and rejection of theater conventions in the performance *Opium Wars—Four Letters to Deng Xiaoping*. Zuni performed this work in 1984, the same year that Deng Xiaoping signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration with British officials and without Hong Kong representation present. The Television and Licensing Authority (TELA) required Zuni to submit the script for review ahead of time. In archival photos[22] from the performance at Shouson

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[20] The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, Article 27, p. 11, April 2017.

[21] Danny Yung, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, 2016.

[22] "Opium Wars—Four Letters to Deng Xiaoping," Zuni Icosahedron, accessed March 11, 2021, https://www.zuni.org.hk/new/zuni/web/default.php?cmd=performance_detail&id=301.

Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre, two performers stand, one with his back turned to the audience; the two sit in chairs side-by-side with their backs turned; and one raises their hand like a school student. Founding company member, Cedric Chan, observes[23] that turning their backs to the audience was perceived as rude by the audience because it lacked an entertainment-orientation. In addition, Zuni experimented with blurring the boundaries between audience and performers. Despite theater management rejecting their request for permission, Zuni asked the audience to come sit on stage; as a consequence, the stage manager turned off the lights and power. Then, Zuni performers brought a boombox to the stage; the stage manager retaliated by closing the stage curtain.

Despite the controversy surrounding *Opium Wars—Four Letters to Deng Xiao Ping,* many of Yung's first works with Zuni directly addressed Chineseness, Communism, and Mainland China's power, using consistent strategies of abstract gesture and subversion of the conventions of theater space. For example, archival photographs from 1989 show Yung's site-specific work, *Art Fair Democracy*[24], set outside in Victoria Park (where Hong Kong residents continue to hold annual vigils for Chinese students killed in the Tiananmen Square massacre earlier in the same year). In that work, Zuni members performed simple gestures of hand raising, cupping their hands near their face as if reading, and kneeling—movements that could refer to students and express urgency, horror, or even submission. In 1991, Yung created *The Square: Deep Structure of Chinese (Hong Kong) Culture,* a staged work, in which the performers enacted pedestrian movements—entering and exiting, standing, sweeping the stage—and danced pared-

[23] Chan, Cedric and Yeung, David, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, June 2011.

[24] "Art Fair Democracy," Zuni Icosahedron, Accessed March 11, 2021, https://www.zuni.org.hk/new/zuni/web/default.php?cmd=performance_detail&id=248.

down, mechanical versions of the Communist *loyalty dance* and *yangge* folk dance,[25] thereby disrupting dances that promoted Chinese loyalty and cohesion. The wings and curtains were removed at the end of the performance as if to use visibility in the theater as a metaphor for power. *Here Here There There*[26], a 1994 collaboration between Yung and New York-based choreographer, Yoshiko Chuma, exemplifies what Chinese theater scholar Rossella Ferrari calls Yung's use of "tropes of mobility and indeterminacy in collaborative creation."[27] High-school and college student performers, dressed in white button down shirts and jeans, paraded through the public space in front of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre by rolling large, but truncated (sinking? or rising?), red Communist star mixed-media installations (designed by Yung[28]); pausing, crouching, and pointing in various directions; and running with small tables (like school desks) overhead in seemingly random formations and frantic timing. Their pathway along Hong Kong's waterfront moved between the new train terminus for Mainland trains and the old colonial terminus.[29] The sheer number of young performers (around 50) and hurried nature of their movement alluded to Hong Kong's future after 1997—while Hong Kong still had time, what urgent preparations should be made to protect against or live with Communism? What

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[25] Yangge dance, originally a rice-planting folk dance, was deployed to garner support the rise of the Communist Party in China during the 1940s. For a discussion of this dance form, see: Gerdes, Ellen. V.P, "Contemporary Yangge: The Moving History of a Chinese Folk-Dance Form," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1, (2008): 138-147.

[26] "1994 進念九四出巡－中國旅程之八：哩度哩度過渡過渡 Journey To The East Part 8: Here Here There There (Zuni Parade 1994) – YouTube," accessed November 1, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QDdRX4VoEQ&index=28&list=PLvyx-OP0BMsbZHTFgRxPXRBms58M2OY65.

[27] Rossella Ferrari, *Transnational Chinese Theatres*, 82.

[28] David Clarke writes that Hong Kong saw a trend of installation art in the 1980s. He argues that Danny Yung's *The Wishing Star* (12-meter high mixed-media installation of a large truncated red star) appropriated Chinese communist symbolism to deal with Hong Kong's impending 1997 future. David Clarke, *Art & place: Essays on Art from a Hong Kong perspective* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996).

[29] Rossella Ferrari, *Transnational Chinese Theatres*, 82.

about protests by young students like those in Tiananmen? Were youth in danger? These pieces taken together demonstrate that Yung has used his position as an artist to question, even if sometimes indirectly, the power exerted by the Chinese Communist state.

Producing the Intercultural Chinese Body in Hong Kong

The transition of 1997, when Hong Kong was transferred from British to Chinese rule, inspired Yung to advance his questions about Chineseness and the power relationship between Hong Kong and China vis à vis a traditional Chinese performance form and the rubric of Chinese cultural heritage. Yung began collaborating with artists from across Asia, including Chinese opera[30] artists, around the compositional device of "one table, two chairs"—a primary set for Chinese opera and a parallel metaphor for the intercultural experiment of "one country, two systems." He has focused on building his relationship with artists performing kunqu, a style of Chinese opera that originated in Suzhou, China.[31] Kunqu's history as a 16th century genre associated with Chineseness suits Yung's attempt to create a more egalitarian relationship between Hong Kong and China. To his company's long-standing commitment to exploring issues of Chinese identity, he has added emphasis on the politics of cultural heritage. Since the early 2000s, he has developed a long-term relationship with the kunqu artists at the Jiangsu

[30] As a failed translation of *xiqu*, the English term "Chinese Opera" includes all regional, interdisciplinary Chinese opera forms: Beijing opera, Cantonese opera, Kun opera, and hundreds of Chinese indigenous theater forms, thereby failing to connote the specificity of each regional form. The term also over-emphasizes the musical aspect, but Chinese opera is interdisciplinary—complete with speaking, singing, dancing, and, even, acrobatics. Lei notes that the term "opera" is a "mistranslation of Western categorization of performing arts" and that the term was first used in the 1920s in the United States.[30] I follow her lead in using the term as a reminder of the transnational nature to the forms, despite its inadequacy. See: Daphne P. Lei, *Alternative Chinese Opera In The Age Of Globalization: Performing Zero* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 9.

[31] For examples of scenes of kunqu by the Jiangsu Performing Arts Troupe, see: "Kunqu Opera Excerpts – YouTube," accessed November 1, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KxHOovVddM.

Performing Arts Kunqu Troupe in Nanjing. As opposed to the amateur performers involved in the first few years of Zuni performances, the kunqu performers who collaborate with Yung are highly skilled artists who have trained in the form since their youth. Furthermore, drawing from this artform and its claim to Chinese cultural heritage permits Yung access to Mainland China without causing too much suspicion about his potential critiques of China; and, in Hong Kong, kunqu operates as a source from which to explore Chineseness without aligning himself with the Communist state.

Kunqu, one of the many Chinese opera forms, is known for its erudite associations and long history and famed for its musical elegance and distinction from more popular Chinese opera forms. It has a well-established pedagogy, as mentioned in the previous chapter, used by Chinese classical dance scholars to create a dance form with Chinese national characteristics. According to Chinese theater scholar Colin Mackerras,[32] kunqu holds the important historical position as the main form of interdisciplinary literary drama/opera in China between the 16th and 19th centuries. Kunqu was patronized by the aristocracy and performed in residence halls and living rooms, versus open-air theaters, beginning as days-long performances. To this day, its musical style is considered higher class and one of the most elegant of all the Chinese opera forms; kunqu's music is characterized by slow, regular rhythm like Western 4/4 meter as well as by the bamboo *dizi* (flute). Due to its association with literature and refined music as well as its long history, kunqu was the first Chinese opera form to be accepted, in 2001, for the UNESCO list[33] of "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." Even so, it remains

[32] Colin Mackerras, *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey* (Beijing, China: New World Press), 1990.

[33] "List of the 90 Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity proclaimed by UNESCO," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, accessed May 25, 2019. https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00264-EN.pdf.

culturally marginalized by the dearth of performances and trained performers.[34] This status conferred by UNESCO has led to increased preservationist logic[35] and cultural tourism of kunqu in China and worldwide, providing more demand for kunqu performances; this framework further frames kunqu as representative of China and Chineseness.

Whereas the HKAPA dance program's investment in Chinese post-1949 classical and folk dance forms directly exported from Mainland China expresses an acceptance of "one country" politics, Yung's experimental work with kunqu, a pre-Communist Chinese artform, takes "Two systems" as a proposal to create a more horizontal power relationship between Hong Kong and China. For his goal of "cross-culturalism" between Hong Kong and China, kunqu movement and vocal vocabulary imply Chineseness because kunqu is a form that has long been culturally considered quintessentially traditional Chinese. Adapting kunqu implies a pluralistic relationship between Hong Kong and China better than working with *yueju* (Cantonese opera), which has a history of being promoted as local Hong Kong heritage; [36] Yung does not participate in the promotion of well-established Cantonese opera education in Hong Kong.[37] Moreover,

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[34] Frequent Yung collaborator and esteemed kunqu performer, Ke Jun, estimates that only around 800 performers maintain the form professionally—a reality that makes artists and cultural-workers alike anxious about preservation. This rhetoric of cultural heritage and preservation, therefore, accompanies kunqu performance in China. Yung works on the margins of this conversation, both acknowledging the importance of Chinese cultural heritage and valuing the embodiment of kunqu, while also shifting the aesthetics of kunqu, against the preservation logic.

[35] Gu, Deputy Chairman of the Jiangsu Theatre Association, and Wang, Deputy Chairman at the Theatre Research Institute, cite kunqu's one-to-one pedagogy (learning by listening and watching your teacher, then copying) as a risk to transmission and mourn the disappearance of much kunqu repertoire in China—approximately 300 out of 600 known pieces of repertoire. They note English translation, constructive criticism, collaborations with retired kunqu performers, public kunqu competitions, and frequent weekend public performances as reasons for the exceptional performance standards at the Jiangsu Performing Arts Kunqu Troupe. See: Gu Lingsen and Wang Tingxin, "A Plan to Safeguard the Kunqu Opera Tradition of Jiangsu Province," *Museum International* 60, no. 1–2 (2008): 114–22.

[36] For a detailed history of Cantonese opera see: Wing Chung Ng, *The Rise of Cantonese Opera* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

[37] The Chinese Artist Association of Hong Kong has designed a K-12 curriculum and the Hong Kong Institute of Education Development has offered general education courses in Cantonese Opera, both in an attempt to build audience and to celebrate the local form. The Government initiated a Cantonese Opera Development Fund and the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, also funded by the government, has offered a diploma in Cantonese

Cantonese opera is thought to be less Chinese due to its incorporation of Western instruments and because it has been treated as a less civilized form. Yung does not engage as much with *jingju* (Beijing opera)—a Chinese opera form that was consciously constructed as a Chinese republic national form.[38] Furthermore, Yung has also said that kunqu interests him because of its relationship to the literati and his pursuit of the intellectual role of the artist in contemporary society.[39] To that end, Yung utilizes his collaborators already-cultivated kunqu bodies in avant-garde presentations in an attempt to give them more agency as individual artists and political actors. At the same time, he expands traditional kunqu's semiotic possibilities past narrative suggestion and beyond Chineseness.

Yung capitalizes on kunqu's association with Chineseness, particularly pre-Communist Chineseness, by abstracting what is traditionally content-laden movement. Although programming and scholarship often characterize Chinese opera as theater based on a Western rubric, movement is integral to this interdisciplinary performance form and essential for character development. Movement performance in Chinese opera can be divided into dancing, acting, and combatting movements; but all Chinese opera performers first train in fundamentals, or *jibengong*[40], that can be adapted to each character role.

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opera in 2011 and now BFA degree in 2013. The Young Academy Cantonese Opera Troupe has gained a reputation for strong performances since it began in 2011.

[38] For a history of how jingju became established as a Chinese national form, see: Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players And Publics In The Re-Creation Of Peking Opera*, *1870-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press,) 2007.

[39] Danny Yung, "If the System Isn't Right, Why Can't We Change It?" 2004.

[40] All Chinese opera performers learn the same movement fundamentals in their first few years of training before being tracked into character roles. Training for Chinese opera students begins around the early teenage years when the students' bodies are still most malleable; the authoritarian pedagogy has repeatedly been described to me by performers as a "bitter" experience. As a result of continued training, *Chinese opera* performers' bodies remain flexible well into middle age. Fundamental movement skills also include acrobatic stretches and skills.

Mei Lanfang,[41] one of the most widely known 20th century Chinese opera performers argued that Chinese opera performers excel at holistically coordinating multiple bodily skills: singing, speaking, eye gestures, hand gestures, and full-body movements.[42] These movement permutations depend on the gender and social status of the character-role portrayed. For example, a male scholar character might show he is opening a door with an open palm, thumb spread out; whereas, a female beauty character will place her fingers in a more compact *lanhuazhi* (orchid finger) position—index finger outstretched while thumb lightly touches middle finger and ring and pinky fingers curve inward. The characters roles are characterized into *sheng* (from martial characters to scholars), *dan* (from young beauties to older women), painted face larger-than-life *jing*, and comical *chou*. Although Yung borrows from the movement vocabularies, he decontextualizes it from the narratives of traditional opera; he treats movement structurally as evident by his strategy of asking the performers to perform movements outside of their usual role (especially their gender role, which I address later in the chapter).

While going against the convention that movement conveys character and indicates narrative, [43] Yung stages movement sequences embedded in their already-learned repertoire in

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[41] Mei Lanfang was a female impersonator for *dan* (female young beauty) roles; he learned the proscriptions for female role-type movements and helped make these characters popular.

[42] Min Tian. *Mei Lanfang and the Twentieth-Century International Stage: Chinese Theatre Placed and Displaced* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 171.

[43] Wang-Ngai Siu and Peter Lovrick, *Chinese Opera: The Actor's Craft* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014). Authors Siu Wang-Ngai and Peter Lovrick stress that movement technique is one of the most important semiotic aspects in traditional Chinese opera that, if understood better, can make the whole experience more accessible to the audience. Here, they are speaking about making the narrative accessible to the audience. The authors highlight the use of mime in performance such as miming a daily activity like closing a window, riding a horse, or writing a letter. Other miming might be less obvious for audiences unfamiliar to Chinese opera, such as circling the stage to indicate a long journey or taking side-steps to symbolize careful traveling by night. Sometimes, performers combine mime with more flexible or acrobatic movement, such as when a female warrior performer mounts a horse in an awe-inspiring spin. The authors also describe several examples of *liangxiang* (sculptural pose or stop), which they say provides pause in the action for audience admiration. The liangxiang is like punctuation on the end of a movement phrase and often involves a quick reversal of direction for effect. For example, the performer might move their head quickly from left to right and push inward-facing palms out with a thrusting

juxtapositions alongside pedestrian movements, such as walking, standing, and sitting. In this way, his work is indebted to traditional kunqu repertoire, although it is taken completely out of context. Although much of the movement in kunqu mimes specific aspects of narrative, it is not realistic, so this logic of the traditional form lends itself well to abstraction and multiple interpretations by the audience, hoped for by Yung. He treats the movement as one component of visual collage with lighting and multimedia design in addition to pedestrian movement. Yung, therefore, does not teach performers a Chinese form, such as training in Chinese classical dance at HKAPA, but rather takes advantage of the performers' specific training, to present Chineseness on the avant-garde Hong Kong stage. Unlike HKAPA dancers who excel at three techniques, these kunqu performers bring the rarified details of the kunqu body to the forefront. It reads as distinct against more pedestrian movements due to the physical postures and specific eye and hand gestures. Like Chinese classical dance (which borrowed from Chinese opera), kunqu requires spiraling of the spine and twisting in the pelvis. Chinese opera scholar Xing Fan[44] writes that the Chinese opera body prioritizes the *yao* (the area between the rib cage and the top of the pelvis), the legs, the hands, and the eyes.[45] The initiation, circling, and bending by the yao helps create roundness,[46] which is a desired bodily aesthetic in Chinese opera.

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motion. In "mountain arm" position, one arm and palm extend outwards as the other arm rests with fisted hand on the hip; this pose shows military readiness. Other *liangxiang* can be quite acrobatic, such as "pedalling heaven" when the performer lifts their leg to their ear.

[44] Xing Fan, "Dance in Traditional Asian Theatre, China," in *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre*, ed. Liu Siyuan (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[45] Xing Fan outlines three eye movements: *ti shen* (holding the attention), *dingshen* (focusing the attention), and *lingshen* (leading the attention). The gaze of the eyes often accompanies the *liangxiang*, the punctuated posture that ends a sequence of dance movements.

[46] The *woyu* (crouching fish movement) is a deep knee bend with the knees touching and the feet on a diagonal, requiring the flexibility of the yao, often bending toward the back foot, drawing the body in an arc between head to back foot.

The kunqu performances re-production of sequences from repertoire shows precision and agility, demonstrating a specialized body.[47] Due to strict training, even the middle-aged kunqu body is very strong and flexible, even acrobatic at times.[48] In Yung's work, even if pared down, the performers certainly read as virtuosic via their skills in a traditional Chinese form.

Instead of focusing on traditional character and narrative contexts, Yung approaches bodily movement and vocal sound as structural components. As with his earlier works, he does not create script-based theatrical kunqu performances. In his definition of performance, he includes the body as one of six major elements of creativity: body, sound/voice, technology, structure, symbol, and space. His conceptualization evinces his belief in abstraction as a tool for encouraging multiple semiotic interpretations from the audience[49] and his worry that narrative makes the audience passive recipients.[50] "Let the audience participate and have their own

[47] Elizabeth Wichmann *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 4.

[48] The kunqu movement, overall, is less acrobatic than the more-touristed jingju (Beijing Opera) because of the prevalence of romantic narratives; however, the kunqu body still requires strength and extreme flexibility. Kicks include a forward hitch kick (performers slap their thighs and then their toes high above their heads) and a side kick (with flexed pressing palms, performers kick to the side and reach toward their side with their opposite arm.) *Fanshen* (wind milling the body) is also a technical requirement during which performers' legs begin in a deep-bend and crossed; as the performer turns around their own axis, switching which leg is in front by the end, they outstretch their arms and extend their back parallel to the floor. These fundamental movements show up in martial and dance movements in various permutations (again, the dynamics and shaping to match the character role) in kunqu repertoire. *Tanzigong* (acrobatics), including back flips, splits, and somersaults in the air, are most often performed in the *wuxi* (or military character performances).

[49] In terms of the bodily choreography, this often means a repetition of gestures in his work. For example, in *One Hundred years of Solitude: The Cultural Revolution* (2012) the artists performed various interpretations of pointing and transformed it over and over again with various permutations in speed and space, indication directions, knowing, accusation, allegation, migration, and, even, revolution. See: "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 1: The body," accessed September 1, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNL8Z71HJFg.

[50] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 6: Structure," accessed September 1, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2KBofjCsus.

readings," he says in his online lecture.[51] In fact, he frequently comments on the parallels between the public sphere and the performance sphere directly in public lectures and more subtly within performances themselves.

With almost an evolutionary perspective ("body language is our first language"[52]), Yung repeatedly speaks about the importance of bodily movement as communication—as an origin for self-reflection first, then interaction and collaboration, and then cross-cultural communication.[53] In his conceptualizing of bodily communication, Yung prefers a collage of the elements of meaning-making. The way he employs kunqu abstractly serves his goal to utilize theater as a microcosm for the outside world, not just an escape for his audience to relax and indulge. Yung creates physical theater over script-based performance with the hopes of engaging the audience members more deeply[54] and encouraging them to self-reflect on their position in society. As opposed to a guest choreographer at HKAPA who sets their movement sequences on the skilled dancers, Yung approaches the kunqu performers' kinesthetic experiences as an architect who designs the structure. Rather than inventing movement vocabularies and sequences, he methodically arranges movements already known by his performers, according to structures of

[51] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 3: Space," accessed September 1, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGSUWpCvnXU.

[52] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 1: The Body," accessed September 1, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNL8Z71HJFg.

[53] "We get to know our body language, and from there we come to understand the culture of our body, the culture of language, the culture of discourse, organizational culture, and local culture. Then, we start to know about creation, personal creation and collective creation. Everything starts from the body." See: Danny Yung Experimental Theatre Education/Creative Playground Programme. 2016.

[54] Kefei Cao argues that Yung's focus on movement, and frequent subtraction of singing and recitation in Yung's work, asks the audience to engage more deeply than as mere spectators. See: Kefei Cao, "How to Re-Learn Ways of Seeing, Listening, Reading, and (Story)telling: 'Flee by Night' by Danny Yung," The Theatre Times, August 12, 2017, https://thetheatretimes.com/re-learn-ways-seeing-listening-reading-storytelling-flee-night-danny-yung/.

time and space that slow down movement materials, create juxtapositions and overlapping effects of meaning, and intentionally provoke his audience. [55]

The company archives show that Yung notates his work, not in movement vocabulary or qualities of movement, but rather in time stamps and spatial placements/directions with the timing of the lighting and the overlapping recorded sound.[56] Bodies are symbolized by Xs or arrows as in a film storyboard or sports playbook. His rehearsal process, moreover, is also less kinesthetically immersive than choreographic processes that involve constant dancing either via improvisation, dancer-led movement invention, or learning movement material verbatim from a choreographer; the movements are not taught to his performers, but rather excerpted from existing kunqu repertoire or generated in discussion with performers. This is due, in a large part, to the ease with the kunqu performers can call upon pre-learned repertoire without actually rehearsing it. Yung constructs movement as an architect via Western avant-garde aesthetics, such as deconstruction and subtraction. Through his staging of kunqu bodies, Yung demonstrates that he views bodies—both compliant and defiant—as sites for cultural politics and histories; as he works in structural elements of space and time, he creates space for dialogue between Hong Kong and China.

In this section, I have shown how Danny Yung coopts the Chinese body for the Hong Kong stage by abstracting an interdisciplinary genre that has traditionally been content-laden with narratives from Chinese literature and movement that conventionally conveys plot actions and character roles. He does this both literally, by importing Nanjing performers, and

[55] Yung speaks of his first foray into movement invention as replicating visual images from the Vietnam War at street protests in New York City's Chinatown with the Basement Collective Activist Group. (Interview with Author, Hong Kong, 2016).

[56] "Issu Zuni Icosahedron," accessed September 1, 2018, https://issuu.com/zuni_icosahedron/docs.

symbolically, by drawing on a form that has long been considered quintessentially Chinese due to its long history and association with elite Chinese culture. I have also argued that Danny Yung's experimentations with kunqu in Hong Kong rely heavily on the training and skill of his collaborators from Nanjing. Rather than teaching them new movement vocabularies or sequencing movement material from their movement inventions, Yung employs excerpts of traditional repertoire out of context. He approaches the movement structurally and arranges it alongside postmodern pedestrian movement. This strategy suits his desire to encourage multiple interpretations for his audience. Moreover, as I show in the next section, his use of Western avant-garde aesthetics with kunqu negotiates the situation of "one country, two systems" by elevating Hong Kong's status and attempting a more horizontal relationship between China and Hong Kong.

Choreographing Transcultural Kunqu

In this section of the chapter, I investigate the strategies Yung utilizes in his choreography—excerpting, re/deconstruction, subtraction— in order to demonstrate how his work engages a cross-cultural relationship between Hong Kong and China. Yung takes a minimalist and deconstructivist approach to kunqu similar to other avant-garde directors interested in intercultural performance; yet, his work challenges East/West as the rubric for intercultural collaboration because he frames his work in terms of China and Hong Kong. Yung complicates the idea of "one country" by proposing that a close relationship between Hong Kong and China can look like imbrications and collages rather than homogeneity. The promise of "two systems" is signified by the performances themselves; in Yung's work, the theater is a site of questioning the legibility of power structures and the potential limits of agency inherent in the

political contract between Hong Kong and China. Addressing each side of the relationship, his work interrogates common notions of China and of Hong Kong. On the one hand, his work represents China as traditional, precise, strict, and hierarchical via the kunqu genre and by questioning the strict pedagogical methods of kunqu. On the other hand, China is represented as open-minded and adaptable via mainland kunqu artists who alter their genre, taking it out of context, "subtracting" traditional narratives, costumes, and symbolism, as well as working across roles/genders. His work also represents Hong Kong as cosmopolitan and cutting-edge, as inter-cultural, and as a site for freedom of speech and creative expression.

By deconstructing kunqu and combining it with Western classical or pop music and Western avant-garde appreciation for the mundane, Yung creates a transcultural Hong Kong version of kunqu. In the context of Hong Kong and many colonial contexts, Western classical music and dance have served as supposed civilizing agents in society.[57] Yung re-claims this Western colonial influence as a tool for expanding the semiotic possibilities of kunqu; yet, he borrows more from the Western avant-garde than from Western classical arts. Avant-garde deconstructive methods undo the set rhythms and tempos of the kunqu movement. Through bricolage, Yung also lays kunqu movement and music alongside pedestrian, every-day gestural movements as well as repetitive, minimalist speaking. These aesthetics are often considered hallmarks of both Western avant-garde theater and postmodern dance. As scholar Rozanna Lilley writes of Yung's company Zuni Icosahedron, "Their pillaging of tradition, their parodies and their allegories construct a hybrid/Chinese/Western theatre/dance form. Tracing the original

[57] Rozanna Lilley shows that the largest percentage of funding in 1982 was for Western opera and ballet. She writes about how British investment in cultural productions was geared toward attracting expats to Hong Kong. "These 'outsiders,' I should point out, tend to be politically conservative white males with managerial careers and dependent wives. Frequently, they have little desire to engage with local culture and, even when they do, are very conscious of being in Hong Kong only for the term of the contract." See: Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 73-74.

sources form which this hybridity emerges is a challenging intellectual exercise. But the essential point to consider is not these originating moments."[58] This section of this chapter considers what emerges when these cultural products are combined in the name of "one country, two systems." Yung's version of kunqu proposes a (post)colonial performance form that comments upon Hong Kong's multiple cultural and historical influences while questioning the future relationship between Hong Kong and China.

Yung takes kunqu movement and vocal vocabulary out of traditional context while the performers contribute these vocabularies with incredible physical integrity, dynamic range, and adaptability. While traditional kunqu repertoire embodies literary narratives, especially romances, Yung's work completely divorces movement sequences and songs from their narratives and from each other. For example, in *Contempt 2013,* male performer Cao Zhiwei—standing atop a table, shirtless, in leather jacket, and to electronic club music—performs a solo of 18 strenuous physical positions from *The Drunken Monk at the Mountain Pavilion*[59] stretching his foot above his head, twitching his cheek muscles, rolling his belly, and balancing low on one crossed leg. The leather jacket, and the arduous movement coupled with the pounding music, portrays a sense of tension and forced masculine display. This moment contrasts with the traditional version, during which Cao performs in full painted-face and costume to an audience that laughs at his character, a monk, performing drunkenness and physical comedy. These 18 poses held for different amounts of time take away the character development of the monk. What the Hong Kong audience sees is the manipulation of formerly sacrosanct Chinese aesthetic symbols. During rehearsals, Yung coaches such excerpts of phrases of movement and song

[58] Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition*, 137.

[59] The Chinese title is 醉打山门.

through revisions that shift the formal elements of space and time, such as slowing down[60] before overlaying sound, lighting, and recorded soundtrack.

Yung's postmodern strategy that he refers to as "subtraction"—subtracting narrative, characterization, and costuming/facial make-up of kunqu—attempts to liberate kunqu from some of its logics of consumption; at the same time, he divorces kunqu of much of its symbolism passed down through generations of performers. As Ferrari[61] astutely notes, what Yung subtracts are the very characteristics of traditional kunqu that have become easily marketed and consumed in a global market, what Yung refers to as its "packaging."[62] In the creative process for *Tears of Barren Hill* (2008), for example, Yung took away Lan Tian's traditional costume. He asked Lan Tian to perform without water-sleeves so that the audience could see the hand gestures that are normally hidden under the water-sleeves, thereby exposing the work of the fingers, wrists, and hands in kunqu. Just as they learn lyrics and melodies via rote-learning and repetition, kunqu students learn the exact combination of sleeve movements in a piece of repertoire by replicating their teachers. The sleeves expand upon what is sung—expressing emotions and relating to other characters. They also signal the audience—telling the audience the character is going to exit, is speaking an aside, or is rejecting hearing what is spoken on

[60] As an example of this structuralist approach to working with movement, one of Yung's primary methods for working with kunqu is to slow down excerpts from existing repertoire. For instance, in the creative process for *Tears of Barren Hill* (2008), Yung questioned kunqu performer Lan Tian about why he sang a sad song from repertoire so fast. Lan Tian said he did not know a reason except that his teacher taught him to do it that way. With prodding from Yung, Lan Tian posited that the quick speed demonstrated his skills to the audience. Yung then suggested Tian try singing the song very slowly. They eventually worked the fifty-seven second song to three minutes. In a parallel process, Yung also slowed down recorded Bach music to 3x the original, which provided the soundtrack for some of Tian's movement.

[61] Rossella Ferrari, "Asian Theatre as Method: The Toki Experimental Project and Sino-Japanese Transnationalism in Performance," *TDR/The Drama Review* 61, no. 3 (Fall 2017), 161.

[62] Danny Yung, Public Lecture. i-Dance Festival. Hong Kong, November 2016.

stage.[63] According to Chinese dance scholar Emily Wilcox, the movements of the Chinese opera body with props (sleeves, fans, flags, etc.) produce semiotic suggestions and *qing*, or "sentiment" "feeling" "passion" or "love."[64] Yung, therefore, minimizes the affected and affecting Chinese opera body, by removing the water-sleeves. At the same time, the removal of the sleeves also reveals the labor entailed in constructing Chineseness through what the actions of the hands and wrists.

Yung's strategy of subtracting kunqu narrative while often adding textual context via repetitive and obtuse surtitles encourages audience interpretation via abstract bodily movement, framing the theater as a public sphere for the audience to examine structures of power. Through subtraction, the symbols, without their referents, allow kunqu to be experienced as dance, not story, but nonetheless, as Chinese. One such explicit example of Yung's use of surtitles occurs in *Flee by Night* (2012). In the beginning of the piece, the surtitles inform the audience that this work is adapted from a Ming dynasty play[65] written by Li Kaixian. The audience is also told via surtitle that: "Li Kaixian wrote the Legend of the Precious Sword while in exile." "Let us imagine this is the study of Li Kaixian." "The study was the starting point of all Kun opera." The audience gathers from these rather explicit introductory surtitles that Yung is considering persecution of Chinese artists and the development of kunqu in intellectuals' homes, thereby questioning Chinese suppression and support of the performing arts. He uses theatrical metaphors to provoke questions about:

How would the stagehands observe the stage?

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[63] Gloria Strauss (1975), "The art of the sleeve in Chinese Dance," ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen, *Dance Perspectives* 63 (1975): 38.

[64] Emily E. Wilcox, "Meaning in Movement: Adaptation and the Chinese opera Body in Intercultural Chinese Theatre," *TDR: The Drama Review* 58, no. 1 (2014): 42–63, 55.

[65] *The Legend of the Precious Sword* written by the mid-Ming playwright Li Kaixian

How would the System observe the Stagehands?
How would the Observer observe the Performer?
How would the Performer observe the Observer?
How would History observe Heritage?
How would Heritage observe History?[66]

As above, Yung frequently uses terms evoking power and politics, such as "observer" and "system" in his works, which color the meaning of the movement expressed on stage. Alongside Chinese movement, "system" often reads as the Chinese state and "observer" as the every-day person caught in the Chinese state's power, either in China or in Hong Kong.

Flee By Night (2012) expresses Yung's frequent choreographic decision to pair postmodern pedestrian movement with traditional kunqu movement sequences, which has the effect of leveling these dance genres. In doing so, he places China alongside the West as equally contemporary in accordance with the "two systems" inclusion of Western legacy in Hong Kong. While the kunqu movement signifies Chinese cultural heritage, the pedestrian movement stands in for Western postmodernism, aligned with Hong Kong, thereby confirming a distinction between Hong Kong and China that makes his conception of cross-cultural dialogue possible. The following describes some of the pedestrian movement. At the beginning of this performance, dressed without makeup in a long plain robe as if a kunqu stagehand, Yang Yang brings out a small white table, then a brown wood chair, and later a second chair. He first faces one chair into the table, then at a diagonal, then out to the audience, pausing in between each placement to stand and look; the shifting of the chairs easily allude to images of power, dialogue, and observation.[67] Although they shift positions, the chairs remain on the same horizontal plane as if signifying a parallel level of power, an aspiration for Hong Kong and China. Yang Yang

[66] *Flee by Night.* 2012. Zuni Icosahedron Archive. Video recording.

[67] This mimics Yung's very first work with tables and chairs called *This is a Chair* (1997) as well as many works since.

looks upstage at the configuration as if aligning himself with the audience, both performer and observer. This set of facings of both chairs and his body directly relate to a set of surtitles that come a few moments later:

> It might well be a stage before or after the revolution.
> The most attentive spectators could be the stagehands.
> The stagehands witnessing the Kun stage for the last six hundred years.
> This performance is dedicated to all stagehands.

The choice of the word "revolution" conjures up several revolutions related to the founding of the People's Republic of China[68]and whether or not revolution is possible in Hong Kong. Coupled with the surtitles, these quotidian movements of standing, looking, and moving chairs question what it might mean to be a witness of "one country, two systems" and an engaged participant in Hong Kong society during that era. Is an engaged citizen preparing for revolution or merely standing by?

The rarefied kunqu vocabulary in this same piece contributes to meanings of artist persecution, furthering the question of artist struggles within Chinese contexts, as if a metanarrative of Yung working as a Hong Kong artist in Chinese contexts. Yang Yang performs a series of kunqu vocabulary. He draws his arms open slowly in a kunqu mountain pose with arms shoulder height, one hand in a fist and one hand flat. Yang Yang suddenly takes a step back and wheels his arms around in his martial character style, stopping abruptly in the still effect known as the liangxiang. Like a frozen sculpture, his wide eyes and raised eyebrows express resolve, or is it shock? Yang Yang lunges far, then quickly jumps in a leap with both knees bent, and spins. As if an error in performance, he re-adjusts his supporting leg out of necessity to balance—this moment revealing how physically taxing classical kunqu movement

[68] Namely, the Xinhai revolution against the Qing dynasty in 1911, the establishment of the National Government in Nanjing in 1927, and the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949.

vocabulary can be. The sporadic/percussive rhythm of this movement sequence makes a counterpoint to the very languid singing of the recorded *O Solitude* by Henry Purcell (17th century English composer). I see in this dance an expression of struggle, a push and pull between vulnerability and strength as Yang Yang throws his body off balance and finds balance again—his body constantly transitioning between slow and fast speeds, spiral and straight directions, and tense and gentle qualities. Although his movements have an attacking quality, it is not clear against what he defends himself. Yang Yang's facial expressions of sorry, anguish, and determination coupled with the adoration of solitude and death in the lyrics[69] of the Purcell song and minor key, generate emotional affect, but not plot. His intense focus away from and back to the audience gives the sense that the audience is implicated in his struggle. Therefore, both quotidian movement and traditional kunqu vocabulary in this work serve to explore the relationship between the observer and the struggle/revolution.

Yung's relationship to the audience is another directorial strategy, besides crafting pedestrian movement, that is related to Western avant-garde aesthetics. Performance studies scholar Tadashi Uchino refers to *Flee By Night* (2012) as the "masterpiece of our age" due to its constant questioning of the audience and refusal to allow the audience to be "blindly immersed" in the performance.[70] Uchino argues that by not telling a linear story and by, instead, confronting the audience with questions in the form of surtitles, Yung actually encourages intellectual engagement, reflection, and contemplation by the audience. Chinese theater director

[69] To finish all their sorrows here,
When their hard fate makes them endure,
Such woes as only death can cure.
O, how I solitude adore!

[70] Tadashi Uchino, ""Usable Past" and Danny Yung's *Flee By Night*" Unpublished. Pgs. 2-3.

Cao Kefei[71] similarly applauds the experience of audience alienation in *Flee By Night* (2012) by writing that Yung makes the audience feel like they are in a rehearsal. I agree that Yung uses postmodern strategies of audience alienation and process-as-product, but it feels much more polished than a rehearsal, and the surtitles can explicitly lead meaning-making. In this way, I find the prompting to the audience heavy-handed at times. Nonetheless, audience alienation itself could be viewed as a tenet of the Western avant-garde used by Yung. It was popularized by Bertol Brecht, but it was also a key principle of kunqu. In fact, Western theater directors, Brecht, Meyerhold, and Barba adapted anti-realist values from Chinese opera.[72] Traditional kunqu is not realist theater; it involves asides to the audience as well as exaggeration and symbolism. Yung's approach to the audience, then, ironically reflects the Western theatrical avant-garde that, in fact, appropriated from Chinese opera.

Yung, likely due to his early professional experience in architecture, often exposes the audience's position as viewer by undermining the conventional proscenium space of a theater, thus attempting to use the theater space as a microcosm for Hong Kong society. Yung refers to this subversion of space as a "mode for asking questions,"[73] but I believe it is also pedagogical—to remind the audience of its passive socialization in the theater so as to discourage complacency in Hong Kong's precarious "one country, two systems" era. In practical terms of presenting his work, Yung might have the wings removed from the theater or have the house lights turn on mid-production. In *Sigmund Freud in Search of Chinese Matters and Mind* (2016), performers sit in

[71] Kefei Cao, "How to Re-Learn Ways of Seeing, Listening, Reading, and (Story)telling: 'Flee by Night.'"

[72] See: Tian Min. *The Poetics of Difference and Displacement: Twentieth Century Chinese-Western Intercultural Theatre*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008).

[73] Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 3: Space, accessed September 1, 2018.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGSUWpCvnXU.

audience seats and the house lights come up twice, thereby reminding the audience of their quiet observation. In *Stage Sisters* (2012), the audience sits on stage facing out to the performers, who perform in the house of the theater of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. This strategy of re-imagining the theater space is now commonplace in international dance and theater circles, but it is rare at the mainstream Hong Kong Cultural Centre, where the majority of Yung's work is shown.

In the following discussion of Yung's work *Contempt* (2013), I describe how Yung's deconstructive strategies with kunqu, taken together with his subversion of the theatrical space, navigate "one country, two systems" by portraying China as restrictive and Hong Kong as a site for freedom of creative expression. *Contempt* (2013) incorporates every-day movements such as trembling, sitting, and walking that might appear as postmodern dance, alternated with scenes of kunqu movement vocabulary, which implicates China in the performance. On the one hand, Chinese culture is included in Yung's version of the avant-garde; on the other hand, Chinese bodily training is presented as constraining. Yung borrows from Western avant-garde dance and theater traditions to present Hong Kong as more culturally neutral as it is a site where kunqu students are more able to push back against the strict replications of kunqu training. Thus, Yung uses this bricolage of kunqu and pedestrian movement vocabulary to undermine the dominance of "one country." Compared to the HKAPA dance program and their adoption of Beijing Dance Academy syllabi, Yung subverts a unified "one country," arguing, instead, for a more equal relationship between Hong Kong and China.

For this performance, which I saw at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Yung employs an architectural stage setup with mirrors that makes the audience aware of its position as voyeur and reflects the performers' image back to themselves, explained by Yung as a means for the

performers to reflect on themselves as public intellectuals, not as entertainment for the audience.[74] The audience looks down into a depressed stage pit with mirrors on all four sides of the rectangular space. The nearly infinite number of images of the performers suggests an amorphous sense of time, of history and of future. The act of looking down feels voyeuristic and powerful as an audience member. The performance opens with slowed-down, recorded classical Western piano music that accompanies a group of mid-twenties kunqu performers simply sitting in a circle on wooden chairs. Instead of ornate traditional kunqu costumes that express a character role, the performers wear pedestrian clothes: leather jackets, khaki pants, white button-down shirts. All sitting casually without kunqu bodily positioning, they appear like a group of students in discussion. Yung's frequent images of students/desks function as parallels to the paternalism of China to Hong Kong. The performers laugh loudly, then each carries a chair to the edge of the space, placing it against the walled mirrors. As they sit on the edge of the space, they become the audience, watching an abstract critique of the hegemonic power of the Chinese nation-state unfold.

Performer Liu Xiaoyun emerges from the group and embodies a solo of apologies that expresses endurance of oppression by the Chinese nation-state. In Mandarin Chinese that marks him as a Mainland performer in Hong Kong, he starts slowly, repeating the word "Sorry" and shaking his head. His words are legible to Mandarin speakers, Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong residents (most of whom understand Mandarin, even if they do not prefer to speak it). As the trembling moves to his arms, hands, and legs, the other performers back away from him.

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[74] For a preview for *Contempt 2013*, Yung comments on how his use of mirrors in the set also relates to creating artist agency beyond mere consumer commodity: "A proper art piece should have the same function as a mirror, revealing major and minor details for one to legitimately perform a self-critique and re-examination… Often it is easy to fall into the habit of actively performing, pouring out yourself on stage, but also losing pieces of yourself each time. Meaningful art is not just about entertainment. I want the actors to see themselves, instead of the audience, when they perform" (Yung, qtd. in Lo, 2013).

Liu's head flops up and down, his cheeks relaxed. He accumulates apologies in Mandarin. "I'm sorry to my dean. I'm sorry to my society. I'm sorry to my country. I'm sorry to my love. I'm sorry to my parents." His body pulses faster, sustaining physical disruption for what feels like too long. I recall the rehearsal of this section—Yung's assistant sat close by with a stopwatch and when Liu stopped his shaking and speaking, his peers cheered him on as if to commend a virtuosic feat. The endless apologies to authority figures such as dean, parents, and country imply that Chinese youth experience pressures to comply to various paternal figures, including the Chinese state. Liu's solo of endurance of shaking and disruption within his body demonstrates both an upheaval of equilibrium but also a persistence as a young Mainland Chinese performer, navigating his journey as a marginal artist in China and in Hong Kong, where Chineseness is contested. Li's solo asks: How might Hong Kong endure its lack of stability? Its subservient position to China? Do Chinese youth have in common with Hong Kong youth a desire for autonomy from these various power structures? What are the effects of this oppression on the next generation? Will they comply or resist?

The kunqu movement anchors the performance in questions of Chineseness. Another character, Qian Wei, moves in the style of his role, the comic chou. In traditional kunqu, the chou character represents the commoner, or lowest ranking individual in society, and provides humor in romantic stories that limit the bawdiness of the female beauty characters.[75] In order to accomplish this affectation of humor, the chou character moves in a squatting posture with a wide T-step position (heel to arch of other foot) that makes him quick at directional changes, implying a cleverness. In *Contempt* (2013), Qian Wei bobs his head while walking in a buoyant squat in a circle. As if casting blame, he raises his eyebrows and points up to the audience with

[75] Ji lao shi, Interview with author, Nanjing. July 2013.

one scooping *shangzhi* (pointed finger) before folding both arms out in front of his chest as if waiting for an audience response. He then hikes his knee up, balancing on one leg and sickling his foot—a movement that shows his control. A rhythm of tossing away movement quickly produces both a light-hearted and cynical affectation. His teasing movement begs the audience to consider their position on an accompanying set of questions.

> While Qian Wei performs this movement, he speaks text in modern Mandarin Chinese:
> How was *xiaohualian* (small painted face character) originally? It shouldn't be this way. It was this way.
> How were performers originally? They shouldn't be this way. They were this way.
> How was kunqu originally? It shouldn't be this way. It was this way.
> How was the audience originally? It shouldn't be this way. It was this way.
> How were the masses originally? They shouldn't be this way. They were this way.
> The leadership?
> The communist party?
> The theater was like this.
> The stage was like this.
> The artist was like this.

The Mandarin Chinese (not the typical regional language of the chou in classical kunqu performance) paired with the kunqu vocabulary references Mainland Chineseness to a Hong Kong audience. The pared-down bodily movement from a 600-year-old form roots the questions and contradictory answers as something parallel to one another. The movement and text also make connections between developing Chinese cultural traditions and the origins of current political leadership, the Chinese Communist Party, pointing to authoritarianism. Specific references to both audience and "masses," leaders and theaters, as well as kunqu in particular, explicitly remind the audience of performance's relationship to power; here, Yung aligns audience spaces with the public sphere. Yung provides indirect critique of the Communist Party through the jovial movement and teasing tone of the chou—a critique that is more easily made in Hong Kong, due to the freedom of speech allowed by semi-autonomy. This is the skill of the chou character even in the traditional repertoire, to comedically question the status quo, to

provide humor in sad situations, and to break the fourth wall with the audience.[76] These strengths of the chou character remain even as narrative and character development have been stripped away by Yung.

In addition, Yung's bricolage of Chinese classical movement, pop music, Western classical music, pedestrian movement, and classical Western music demonstrates the multiple cultural influences on Hong Kong, but also portrays multiple temporalities important to the current experience in Hong Kong. Against the mirror backdrop of repeating images of the performers' bodies, multiple versions of Hong Kong can emerge. Hong Kong as Chinese. Hong Kong as British Colony. Hong Kong as Chinese (post) British colony with an international status. Hong Kong's future as Chinese (set for 2047). When Qian Wei yells, "How was the nation originally?" the other performers who sit erect on wooden chairs along the walled mirrors begin stomping their feet louder, louder, and louder in a pedestrian way. Qian Wei slaps his hands together, folds them behind his back clasped as still in chou character. One performer lets out a long-held note in kunqu styling. Techno music begins. Liu Xiaoyun shouts one last apology in Mandarin: "Sorry to my dean." This moment is a layered collage of classical/contemporary and Western/Chinese art production that communicates disruption to the narrative of one unified Chinese nation on a linear timeline. It is transcultural, and it is cacophonous. It is not the seamless multi-culturalism offered by HKAPA. I see, in this moment, Yung's challenge to the notion of precise points of origins that are so fraught in discussions of (Chinese) cultural heritage and authenticity, but also in discussions of Hong Kong's status. There have been fierce debates over Hong Kong's Chinese origins that have occurred since the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. In these moments, the work questions the

[76] Yining Lin, "Xiaoli shizi (Death of a Little Servant): Yang Qinggu's Jingju Performance of Saving Face," Association for Asian Performance virtual annual conference, July 27-29, 2020.

boundaries and power of a nation, and the Chinese nation in particular. In so doing, Yung employs the challenge to the nation as one embedded in the promise of "two systems" (if not always fulfilled) and complicates the notion of an easy "one country." Compared to the seamless multi-culturalism displayed at HKAPA, Yung's work shows tensions and incomprehensible collages. In fact, his work is often criticized for being hard to understand.[77]

Although Yung's work deconstructs traditional kunqu and "subtracts" its original contexts, Yung's use of the traditional vocal and movement vocabulary maintains its Chinese distinctiveness for his aim to perform a cross-cultural relationship between Hong Kong and China. This phenomenon is exemplified in his work *Sigmund Freud: In Search of Chinese Matters and Mind* (2016), which incorporated a Nanjing composition entitled *Making Dreams* (directed by Yung and executed by kunqu performers Zhang Jun and Xu Sijia).[78] Chinese theater scholar Rossella Ferrari refers to *Making Dreams* as an "embodied stage installation,"[79] commenting that Zhang Jun defies traditional kunqu audience expectations by not performing movement and by staying silent. According to Zhang Jun, he explored the idea of a "performance without a performance" by reclining in stillness, draped in white cloth to the recording of his voice repeating the Chinese word for dream, *meng*.[80] When this composition

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[77] I heard this critique over and over again by traditional Chinese opera practitioners and Hong Kong audience members.

[78] This piece, in particular, left a long-lasting impression on young Hong Kong high school students from Yung's creative theater program who attended the Toki Festival; they were impressed that Zhang Jun captivated the audience in stillness and that the spoken repetition of one word felt like music.

[79] Rossella Ferrari, "Asian Theatre as Method: The Toki Experimental Project and Sino-Japanese Transnationalism in Performance," *TDR/The Drama Review* 61, no. 3 (Fall 2017), 159.

[80] When Zhang speaks of his experience, his words reflect Yung's teachings about the open-ended possibilities of abstraction and the value of process for crafting the performer's individual creative voice and agency. Zhang speaks of having fun with the "performance without a performance," as a means to delve deeper into the act of performing. As if demonstrating his experience in the avant-garde performing arts, he says, "Recently, many people ask me: 'What is your concept? What do you want to express? Why don't I understand.' What I want to say is that

excerpt was transplanted into the larger-scale Zuni production in Hong Kong at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, however, Zhang no longer performed "without performance"; rather, he performed pared-down kunqu movement in practice water-sleeves. In this way, Zhang Jun is, in fact, the more flexible performer compared to the Zuni amateur avant-garde performer who has performed only in experimental theater contexts. Jun's virtuosity, learned through his intense kunqu training, the very training Yung is trying to deconstruct, makes the work aesthetically read as inter-cultural. Yung's directing Zhang to deconstruct his kunqu vocabulary maintains the exotic difference needed for performances to be marketed and perceived as transcultural.

In Zhang's solo like in *Contempt* and *Flee By Night* (described above), Yung composes the performers' movement in such a way that leaves the kunqu vocabulary present even if decontextualized. Although he subtracts the traditional costuming and narratives, the kunqu movement still reads as Chinese, necessary for his conception of cross-cultural dialogue between Hong Kong and China. In all of these works, he makes the kunqu movement more minimal by slowing it down, repeating it, or excerpting it, but he does not minimize it past recognition; the performers often demonstrate full-bodied kunqu gestures and traditional movement in sequence. This approach contrasts the effect, for example, of asking the performers to improvise and take movements out of sequence or distort kunqu movements in terms of bodily posture. Excerpting or playing with the timing of the movement leaves the spatial pathways of the kunqu movement and gestures still intact. As one component of a collage with lighting, multimedia, and recorded sound, the alternation between kunqu movement vocabulary and pedestrian movement gives the sense that these forms are interchangeable, both abstract and contemporary. In doing so, he

questioning is part of the performance." See: "昆剧王子"张军：我为什么要做"实验" *新华报业网* November 16, 2015, http://js.xhby.net/system/2015/11/16/027019350_03.shtml.

positions Western aesthetics and Chinese aesthetics as equals, yet also creates a more horizontal relationship between Hong Kong and China by both implying that Chineseness can be flexible and by showing that Hong Kong can play a role in the future of this Chinese cultural heritage. In his conception of transcultural kunqu, the Chinese form mingles with Western postmodern aesthetics that stand in for Hong Kong due to its Western colonial legacies. He creates compositions that explore diminished Chinese power, while using "two systems" as a proposal for partnership between China and Hong Kong.

These performances, even if workshopped in Mainland China, ultimately occur in Hong Kong at the pace and within the capitalist structures of the city, which do affect the compositions themselves. Due to the skill of the kunqu performers, Yung's creative process can privilege capitalist expediency of production and assembly, a legacy of British colonialism. The kunqu performers who work with Yung in his Hong Kong productions demonstrate tremendous adaptability by applying their talents to last-minute assembly of multiple performance aspects: on-trend architectural elements, surtitles, recorded music, and lighting. These additional elements are often highly technical, which parallels the technological savviness of Hong Kong and keeps Yung's work on trend among international contemporaries. His use of lighting, architecture, and even motion capture technology corresponds to the way stage technology has been used to promote the Chinese nation-state as modern as well as to connect Chinese theater artists to international trends.[81] These elements are often constructed, created, and recorded separately, then assembled quickly in the last few days before a performance without input from the performers. Thus, Yung's extraction of kunqu from traditional repertoire also suits the speed of production required at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and encouraged across the city. Even

[81] Tarryn Li-Min Chun, "Stage Technology in Modern China: The Media of Revolution and Resistance," Harvard University, Diss., 2016.

in the mainstage venue at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Yung's work changes slightly from dress rehearsal to performance and from performance to performance. In this way, each performance materializes at the last possible moment. The performers make it work, sometimes reluctantly.

The rehearsals for one of Yung's experimental kunqu pieces at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre can span less than a week, which makes for a particularly expedient, but not necessarily collaborative, rehearsal process. For example, in Fall 2016, the renowned performer Shi Xiaomei from Nanjing said she did not realize that the famous Zhang Jun from Shanghai would be performing with her until she arrived in Hong Kong for a week of rehearsals. She laughed this off, saying that they both had solid *jibengong* (fundamentals), so she would be proud to perform with him, but complained that she could not even see what he was rehearsing with her back sometimes facing the house of the theater (characteristic of Yung to have performers to face away from audience). One consistent complaint I have heard from the Nanjing kunqu performers is that Yung's rehearsal process is much too fast.[82] Performer Cao Zhiwei informed me that, although it takes a long time to memorize traditional repertoire (one to two years per piece), he feels less nervous performing that repertoire because he has had the time to fully embody it.

The short rehearsal schedules likely are due to the demands of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, where Zuni is a resident company, as well as Zuni's busy international schedule, which solidifies Yung's status as an international artist. A former Zuni employee informed me that Zuni has many different performances each year because the Hong Kong Cultural Centre dictates this number of performances and Zuni is not popular enough to sell tickets to one show with a long

[82] Cao Zhiwei; Qian Wei; Sun Jing; Xu Sijia; Yang Yang, Interview with author, Nanjing, July 2013.

run.[83] Zuni Icosahedron's recent annual reports list approximately 15 local and international productions for one year alone.[84] Yung's propensity for revising early works may be a strategy for creating so many productions each year to meet the requirements for the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. It is likely that due to Yung's international status, administrators at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre want to keep funding his work and require multiple performances to make it financially viable.

Yung out-sources; he works with mobile artists, who are flexible and mobile both in their border-crossing from the People's Republic of China to Hong Kong and in their bodily skills. Flexibility and mobility are both hallmarks of late capitalism,[85]a financial paradigm developed in Hong Kong by the British and still demonstrated by Yung's mode of production. The organizational structure of Zuni found on its website illustrates that, even as a main-stage company, Zuni has only two full-time performers-in-residence and one full-time artist-in-residence, three artists in total who reside in Hong Kong. In the case of Yung's work, most artists travel from Mainland China, contracted by performance. As the People's Republic of China has moved to a market economy, the kunqu performers rely less on state funding[86] and more on global markets (such as the global tourist markets that entice tourists to follow kunqu for its cultural heritage status).[87] The kunqu artists constantly travel for performance gigs

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[83] Cheuk Cheung, Interview with author, Skype (Hong Kong), March 2018.

[84] Zuni Icosahedron, Annual Reports, 2016/2017; 2017/2018.

[85] David Harvey, "Flexible accumulation through urbanization," *Perspecta.* 26 (1990): 251-72.

[86] The Jiangsu group is one of seven kunqu state troupes that were established after 1949 (when the Communist party came to power in China). It was founded in 1977 and, in 2005, privatized.

[87] For a discussion of the effects of rapid development of China's market economy and global tourism on Chinese cultural heritage, see: Andrew Weintraub and Bell Yung, *Music and Cultural Rights* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

assigned to them by the director of their troupe. In contrast, company managerial and administrative positions that support the business, both performance projects and educational/cultural exchange initiatives, abound for Hong Kong employees. Yung partially fulfills his creation of cross-cultural conversation between Hong Kong and China via aesthetics, but also through the personnel hired. Simply put, instead of importing teachers and syllabi like HKAPA has done with Chinese dance forms, Zuni imports Chinese performers from Mainland China.

Moreover, the kunqu performers' intense training in fundamentals and memorized repertoire enables them to be reliable participants in Yung's intercultural work, which is then viewed as experimental and cosmopolitan. Due to the performers open-minded work ethic and exceptional embodied precision, Yung can use his compositional strategies of collage and excerpt without necessitating time for more creative development. The intense training in the traditional kunqu form—the many painstaking hours trying to match the teacher exactly—results in a physical integrity to their movement. Although Western directors might assume Chinese opera artists are limited by their strict training, the kunqu performers from Nanjing show incredible adaptability, allowing for the creativity Yung desires. Just as Aihwa Ong observes, transnational mobility often occurs within structures of exploitation.[88] Even though Yung sincerely desires collaboration across difference and has a decade-long working relationship with many of these Mainland artists, the success of his work depends upon their adaptability and fine-tuned skills as physical artists who execute his vision. His work might not reproduce the same power relationship as one-off East-West collaborations or hegemonic intercultural theater,[89]

[88] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: the Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Duke University Press, 1999).

[89] Daphne Lei, "Interruption, Intervention, Interculturalism: Robert Wilson's HIT Productions in Taiwan" *Theatre Journal* 63, no. 4 (2011): 571-586. 573.

where the Eastern element is expected to bring innovation to the Western element; however, Yung's prominent status as a cultural worker in cosmopolitan Hong Kong still replicates a geographical power imbalance of Nanjing "traditional Asian artists" providing bodily labor to the more global "creative genius." Therefore, Yung ironically benefits from the performers' professional experience in traditional kunqu that he deems less creative in order to show the creativity possible in Hong Kong.

Transgender Choreography: Hong Kong as a Site for Freedom

Whereas HKAPA built its modern dance curriculum as a presumed creative expression permitted by "two systems," Yung explores Hong Kong as a site for freedom of creative expression[90] by asking performers to try out new role-types, especially across gender lines. Yung says that trying on new role-types can develop the performers' existing performance potential and the self-reflective capacities imperative for cross-cultural work.[91] His directing is often pedagogical, and paternalistic, aiming to give the performers agency they do not experience in their rote-learning; at the same time, their strict training has provided them with a unique physical skill set. Yung's gender experimentation with a traditional Chinese form presents the Hong Kong stage as a progressive outlet for the performers. Ironically, the transgender work shows the Chinese artists as adaptable at the same time that the Chinese artform, and China, itself is being considered rigid. Yung views his work in conversation with other transgender experimentation in traditional performance across Asia,[92]but it also makes his

[90] In an interview, Yung has spoken about the unique artistic freedom afforded by Hong Kong's liminal status.

[91] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 5: Symbol," accessed September 8, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W05j3UhXsFs.

[92] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 5: Symbol."

work seem contemporary in global circles of performing artists. In my analysis, transgender choreography is a significant compositional strategy because subverting gender binaries is also a strategy for subverting power hierarchies, especially in the context of China's masculinist presence in Hong Kong, which had already been feminized as a British colony. Yung's compositional approach to gender also confirms his use of Chinese cultural source without alignment with the Communist Party. His transgender choreography directly counters the stance of the Communist Party, which has a history of suppressing cross-gender performances as well as female performers. Although Chinese opera has a long history of cross-gender performance, censorship by the Communist Party both before and during the Cultural Revolution is the reason that the young kunqu generation does not normally perform across gender-roles.

Throughout Chinese history, male opera performers often played female roles because it was considered taboo to have men and women perform together, and women were often excluded from the theater altogether.[93] Because Chinese opera role-types are codified and stereotypical in binary gender terms, anyone can learn a male role or female role. After women were no longer prohibited from the stage and audience, female performers increased and so did female impersonators (circa the 1930s). In fact, a number of female impersonators (including the internationally renowned Mei Lanfang) made the *dan* (young female) roles popular in the early 20th century; this phenomenon demonstrates a patriarchal bias because men, as observers of women, were considered stronger performers of the female roles than women.[94] Despite this patriarchal justification, female impersonators have dwindled in contemporary China due to the

[93] Professor at Nanjing University, Chen Tian, notes that *nandan* or female impersonators were highly regarded during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1922), when females were not permitted on stage or in audiences.
See: Tian Chen, "What Chinese Opera Can Teach Us About Gender," August 29, 2018.
https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1002838/what-chinese-opera-can-teach-us-about-gender.

[94] Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2003). 105; 210-211.

Chinese Communist Party's anxiety about homosexuality and disdain toward transgender performance, made apparent soon after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949).[95] Yung's experimentations with kunqu gender performance, therefore, utilize the freedoms invited by Hong Kong's "two systems" to signify a non-Communist version of Chineseness.

The kunqu form, although rigid and gender-binary, ironically facilitates cross-gender experimentation because the roles are codified. When performers are young, they all study the same basic fundamental movements and vocal technique, which affords them the potential to learn other role-types. For example, in Yung's 2017 lecture-demonstration at the University of Michigan, male painted-face character Sun Jing first performs his staccato kicks and wide-eyed facial expressions, immediately followed by his performance of the female lead role in the *Peony Pavilion*—raising his voice to a falsetto, narrowing his bodily movements, minimizing his facial expressions, and adding *lanhuazhi* (orchid finger) position to his hand gestures. Because the female or dan role-type, like all role-types, has prescribed body positions, movement pathways, and singing set by repertoire, Sun Jing's challenge is to inhabit the role-type, not necessarily to create femaleness. Yung is praised[96] for the opportunity he gives the performers to self-reflect and to transcend boundaries set by the traditional form; yet, the kunqu genre also lends itself well to the cross-role, and therefore, transgender, performance. In this performance, Sun showcases incredible dexterity. The theatrical effect of his talent is a depiction of the way the kunqu form

[95] Chinese opera scholar Siu Leung Li cites speeches by Premier Zhou Enlai in the 1960s that express anti-transgender and anti-co-gender performance. See: Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 192-193.

[96] Jessica Yeung, "Danny Yung in Search of Hybrid Matter and Mind: His Experimental Chinese opera for Zuni Icosahedron," in *Hybrid Hong Kong*, ed. Kwok B. Chan (London: Routledge, 2012), 171-185; Bell Yung, "Deconstructing Peking Opera: Tears of Barren Hill on the Contemporary Stage," *CHINOPERL* 28, no. 1 (2008): 1–11.

traditionally associates the feminine with delicateness, contained space, and a certain coyness. Overall, Sun's performance illustrates a performativity of gender. Here, this approach to gender experimentation also endows Yung's work with a progressive appeal, especially intended for a global audience during this lecture-demonstration, and an uncanniness.

In addition to Yung's bending the form, he challenges his performers to work outside their comfort zone, thereby signifying an adaptable Chineseness on stage in Hong Kong. Traditional pedagogy teaches the performer to capture the *shen* (essence/psyche) of the character, transforming their *xin* (heart/mind) even outside the show. As Chinese theater scholar Siuleung Li argues, Taoist/Buddhist conceptions of mutability dictate that the male performer transforms his xin (heart/mind) into a woman's xin, thereby affirming gender as a performative act. According to Li, costumes and make-up traditionally divide performers in binary and patriarchal terms.[97] Yung's "subtraction" methods without characterization and without traditional costumes/makeup, which signify the role and gender of the character, can dis-orient his kunqu collaborators. In interviews, many performers have told me that they identify with specific characters in the traditional repertoire and feel lost without this anchor, consistent with Li's argument.[98] Nevertheless, even with this disorientation, the Nanjing performers demonstrate adaptability by trying on movement and singing techniques of other role-types.

Removing the gender-coded costuming aligns the female performers with assertive movement in a way that the traditional form prohibits, thereby aligning Hong Kong with progressive gender politics and feminine strength. Yung frequently features the female and male

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[97] Siuleung Li. *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press, 2003), 165-166.

[98] For example, male painted-face performer Cao Zhiwei said that even though it takes much longer to learn the details of traditional kunqu repertoire (can take 1-2 years per piece), he feels more nervous to perform Yung's work because of the pressure to perform something compelling without the support of the kunqu conventions or the depth of practice offered by long rehearsal processes. Cao Zhiwei, Interview with Author, July 2013, Nanjing.

warrior/military role-types (*wusheng*) without the traditional feminine-coded make-up/costume for the female warrior.[99] The female wusheng was originally played by men in all-male kunqu troupes and always wore the *kao,* a military male garment; however, the female wusheng performer (whether performed by male or female) also usually wore feminine-coded makeup to heighten her "prettiness" and maintain androgyny.[100] In contrast, in Yung's work, Zhu Hong performs the female warrior's *qiba* (movement to prepare for battle,) which displays exhausting, assertive acrobatic and martial arts sequences, without the convention for feminine beauty in her makeup and without cross-dressing as male to distance the assertive movement from the female. In Yung's *Contempt* (2013), for instance, she wears no make-up and plain gender-neutral pedestrian clothes as she kicks, strikes, and performs *fanshen* (full-body wind milling) with rapid precision. Even though she is not performing cross-role, Yung's work affords Zhu Hong the opportunity to perform her female wusheng assertive movement without being constrained by patriarchal terms of beauty as her traditional repertoire dictates. In *Contempt* (2013), without cross-dressing, the theatrical effect is not necessarily that a Hong Kong audience is imagining the comparison of her performance to a traditional version in her male military garment; instead, the fact that she is female, reading as female, and performing attacking, assertive movement signifies a feminine strength in line with feminist values. This feminine strength could be viewed as an argument for the strength of the feminine (post)colony. Yung's experimentations with gender, however, do not have the same effect in each piece.

Besides Yung's work with the female martial characters and transgender

[99] The *wusheng* performers receive fewer opportunities to perform in their troupe due to audience demand for familiar romantic narratives between scholar and beauty role-types.

[100]Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*,102-103.

experimentation, he has drawn often on the rare skills[101] of kunqu elder and male impersonator, Shi Xiaomei, in order to explore creative artistic freedoms possible in Hong Kong and to expand kunqu performance as a means for demonstrating his (and Hong Kong's) savviness. Shi Xiaomei is an actress of incredible renown and strength; she has won The Plum Blossom Award (the highest theatrical award in China) and has been named the National Maestro of Intangible Cultural Heritage. She is near retirement age and has been performing the young male scholar role since age 28 because of the timbre of her voice.[102] Male impersonators like Shi Xiaomei subvert the heterosexist patriarchy of the Communist party, which supposes the superiority of the male dan.[103] Her life's work is to investigate taking on the essence/psyche of male characters and to teach the next generation the repertoire that she remembers. As a highly regarded teacher at the Nanjing Jiangsu Performing Arts Kunqu troupe, Shi Xiaomei's expert movements and inflections are transferred to the next generation of male performers as students learn one-on-one with their teachers. Thus, a woman ensures the transfer of kunqu knowledge and repertoire to young men portraying young men. From the rehearsals I observed, she has strong artistic integrity and is willing to speak up in Zuni rehearsals, dominated by Hong Kong male artists. Nevertheless, this working relationship also exploits her talents in order to endow Yung's work with uncanniness and global appeal and in order to allow him to push against the rigidity of the Chinese Communist state, thereby positioning himself and Hong Kong as more progressive than China.

Shi Xiaomei's best-known collaboration with Yung, entitled *Sigmund Freud: In Search*

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[101] As Bell Yung writes for the program notes, current male impersonators are very rare. *Sigmund Freud: In Search of Chinese Matter and Mind*. Program. 2016.

[102] Shi Xiaomei, interview with Author, Hong Kong, November 2016.

[103] Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 209.

of Chinese Matter and Mind (2016), excerpts and deconstructs scenes from the *Peony Pavilion*—a famous opera[104] known for its portrayal of sexual desire of both women and men—to the effect of subverting Chinese Communist gender binaries and elevating Hong Kong's status. In contrast to Yung's other work with kunqu, Shi Xiaomei wears the male scholar costume, likely as a means for Yung to make Shi Xiaomei's gender-bending more visible. Shi Xiaomei presents both femaleness and maleness in this performance, both through her everyday gender expression and through her identification with male scholar characters. The female in this performance, then, is located in the biological sex of performer Shi Xiaomei, explicit in program notes that praise her unique talent of male impersonation. In program notes, she alludes to how she captures the essence/psyche of the character (mentioned above) as she defends the male character's desire. She writes that although some have criticized the lyrics as pornographic, she sees them as the "motivating force" for all his behavior and that their performance requires great "precision."[105] While scholars debate the *Peony Pavilion*'s potential for liberation of the female character, who can fulfill sexual desire only in supernatural occurrences,[106] Shi Xiaomei writes that both hero and heroine have a common desire for sexual liberation. Thus, these program notes show her simultaneous support of female sexual liberation as well as her identification with the male character.

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[104] For a discussion of the *Peony Pavilion (Mudanting)* in several iterations see:
Catherine Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2002).; Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[105] *Sigmund Freud: In Search of Chinese Matter and Mind.* Program. 2016.

[106] Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan*, 2001.

Unlike the recent phenomenon of Chinese opera adaptations of Western plays,[107] Yung borrows from the *Peony Pavilion* without creating anything remotely narrative or linear; Western elements include vague references to Freudian analysis and Western avant-garde aesthetics. Characteristic of Yung's work, surtitles offer incomplete context. A long-time Zuni performer, Carson Cheung begins sitting in the house of the theater and moves to the stage holding a white paper. The surtitles say "This is a piece of white paper. Here is a question/problem. This is a prison. This is a forest. This is a stage. Now, I shall share with you a never-ending monologue. We made love only once. It is like yesterday and today. It is like form and content." These words seem to tell the audience that the theater space and time are multivalent. And that the way the various elements are collaged together is as important as the meaning of each element. Again, Yung combines Western classical music, traditional Chinese kunqu, and Western avant-garde aesthetics to present cultural and temporal pluralism possible in Hong Kong. Even though Yung's work is touted as innovative and experimental in its approach to the audience, Chinese opera was also originally metatheatrical—*Peony Pavilion* during the Ming Dynasty could have taken 5 days to be performed in intimate settings, where real life and play might blur.

Yung's adaptation of *Peony Pavilion* compartmentalizes movement and voice, a frequent compositional strategy of his, as a means to deconstruct the gender of the male scholar character. The excerpts of the male scholar character are partially performed by Shi Xiaomei of the Nanjing Troupe and partially by the much younger man Zhang Jun[108] who trained with the Shanghai

[107] See: Alexa Huang, *Chinese Shakespeares: Two Centuries of Cultural Exchange* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[108] Zhang Jun has been awarded the "UNESCO artist of peace" award for his service to kunqu. He trained with the Shanghai Opera Troupe before leaving to start his own company. Although Danny Yung speaks paternalistically about Zhang's growth in this performance of *Sigmund Freud*, Zhang has incredibly diverse professional experience (from working with Bobby McFerrin to Tan Dun), and has developed several original kunqu works, including a solo show adaptation of Hamlet that has toured internationally.

Opera troupe. Through much of the performance of a scene called "In Praise of the Portrait," Shi Xiaomei performs singing and Zhang Jun performs dancing. Shi Xiaomei, costumed in kunqu attire, sings seated on a stool atop a revolving stage, juxtaposed against Zhang Jun, who dances in all black pedestrian clothes upon a red carpet. Shi Xiaomei sings not to traditional accompaniment of the flute but, rather, against synthesizer and drum polyrhythmic recorded music—her voice is also manipulated technologically by an echo effect, which implies a boundless sense of time. This additional technology, without simultaneously performing the movement paired with the singing, takes extraordinary internal sense of pitch and rhythm—kinesthetic flexibility.[109] Her presence comes across as background, upstaged by the younger, moving Zhang Jun. Zhang dances continuously during Shi Xiaomei's singing and speaking. His hands and arms constantly roll at the wrists, flipping outward and inward as they would underneath water-sleeve costumes if he were singing the scene. If he were wearing water-sleeves, the sleeves would draw a large circle around his face and torso, be tossed with a flick of his wrists, then caught in tight fists. Here, Zhang evidences the circular aesthetic present in the movement of kunqu, which can make the movement read as feminine when measured against both Western and Chinese cultural standards. Without water-sleeves, the movement also reveals the labor of the female dancing kunqu body. The buoyancy and frequent directional changes, bringing in and letting go, mirror the pondering quality of the original opera but also Yung's ambiguous surtitled questions about memory, power, and identity, such as "Am I thinking too much?" or "You are following my regulations."

In addition to experimenting with dividing the male role into two bodies, Yung's use of motion-capture technology in this work also expresses a gender-neutral attempt that counters the

[109] Shi Xiaomei is an expert and confident performer. After the dress rehearsal, she demanded that the technology to hear herself in her ear work better.

gender boundaries desired by the Communist Party as well as showcases Hong Kong's technological progress. Zhang Jun's movement during the performance takes on unconventional technological augmentation as his movement in motion capture (created by German designer Tobias Gremmler) is projected on a large scrim. In a sung interlude by Shi Xiaomei, Zhang Jun merely stands and gazes at the projection, his body witnessing the mediated body. The motion capture simultaneously captures and modernizes kunqu movement into multi-media moving image. As dance scholar Danielle Goldman[110] finds, motion capture has been employed at times as an attempt to reduce the body to only movement—rendering the dancing body less sensuous, even gender-neutral. Although Chinese opera performers, lyrics, and the genre itself historically have been gendered as feminine both within and outside of China,[111] the technology adds an un-feeling masculinist interpretation to Zhang Jun's movement as the large projection screen takes over the stage with images of the body as face-less and ostensibly gender-less repetitive geometric lines and shapes, rather than buoyant. Although this masculine version might be seen as innovative because it differs greatly from the traditional form, it also erases the femaleness of Chinese opera and of the expert female performer on stage.

The neglect of Shi Xiaomei's movement while creating a technological archive of Zhang Jun's movement mimics the neglected female performers and leaders in kunqu as well as the issue that the older performers, perceived less beautiful, face erasure by the younger performers. Kunqu artists strive to attain two opposing ideals of prettiness-eroticism and artistry; prettiness-eroticism is often held in highest esteem and not considered in older performers who become

[110] Danielle Goldman, "Ghostcatching: An Intersection of Technology, Labor, and Race," *Dance Research Journal* 36, no. 1 (2004): 68–87.

[111] Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 173.

part of the canon, instead, due to their artistry.[112] The technology captures the young male body, rather than the expert female teacher's body, consistent with the experience of aging as a traditional Chinese opera performer. Although as a male impersonator, Shi Xiaomei is not held to the same beauty standards as women who play the young female beauty roles, Shi Xiaomei, has indeed been recognized for her artistry and leadership as a teacher. Her skilled body is muted by this performance and Yung's direction.

As Yung fosters flexible interpretations of gender performance by kunqu artists, he takes advantage of the "two systems" opportunity as a way to flip the relationship between the masculinist national Chinese government and the feminized (post)colony Hong Kong. His work, and Hong Kong, become dominant in this relationship. His predominantly male company with local and global success benefits from the expertise of the traditional performers who have historically been associated with femaleness. His creative process might not be the style of the typical Western director who Orientalizes the Asian performers in a quick inter-cultural exchange, yet he uses his cultural capital to take advantage of the performer's expertise and bend the Chinese materials. Although he claims it to be, his process is not wholly collaborative, as the performers fulfill his vision of what "experimental" means. The Hong Kong Cultural Centre might also be taking advantage of Yung by sponsoring his work, to show that Hong Kong is a more liberatory space than Mainland China. As he challenges the binary gender performance mandated by the Chinese Communist Party, Yung works with cultural Chineseness without identifying with Chinese Communism. This is a politically savvy strategy for both presenting work to Hong Kong audiences and for connecting with artists in Mainland China.

In these past two sections, I have described several of Yung's compositional approaches

[112] Siuleung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, 178.

that de-emphasize the "one country" in favor of a more horizontal relationship suggested by "two systems,"; through compositional work, he elevates the status of Hong Kong, proposing its capacity for artistic freedom of expression, progressive politics, and transculturalism. As one method of working, Yung subtracts narrative, costume, and character from kunqu while excerpting movement sequences, which he then crops to a short segment, slows down, or repeats. He also pairs this kunqu movement with pedestrian movement and a Western postmodern relationship to the audience. The bricolage he creates with kunqu and pedestrian movement alongside lighting, multimedia, and text, abstracts the kunqu movement while leaving the Chinese markers intact. Non-script-based spoken or surtitled repetitive text encourages the movement to be read in terms of Chinese power, persecution, and revolution. Moreover, his compositional strategy of quick assembly reflects his working business relationship with the venue, but also asserts his power in the relationship with the adaptable kunqu performers who provide the skill necessary for such short creative processes. Yung takes advantage of their ability to perform Chineseness and adapt their craft in order to create work with a cosmopolitan appeal, which upholds his international status. (Yung has strong artistic connections in Europe because he has spent months out of some years in Berlin, Germany). Furthermore, Yung's local status as an artistic genius licenses him to present these artists from Nanjing.

Along with movement and voice, Yung approaches gender performance as a structural element that can be added and subtracted, moved around on stage, or even separated into two bodies. Sometimes, the same performer performs several gender roles or the performer gains the disorienting experience of performing outside of a gendered costume. When the female martial character performs without costume and makeup, she can inhabit an assertive, decisive femininity, perhaps suggesting a path forward for the feminized (post)colony of Hong Kong. His

work with male impersonator, Shi Xiaomei, highlights the skill of the kunqu performers and the history of cross-gender Chinese opera performance that makes Yung's experimentations possible. Such flexible transgender choreography subverts the monolithic desire of "one country" by interrupting the Chinese Communist suppression of transgender choreography. It also makes Yung's work seem contemporary in global circles and endows it with uncanniness, which portrays Hong Kong as the Chinese site for artistic freedom and progressive politics. Here, he connects Chinese cultural heritage to a global market and Hong Kong's liberal promise of freedom of expression under "two systems." Thus, Yung's creative work flattens the power hierarchy between Hong Kong and China, even as it elevates his own status. Yet, taken together with the male dominance in his own company, motion capture technology that attempts to strip the body of identity, and the promotion of young male kunqu performers, his experimentations with gender ironically express a masculine dominance.

Curating Artist and City Dialogue

Yung has cultural capital based on his international touring and Hong Kong's global city status, and he takes advantage of "one country, two systems" by inducing Hong Kong to act as a broker of multiple Asian partners. Subvented by the city of Hong Kong, he has insinuated himself into the cultural bureaucracies of China, and the rest of Asia. Through his role of curator for festivals and artist exchanges, he aims to keep Hong Kong central as he works the "one country" by establishing a close relationship with Chinese performers. Unlike the institution of HKAPA, Yung does not promote inviting various Western artists and administrators to Hong Kong, but rather, sets up relationships among Asian artists and cultural policy makers. His investment is not in East-meets-West promotion like HKAPA; instead, he frames cross-cultural

artist exchange between Hong Kong and China, along with many other locations in Asia, in terms of city-to-city exchange. City-to-city cultural exchange undermines the "one country" Chinese hegemony, and, instead, utilizes the semi-autonomy of "two systems" to ensure Hong Kong has its own seat at the table. In fact, table imagery pervades Yung's cultural exchange work. His "one table, two chairs" compositional structure of inviting artists to create a work with one table and two chairs, inspired by the Chinese opera set, has undergirded many festivals. The most recent festivals he curated ensure a steady pipeline of kunqu artists and performance material that can quickly be assembled for the Hong Kong staged work described above. Therefore, the festivals are important to analyze because they sometimes act as workshops for more highly-produced versions in Hong Kong.

In order to specifically explore Hong Kong's contentious relationship with China, Yung engages with the symbolism implied by tables and chairs in the traditional Chinese opera set by incorporating "one table, two chairs" metaphorically and literally. Even before Yung starting working specifically with the movement and vocal Chinese opera vocabulary in 2000, he used this stage setup of Chinese opera.[113] In traditional Chinese opera, the simple set allows for the theatrical form's use of symbolism to emerge; a simple move of the set symbolizes a new setting in the narrative, such as indoors or outdoors. This suits Yung's attention to non-realist theater sets that can be molded for multiple interpretations. One table and two chairs can also suggest power relations between characters on stage. In Yung's work, the chairs and table frequently symbolize power differentials between China and Hong Kong. Unlike Western realist theater, Chinese opera does not use detailed sets and props, an approach that Ferrari writes, "magnifies

[113] Yung's promotional materials note that in the year 2000, he expanded "one table, two chairs" in the direction of exchange between Asian traditional artists and contemporary theater artists. Creative Playground, 2016.

the signifying potency of the performer's body."[114] To date, over 100 "one table, two chairs" performances of 20 minutes each have been created by a range of dance and theater artists with Yung as curator.[115] This open structure for inter-cultural collaboration encourages commonality among works, yet room for artist variation.[116] It also makes the creative process more expedient in festivals lasting just one to two weeks.

Yung's challenging initial experience creating a festival in Hong Kong was in 1990, and it encouraged him to advocate for artist influence in governmental institutions. Yung credits a 1990 Singapore conference[117] with other Asian theater directors as his inspiration for curating conferences and festivals. As he recounts, the group discussed performance in Sinophone locations, institutionalization of arts and artists, cultural/ethnic labeling, and networking. He believed at the time that Hong Kong was best-suited economically and politically (Mainland China had just experienced the Cultural Revolution a decade earlier) to host such a festival, so he proposed it to Hong Kong's Urban Council Festival Office.[118] In 1991, the first Chinese

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[114] Rossella Ferrari. "Asian Theatre as Method: The Toki Experimental Project and Sino-Japanese Transnationalism in Performance," 157.

[115] Danny Yung Experimental Theatre Education Programme: Creative Playground, 2016, 31.

[116] Some artists suspended the chair from the air or kept it out of view, or draped flags of Taiwan or China on the table or covered the tables and chairs with traditional red fabric of *Chinese opera*. Although directors were not told to create a work about "1997," most works were read in that light. As Yung said, "1997 undeniably provides an unprecedented opportunity for reflection, review, investigation, and even crystal ball-gazing, on the topic of Chinese culture." As Vicki Oii, one of the theater critics and few women invited, notes in her published reflection, the work touched upon issues of identity, freedom of expression in sex and politics, and the pursuit of individualism. Much of the theater work included dialogue. As one example, Hong Kong director Edward Lam used crimson tables and chairs with Chinese folk music to serve as a backdrop for two local Hong Kong performers, who spoke in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin about their times traveling and studying abroad. Mainland director Li Luiyi used only movement; two performers dust and wipe the chairs and table incessantly as if erasing historical wrongs. The visual arts installations brought to mind allegories of citizens as school students to the power of government.

[117] Yung attended a drama conference in Singapore with Stan Lai of the Performance Workshop of Taipei, Gao Xingjian of the Beijing People's Art Theatre, Yu Qiuyu of the Shanghai Theatre Academy, and Krishen Jit from Kuala Lumpur.

[118] Danny Yung, "In the presence of the witness," *The Drama Review 38,* no. 2 (1994): 53.

Theatrical Festival of Hong Kong developed from Yung's suggestion to the Urban Council Festival Office; however, Yung bemoaned the fact that it prioritized performances and lacked opportunities for dialogue among artists. In addition, the Urban Council Festival Office demanded that he change the title[119] of his own work that was government commissioned. Following this experience, Yung publicly criticized the lack of cultural development by the British colonial government, particularly its alignment of the arts with entertainment and its disregard for fostering local culture.[120] In 1992, Chris Patten, the last British governor, invited Yung to help organize the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Yung has said that he took this invitation as an opportunity to promote a platform for the freedom of expression; half of the members of the Council were to be artists themselves.[121]

Inspired by the 1997 political shift, Yung has consistently engaged with "one country, two systems" as an experiment that de-centers the nation via his curation of transcultural exchange and international festivals. Of particular note, in 1996, a year before the handover, he stressed breaking down barriers between China and Hong Kong.[122] In 2011, he continued to speak about artistic experimentation as a means for re-defining the concept of nation at a forum I attended devoted to Intangible Cultural Heritage in Asia.[123] Even two decades after 1997, in

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[119] This work *Hong Kong Yang Ban Xi/[Revolutionary] Model Opera of Hong Kong,* was built around themes of de-constructing and re-constructing "model stage" "ideal stage" and witnessing on and offstage. The original title that was censored was the exact title of one of the eight model operas from the Cultural Revolution on the Chinese Mainland. See: Danny Yung, "In the presence of the witness," 53.

[120] Danny Yung, "In Search of Cultural Policy, '93" in *Cultural Perspective Hong Kong: Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron* (2015): 53-54. (reprinted from 1993 speech).

[121] Danny Yung, "If the System Isn't Right, Why Can't We Change It?" 9.

[122] Danny Yung, "Hong Kong. Margins. Art," 23-35.

[123] Danny Yung, Jessica Yeung, and Yuewai Wong, eds. *Asian Performing Arts From the Traditional to the Contemporary: Selected Proceedings* (Zuni Icosahedron: Hong Kong, 2011).

2017, he still expressed optimism that "one country, two systems" allowed for de-emphasizing the nation as a unit of cultural understanding:

> One Country Two Systems is an experiment, in my opinion, that provides opportunities for discussion and challenges on the cultural concept of what a "Nation" is. When the leaders of these two systems are visionary and with determination, this One Country Two Systems experiment might be able to re-position "Nation" in the cultural context and open up a whole new world. At the same time, it might relax the border issues among different countries, and loosen up tension of the opposing forces in cultural differences.[124]

Yung's comments communicate that he imagines the "two systems" as a non-nation-based cross-cultural experiment; over the years of his career, he has repeatedly used the words "dialectic," "cultural exchange," and "cross-cultural"[125] to describe his goals for theater and cultural policy. Although Ferrari praises Yung's work as transnational,[126] I have never heard him nor seen the company use this term; one of the Zuni company managers expressed to me that this term borders on offensive in Hong Kong due to Hong Kong's non-nation status.

In 1997, Yung first conceived of a festival called *Journey to the East* as a means for connecting artists in the Sinophone world through the "One tables, two chairs" compositional structure. *Journey to the East* was subtitled "A Cultural Exchange Project" and part of the First International Conference on Urban Culture in Hong Kong. The title *Journey to the East* alludes to Yung's interest in blurring the boundaries between East and West and re-directing the West's perception of the East. Yung recommended co-opting the Orientalizing Western gaze on Hong Kong as the world anticipated the 1997 moment by demonstrating transcultural/international

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[124] Danny Yung, quoted in Zuni Icosahedron, Annual Report, 2016-2017.

[125] Matthias Woo, ed. 榮念曾：實驗中國, 實現劇場/Danny Yung Experimenting China Realizing Theatre (Zuni Icosahedron: Hong Kong, 2010).

[126] See: Rossella Ferrari, *Transnational Chinese Theatres*, 2019.

Asian collaboration.[127] Ferrari highlights Yung as the leader of an emerging Pan-Chinese avant-garde that de-emphasizes the nation-state, focusing on the East Asian region and on Chinese culture. She observes the new directional orientation[128] *Journey to the East* proposed—East to East, and East to West, rather than the more dominant West to East orientations projected by many intercultural performance experiments.[129] The subsequent 1999 iteration of *Journey to the East* included performers from Macau (during the year of the Macau handover to the People's Republic of China).[130] Because of this focus on Asian artists, Yung's approach differs dramatically from the HKAPA festival begun by Carl Wolz that hosted Euro-American teachers and students for master classes.

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[127] Danny Yung, "Hong Kong 97 Culture Field of Vision," in *Cultural Perspective Hong Kong: Hong Kong Cultural Sector Joint Conference International Association of Theater Critics (HK) Zuni Icosahedron* (2015): i-ii (reprinted from 1997 speech).

[128] The directionality observed by Ferrari contrasts much of the inter-cultural theater work with kunqu. Kunqu, and other genres of *Chinese opera,* have been deployed as a commodity of intercultural performance experimentation in order to reinvigorate Western avant-garde theater; the history of modern Western theater is also a history of Chinese theater being assimilated and imitated out of context. Modern European theater directors Meyerhold and Barba adapted anti-realist values from Chinese theatre inventing a neo-Eurocentric and neo-Orientalist theater that upheld Chinese theater as exotic. In fact, Bertol Brecht was heavily influenced by famous *Chinese opera* performer Mei LanFang's international tours; therefore, even the Brechtian influence in contemporary China could be viewed as *Chinese opera* influence. Chinese avant-garde theater artists in the late 20th century not only responded to the overtly political theatrical content of the Cultural Revolution, but also to Bertol Brecht's strategies of alienation, which seeks to make the audience members conscious of their role as observer. Moreover, the contemporary Sinicization of Shakespeare and Greek tragedy via Chinese opera vocabulary and conventions represents a return to Chinese opera as an indigenous cultural vocabulary within recognizably Western narratives.

[129] For a discussion of the *Journey to the East* performance series, see: Rossella Ferrari, "Journey to the East—travels, trajectories, and transnational Chinese theatre(s)," *Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 4 (2010): 251-366.

[130] Although Zuni currently receives the majority of support from the government, funding from the Urban Council (which had censored Yung's title in 1991) fell through for the 1997 *Journey to the East* program. Yung's festival work often is supported by education initiatives for young people. The 1997 *Journey to the East* festival was organized by Zuni Icosahedron, the Hong Kong Institute for Contemporary Arts and Culture (HKICC), and the HKUST Center for the Arts, which co-organizes activities for students with universities and other cultural organizations. Both the HKICC and HKUST Center for the Arts aim to promote cultural exchange. The sponsors of the festival were wide-ranging, including government, business, non-profit, and university support: the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (government), DHL international (business), Yew Chung Education Foundation (non-profit), and the Office of Vice Academic Affairs at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (university). The Yew Chung Education Foundation has a mission for East/West education.

The compositional form of the *Journey to the East* program, "One table, two chairs," as well as the festival format became ubiquitous over Yung's career, including its use for the Toki Festival, which I attended, two decades later. Described by Yung as "informal, interactive, and self-directed"[131] and a "public sphere,"[132] *Journey to the East* was comprised of three parts: performances and critical forums led by theater critics/scholars held at the Shouson Theatre in Hong Kong Arts Centre, visual arts installations and critical forums led by visual arts critics/scholars held at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and cultural policy forums held at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The cultural policy discussions encompassed broadcasting, architecture and city planning, libraries and museums, cultural and arts institutions, and urban culture. Six theater directors and six visual artists from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong were commissioned to create 20-30-minute pieces that experimented with the structure of "one table, two chairs"—inspired by the traditional Chinese opera set. Therefore, the festival was intimate and process-based, in contrast to the product-orientations and large polished ensemble pieces that are presented by institutions such as HKAPA or the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Yung's strategy of "one table, two chairs" as a compositional structure for cross-cultural exchange lends itself to a semiotic exploration of Hong Kong's semi-autonomy and Chinese nationalism, without explicitly critiquing the Chinese government. It is intentionally a play on the phrase "one country, two systems." If Hong Kong and China were two distinct entities sitting across the table in dialogue, they would each hold power and respect, which Yung perceives as the promise of "two systems." Yung has said, "China has to accept that the one

[131] *Journey to the East* program, 1997, p. 8.

[132] *Journey to the East* program, 1997, p. 8

table, two chairs are the same size. When you do intercultural interaction, all sides are equally important, and you have to be respectful."[133] Yung generally uses simply-designed tables and chairs. Sometimes, he uses more than one table and two chairs. Although the table and chairs might be arranged in several configurations, they usually exist on the same horizontal plane of the stage (occasionally, I have seen him hang two chairs and a table from the ceiling as if power figures looming). This perspective on space symbolizes Yung's hope that the seemingly vertical relationship between Hong Kong and China could be more horizontal than vertical. Just by rearranging the table and chairs in space, or by placing them upside down, a spatial tension is created. The most frequent image I see emerge from Yung's abstract work with tables and chairs is the school desk and student, an explicit reminder of power relations between China as paternalistic to Hong Kong. Yet, the tables and chairs elicit a range of images, such as the table where the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed without Hong Kong representation. The table is, like Yung's work, a platform for the dialogue to take place.

Many of the critics present at the germinal *Journey to the East* program easily read the symbolism of power dynamic between Hong Kong and China, made obvious in Danny Yung's own piece *This is a Chair* (1997), which he would later adapt in his first Toki Festival in 2013 with Nanjing kunqu performers.[134] In it, Yung uses compositional devices typical of his later works to illuminate observations of political power, such as a spotlight on the audience as if questioning the audience member's role as witnesses. Stagehands repeatedly make slight adjustments to the chairs and table on-stage. The second chair with a silhouetted figure is only

[133] Yung, qtd. in Akshit Nanda, "Theatre Veteran Danny Yung on intercultural dialogue," The Straits Times (Singapore), December 12, 2017, https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/back-with-1-table-2-chairs.

[134] In 1997, (according to the *Journey to the East* program) Yung actually directed this piece at the last-minute due to a Beijing artist not being able to obtain his visa from the British consulate in time.

sometimes visible behind a screen as if a hidden authority. In the 1997 original, one motionless performer, Jimmy Kwok, reads a non-linear, repetitive monologue typical of Yung's work:

> This is a chair. This is a stage. Position yourself in a seat. You have a direction. Having a direction…you have a position…This is a theater. This is a Hong Kong style…stage…This is a performer. This is a monologue. Not a Tung Chee-hwa promise…I can be Tung Chee-hwa. I can be a director. When I am onstage I can choose not to follow the script. Not making a single move. Doing absolutely nothing (silence)...would this still be a performance?[135]

Tung Chee-hwa was the first post-British Chief Executive of Hong Kong at the 1997 mark and extremely unpopular after the pro-democracy protests of 2003.[136] The monologue's words refer to potential apathy in Hong Kong, but the rearrangement of the chairs by stagehands suggests the specter of Chinese leadership making a series of small adjustments in the (post)colony. The performer's mention of doing nothing as a performance is certainly an idea often found in Yung's work; in fact, kunqu performer Zhang Jun also experimented with "doing nothing" at the Toki Festival with Yung many years later (mentioned earlier in this chapter).

In contrast to the *Journey to the East* series, Yung's Toki Festival (annual since 2012) and Intangible Cultural Forums (2011, 2013) were grounded in kunqu and other Asian traditional performance forms, playing up the focus on Chinese culture. Rooted by kunqu and Nanjing, the festival signifies that Chineseness undergirds the event as a nod to "one country." With the opening of the festival to non-Sinophone Asian artists, Yung also conveys that the collaboration between China and Hong Kong is supported by other Asian collaborators as well. As opposed to the typical East/West intercultural experiment that reifies East/West binaries and power

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[135] *Journey to the East* program, 1997.

[136] "Low point: Popularity of Hong Kong chief executive C.Y. Leung continues to plunge, according to latest HKU poll," South China Morning Post, January 12, 2016, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1900101/low-point-popularity-hong-kong-chief-executive-cy-leung.

hierarchies,[137] Yung promotes an Asian regionalism. Ferrari argues that Yung's approach to the Toki Festival accomplishes processes for Asian regional integration advocated by scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen's *Asia as Method*:[138] de-cold warring, de-imperialization, and de-colonization. Similarly, scholar Aihwa Ong warns that scholars should not look at cultural hegemony only through an East/West binary but also consider China's powerful position in Asia.[139] The possible solutions to China's problematic relationship with Hong Kong require a broad view, tackling Japanese imperialism and Chinese chauvinism, not just Western imperialism. The multiple cultures and artforms represented at the Toki Festival signify an Asian regional integration through the performing arts—a table where both Hong Kong and China have an individual seat. In this way, Yung builds relationships across Asia differently than HKAPA, which cultivates relationships with Euro-American and Australian educational institutions and dance companies for employment and exchanges. In Nanjing, Yung does not explicitly challenge Chinese chauvinism, a move that would certainly have consequences in Mainland China, but he does encourage innovations on Chinese culture by Asian artists without the intervention of Western artists.

Because the Toki Festival attempts Yung's mission of harmonious transcultural[140] artistic invention, he privileges artist-to-artist learning over the financial earnings of the festival. Through its format of "one table, two chairs" projects, the Toki Festival encourages dialogue

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[137] See: Rustom Bharucha, *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*, 2011.

[138] Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[139] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible citizenship: the Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

[140] Toki Festival Promotional Materials state the mission of the festival is to: "create a cross-cultural platform for Asian traditional ICH artists' dialogue and collaboration" and to, "enhance interactions between young performers of Kunqu and great Asian performing artists."

between artists, mostly in the form of duets. The Toki Festival is set up as a few days of: lecture-demonstrations/master classes in various Asian traditional performance forms, several performances, excerpts of traditional kunqu performances, meetings for reflection/planning, and round-table discussions among artists. Although kunqu is a grounding presence at the festival each year, the other Asian dance/theater forms have included *noh* Japanese drama, Thai dance, classical Javanese dance, and Indian *kumiodori*. This festival is small and intimate—around 20 artists meeting one another, a handful of scholars, and fewer than 100 audience members.

It is what scholars refer to as a low-density festival[141] that privileges social interaction as opposed to larger scale festivals that host highly produced productions and garner big earnings from international audiences. The performances sell out to eager Nanjing college students[142] who do not have many opportunities to see international artists or experimental performance work. Yung frames this festival approach as anti-consumerist[143] by its prioritization of the artists,' not the audience's, experience. The performances featured during the Toki Festival have an in-process feel, as opposed to dance/theater repertoire set upon the artists by an international guest artist such as at HKAPA or a show of elite repertoire like at the Hong Kong Arts Festival.[144] Yung's conceptualization of festival allows the kunqu performers an opportunity to embody new techniques rather than just showcasing their skills as objects of rare Chinese cultural heritage. The low profile of the festival also probably keeps it off the radar of the

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[141] See: Christina McMahon, *Recasting Transnationalism Through Performance: Theatre Festivals in Cape Verde, Mozambique and Brazil* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[142] Based on Zuni employee Cheuk Cheung's observations.

[143] "Danny Yung Creative Talk Series Creative Elements 3: Space," accessed September 1, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGSUWpCvnXU.

[144]See: *Pawit Mahasarinand, "*When Cultures Mingle," The Nation, January 23, 2014, http://www.nationmultimedia.com/life/When-cultures-mingle-30224947.html.

Chinese government.

Given the low-stakes nature of the festival, the artists do not necessarily gain notoriety within China; yet, the chance to work with Yung can reward performers with more performances in the future, even across the globe. The Nanjing kunqu performers already have high status in the Chinese social sphere that adores traditional Chinese opera; those audiences tend to know specific kunqu narratives and symbolism and to be less likely to watch an experimentation with kunqu. In addition, the non-kunqu artists from across Asia already have high status in their artforms as Yung seeks out experts in their forms. Due to the small audience of primarily college students, it is unlikely that the Toki Festival performances lead to more support or funding of any participating artists. The one exception, nevertheless, is that participation in the festival solidifies a working relationship with Yung, who often borrows from the Toki Festival's performances for works in Hong Kong and the possible tour to Europe. For the Nanjing performers, the opportunity to perform in Hong Kong offers access to more global audiences than in Nanjing, and, therefore, greater cultural capital. On the other hand, given the anti-Chinese sentiment in Hong Kong, the Nanjing performers might not find it all that desirable to work in Hong Kong.

The potential of the structure "one table, two chairs" for artist agency is recognized by performers and observers alike; yet, according to my interviews with the kunqu performers, it is not always felt nor clear how these festivals can be applied to their normal performance repertoire. While Yung still acts as director for many pieces for the festival, he welcomes performers' input.[145] Ferrari asserts that the festival is revelatory and liberatory and attuned to the performers' lives. She praises the structure of "one table, two chairs" as "far from being

[145] See Pawit Mahasarinand, "When Cultures Mingle," 2014.

restrictive" as it "enhances the 'conversational' potential of the performers."[146] A similar assessment of Yung's work as liberatory is asserted by his brother ethnomusicologist, Bell Yung, who concludes that Chinese opera performers who work with Yung learn to push against the expectations of their training, administrators, and audience members, leading to greater creative potential.[147] Indeed some performers feel empowered and find new modes of creativity. For instance, Kunqu performer Yang Yang credits Yung with inspiring him to create his own experimental kunqu evening-length work[148] in Nanjing. Contemporary Thai theater artist Ornanong Thaisriwong has said that she learned to work outside of Western modes of theater improvisation through her duet with kunqu artist Zhu Hong at the Toki Festival. Although creative potential exists through this process-based transcultural model, some participant-performers have complained that the duration of the festival, just one week, provides only a surface-level collaboration[149]and that the relevance of the festival to their normal professional lives seems shallow.[150]Moreover, although Yung attempts to get to know the kunqu performers through conversation, his mode is pedagogical and even psychoanalytic at times, which

[146] Rossella Ferrari. "Asian Theatre as Method: The Toki Experimental Project and Sino-Japanese Transnationalism in Performance, 160.

[147] Bell Yung, "Deconstructing Beijing Opera: Tears of Barren Hill on the Contemporary Stage," 2-11.

[148] For scenes from *319,* see Cheuk Cheung's (2015) film. *My Next Step:* 一个武生, Cheung, Cheuk, Film, Hong Kong Asian Film Festival, Broadway Cinemateque, Hong Kong, November 13, 2014.

[149] Xu, Sijia: Yang Yang; Sun Jing; Ji Shaoqing; Qian Wei, Interview with Author, Nanjing. July 2014.

[150] Repeatedly during my interviews with Nanjing kunqu performers and teachers, I heard that Yung's festivals and work are separate from the performances of traditional repertoire because they are not kunqu. Zhu Hong says of her experience with "#Gertrude #Ophelia": "I think I'm quite accustomed to improvisation now. I've learned a lot from this experience but I still don't know how to make use of these in my Kunqu performance back home." (qtd. in Pawit Mahasarinand's, "When Cultures Mingle") Even though the artists tend to be very positive about their experience with the Toki Festival, their experiences in just one week do not always translate to the performing they do the rest of the year based on teacher, colleague, and audience expectations in addition to their training.

maintains hierarchy between him and the kunqu performers.[151]Yung acknowledges the lack of democracy inherent in a process whereby he suggests the format, even if not the vocabulary.[152]

"One table," in addition to symbolizing conversation between China and Hong Kong, is an apt metaphor for the way Yung choreographs alliances among artists and funders, bringing them all to the same table. These festivals of "one table, two chairs" have connected him with many traditional and contemporary theater and dance artists as well as Asian performance scholars and cultural-policy makers to consider avenues for transcultural and cross-disciplinary work. Well-known Sinophone theater directors—Zhang Ping, Wang Jingsheng, Stanley Lai, Lin Zhaohua, Li Liuyi, Edward Yang, Tsai Ming-Liang, and Stanley Kwan—have participated as well as more than a hundred dance and theater artists and creative personnel. Besides artists, Yung delights in bringing policy makers and cultural administrators to the table. As with the *Journey to the East* festival in 1997, the Toki Festival includes moments for reflection, critique, and vision for future projects; for forums on intangible cultural heritage[153] that served as precursors to the Toki Festival, he invited intercultural theater scholars as well as Chinese scholars, even though their main emphasis is preservation of the traditional operas. Yung is expert in providing a space for round-table discussion where each participant gets to voice their thoughts—to stimulate dialogue, but also receive feedback for improvement. He is charismatic

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[151] Cheuk Cheung, Interview, Skype (Hong Kong), 2018.

[152] Yung says, "In fact, providing some frameworks or conditions to artists might be more inspiring than restricting, that brings forth more interactions. Speaking of the concept of democracy, festivals here running under the practice of curatorship or artistic directorship would not be democratic per se. This practice providing framework to artistic creations tells the cultural difference between the East and the West...If this was the idea of freedom, then it was a conditional one since it was granted by the curator. Freedom or democracy in that sense might be a pseudo-concept." Zuni Icosahedron, Annual Report, 2016/2017.

[153] When I attended the intangible cultural heritage forums in 2011, for which Yung invited 35 speakers, moderators, and researchers, Yung invited all participants to offer responses and critiques to the forums themselves through brainstorming sessions. The subsequent Toki Festivals have not included as many non-artist participants.

and skilled in both Hong Kong and China social mores, such as inviting in local officials for banquet meals and keynote speeches.

Yung's particularly close relationship to Nanjing performer and administrator Ke Jun has assured a continuing relationship with the younger generation of kunqu performers in Nanjing. Ke Jun held a political position in the Chinese government and is an administrator with the Jiangsu Performing Arts Group (the organization that includes the kunqu troupe). Ke Jun and Yung have developed a mutual respect for each other as artists. Yung has spoken about Ke Jun as one of the most-dedicated artists he knows;[154] Ke Jun speaks of his experience with Yung as opening his mind to creative options for innovating kunqu.[155] Due to his positive working relationship with Yung in several experiments as well as the very successful show *Flee by Night*, Ke Jun assigned the younger generation at the Nanjing troupe to work with Yung. According to the power structure of the Nanjing Jiangsu Performing Arts Kunqu Troupe, performers get assigned to performances by the troupe's administrators like Ke Jun, whether Yung's mainstage work in Hong Kong or a school lecture-demonstration in Nanjing. Performers are paid per performance, so they delight in any performance opportunities. For five years, Ke Jun also served as deputy to the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China—a nearly 3,000 member parliamentary body, which has been called a "rubber stamp for party decisions."[156] His positive relationship with the Chinese Communist Party, therefore, might ensure that the Toki Festival, despite Yung's reputation for being "political," is not scrutinized too closely by party officials.

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[154] Danny Yung Experimental Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Festival, *Book of Ghosts* program, 2009.

[155] Ke Jun, Interview with Author, Nanjing, July 2014.

[156] "How China is ruled: National People's Congress," BBC News, October 8, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13908155.

Funding for the Toki Festival reveals additional strategic partnerships and alliances choreographed by Yung; this is an illustration of Yung's entrepreneurial spirit. The series of Yung's intangible cultural heritage forums and the Toki Festival have been funded by a number of non-governmental partners in addition to Zuni funds. Yung receives little financial support to host intangible cultural heritage festivals and forums from the Hong Kong government even though the majority of Zuni's performance funding does come from governmental grants.[157] In Hong Kong, he would be more likely to receive funding from the SAR government if he focused on Cantonese opera. Instead, Yung sought to renew the potential impact of kunqu. Yung's intangible cultural heritage forums and festivals have been funded in large part by Hong Kong and Nanjing universities, Japanese and Chinese cultural institutions such as museums, and a not-for-profit NGO, called the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture (HKICC). The HKICC values cultural pluralism, exchange between Hong Kong and other Asian cities, and cross-disciplinary relationships. Yung has also served as the Chief Executive of the HKICC, so it is not surprising that his vision aligns with the values of that funding body. Based on my experience, potential funders were also invited to attend the intangible cultural heritage forums and festivals.[158] Funders, along with policy makers and artists, take a seat at the table of reflection about projects.

The Toki Festival has also served as an advertisement for potential funders and as a means to showcase specific theater organizations and funders in Asia, especially Japanese.

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[157] Danny Yung, Jessica Yeung, and Yuewai Wong, eds., *Asian Performing Arts From the Traditional to the Contemporary: Selected Proceedings.*

[158] I was initially sent to the intangible cultural heritage forums in 2011 by Dance Advance by Pew Charitable Trusts, a funder of Yung's work in Philadelphia.

The Toki Festival has been supported by Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Kun Opera House in Nanjing, where they have been held, and by the Japan Foundation, which is devoted to cultural exchange. Other partners include Asian theaters: Patravadi Theatre Bangkok, The Theatre Practice Singapore, The National Theatre Okinawa, and Za Koenji Public Theatre (Tokyo), whose associated directors participated. In promotional/archival materials, Yung is listed as curator; depending on the year, the information also lists co-curators, especially his colleague Makoto Sato from Tokyo and many Nanjing kunqu administrators, including Ke Jun. Whereas Sato did direct some performance works for the festival, this inclusion of the Nanjing administrators seems to be more about an expression of gratitude that they offer their theater and their performers for these projects, versus an acknowledgement of any sort of artistic curation on their part. This is both a cultural and political move to recognize the people in power at the Nanjing troupe.

In a move well-supported by the Hong Kong government to create more exchange possibilities between Mainland China and Hong Kong, Yung's Experimental Theatre Education Programme "Creative Playground" invites young Hong Kong artists aged 16-25 to attend the Toki Festival. Most of these performers are students at the Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity secondary school, where Yung serves on the board. With funding from Hong Kong's Home Affairs Bureau and the Commission on Youth Secretariat, the young artists from Hong Kong attend master classes and workshops and watch performances at the Toki Festival. The Home Affairs Bureau supports civic education, youth policy, sports and recreation, and culture and arts to benefit local Hong Kong people. The sub-organization Youth Development Commission (established 2018) outlines its emphasis on youth development:

> The aim is to enable the younger generation to see hope and opportunities for upward mobility…seeks to promote cross-bureau and inter-departmental collaboration as well as

strengthen communication with young people in order to better understand them.[159] The above statement, especially lines such as "to better understand" young people, likely reflects a reaction to the 2014/15 Occupy Hong Kong movement, led mostly by young people who sought a better economic and political future for Hong Kong. Likewise, the Youth Commission within the Home Affairs Bureau seeks to empower youth particularly through business internship opportunities in Mainland Chinese cities. The Toki Festival fulfills the Hong Kong government's goal, which aligns with Yung's, to foster better relationships between Hong Kong and China. In terms of funding, it behooves Yung to work on projects that involve cultivating a relationship between Hong Kong and China.

In contrast to HKAPA, which exports its expertly trained dancers across the globe, Yung inserts Hong Kong into transcultural conversation between Mainland China and makes Hong Kong, as a distinct entity from China, relevant to the rest of Asia. Besides his own influence as Hong Kong director and curator with the kunqu genre, the framing of the Toki Festival as artists representing cities, as opposed to nations, attempts a parity among Hong Kong, Nanjing, and other Asian cities. Through this city-to-city exchange, Yung treats "one country, two systems" as an "elaboration of and challenge to the cultural concept of 'country."[160]In contrast to UNESCO's nation-centered cultural heritage model, the Toki Festival establishes a relationship between cities and cultural heritage. The promotional materials for Toki Festival 2016, entitled "Bridge the Traditional and the Contemporary: Cross Cultures and Boundaries," frame the performances as dialogue between cities in a written format as a "X" between two cities'

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[159] "Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs," Hong Kong Home Affairs Bureau, 2018 Policy Address, October 22, 2018.

[160] Danny Yung, Jessica Yeung, and Yuewai Wong, eds., *Asian Performing Arts From the Traditional to the Contemporary: Selected Proceedings.*

names.[161] In fact, this is a common format for house programs in Hong Kong to express cultural exchange. Here, Yung takes advantage of "one country, two systems" to promote a positive relationship between China and Hong Kong, but not necessarily to agree with a "one China" hegemonic philosophy.

If the relationship formed between Hong Kong and China at the Toki Festival occurs through Nanjing as a surrogate for China, then the resonances of Nanjing and Hong Kong as cities also influence the meanings created by this festival. Nanjing and Hong Kong function as "Global Cities" with distinct manifestations. In Saskia Sassen's theorization of the "Global Cities"[162]as "transterritorial marketplace(s)" the urban space is one of capital mobility connected to similar sites of capital flow. She argues that deregulation and internationalization of the world economy conversely create a situation of agglomeration centralized in just a few global cities where capital flows back and forth; in addition, labor and production become geographically dispersed, but ownership is centralized. Nanjing fits Sassens's model in that global cities manufacture highly specialized services, information technologies, and financial products, and experience a high density of people and information systems. As the largest in-land port city in Mainland China, Nanjing depends on trade, but not with first-tier global cities[163] like London.

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[161] For example, one performance of Danny Yung (listed with contemporary theater), Rajanikara Leng Kaewdee (listed with Thai Acrobatics), and Qian Wei (listed with Kunqu opera), is listed in promotional materials as "Hong Kong X Bangkok X Nanjing".

[162] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[163] Even though Nanjing might not meet Sassen's criteria as a first-tier global city, it experiences incredible international travel into and out of the city. Notably, Nanjing welcomes many international college and graduate students. Nanjing University was the first university in China to enroll international students. American students can attend Nanjing University through a joint program with Johns Hopkins University. Furthermore, it is a popular tourist destination due to its close proximity to Shanghai and its architectural monuments to its long history as a Chinese capital.

Hong Kong maintains a global status due to its high levels of foreign investment[164] coupled with legacies of British colonialism—notably, British business methods and the ease of using English to do business in Hong Kong. Due to these factors, Hong Kong functions as more of a "transterritorial marketplace"[165]with other first-tier global cities than does Nanjing.

Nanjing represents pre-Communist Chinese nationalism, which suits Yung's work that both connects with China and is critical of the Communist party. Nanjing was one of four ancient capitals in China; it became the capital during the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and again during the founding of the Republic of China in 1912 under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. Sun co-founded the Nationalist party of China, the *Guomindang*, which ruled from 1928 to 1949. In 1937, Nanjing suffered horrific murders and rapes when invaded by Japan during the second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945). Nanjing holds onto this legacy of Japanese Imperialism in its local history and suffers from anti-Japanese sentiment. At the turning point of the Communist Party's ascension in China in 1949, the Guomindang fled with Chang Kai-Shek to Taiwan, and Mao Zedong declared the victory of the People's Republic of China and restoration of Beijing as capital. Nanjing serves as a specific Chinese city in Yung's city-to-city/intercultural relationship with Hong Kong because Nanjing is not Beijing, where the Chinese central government currently resides and carries the weight of the Communist capital. Moreover, the more cosmopolitan Shanghai might be too similar to Hong Kong for Yung's inter-cultural experiment; cross-cultural

[164] In 2017, Hong Kong had the third largest flow of foreign investment behind China and the United States. According to the Santander Bank website, the majority of foreign direct investments are intended for "financial activities: holding, real estate, finance, insurance, banking" in addition to trade, construction, information and communication. The Santander site also states that the appeal of investment in Hong Kong is the strategic position with China, its free-port status, its simple tax system with incentives, infrastructure, and judicial security. "Santander Bank," accessed February 1, 2019, https://en.portal.santandertrade.com/establish-overseas/hong-kong/foreign-investment.

[165] Saskia Sassen. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 1991.

dialogue requires difference. Although Ferrari argues that Nanjing's role in the Toki Festival supports the repair of Chinese Japanese friendship,[166] I believe that the city is also important to Yung as a symbol of pre-Communist China and as a less cosmopolitan city than Hong Kong.

By working in this city-to-city intercultural frame, Yung's approach to cultural heritage departs from common framings of Chinese cultural heritage by de-emphasizing the Chinese nation-state. This revision is particularly important in terms of festivals and performances of "intangible cultural heritage," a conception by UNESCO that is based on nation-state application. Cultural studies scholar Valdimar Hafstein critiques UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage logic as turning culture into a cultural Olympics for nation-state promotion.[167] Often, the stamp of intangible cultural heritage conferred by UNESCO leads performance artforms to a process of museumification under the guise of preservation, which re-scales cultural productions as meta-cultural.[168] The fact that kunqu was one of the 19 Masterpieces first listed in 2001 signifies the importance of this performance tradition to the nation-state of China. China has participated enthusiastically in UNESCO's project as evidenced by several nominations each year from the Ministry of Culture submitted to the UNESCO committee. By nominating arts from contested territories of Chinese rule—including Tibet, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang—China approaches the preservation and innovation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in terms of national

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[166] Ferrari writes that Yung utilizes Noh and *kunqu* as symbols for de-imperialization, de-colonization, and un-doing Cold War logics (borrowing from Kuan-Hsing Chen's theorization of *Asia as Method*), in order to express Chinese-Japanese friendship. She mentions that Yung even publicly announced his intention to start an anti-war cultural center in Nanjing; although this idea was never realized, it does demonstrate Yung's interest in cultural heritage and inter-cultural healing. See: Rossella Ferrari, "Asian Theatre as Method: The Toki Experimental Project and Sino-Japanese Transnationalism in Performance," 155.

[167] Valdimar Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a List: from Masterpieces to Representation," in *Intangible Heritage,* ed. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (Routledge, 2009), 93-112.

[168] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible heritage as metacultural production," *Museum International* 56, no. 1-2 (2004): 52-64.

pride and multi-ethnic national unity. From the Chinese Ministry of Culture in 2007:

> China's intangible heritage is the symbol of the Chinese nation, the precious source for fostering the self-identity of the Chinese nation, the solid basis for promoting unity of nationalities and safeguarding the unification of the country as well as the important force of unifying all peoples.[169]

As shown above, Chinese nationalist rhetoric stresses unification through the celebration of cultural heritages claimed by China, thereby pulling intangible heritage into the logics of China's continental colonialism. By exploring cultural heritage in duets set between artists and between cities, Yung undermines this display of Chinese hegemony that occurs via the promotion of intangible cultural heritage. In this way, Yung's festival functions differently than HKAPA's direct adoption of national Chinese folk and classical dance pedagogy.

Conclusion

Yung's creative work as the director of performances with Nanjing kunqu performers as well as his curatorial work with the Toki Festival takes "one country, two systems" as an invitation to treat Hong Kong and China in a more horizontal, cross-cultural relationship. His collaborators, Mainland Chinese kunqu performers, represent Chineseness through their artform and their citizenship. As the site of frequent performances by Yung, Hong Kong acts as a cosmopolitan space for creative artistic freedom. Instead of drawing on character development and narrative, his structural collages of sound, kunqu movement, pedestrian movement, lighting, multimedia—and even gendered inflections—combine to make abstract meanings; this strategy attempts parity between Western postmodern dance aesthetics and the Chineseness embedded in kunqu. It also diminishes the monolithic power desired by "one country" by demonstrating

[169] Dawson Munjeri, Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, "Following the Length and Breadth of the Roots: Some Dimensions of Intangible Heritage," in *Intangible Heritage* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 145.

Hong Kong as a global city capable of liberal progressive politics and contemporary performing arts trends. The skill of the kunqu performers along with his status allow Yung to quickly assemble the work in accordance with the fast capitalist production required of the venue and the city. In other words, these interactions between Hong Kong and China in Yung's work, conceptualized by Yung as cross-culturalism, elevate Hong Kong to a status that is alongside China, and to an extent, undermine the power of the Chinese state.

If "one country, two systems" proposes interaction between socialism and capitalism and between Chinese culture and Hong Kong culture, then Yung engages with this interaction by choreographing transcultural kunqu (pairing a recognizably Chinese genre with Western avant-garde performance aesthetics). As a curator, Yung has brought Asian artists together at the low-stakes Toki Festival through his compositional structure of "one table, two chairs" (as a metaphor for "one country, two systems"). Both the artform of kunqu and the location of Nanjing, where the Toki Festival serves as a rehearsal ground for much of the Hong Kong staged work, represent a pre-Communist Chineseness. He takes advantage of his own cultural capital as well as the global status of Hong Kong to bring artists from across Asia together to collaborate with kunqu as the foundation, thereby supporting Trans-Asian exchange without the West as participant. In addition, the Toki Festival, conceptualized as city-to-city networking via artist-to-artist duets, redefines notions of Chinese cultural heritage as independent of the Chinese nation-state; the festival thereby inserts Hong Kong in conversations surrounding Chinese culture. His countless alliances with government representatives, funders, artists, and even the Hong Kong Cultural Centre underpin the success of Yung's work. Government officials and funders who have supported Yung's work share his vision for a less tense relationship between Hong Kong and China.

Through all of this relationship building, Yung does not turn his back on China, but rather deeply investigates what China means and what it could be. In the initial conceptualization of "one country, two systems," the Chinese government, in a sense, indicated that China would allow dissent even as the Chinese nation was strengthened. Yung's work, too, experiments with the dissent of made possible by "two systems" while still upholding Chineseness. The 2017/2018 Annual Report for Zuni Icosahedron illustrates that Yung's company does acknowledge the Chinese nation-state and the Beijing central government. For example, the report mentions that the company had produced more Mandarin-Chinese language shows that year. It also reprints a speech by Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, who avidly supports the idea of "one country" as a "pro-Beijing" politician. In her speech, given at the Belt-Road City-to-City[170] Cultural Exchange Conference 2017 curated by Yung, she quotes General Secretary Xi Jinping's 19th Congress Report delivered on October 18, 2017, which stated, "China will thrive only if the Chinese culture thrives, and our Nation will be strong only if our culture is strong."[171] In the same pro-China speech, she praises Yung's cross-cultural work with Chinese culture and foreign cultures, promises SAR government funding for such future initiatives, and mentions the worthy goal of showcasing Hong Kong as a regional cultural capital. Although there might have been political pressure to include this speech by Chief Executive Lam in the company report, the pro-China sentiment also aligns with Yung's approach to working with Mainland Chinese artists, Mandarin Chinese language, and Chinese cultural heritage. Instead of joining the independence movement in Hong Kong, Yung works on

[170] Cities in this exchange included Shanghai, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and Taipei

[171] Zuni Icosahedron, Annual Report, 2017/2018.

dialogue between Hong Kong and Mainland China—and brings in other high-profile Asian partners to witness this alternative vision.

The next chapter explores the i-dance improvisation festival as another rubric for hosting partners of diverse nationalities, where Chinese dancers and choreographers are included as part of an international network. This festival does not adopt Chinese classical and folk dance forms like HKAPA nor adapt Chinese opera movement like Yung, but rather provides the opportunity for expression of ambivalence and critique of Chineseness in addition to attempting precultural collaboration among dancers.

Chapter Three
Improvising the International: Natural Bodies and Ambivalence at the i-Dance Festival

Introduction

The i-Dance improvisation festival, uniquely comprised of freelance artists, functions independently of Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and of Hong Kong's three flagship dance companies. The festival is small, but ambitious; according to promotional materials, the "i" in the title of i-Dance stands for independence, individuality, identity, international, interaction, improvisation, technological invention, and subjectivity.[1] I-Dance includes both workshops and performances. Directors Victor Choi-wa Ma and Mandy Ming-yin Yim aim to make improvisation more accessible to Hong Kong audiences by programming pre-devised choreography alongside improvisation. In regard to its "international" goals, the festival partners local Hong Kong artists with dance artists from around the world, including China, thereby treating Hong Kong as a node in a global dance improvisation network. While HKAPA constructs an East/West multiculturalism through dance techniques that are thought to explicitly represent the West and China, the i-Dance festival opts for improvisational and postmodern dance forms that read as vaguely international due to their association with Somatics—a variety of related movement techniques that claim discovery of the pre-cultural "natural" body and "authentic" movement. As a strategy for collaboration, the i-Dance festival cultivates the supposed natural body as opposed to the Chinese body presented by Danny Yung or the Chinese dance curricula at HKAPA. This chapter investigates how i-Dance then uses this cultivation of the natural body (that is presumed culturally unmarked) in order to join an international network and to re-orient Hong Kongese and Chinese partners as all part of "one country, two systems."

[1] i-Dance festival (HK). Promotional Materials. 2009.

This festival employs training in and presenting of genres that have a global reputation as culturally unmarked and experimental in order to re-position the dancers' national identities and place Hong Kong and China in a horizontal power relationship. The i-Dance festival incorporates many genres—site-specific dance, postmodern dance, contact improvisation, and compositional improvisation—all of which incorporate improvisation and Somatics pedagogy. In their historical analysis of the late twentieth century development of Somatics, George defines the goals of early American Somatics dance teachers in these words:

> They instituted biological and mechanical constructs of the body as the guiding logic for dance classes, claiming to uncover a "natural" way of moving. In so doing, they drew upon early twentieth-century theories of postural and emotional health, influenced by Darwinism and progressive education. Somatics used this conceit of naturalness to develop a new form of training designed to supersede the Graham technique and ballet training, which were thought to be harmful to the body because of their demand to fulfill specific aesthetic ideals.[2]

These claims to "natural" ways of moving remain today across many Somatics and improvisation practitioners. Across the range of Somatics techniques, the pedagogy promises increased bodily awareness that leads to self-discovery and release of physical tension; these teachings, therefore, treat the body as distinct from its socio-cultural milieu. The prevalence of tactile feedback from teachers further indicates that dancers need not aim for a particular aesthetic; however, Somatics techniques do each have recognizable vocabularies derived from their focus.[3] In contact improvisation, dancers learn how to connect to partners based on the sensations of their bodies and physics concepts. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen's Body-Mind Centering, as another example, takes an evolutionary approach and claims to connect the dancers to the inner working of their bodies (such as their organ system, their nervous system, and their

[2] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2.

[3] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 31.

endocrine system). Alexander technique places importance on the posture of the spine and head in order to learn more efficient movement patterns for effective movement and as a remedy for pain. Dancers' movements in each technique do coalesce around a similar aesthetic. Despite their different emphases, Somatics techniques share an insistence on gaining a cognitive understanding and sensorial awareness of a precultural body.

The i-Dance festival deploys this "natural body" in order to re-orient the dancers' national identities and create a sense of egalitarianism in an era of "one country, two systems." Although i-Dance fosters international collaboration, it does not do so within the framework of collaboration between Mainland China and Hong Kong, the way that both HKAPA and Danny Yung realize "one country, two systems." Furthermore, in contrast to Yung's festival curation of "one table, two chairs" duets between Asian artists, i-Dance cultivates collaborations through group-oriented improvisation experiences with various international members, including Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, and Chinese dancers who do not share work in the name of national or city exchange. Rather, the ostensibly culturally unmarked group improvisation serves as the means for attempting a path forward together in a collective, politically neutral experience. I-Dance imagines this precultural harmonious future between local Hong Kong artists and the vague "international"—not excluding Mainland China, but neither isolating Mainland China out as a special partner. In addition, the i-Dance festival directors, unlike Yung, make no attempt to bill their work as Chinese cultural preservation or as cross-cultural exchange. Instead, the i-Dance directors invite Chinese artists who may or may not present Chinese material, and they present Hong Kong artists who interact with Chinese sources, but not with the intention of explicitly advocating for China or Chinese cultural heritage. Therefore, the i-Dance festival responds to "one country, two systems" by proposing a precultural collaboration and expressing an

ambivalence about Chineseness.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief description of how this festival originated amidst the promotion of the three flagship companies and the overwhelming prevalence of Chinese dance, modern dance, and ballet in the city. Next, I discuss how the festival trains the natural body for improvisation as its strategy to negotiate "one country, two systems." This attempt at the natural steers the festival away from presenting dance that reads as exclusively Western or Chinese, but rather re-iterates Hong Kong as a global city, and connects Hong Kong dancers to an international network. I focus on the values transferred to the dancers in a range of styles of improvisation found at the festival: dancing contact improvisation, making scores and enacting them, improvising with site/nature, and using improvisation in the choreographic process. Then, I analyze how the participants of the festival come together in presumed collective action, in which they have not been assigned the role of representing national culture. I highlight one event of the festival in particular, called *Research Week*, during which participants contribute to teaching schedules, performance scores, and workshop ideas in an egalitarian spirit. Instead of an authoritative director who shapes the event, such as Danny Yung, *Research Week* participants utilize their observation of other bodies' movements and the sensation of other bodies against their own as impetus for movement invention. In that section, I also describe how female choreographers Helen Lai, Mui Cheuk Yin, and Wen Hui draw from Chinese source material to portray anxiety related to Chineseness and to critique power hierarchies, especially the restricted agency of Chinese women's bodies, thereby undermining Chinese nationalist, masculinist agendas. Thus, i-Dance downplays the Chineseness of "one country" while it seeks the liberty and pluralism promised by the semi-autonomy of "two systems." In the final section of this

chapter, I discuss how i-Dance interacts with the international in comparison to Danny Yung and HKAPA.

Founding and Shaping an Independent Festival

The i-Dance festival was established in 2004 by a group of freelance dancers in Hong Kong who saw themselves as "independent" dancers. That is, these dancers were not company members in Hong Kong's three flagship dance companies, Hong Kong Ballet, City Contemporary Dance Company (CCDC), and the Hong Kong Dance Company. As stated in previous chapters, these three companies pursue the three genres of ballet, modern dance, and Chinese dance. That first year of the festival (2004), the organizers (including Victor Choi-wa Ma, Mandy Ming-yin Yim, and Force Fong) did not receive government funding because the government chose a more entertainment-oriented project instead. CCDC contributed part of the funding and donated the space.[4] In 2009, Ma and Yim continued the festival as an annual event. The Hong Kong festival has since become a trans-Asian phenomenon: Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan formed their own i-Dance festivals in 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively, which the promotional materials refer to as an "i-Dance festival network in Asia."[5] Many of the same participants attend i-Dance festivals in several Asian countries, creating a tight-knit core community (around 20-30 dance artists) who attend year after year. As evidence of its influential position in the dance community, the 2016 festival was awarded the Hong Kong Dance Awards "Outstanding Service Award."

The i-Dance festival is run by Y-Space founders, Victor Choi-wa Ma (Artistic Director)

[4] Victor Choi-wa Ma, Interview with Author, Ma, Hong Kong, 2016.

[5] i-Dance festival (HK), House Programme, 2019.

and Mandy Ming-yin Yim (Education and Outreach Director), both extremely prolific co-choreographers and HKAPA alumni. Both Ma and Yim were dancers in the first graduating class at HKAPA and have influenced the Hong Kong dance scene in countless ways. Yim danced with Hong Kong Ballet and CCDC early in her career. Ma also danced with the Hong Kong ballet for a short time before he was badly injured and resumed study at HKAPA, this time for a degree in drama. A year after they founded Y-Space in 1995, the pair went to the United States on an Asian Cultural Council grant to study dance and theater. Much more a space than a company, Y-Space hosts classes and produces shows in addition to the i-Dance festival. Their mission includes both the goals to create works that are "characteristic of local culture"[6] and to increase international exchange. For them, the development of the local goes hand-in-hand with global connections. In addition, they hope to "cultivate young choreographers,"[7] not simply to hire dancers to perform their choreography. They hire administrative staff on a project basis and have one dancer as an intern; but, for the most part, these two work tirelessly to run Y-Space. They sometimes even sleep in the dance studio in order to get their work done.

The number of participating artists and events at the i-Dance festival each year has depended on how much funding Y-Space receives from the Arts Capacity Funding Scheme of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The funding also influences the stature of participating artists. Over the years, anywhere from 50 to 200 people have participated as dancers in the festival, in addition to the approximately 10-30 members of the production team, including stage managers, videographers, and photographers. Depending on the year, 60-80% of featured performers are local Hong Kong artists; workshop participants in

[6] "Y-Space," YSpace, accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.y-space.org/about/y-space1/?lang=en.

[7] "Y-Space," YSpace.

attendance are nearly all local. The rest of the performing participants travel from the United States/Europe, China, and the rest of Asia. Many non-professional dancers take part in the workshops and in some improvisation experiences, reflecting Y-space's goal to "promote broad-based participation in dance and its appreciation," as noted on its website.[8] The cost of tickets can depend on the funding available; but, each year, Y-Space does offer a number of free events, including contact improvisation with children, mini-conferences, and dance film screenings. Most theater performances and workshops have a reasonable cost. In 2017, a ticket for a show cost $90-180 HKD ($12-$22 USD), and a workshop cost $120-130 HKD ($13-$15 USD) per hour. The marketing for i-Dance does not attract international tourists who are not dance artists; this is likely due to its emphasis on Somatics and abstract dance.

This accessible festival's many components occur at several locations throughout the city. Most of the festival takes place in the urban areas of Hong Kong, whether the site-specific areas on Hong Kong island, the warehouse studio space of Y-space, or mainstage theaters. Apart from that, the closing event, which is a final group improvisation on a farm followed by a vegetarian dinner, always takes place in the village of Kam Tin outside of Hong Kong city in a rural area known as the "New Territories." Many of the core participants joke that the version of the festival in Hong Kong (as opposed to its offshoots in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea) is the most densely scheduled, in a way that reflects the pace of the city: "Hong Kong style" goes the running joke. With little administrative help save a few paid staff members, the directors Ma and Yim manage an ambitious schedule: including site specific performances around Hong Kong; improvised group performances; solo performances in theaters; workshops for professional and amateur dancers; and mini conferences on topics such as technology, traditional/contemporary

[8] "Y-Space," YSpace, accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.y-space.org/about/y-space1/?lang=en.

conceptualizations, and funding issues. In addition, festival directors Ma and Yim invite international guest artists to join local artists in *Research Week*, a week of improvisation practice cooperatively led by participants. I attended the festival and participated in *Research Week* as a dancer in the falls of 2015 and 2016. Besides dancing, *Research Week* also includes several casual discussions and "happy hours."

Outside of the mainstage companies, Ma and Yim have struggled with carving out space in Hong Kong for Y-space and for improvisation. In 2010, they did have a residency at the Yuen Long Theatre. By 2016, they maintained two spaces in a warehouse building called On Fook Industrial Building near the Kwai Fong metro stop, Kwai Tsing Theatre, and Metroplaza shopping mall. Although they were once able to afford a larger space, now they just rent that large space for some performances and showings. Due to government restrictions on arts industrial spaces, they once staged the smaller space as if it were a small sewing business so that it would pass government inspection. In 2019, they lost that space completely. Although they receive support from the government and some support from the major companies, Y-Space is a counter-cultural space that uniquely privileges improvisation, site-work, and freelance artists, without a guaranteed financial support system. Although Ma's and Yim's work is still respected by HKAPA and the major companies, they have struggled to find financial support for their vision that offers a unique space for dancers who may not all have academic training and for dancers who wish to work outside of the company model.

The i-Dance festival fosters a small community of dancers who are interested in improvisation and site-work in Hong Kong. One key player in the Hong Kong improvisation scene, Force Fong (a founding member of i-Dance festival) studied contact improvisation in the United States when funded by an Asian Cultural Council grant in 1995. He started Kongtact

Square in 2000 and now hosts monthly contact jams at the CCDC studios. For the i-Dance festival, Fong is a regular workshop teacher, *Research Week* collaborator, and performer. Mimi Lo and Maru Yuen, two long-time participants in the i-Dance festival, also run a group called Contact Improvisation Hong Kong and work with DanceAbility for people with disabilities. Lo attended HKAPA as a dance major, but Yuen did not, bringing skills in visual art and performance art to the festival. In terms of site-specific performance, there is no major dance company solely devoted to site-work in Hong Kong even though many young freelance artists do create site-specific choreography. One such freelance group, the Slow Movement Group, which moves slowly in public space, started during the 2014 Umbrella Movement. Because improvisation has a small following in Hong Kong, the i-Dance directors aim to make improvisation more enticing by inviting international guest artists to perform and more accessible to audiences by coupling pre-devised choreographed pieces alongside improvised ones.[9] In other words, unlike some improvisation festivals, the i-Dance festival relies on several pre-devised choreographed performances not just workshop/jam formats.

Festival directors Ma and Yim aim to intervene in what they see as the status quo in Hong Kong dance research and development, which is a failing they attribute to HKAPA.[10] In contrast to the professional aesthetics and standards present in Hong Kong, i-Dance international guest artists alongside local artists teach local dancers to treat dance as a process and ready themselves for unpredictability. In fact, it could be argued that preparing for the unexpected has become a necessary skill of living in Hong Kong during "one country, two systems" as the relationship with China has shifted since 1997. The dancing bodies that are cultivated and

[9] Interview with Author, Ma, Victor Choi-wa. Hong Kong, 2016.

[10] i-Dance festival (HK). House Programme. 2017.

celebrated by i-Dance are responsive to the moment, as opposed to the bodies-for-hire formed by the HKAPA dance curriculum and Yung's kunqu collaborators that are shape-oriented and well-rehearsed in pre-devised movement phrases and whole dances. By focusing on honing skills in improvisation rather than in memorizing set repertoire, which is common for both Yung's kunqu collaborators and HKAPA students, professionals and amateurs at i-Dance alike ready themselves for the unscripted. Even so, this practice in improvisation is not completely haphazard. Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster writes that improvisation is far from mindless spontaneity, but rather is extemporaneous composition, knowledge, reflexivity, and a "vigilant porousness toward the unknown."[11] This cultivation of skills in adapting to the present moment counters the academic standards of Chinese dance, modern dance, and ballet in the city and provides opportunity for agency during the uncertain era of "one country, two systems."

Cultivating the Natural Body

The i-Dance festival produces the "natural" body asserted by Somatics training via its workshops and improvised performances. Somatics is an umbrella term for a range of dance techniques and pedagogies that ground dance intent in anatomical realities and view movement exploration as means for finding "essential truths of the body" and "lost corporeal capacities."[12] The natural body is, thus, conceptualized as pre-cultural. At i-Dance, like many contemporary dance workshops worldwide, Somatics training might include taking dancers through stages of infant development such as crawling; asking dancers to lie supine and swing their legs against the floor to feel the weight of their bones, versus a muscular engagement of the quadricep

[11] Foster Susan Leigh, "Improvisation in Dance and Mind," in *Taken by Surprise a Dance Improvisation Reader*, eds. Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 2003), 7.

[12] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 1.

muscles; or practicing a gentle nod of the head to re-align spinal posture. At i-Dance as elsewhere, Somatics instructors often ask dancers to meet in a circle at the beginning and end of class, signaling an egalitarian spirit different from the power hierarchy of dancers following in rows behind a teacher. The teaching also frequently involves tactile feedback from both instructor and peers. For example, dancers hold the weight of their partner's leg to provide relaxation to the hip muscles and a visceral sense of release. Then dancers enter into an open improvisation where they move simultaneously with no apparent agenda besides feeling this new sensation in full-bodied movement. Somatics students learn to search for and revere this sensation of ease, rather than creating an aesthetic of ease, such as in ballet or Chinese classical dance. In fact, Somatics training communicates that students can unburden themselves from copying a teacher or worrying how their movement looks. Instead, Somatics teachers privilege attention to bodily sensation, relationship to partners, and individual spontaneity versus crafted unison. This spontaneity, offered in improvised structures, is often associated with a freedom of consciousness. Due to its claims to physical release, Somatics forms are often touted as healing, both physically and psychologically.[13]

The cultivation of the natural body by Somatics occurred through a process of allegedly eliminating cultural influence. The Somatics movement occurred in the mid through late twentieth century in reaction against the rigidity of ballet and early modern dance genres. Somatics sought "personal authenticity in the body's fundamental motility"[14] through a range of practices in body awareness, including improvisation as a primary mode of exploration. As Doran George writes in their history of the development of several Somatics communities

[13] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 35.

[14] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 2.

worldwide, practitioners advocated a more authentic body unburdened by authoritarian genres and re-asserted American expansionism/postwar liberalism via propositions of universal individual freedom.[15] Although Somatics borrowed from Asian epistemologies, martial arts, and meditation practices, the Somatics movement glossed over these appropriations, and, through several generations and geographic locations, disregarded these cultural influences. Early American Somatic teachers claimed the dancing as precultural rather than citing Eastern philosophy and thought, thereby representing the West as the site for contemporary innovation and the East as the source for the natural mind-body integration.[16] This history explains how, although i-Dance occurs in Asia with mostly Asian participants, the festival does not deploy Somatics for its Asianness, but rather for its associations with the international.

A closer look at Somatics development reveals the cultural borrowings and cultural negations that have influenced the 21st century reputation of Somatics, relied upon by i-Dance. According to George, although early 20th century American modern dance artists such as Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, and Martha Graham had appropriated from Eastern cultures, early Somatics practitioners viewed their cooptation of Asian epistemologies as more ethical. In fact, through a similar process of appropriation, Somatics relied upon ideas, concepts, and general practices without fully understanding or citing Asian sources. Early Somatics teachers borrowed values from Zen meditation, yoga, Tai chi, other martial arts, and Eastern philosophy, arguing that modern dance did not integrate the mind and body sufficiently due its emphasis on Western thought and its manifestation of the Western ego.[17] Martha Graham's work, in particular, was

[15] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 58.

[16] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 61.

[17] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 21.

critiqued as authoritarian and as manipulating psychological expression, and dancers began finding other avenues for training that they found more humane. George writes that mid-twentieth century dance artists were so intent on their rejection of Graham that they failed to realize the additional Western genealogy of their renewed interest in moving with "natural ease"—that is, Western Somatics approaches such as those led by French theater practitioner Francois Delsarte and Swiss movement practitioner Emile Jacques Dalcroze.[18]

In the mid-twentieth century, Americans developed several Somatics approaches, borrowing from Asian philosophies. For example, on the East Coast, modern dance choreographer Eric Hawkins worked with the Zen concept of "receptive mind," and Merce Cunningham focused on indeterminacy and on dance solely as physical organization, not as psychological expression. On the West Coast, Anna Halprin continued American dance educator H'Doubler's conceptualization of thinking/feeling/moving combined with Bauhaus and Zen concepts. Mary Starks Whitehouse, also on the West Coast, developed a therapeutic practice called Authentic Movement that incorporated Zen, Taoist, and Jungian philosophies.[19] In the 1950s, Joan Skinner, Susan Klein, F.M. Alexander, Mabel Todd, and Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen asserted that their Somatics work connected dancers to new cosmologies, rescuing them from forced emotional expression. Recovery as a result of accessing new cosmologies, then, became associated with the Somatics myth of the precultural body.[20]

In the 1960s and 70s, American Somatics practitioners continue to combine Western scientific justifications with Eastern cultural approaches in order to foster kinesthetic awareness

[18] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 23.

[19] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 26.

[20] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 27.

and to counter perceived elitism and spectacle in early modern dance. Injury prevention work by Klein, Skinner, and Cohen led to Anatomical Releasing technique, which prioritized "intrinsic movement principles" and pedestrian movements such as lying, sitting, crawling, and walking, claiming natural movement that was unsullied by ballet or early modern dance aesthetics.[21] In addition, pedagogical shifts such as tactile feedback and open improvisation emphasized a supposed exploration of unconscious bodily ability. As George writes:

> Hands-on exercises convinced dancers that they were discovering bodily veracity because they were commonly surprised during the touch-based processes by the sensation of the location, size, weight, and dimensions of various body or visceral components.[22]

Contact improvisation, which relied exclusively on tactile dialogue with a partner, shared an investment in simple movements, bodily receptivity, and similar pedagogy to other Somatics practices. Dancers connected via their centers of gravity, versus the more arm-oriented partnering of ballet, and relied on physics and Anatomical Release mechanics to support each other's weight. The Asian martial arts (Aikido) and African American aesthetic of improvisation[23] that influenced contact improvisation became subsumed in the belief of kinesthetic efficiency between partners.[24] George critiques that contact improvisers' use of scientific metaphors convinced them that the body could be danced with objectivity, and without sexual or emotional feeling during contact with a partner.[25]

All of these strands of Somatics, as well as their conceptualization of a precultural body,

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[21] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 28.

[22] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 32.

[23] Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: contact improvisation and American* Culture (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 38-42.

[24] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 33.

[25] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 35.

still exist; at the i-Dance festival in Hong Kong, contact improvisation is among the most prominent forms of Somatics, while yet other forms influence a range of improvisation and contemporary dance workshops and performances. In the Hong Kong context, Somatics offers i-Dance dancers the chance to push against the institutionalized aesthetics that stem from the three genres of the academic training at HKAPA, which also dictate the professional dance scene: ballet, Chinese dance, and modern/contemporary dance. (Many of the participants at i-Dance are graduates of HKAPA.) At the festival, through workshops in Somatics and improvisation-as-performance, local dancers unlearn the "imposed aesthetics"[26] of their training that stress precision in unison, cultural malleability, adherence to a choreographer's vision, and visual composition of highly flexible and strong bodies in proscenium high-tech spaces. Although dance students at HKAPA have limited opportunity to practice improvisation and Somatics in elective coursework, these electives serve the goal of injury prevention and the greater purpose of creating well-rounded professional, hirable dancers; in contrast to HKAPA's emphasis on evaluated product, the i-Dance festival provides training in Somatics and contact improvisation as a mode of exploration. The additional inclusion of amateur dancers at i-Dance further demonstrates its value of rejecting academic standards and professional aesthetics.

As i-Dance negotiates "one country, two systems," it deploys the natural body as a solution to what Rey Chow calls the "double impossibility" of navigating British colonialism and Chinese hegemony in Hong Kong.[27] At i-Dance, an emphasis on the natural body frequently occurs during warm-ups that focused the dancers on their inner sensations—their breath, the

[26] George finds that one of the most empowering aspects of Somatics is not that dancers actually achieve the most natural way of moving, but that "dancers construct nature to achieve a sense of authenticity against what they experience as imposed aesthetics" (140).

[27] Rey Chow, "Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-Writing in the 1990s," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 2, no. 2 (1992): 151–70, 153.

weight of their bones against the floor, or their perceived release of tension of their muscles. Teachers of workshops describe concepts in terms of anatomical principles—such as the most efficient placement of the head or the movement of the scapula as arms raise and lower—as if universal bodily truths. For the HKAPA graduates, therefore, the festival's workshops teach them that, as opposed to moving in order to fulfill a choreographer's vision, a dancer can move in relation to concepts of efficient movement, the feelings and desires of their own body, and their relationship to other dancers. For the amateur dancers who participate at i-Dance, the festival teaches them that dancers do not need technical proficiency as much as awareness of their own and others' bodies. In other words, amateur and professional dancers alike can practice and perform under the assumption that they are just people who have bodies, who can move those bodies freely.

i-Dance takes advantage of the presumption of cultural neutrality of Somatics and related improvisation forms in order to create a third option between recognizably Western forms of dance or Chinese forms of dance. In this way, I observe i-Dance's attempt at what scholar Homi Bhabha refers to as the "Third Space" of (post)colonial hybridity:

> …the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. It is the *inbetween* space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people.' And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.[28]

Therefore, Bhabha's concept of the third Space allows for cultural ambivalence and subverts utopian rhetoric of multiculturalism and essentialist readings of cultural difference. Several authors characterize the mundane as a third space for Hong Kong between British colonial and

[28] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Cultures* (London, Routledge: 1994), 56.

Chinese aesthetics.[29] The i-Dance festival directors employ the natural body and its presumed international, and universal, resonance in order to create a third space that offers a level playing field for Chinese and Hong Kong, and, even, Taiwanese, artists.

Even though the festival treats its genres as a-cultural, these genres, nevertheless, are inherently based in Western imperialism. Although Somatics might not be touted as a British national dance form, Great Britain has played a strong role in the development and dissemination of Somatics worldwide. In George's scholarship on Somatics, they trace the various permutations of the Somatics Movement in the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia. In the United States, particularly in New York City, Somatics came to be understood as innovative and professional; whereas, New England Somatics practitioners attempted to counter professionalism and capitalism by practicing Somatics in nature retreat formats/settings. British Somatics contrasted American establishment dance by employing Somatics as a pedagogy for individual creative freedom in compositional artistry rather than performance aptitude. British choreographers also utilized Somatics as a way to create politicized choreography in the 1970s and 1980s, thereby rejecting the formalism of American dance. As George writes, "interdisciplinary social critique claimed itself as a peculiarly British aesthetic".[30] Unlike the American and British Somatics practitioners who largely worked in professional communities, students in educational institutions in the Netherlands studied Somatics under the goal of becoming creative, not just interpretive, artists. George argues that Dutch Somatics

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[29] Rey Chow. *Ethics after idealism: theory, culture, ethnicity, reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 151; Shu-mei Shih. *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007),155; Wessie Ling, "From made in Hong Kong to designed in Hong Kong: searching for an identity in fashion," in *Hybrid Hong Kong* ed. Kwok Chan (London: Routledge, 2012).

[30] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 81.

promoted individuality more than the other transnational permutations.[31] Somatics began, then, as a Western phenomenon of promoting the natural body against other learned lexicons of movement and for the intent of fostering individual creative freedom.

The i-Dance festival, as the primary site of Hong Kong Somatics development, most closely resembles how Somatics developed in Australia as a nativist cultural product. George writes that the import of Somatics to Australia aligned with the 1970s Australian culture independence movement. Australian dancers sought an authentic and local voice that countered the influence of British colonialism. The "trope of bodily authenticity"[32] as George calls it, therefore, became aligned with navigating a unique Australian culture. I assert that i-Dance has utilized Somatics to similar effect. Hong Kong's distinct culture has been debated since 1997 and the development of the Localist Movement[33]; the i-Dance festival draws on the natural body, Somatics, and improvisation (all inter-connected) as means for creating bodies and dance distinct from China. Ironically, at the same time that i-Dance affirms a Hong Kong local dance culture, it deploys Somatics' reputation as a-cultural to portray Hong Kong as being anywhere. Moreover, in Hong Kong, cultivating and producing this natural body carries forward the contradiction identified by George that the movement of Somatics is often considered evolutionary, yet also innovative.[34] Hosting a dance improvisation festival illustrates to the world that Hong Kong houses cutting edge dance practices that align with the city's position as a quintessentially modern, high-tech global city. At the same time, the Hong Kong festival

[31] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 84.

[32] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 95.

[33] The Localist Movement—galvanized by transition fatigue, Hong Kong cultural heritage erasure, the Umbrella Revolution and Anti-Extradition Law protests—asserts that Hong Kong should be independent from China.

[34] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 63.

advocates a "going back to nature" stance (like the New England Somatics movement) and utilizes Somatics as a way to resist professionalization and the capitalism promoted by "one country, two systems," which demands rapid production from the artists in the city.

Somatics in Hong Kong is practiced by Asian dancers, many of whom have personal history in Asian dance forms, different from Somatics' history as a predominantly White Euro-American form. Hong Kong Somatics developed after the communities explored in George's astute history; and Hong Kong Somatics included influence by Western practitioners as well as Asian practitioners, such as Taiwanese improviser Gu Mingshen, Japanese improviser Chico Katsube, and Korean improviser Kim Bongho, who have each integrated Asian meditation and Somatic forms in their own way. In Hong Kong, certain Somatics forms such as Alexander and Feldenkrais have entered the academic training for the purpose of injury prevention; but, by and large, it is the improvisation communities outside of HKAPA that disseminate Somatics. These communities are extremely close-knit and collaborate often with other Asian practitioners who visit Hong Kong, or vice versa.

A wide range of improvisation practices, all connected to the Somatics movement, occur at the i-Dance festival, placing Hong Kong and China in a horizontal power relationship. Unique to the Hong Kong Somatics movement, the i-Dance directors invite some practitioners who have little experience in Somatics and improvisation but do have experience experimenting with forms that are culturally marked as Asian, such as classical Cambodian dance, classical Thai dance, or national Chinese dance forms. In other words, these Asian dance forms, rather than ballet and modern dance, sometimes act as the "imposed aesthetics" against which to push. In addition, the i-Dance format of presenting pre-devised choreography by visiting guest artists alongside improvised performances by the same guest artists incorporates participants with a wide range of

experience of Somatics and improvisation, as well as makes evident resonance of Asian dance forms. Overall, the improvisation focus of the festival masquerades as acultural as it purportedly highlights individual initiatives and inspirations, thereby neglecting the socio-cultural impacts on dancers' bodily thinking.

As mentioned previously, contact improvisation figures prominently in the i-Dance festival. Dance scholar Cynthia Novack contends that contact improvisation, borne from American 1960s social dance and art dance, elicits a shared ethics of collaboration and activism through a cultivation of the seemingly natural body that moves based on gravity and momentum.[35] George includes contact improvisation in their analysis of Somatics because it also treated bodies as based in anatomic realities, unmarked in terms of culture, gender, and sexuality.[36] Contact improvisation, as a genre, therefore, poses a contradiction as a form that seeks egalitarianism and dancer agency, yet presumes universal ways of efficiently and effortlessly moving. Although it is often positioned against technique, contact improvisation is its own technique. It shares a set of common values and movement vocabularies as it is taught across the world. Novack has identified the following movement principles and performance conceptualizations of the form:

> Generating movement through the changing points of contact between bodies
> Sensing through the skin
> Rolling through the body; focus on segmenting the body and moving in several directions simultaneously
> Experiencing movement from the inside
> Using 360-degree space
> Going with momentum, emphasizing weight and flow

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[35] For an in-depth genealogy of Contact Improvisation, see: Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance: Contact improvisation and American* Culture, 1990.

[36] Doran George, "Unpredictable Manoeuvres: Eva Karczag's Improvised Strategies for Thwarting Institutional Agendas," in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisation in Dance*, ed. Vida Midgelow (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 231.

Tacit inclusion of the audience; conscious informality of presentation, modeled on a practice or jam
The dancer is just a person
Letting the dance happen
Everyone should be equally important[37]

These values of non-pretentiousness, sensuous attention, and non-proscenium presentation are taught by teachers worldwide who share methodologies for developing the contact improviser.

At the 2013 i-Dance festival, the late, esteemed American contact improviser Nancy Stark Smith offered workshops and score-based group jams that exemplified contact improvisation pedagogy. In her workshops, attended by around 20 amateurs and professionals, Stark Smith guided the class through simple building blocks of improvised contact with a partner. Festival archival footage from 2013[38] shows Stark Smith teaching dancers to share weight by first noticing their own bodily sensations, such as through still meditations and heel rocking while lying supine. To teach lifting a partner, she begins by leading everyone in the swinging of their arms to explore pendular motion, noticing the catch of suspension in the top of the swing. Then dancers find spiraling pathways with just their arms, and eventually their whole bodies, an indication of Stark Smith's value of spherical orientations to space.[39] While wrapping

their arms around a partner, like a three-legged race, the dancers then walk with a bounce, turning and spiraling together. After these fundamentals, she demonstrates a lift with a partner, encouraging him to keep bouncing toward her and moving upward with light energy, a concept she refers to as "weight cycling"; she lifts him easily. In the i-Dance workshop

[37]Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 115-125.

[38] i-Dance Festival. Y-Space. Video recording. 2013.

[39] Nancy Stark Smith, "A Subjective History of contact improvisation," in *Taken by Surprise a Dance Improvisation Reader*, eds. Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University, 2003), 153-174.

described above, Stark Smith transfers her values of "doing flow," of being open to the unexpected; expanding one's sense of space (space as spherical, falling, rolling, going with momentum, getting disoriented, etc.); and developing an expanded sense of time through "time conditioning."[40] Stark Smith's methodical approach (and acquisition by students with one week of workshops) illustrates the way that contact improvisation is, indeed, its own technique with a set of physical expectations. Likewise, dance scholar Vida Midgelow writes that improvisation is an expression of embodied memory that takes mimicry and emulation, not just innovation and spontaneity.[41] Here, Midgelow is writing against the discourse surrounding contact improvisation that treats it as pure creativity, noting that contact improvisation students do learn by copying their teachers and peers, the same as other dance forms. Contact improvisation dancers develop a shared movement vocabulary, if not as codified as ballet or Chinese classical dance.

The bodies shaped by this contact improvisation technique differ from the rarefied, malleable bodies produced at HKAPA and via Danny Yung's direction. Virtuosity in contact improvisation does not demand the extreme strength and flexibility of the HKAPA dancers or Yung's kunqu collaborators. At i-Dance, there are no levels of achievements or performance evaluation as is the case at HKAPA; similarly, Novack identifies the concept of "no-fault" dancing in contact improvisation.[42] Anyone who has participated in contact improvisation jams has experienced awkward moments when the partners feel out of synchronization; someone might even trip or fall. In line with the expectation that a contact dancer cannot make a mistake,

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[40] Nancy Stark Smith, "A Subjective History of contact improvisation," 165-166.

[41] Vida Midgelow, "Introduction: Improvising Dance: A Way of Going About Things," in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisation in Dance*, ed. Vida Midgelow (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 11-12.

[42] Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance,* 178.

the form emphasizes an understated performance. In the contact improvisation circles of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, the performers presented as non-elitist with "signs of naturalness," such as not wearing costumes, walking in more pedestrian ways, and coughing/laughing.[43] Novack writes that the de-emphasis on the visual aspects of the body as well as the understated performance aspects have created an accessibility of contact improvisation to a wide range of bodies and abilities. At i-Dance, then, amateur dancers and dancers of non-balletic body types partake easily; whereas, the body types are uniformly thin across the HKAPA student dance population and Hong Kong's three main professional dance companies. Unlike contact improvisation, Yung shares a visual emphasis with HKAPA. Although Yung hopes for self-reflection by his performers, he privileges the visual design of the movement collaged together with several multimedia components.

Another kind of improvisation that is practiced at the i-Dance festival is making scores and enacting them, which treats dancers as equal contributors to the creation of performance regardless of national status. These scores often structure improvisations for audiences that follow solo presentations of choreography. A score-based improvisation also follows the *Research Week* event (one full week of improvisation workshops for the same group of dancers) as a culminating event of sorts. These improvisations based on scores, titled *Improvisation Land*, involve small groups of dancers, five to twenty participants, who contribute to the score in a non-hierarchical relationship. Participants often include contact improvisation due to their background. The open-ended scores, which can be as minimal as deciding how long the dance will last, or as complex as dictating themes of meaning or setting pairings of dancers, allow for a shared vision, or at least a compromise of vision, between dancers. When I participated in the

[43] Cynthia Novack, *Sharing the Dance*, 136.

Research Week process of creating the score, all dancers present were able to speak their opinions about the score, thereby using an egalitarian process of making the plan for performance. During the performance of an open-ended score, dancers further attempt this sense of egalitarianism as they remain attentive to one another, trying to respond to their own and the group's impulses, versus attempting to fulfill a choreographer's vision. Enacting these open-ended scores without expectations of traditional virtuosity or precision allows for moments that might read as awkward or as error. It further portrays the dancers as non-pretentious—that dancers are just ordinary people moving their physical bodies. This means that the dancers attempt a collective performance-in-process guided by the punctuation of the score. Furthermore, the collaborators come from different nations, yet the festival reconfigures them as a collective, which is a unique way to treat Hong Kong's relationship with China. I discuss this in more depth in the next section of the chapter.

As another indication that the i-Dance festival perpetuates the Somatics movement's investment in training natural bodies, it incorporates dancing at sites outside of the proscenium stage, both urban and rural, as a means for using aspects of quotidian life as well as nature as inspiration for dancing. Perhaps nothing evidences this connection more than the culminating event of the entire festival that occurs on a farm outside of downtown Hong Kong, called Kam Tin. After a tour and a series of site-specific performances throughout Kam Tin's dilapidated buildings and alleyways, the audience is invited to participate in a workshop on a farm outside of the village. Teachers and long-time i-Dance participants, Mimi Lo and Maru Yuen, invite the audience to listen to the sounds of nature, such as birds chirping, and the feel of nature, such as mud squishing below their feet, as inspiration for moving together as a group. Later, festival dancers perform an open-ended improvisation throughout the same farm, ending in a bonfire that

includes ecstatic dancing and audience participation. The audience and performers together eat a vegetarian dinner.[44] This event resonates with the "back-to-the-land" facet of Somatics as it developed in the 1970s in the United States.[45] These rural dance communities continue to this day, such as the Earthdance community in Western Massachusetts, where i-Dance participants Lo and Yuen have attended and connected with the late Nancy Stark Smith.

Yet another kind of improvisation present at the i-Dance festival is the contemporary dance phenomenon in which improvisation serves as part of the choreographic process for a choreographic product that is not improvised in the moment of performance. The female choreographers I will highlight later in the chapter, Mui Cheuk Yin, Helen Lai, and Wen Hui, all work with Chinese cultural source material, yet improvise within existing forms of dance, such as modern dance and Chinese folk dance. They ask their dancers to improvise as a means for generating movement material and innovation beyond what the choreographer could envision. This common method of asking dancers to improvise during the rehearsal process permits the dancers some creative license within the process, yet the full implication of power depends on how the choreography is credited in the end. I view this process of improvisation during choreographic rehearsal differently than the creative process conducted by Danny Yung. Although, at times, he asks his collaborators to test out a change in their movement vocabulary, such as by slowing it down, he utilizes a heavy hand in setting up experimentation experiences. Due to his own lack of dance background, Yung mostly sets time/space parameters for his collaborators, and they ultimately fulfill his vision by borrowing from kunqu movement

[44] The directors of the festival even use this connection between improvisation and nature to promote the festival, often including images of nude dancers, animals, and trees on promotional brochures.

[45] George chronicles how a number of Somatics-based dancers stayed connected to the New York City professional dance scene yet lived in rural New England in an attempt to discover authentic ways of moving and to resist capitalist demands for success. See: Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 69.

repertoire. In contrast, for Yin, Lai, and Wen, open movement improvisation that accesses various vocabularies and emotional connections provides them insight with how to proceed in their processes that do not have a clear end goal. Via improvisation as choreographic process, these three choreographers complicate Chinese materials and give dancers opportunities to contribute to the composition of the final product.

Despite an aim for universality, these improvisation forms found at the i-Dance festival all have roots in the Western Somatics and postmodern dance movements as well as appropriations from Asian sources and African American aesthetics. At the festival, dancers learn how to produce a seemingly natural body and cultivate skills in improvisation not prioritized at HKAPA or in studio training elsewhere in the city as an effort to find an authentic dancing self that neither adheres to national Chinese nor British colonial expectations. Various forms of improvisation at the festival claim dancers' agency in creating and performing dance, thereby resulting in choreography that frames the dancers as "just people" (see Novack's list of values above). Compared to the choreographic work presented by Danny Yung and by HKAPA, dancers appear less polished and precise. Not only do the participants train under the Western assumption about shared universal anatomical structures as an attempt at unification, they come from different nations and non-national locations (Hong Kong) as evidence of the pluralism of "two systems." Through these workshops and performances in improvisation, dancers meet one another and form collective communities without regard for national identities. In this way, therefore, i-Dance utilizes improvisation and the natural body as means for producing work that is perceived as culturally unmarked, or at least, culturally ambivalent, which I explore in the next section of the chapter.

Choreographing Precultural Collaboration

The i-Dance festival deploys natural bodies as a strategy for attempting a more egalitarian space for Chinese, Hong Kong, and international dancers than their geopolitical relationships suggest. Particularly during the event called *Research Week*, dance artists hailing from various national backgrounds assemble with a goal of creating a collective, responding to the cultural overlap opened up by "two systems." As mentioned above, *Research Week* is one event for the i-Dance festival that is composed of a week of improvisation practice of the same group of dancers; it culminates in an improvised performance. *Research Week* is a separate event from the festival workshops, for which dancers can drop in throughout the week; *Research Week* participants join for one week and spend most of the week together dancing. It is accessible to those who can travel or leave work for a week of daily practice together, which means it is particularly geared toward freelance artists. I joined *Research Week* during the 2015 and 2016 festival as a participant-observer. The group consisted of about twenty artists, mostly local Hong Kong and Asian artists. I was one of three Euro-American dance artists. My experience as a dancer in *Research Week* was a process of shared discovery and vulnerability to strangers. In one week, we also formed a group cohesiveness and social closeness that stemmed from physical closeness. Throughout, *Research Week* relied on the assumption of our bodies as universally similar bodies—similar structures of bone, muscles, and organs that sense from the skin, observe, smell, and need release from tension—as a basis for supposed pre-cultural collaboration. During the week, the themes and topics investigated did not center around cross-cultural fusion or cultural heritage (like questions found at Danny Yung's festivals) as much as about proposing precultural harmony.

We danced inspired by several directives to notice bodily sensations, to physicalize empathy, to trust, to dance generously, to remain conscious of one another, and to attend to the present moment—all directives that presumed our bodies could act independent of their socio-cultural identities and experiences. Sometimes the directive was simply to "feel each other" or "find the present moment." Other co-taught structures involved observing others carefully and allowing their movements to influence our own; moving from the images and metaphors of bones and water; moving while our partner continually supported our head by holding some of its weight; moving from the inspiration of sounds made by our partner; experiencing the idea of going on a journey together; and exploring self and group consciousness. The open-ended prompts did not direct us in specific movements, but rather encouraged an attention to bodily sensations and encouraged us to look at one another in terms of physical properties and impetus of touch. Structures like this during *Research Week* showed an aspiration to establish emotional connection, trust, and generosity in our dancing, which presumed that our bodily experiences could be isolated from our cultural identities.

Research Week drew heavily from contact improvisation and its emphasis on physical touch and sharing weight. When we danced an improvisation structure of "meeting each other with our eyes closed," we touched strangers' bodies and clothing, rubbed up against their skin, sensed their energy and pathway, and felt their weight. This structure assumed a neutralizing effect of our identities by closing our eyes and emphasizing touch. After the whole group opened our eyes, we joyfully hugged one another, feeling each other's frames and clothing and smelling one another to confirm who we just danced with moments before. For another structure, our co-teacher asked us to show a partner through touch where we had trauma or pain on our bodies. Using movement, some of us referred to how the trauma had happened; others of

us showed what relieved pain or tension in our bodies. My partner, Taiwanese artist Mei, jiggled my arm, pressed firm in my lower back, and touched gently on my stomach. When we traded roles, I took her hands to the site of the back surgery I had as a teenager, the tight muscles in my hip flexors from the long plane flight to Hong Kong, and the spot in my neck that tends to hurt after too much typing. Structures like this during *Research Week* implied that we could learn quickly of the individual experiences of our bodies and prioritized touch as a way of relating between dancers. We hugged frequently during our week together, after open improvisations, and at the end of our day together. Apart from improvisation, we also did body work on partners, a frequent aspect of Somatics, such as holding their head for neck tension release or using our hands like cat paws on our partners. The repeated hugging and massaging of bodies implied tenderness and care with one another. In one week, we formed a group cohesiveness and social closeness, common in many dance practices, but likely heightened by our close physical contact with one another and the promise of dancing our "authentic" selves.

Research Week used this Somatic focus on observation, sensation, and touch as a means for placing both Chinese and Hong Kong dancers in the context of "one country" and "two systems." Regardless of geopolitics and the reality of Chinese hegemony, Taiwanese dancers, Hong Kong dancers, and Chinese dancers all participated with equal footing within these structures of collectivity. As part of i-Dance's strategy to subvert the power hierarchy between China and Hong Kong, the promotional materials for the festival note the national origin of the dance artists (as well as note Hong Kong and Taiwan residents), but then Somatic and improvisation exercises strip these identities away. In terms of dancing and the audience talkbacks, all artists were framed as contemporary dance artists, not national representatives or even city representatives, as they were in Danny Yung's Toki festival. The approach of

Research Week provides a non-hierarchical structure for dancers from both Hong Kong and China to collaborate without an authoritative national curriculum or authoritative director dictating the movement lexicons. Due to its leanings toward Somatics and contact improvisation, *Research Week* dancers from Hong Kong and China approach one another as bodies to observe and feel. Ostensibly, these dancers can use their authentic movement to contribute toward mutual understanding and disregard their national statuses and the cultural conflicts between nations. Here, the strategy of approaching bodies as natural bodies serves to re-orient the power dynamics of geopolitics.

In addition to the collective workshop experience we shared day in and day out, our *Improvisation Land* performance at the end of the week further evidenced i-Dance's aspirational egalitarianism that might re-orient assigned national identities. Together, we organized this score for the performance:

1. Simultaneous solos of no more than 3 people for 15-20 seconds
2. Formation of a line
3. Several short movement vignettes created by small groups of 0-5 people during text spoken by theater artists
4. Video projected as everyone goes to the back wall
5. Open awareness with one other until lights cut out to cue end of performance

In order to prepare for the performance, we warmed up our bodies and chatted with one another. We never rehearsed the particular score, delighting in the unexpected. The performance was a series of non-sequiturs. There were many surprises. In our time spent with one another from *Research Week,* we seemed to establish a rapport of taking turns, each taking space for solos and small group moments, so that there were no featured performers of our performance. Consistent with the contact improvisation values laid out by Cynthia Novack (above), we performed a "just people"-ness by wearing every-day clothes and drawing from quotidian actions such as walking, clapping, and standing. We also, of course, drew from our shared technique of contact

improvisation, which involves clever lifts and weight sharing. To perform such a score gives the illusion that we simply acted to inspiration solely in the present moment, but, in actuality, we drew from our individual performance and cultural histories.

Improvised performances at i-Dance, like this culminating performance of *Research Week*, portray a sense of freedom from authoritarianism, the American postwar universal individual freedom promoted by the Somatics movement,[46] and in the Hong Kong context, the individual freedom promised by "one country, two systems." The compositional improviser does not need to reproduce memorized movement combinations in order to fulfill a choreographer's vision, as do performers at HKAPA or with Danny Yung. This individual aspect of improvisation is what arts scholar Hannah Yohalem calls democracy via a "freedom of choice" not consensus.[47] In our *Research Week* performance, we did not perform a single directorial vision but we did know something about our peers' implicit expectations for movement vocabulary and virtuosity by having spent a full week dancing with them. My attention was neither on satisfying a choreographer's demands nor on the audience perception of whether a movement was performed well, but instead, on a constant attempt at maintaining an open awareness to the group. Nevertheless, even though standards of virtuosity differ when the natural body is considered the core of performing, improvising dancers can still experience a pressure to do something idiosyncratic or shocking or, even, entertaining. Improvisers at i-Dance might not have to adhere to a single choreographer's vision, but neither do they entirely un-culture themselves nor liberate themselves from all structures of power.

[46] Doran George, *The Natural Body in Somatics Dance Training*, 138.

[47] Hannah Yohalem, "Displacing Vision: Contact Improvisation, Anarchy, and Empathy," *Dance Research Journal* 50, no. 2 (2018): 45.

Although improvisation might offer feelings of freedom from hierarchical power structures, it still has a technique and discipline to follow. Even Stark Smith claims contact improvisation is a practice, rather than solely liberatory: "I've come to realize that the freedom improvisation offers doesn't come without bidding. Its pleasure is a discipline."[48] In our group performance, we still had a responsibility to each other to follow the implicit rules of group improvisation; in contact improvisation, the contact between partners is intended to be nonviolent and nonsexual. That is, dancers do not yank on each other's limbs or touch one another's sexualized body parts with their hands. In addition, the use of expressive body parts (the head, hands, arms) as functions of physics is intended to desexualize the contact between dancers; in other words, touch is taught in terms of biometrics.[49] Early dancers of contact improvisation warned against sexual contact or psychological connection that would distract from concentration needed to stay safe. Inherent in this warning was the problematic assumption that the contact improvisation body could negate emotional and sexual impulses.[50] Although contact improvisation technique started with a bit less nuance and more collisions,[51] students of contact improvisation learn how to safely hold their partner's weight and transition weight onto their partner. One foundational exercise is when both partners start on all fours, making a steady base, and practice rolling over each other. For dancers coming from genres that craft strict gender binaries like ballet and Chinese dance, it can feel liberating to dance a form that expects men and women to support weight equally; yet even with gender-neutral partnering, there is no

[48] Nancy Stark Smith, "A Subjective History of contact improvisation," 164.

[49] Cynthia Jean Novack, *Sharing the Dance,*163-165.

[50] Cynthia Jean Novack, *Sharing the Dance,* 163-165.

[51] Nancy Stark Smith discussed early works of contact improvisation at an i-Dance "happy hour" event.

universal liberatory experience of contact improvisation. Safety is a relative term. Although many dancers with disabilities do have access and success with contact improvisation, dancers with histories of injury, disability, or sexual trauma might not feel safe in a contact improvisation jam.[52] Furthermore, as contact improvisation co-founder Steve Paxton and dance scholar Royona Mitra discuss, non-white dancers might not feel safe enough to trust close physical contact with and reliance on white dancers.[53] Dance scholar Danielle Goldman similarly observes that improvisation is a practice of freedom, not necessarily true liberation.[54]

Nevertheless, in the context of Hong Kong, the i-Dance festival seeks to make space for creative freedom for artists in a location where freedom is in question. It attempts egalitarianism in process and performance product. In other words, the i-Dance participants, along with the content programmed, demonstrate aspirations for Hong Kong as a place for freedom of expression, greater freedom than Mainland China and more than the reality of semi-autonomy. "One country, two systems" and the Basic Law ostensibly safeguarded Hong Kong's freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; yet, the (colonial) Public Order Ordinance was used to restrict rallies and marches in the name of "public safety" as early as 2000, and later in 2014 and 2019.[55] In addition, suspicions that booksellers who sold political content had been abducted by the

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[52] I have experienced this both as a dancer with a hidden history of back surgery and as an educator listening to student discomfort and observations.

[53] Royona Mitra, "Talking Politics of Contact Improvisation with Steve Paxton," *Dance Research Journal* 50, no. 3 (2018): 13.

[54] Danielle Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

[55] According to scholar Agnes Ku, in 2000, police used unexpected force at a demonstration based on their new imperative to squash demonstrations in the name of "national security," "public safety," and "public order" by the colonial Public Order Ordinance. See: Agnes Ku and Ngai Pun, *Remaking citizenship in Hong Kong: Community, Nation, and the Global City* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Chinese government called into question the reality of freedom of speech.[56] Furthermore, the 2019 protest mask-ban (based on colonial-era emergency law) that Chief Executive Carrie Lam implemented upset many Hong Kong residents as an encroachment on civil liberties. In 2020, the National Security Law threatens the freedom of the press, academic freedoms, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly.[57] Therefore, i-Dance promotes individual creative freedom as an aspiration for Hong Kong in the midst of Mainland China's encroaching domination.

Presenting Ambivalent Chineseness

The i-Dance festival also promotes individual creative freedom through presentations of Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese artists that represent Chineseness as a means for constructing China, as well as Hong Kong, as equally part of "one country, two systems." This festival incorporates Chinese dance artists and Hong Kong artists in equitable relationships, both through the collective action of simultaneous improvisation, and via the presentation of pre-devised choreography. At i-Dance, Mainland Chinese artists can disregard their Chineseness completely or question Chinese sources; Hong Kong artists can play with Chineseness without needing to emphasize the "one country" image of seamless cultural harmony. Even though i-Dance does not present Chineseness via dance genre or the framing of its programming, it accounts for "one country" by including China as a member of its international conversation. Notably, Mandarin

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[56] Alex Palmer, "The Case of Hong Kong's Missing Booksellers," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2018, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/03/magazine/the-case-of-hong-kongs-missing-booksellers.html.

[57] Louisa Lim, "Hongkongers Face a Kafkaesque Reality as Censors Outlaw the Words of Protest | Louisa Lim." *The Guardian*, July 5, 2020, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jul/05/hongkongers-face-a-kafkaesque-reality-as-censors-outlaw-the-words-of-protest.; Matthew Henderson, "The Day Freedom Died in Hong Kong." *The Telegraph*, June 30, 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/30/day-hong-kongs-freedom-died/.

Chinese, which marks Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong, is used freely at the festival. In addition, Mandarin Chinese is a language spoken in *Research Week* and casual conversations, even if not at the official talkbacks, to support participants from China and Taiwan, thereby evidencing that i-Dance values Chinese artists as exchange partners. The directors also welcome Mainland Chinese artists despite the complicated visa process. Article 22(4) of the Basic Law of the HKSAR stipulates that, for entry into the HKSAR, people from other parts of China must apply for approval.[58] This can have consequences for the festival. For example, due to visa limitations, Beijing-based Wen and her dancers were not able to remain in Hong Kong for the entire 2016 festival. Consequentially, i-Dance supports Mainland Chinese artists joining the dialogue about local Hong Kong dance development without expressing anti-Chinese sentiment promoted by the Localist movement.

One example of an artist invited from Mainland China, who did not explicitly promote Chineseness is Zhang Zamin, who is differently abled. In 2012, i-Dance featured him in his self-choreographed solo, called *Limbs*. The title brought together both the natural aspect of trees and his differently abled legs, which require the support of a wheelchair for mobility. He moved with two large tree branches like crutches; and during a group improvisation after his solo, he danced primarily with a partner who held nearly all of his body weight while other dancers pushed his empty wheelchair. His body is smaller than average, and his legs contorted—a body that does not match the graceful, flexible, and lithe dancer seen on mainstages in Hong Kong. To see Zhang Zamin struggle to move displays an aesthetic of difficulty not often presented in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, the improvisation during which he was held by another dancer and the audience talkback tended to infantilize him, thereby reifying his difference. In the case of

[58] "Entry Arrangements for Mainland, Macao, Taiwan & Overseas Chinese Residents," Immigration Department. accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/visas/overseas-chinese-entry-arrangement.html.

Zhang's participation, he fulfilled the festival's ideal of including a various range of body types and bodily abilities based on the tenets laid forth by the Somatics movement and related forms, such as contact improvisation. His Chineseness was not foregrounded although it was made apparent in his bio, in his name, and in the Mandarin Chinese he spoke at the talkback. In this example, Zhang's choreography does not draw from Chinese source material or Chinese dance forms; yet other choreographers at i-Dance do take inspiration from Chinese sources.

Wen's piece *Red*, presented at i-Dance, reflected on the Chinese ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* from the Cultural Revolution. Beijing-based Wen is a frequent collaborator at the i-Dance festival and a good friend of the directors. In 2016, she presented *Red* in addition to participating in *Research Week*. In Mainland China, the *Red Detachment of Women* still persists as a symbol of Chinese national strength. The choreography was spearheaded by Jiang Qing, Chairman Mao's wife, who oversaw Chinese performance reform during the Cultural Revolution in order to attempt erasure of traditional cultural forms. It is one of the eight model performances (including ballets, operas, and plays) that were permissible to perform during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The ballet's narrative follows a heroine who escapes from an evil landlord and joins an army battalion of women who help her retaliate. It is based on a true story of an all-women army battalion on Hainan island in 1930s. In the ballet, the battalion members dance on pointe assertively with rifle props, defying the mores of romantic ballet. Their short shorts show the attacking nature of their leaps and arabesques. The movement is intentionally powerful, rather than dainty. In order to learn their parts, the women actually studied military drills. Unlike classical ballet, the dancers use fisted hands and flat palms, a holdover from Chinese opera. They also incorporate the *liangxiang*, punctuated sculptural pose from Chinese opera, which adds to the direct nature of the movement. Although

the Cultural Revolution was a time of great cultural upheaval and violence in China, the ballet still evokes nostalgia for many, including Wen.[59] It is still performed for national holidays and is part of the repertoire of the National Ballet of China.

In *Red*, Wen set out to interrogate this nostalgia.[60] This piece was not created specifically for i-Dance, but even so, its presentation signifies that i-Dance is a space that allows criticism of Chinese cultural icons. There were four dancers in the theater space. First, Wen included herself as someone who grew up admiring the ballet as a child. Another dancer, Liu Zhuying, was one of the original dancers in the ballet. The other two dancers, Li Xinmin and Li Yuyao, are younger contemporary dancers. Throughout the piece, archival footage of the ballet, pages of staging notes, as well as interviews with original dancers were projected on to a black curtain behind the dancers. In some of these filmed interviews, the original dancers reconstructed movement as they remembered it, expressing joy about their performance. The dancers interacted with the physical curtain that acted as a screen for the film, by pulling on it, scrunching it up, and standing in front of it as if blending into it, thereby keeping the film aspect malleable and rooted in the present dancing on stage. The project integrated each dancer's experiences and thinking related to the ballet. Playwright and American academic Zhuang Jiayun served as the dramaturg for the project in 2013 and outlines the intent of the project:

> We were trying to use our documentary play to return to the historical details and individual stories that led to the creation of this revolutionary ballet. From the perspective of the field of dance, we dissected the technical innovations and aesthetic standards of the original work and its particular historical context. The second idea was to explore the dense ideological content of the text and the collective identity that this dramatic platform creates. This part was mainly based on interviews. By sorting through the complex feelings held by a generation of people who experienced the politicization of

[59] Sofia Jesus, "Red: Body and Memory," *MART* | Macau and Lisbon on the Same Page (blog), accessed October 14, 2020, http://martmagazine.net/stories/red-body-and-memory/.

[60] Jesus, Sofia, "Red: Body and Memory."

> art and the ratification of politics, we analyzed the high degree of integration between national mainstream political ideology and people's everyday artistic lives during a particular historical period.[61]

Zhuang Jiayun's framing demonstrates how Wen explored the body as archive and as research methodology. Together, they recognized that politics not only inscribe the body, but that the body is also the "foundation" of consciousness and cognition.[62]

Improvisation was key to the development of *Red*. As Zhuang Jiayun writes, "the actual presentation on stage is the result of countless rounds of invention and rehearsal between Wen and the dancers."[63] The creative team began with no set choreography or set visual images. First, the dancers improvised to the collected interviews and archival materials; they moved whenever they felt inspired and moved without restriction set by Wen. Then, as a group, they discussed their inspirations and challenges with the material. After a while, themes developed; Wen and Zhuang Jiayun then asked the dancers to improvise within those themes. The process was structured using a chart that outlined the dancers' reflections on dance training during the Cultural Revolution as well as ideological meanings embedded in the original ballet.[64]

In its final product, this incorporation of improvisation in the creative process meant that some of the performance read as improvised and certainly individualized, offering more juxtapositions than precision or unison. Wen frequently utilized repetition of movement at sporadic timings to heighten the physically intensity, pushing the dancers' endurance. One such example occurred when dancer Jiang Fan turned her head back and forth incessantly, then used

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[61] Zhuang Jiayun, "'Red': Using the Body to Touch The Contemporaneity of the Past," *The Theatre Times* (blog), March 6, 2017, https://thetheatretimes.com/red-using-body-touch-contemporaneity-past/.

[62] Zhuang Jiayun, "Red: Using the Body."

[63] Zhuang Jiayun, "Red: Using the Body."

[64] Zhuang Jiayun, "Red: Using the Body."

this chaotic head movement to propel her through space into a partial handstand. Similarly, at another moment, all four dancers alternated performing a sudden high arched spine as if hanging from their sternums, which created a mood of panic and an image of manipulation. Overall the piece involved much flailing movement and emphasized staggered timing rather than unison—compositional choices that illustrate violence and a sense of unease, not initially depicted by the unison and precision of the original ballet, which glorified an army battalion.

Based on her belief in the American expansionist ideal that modern dance supports individual creative freedom, Wen utilized modern dance to compose this piece with each dancer's perspective in mind. Throughout *Red*, the dancers maintained their individual perspective through consistent individual vocabularies. As the audience entered, the dancers repeated one chosen starting movement with a suddenness reminiscent of the *liangxiang*, or sculptural punctuation, of Chinese opera, while music from the original ballet played in the background. Liu Zhuying, as an original performer in the model ballet, began by intermittently raisings two fists—a direct citation from the *Red Detachment of Women*. Wen (who studied at Beijing Dance Academy in 1985 where she would have been expelled for dancing contemporary dance at the time) chose hugging her shoulders inward in order to represent her disaffection and questioning of her own nostalgia for the ballet.[65] Throughout the piece, she pushed the physical limits of her body, expressing pain and discomfort to the audience. At some point she even used her hands as if stabbing her chest. Jiang Fan, a contemporary dancer and Mainland Chinese dance conservatory graduate, swung her arms against her thighs. Li Xinmin, who grew up in poverty and has no training in professional dance, danced violent movements, such as chopping

[65] Cai Yiwen, "From Propaganda Ballets to Dance for the People," Sixth Tone, May 28, 2017, https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sixthtone.com%2Fnews%2F1000270%2Ffrom-propaganda-ballets-to-dance-for-the-people.

motions as if swinging a military sword from the *Red Detachment of Women*. Each dancer performed a solo within the context of the whole piece, presenting a distinct perspective in relation to the original ballet.

Via *Red*, Wen has complicated *Red Detachment of Women* as neither solely successful nor as solely Communist propaganda, offering an ambivalence related to the Chinese nature of the work. *Red* is partially informative, such as explaining the ballet's combination of Western ballet aesthetics and Chinese opera aesthetics while demonstrating reconstructions of segments of the original choreography. The film behind the dancers added more context, such as the oppressive training of the revolutionary dancers. For example, dancers were told to use "class hatred" when they practiced broadsword movement and were told "fear neither hardship nor death" in relation to the physical demands and pain of the training.[66] In *Red*, the dancers spoke this phrase over and over while tossing their torsos forward and back repeatedly with great endurance as if to emphasize the toll on their bodies. The film also revealed that female dancers in short shorts became the object of the male gaze of Chinese army officers. Nevertheless, the original dancers interviewed and Liu Zhiying on stage in *Red* seemed proud of the hard work and technical virtuosity they accomplished.[67] One original dancer, even remembered fondly that she performed the work a month after giving birth and thanked Wen's team for giving her a chance to remember the past.[68]

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[66] David Mead, "Reflecting on and Remembering The Red Detachment of Women: Wen Hui's Red," *Seeing Dance* (blog), October 8, 2018, http://www.seeingdance.com/wen-hui-red-08102018/.

[67] "Wen Hui's RED: Reflecting on Chinese Model Opera," Dance Dispatches (blog), January 28, 2019, https://dancedispatches.com/wen-hui-red-chinese-model-opera/.

[68] "Red, Wen Hui," Youtube.com, accessed March 12, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Igpds7f1d4M.

Although Wen included positive memories of the "revolutionary" ballet in *Red*, the piece overall read as a critique of the sentimental and national pride about the ballet. It exposed the ways in which the ballet treated female dancers as objects and tools for political gain without considering the physical stress they endured. In *Red*, the choreographic use of uncomfortable, violent, and repetitive movements emphasized the degree to which the clean precision of dancers on pointe wielding rifles and executing arabesque simultaneously obscured the actual experience of the dancers in the work. In terms of dance training, the original ballet was born of incredible authoritarian pedagogical methods, which Wen has tried to counteract.[69] Due to its critical nature, Wen might have to be careful where she shows *Red* in Mainland China; whereas in Hong Kong, audiences might be particularly interested in a critique of the Communist ballet due to anti-Communist sentiment. (Initially, the Goethe-Institut funded the work as part of its interest in the arts and cultural exchange, and the work has toured globally.)[70] Producing *Red* at i-Dance portrays this festival as on-trend with global presentations and also promotes questioning of cultural products from the Cultural Revolution without representing an overt anti-China stance. The work undermines Chinese nationalism, which remains in line with i-Dance's strategy to downplay Chineseness.

In addition to producing Chinese choreographers, the i-Dance festival has presented work by Hong Kong artists who experiment with Chinese source material. The directors have programmed the work of local esteemed choreographer Helen Lai in several festivals as an indication of the importance of her choreographic voice to Hong Kong modern dance

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[69] Lorna Irvine, "Dance as Revolution," *Fjord Review* (blog), October 3, 2018, https://fjordreview.com/red-living-dance-studio/.

[70] "Wen Hui's RED: Reflecting on Chinese Model Opera," *Dance Dispatches* (blog), January 28, 2019, https://dancedispatches.com/wen-hui-red-chinese-model-opera/.

development. During the 2016 festival, a whole evening-length performance presented excerpts of several early works of hers, thereby evincing their continued relevance. Lai began dancing with the first semi-professional company in Hong Kong, called Ballet for All, in the 1970s, and advanced her reputation as a resident choreographer for Contemporary City Dance Company (CCDC). At the beginning of her career, only ballet studios and TV popular dance outlets were available to her; now, she mentors freelance modern choreographers. Although extremely prolific and influential,[71] she has not received the international recognition that her male counterpart Willy Tsao, founder of CCDC, has. Using movement generated by dancers, she has choreographed across the city in a range of genres for CCDC, Hong Kong Ballet, and Hong Kong Dance Company. In an interview with me, she described herself as the "one lucky enough" to have been able to make a living solely through choreographing due to her contract with CCDC. She has seen the Hong Kong dance scene grow in terms of appreciation of modern dance, technical skill, independent artists, creativity, and production value, much of which she attributes to professional training at HKAPA. Although Lai does not explicitly comment on "one country, two systems" in her work, she acknowledged to me that the socio-political context of Hong Kong always influences her choreography.[72]

At i-Dance 2016, the evening-length performance called *Helen Lai in the post-90's* involved a retrospective of some of her most danced works, including *HerStory* (2007),[73] which

[71] List of Helen Lai's Awards: "Choreographer of the Year" by the Hong Kong Artists' Guild (1990); "Badge of Honour" by the Queen of the United Kingdom (1995);the "Medal of Honour" by the Hong Kong SAR Government (2000); Six-time Hong Kong Dance Awards winner, most recently for Outstanding Choreography in 2016; the recipient of "Distinguished Achievement Award" (2002); Award for Arts Achievement (Dance), Hong Kong Arts Development Awards (2003; Honorary Fellowship from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (2004); Award for Outstanding Contribution in Arts, Hong Kong Arts Development Awards (2015).

[72] Helen Lai, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, September 2016.

[73] Lai told me this was her favorite piece in an interview.

sourced from a particular historical Chinese cultural form that served as a secret language, an act of resistance, in order to question sexism across cultures and time periods. *Nushu* was developed 400 years ago by Chinese women living in Jiangyong County, Hunan province. Nushu works, written as songs, ballads, laments, and autobiographies were written by women, for women, and, subsequently, neglected in most historical records of China.[74] In 1982, when an anthropologist came across the language, a few elderly women still knew artistic practices that included the language: needlework, songs, and poems. In addition, fans were often gifted between women as a portable and secret means for passing poems back and forth. The ballads highlight the lack of agency women had.[75] When Lai first read about the secret language, her interest was piqued, but she sought to make the idea more relevant to contemporary times and more universal, as well.[76] She says of her choreographic intention for *Herstory*:

> But the topic was typically Chinese, involving ancient tradition and people; while classical or folk dance doesn't feature in my background. Also, due to the circumstances, 'nushu" often conveys a strong sense of being suppressed. This was not the sentiment I was interested in expressing through my work. It was then that I realized 'nushu" could also mean "women's writing' in its broader sense. In that case, it is not an arcane language, but part of a constantly expanding and evolving vocabulary for women.[77]

In this quote, I see Lai's intention not to foreground women's oppression, yet I also believe the work does not present a fully agentic view of women.

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[74] Nicola Foster, "Translating Nushu: Drawing Nushu, Dancing Nushu," *Art in Translation* 11, no. 4 (2019): 393.

[75] Nicola Foster, "Translating Nushu: Drawing Nushu, Dancing Nushu," *Art in Translation* 11, no. 4 (2019): 409.

[76] Zhao Xu, "Having a Blast with the Past," accessed December 16, 2020, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2008-01/22/content_6410371.htm.

[77] Zhao Xu, "Having a Blast with the Past."

In *Herstory*, Lai drew on Chinese sources and referenced Chinese dance props, yet, did not incorporate Chinese classical and folk-dance lexicons. Although Lai cited the nushu language through projected images of the script and utilized Chinese dance fans and red handkerchiefs, she choreographed from her own modern dance background and with her dancers' invention of movement material. In a section with red handkerchiefs, a line of dancers wearing white *qipao* blouses sat on stools covering their faces with the handkerchiefs, as if needlework or the red bridal veil.[78] A dancer standing apart from the group performed a solo of catching and releasing her handkerchief with spasmodic spins as if trying to rid herself of the handkerchief. While this section conveyed a sense of confinement, represented by the handkerchiefs, another section offered a playful duet between two women with paper fans. They quickly closed and opened their fans with arms extending, moving within each other's negative space while sitting on stools. It read as if a game to see who could move into a certain spot and open their fan first. The quick and sudden opening of the fans mimicked martial arts fan techniques more than classical or folk-dance fan techniques, which are more circular and delicate in nature. In this first section of the dance, therefore, Lai signified both the close female bond discovered through nushu as well as the lack of female agency that dictated the secret nature of the language.

As opposed to the first section of the dance that seemed to convey the historical past of nushu, the next section borrowed music and dance forms from the West with Lai's intent to open up the question of women's means of expression as a more universal issue. Lai sourced movement material from tango, which has certainly been co-opted by the West, such as in West ballroom competition, yet originated in the global south. This section did not represent

[78] SeeChinaOrg, *HerStory*, 2010, accessed March 12, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-GQ6qo4ldQ.

Chineseness. Lai's use of tango called forth various histories of colonization and resistance that can be applicable to Hong Kong's (post)-colonial condition. Like the global business world's consumption of Hong Kong as familiar, yet still exotic, tango exists in a capitalist world economy in which the supposed production of passion by the Third World leads to the consumption of tango by the desirous First World. [79] Using this genre that is entangled in political economies of passion and desire, Lai choreographed a duet between a man and woman, wherein the man obviously directed the woman's movement.

First, to Paul Anka's song "She's a Lady," the male dancer demanded the beat on which she danced by snapping his fingers; after he showed her what flirtatious movements to perform, she copied him a few beats later. As they danced in a typical ballroom embrace, his movements were seamless and hers loose and imprecise as if she did not know the language within which he moved. In this not-so-subtle choreography, Lai depicted a woman without agency being told exactly how and when to move. In contrast to this section where the man dictated the movement, other moments of this section presented the fan as controlling the women. One duet showed two women seated and flapping fans frantically, their torsos collapsing and straightening uncontrollably to a cover of the The Doors "Come on baby, light my fire." A solo dancer repeatedly slapped a closed fan to her legs, pushing her legs with the fan. Although Lai utilized Western music and dance to open up this section to universal meanings, a specter of Chinese patriarchy (via the fans) colored these women's actions.

The penultimate section of *Herstory* employed frenzied movement and scattered paper to signify that women's expression occurs arduously and without due preservation. At i-Dance, Y-Space's Yim, festival co-director, performed this excerpt—carrying piles of paper, crumpling

[79] For an in-depth analysis of tango, see: Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the political economy of passion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

paper as if wiping her face, placing the crumpled paper in her mouth and letting it fall out. To the gut-wrenching Chavela Vargas song *La Llorona*, she shaped paper into flowers and grabbed at her heart. In this dance, it appeared as if writing could literally emerge from Yim's body but not remain a part of her. In the context of post-1997 Hong Kong, the work also resonates in terms of its display of the labor of archive and frustration of impermanence. In this dance, Lai presented Chineseness alongside the Western/the global as means for commenting on the universal oppression of women. Chinese dance props, Latin dance movement, and various Western songs added various inflections to the modern dance vocabulary in order to question global patriarchy. At the same time, this piece offered a critique of the traditional Chinese society that necessitated nushu as a secret language and attempted erasure of the language. Although Lai did not first choreograph this piece for i-Dance, the re-presentation at i-Dance demonstrates that the festival welcomes ambivalence and critique about Chinese culture and history.

In addition to Wen and Lai, Hong Kong choreographer Mui Cheuk Ying has also improvised and experimented with Chinese source material at i-Dance. The i-Dance festival has frequently collaborated with Ying, an esteemed choreographer and cultural ambassador in Hong Kong, via her participation as a dancer in *Research Week* and by producing her choreography. Ying is a pioneer of the free-lance dance profession in Hong Kong, but, unlike Lai, she began her training in Chinese dance forms. In her youth, in 1981, by chance, Ying was chosen to dance with the Hong Kong Dance Company, the mainstream company that specializes in Chinese dance, even though the majority of dancers came from Mainland China. In an interview with me,[80] she described that she had to put extra time and effort into learning her *jibengong*, or

[80] Mui Cheuk Ying, Interview with Author, Hong Kong, November 2016.

fundamentals, in ballet and Chinese classical dance compared to her fellow Mainland Chinese dancers. After long hours and dedicated work, she starred in several dance dramas choreographed by Hong Kong Dance Company's Shu Qiao, one of the choreographers responsible for the dance-drama style famous at the company. Another artistic director, Jiang Qing, introduced Ying to modern dance, specifically a mix of Horton and Chinese dance. In 1986, Ying received a scholarship to study contemporary dance in New York City, where she dabbled in many modern and postmodern forms. In 1990, she returned to New York City, where she studied contact improvisation; she then became one of the first contact improvisation teachers in Hong Kong. When she teaches repertoire at HKAPA as part-time faculty member, she shares contact improvisation with the Chinese dance majors. She is proud that she has convinced the administration that contact improvisation can enhance Chinese dance skills with props and creative choices. Informed by her study in NYC, she has developed several solos—which she conceptualizes as contact improvisations with—Chinese dance props: fans, sleeves, and umbrellas.[81]

In the 2014 i-Dance festival, Ying reconstructed her experimental Chinese fan solo, entitled *Awakenings in a Dream, Cursive Script*, which represented a turning point for independent dance artists in Hong Kong. After her first trip to New York City, Willy Tsao (founder of CCDC) commissioned the solo, which launched her career as a solo artist.[82] She has performed this solo many times in Hong Kong, where it has been well-received, as well as in Europe, including in Germany, supported by Pina Bausch. Like Wen's *Red*, Ying's solo was not produced specifically for i-Dance, but rather toured globally and re-presented at i-Dance as an

[81] Mui Cheuk Ying, Interview.

[82] Mui Cheuk Ying, Interview.

indication of the status i-Dance aspires to in the global improvisation/postmodern dance scene. Due to its budget, i-Dance cannot fund choreographic residencies where choreographers' make new work, but it can fund the presentation of the choreography. Presenting Ying's work honors her place in Hong Kong dance and the influence she has made in terms of carving out a space for the freelance dancers in Hong Kong. Moreover, this particular solo *Awakenings in a Dream, Cursive Script*, shows experimentation with Chinese folk-dance forms that are taught verbatim at HKAPA. Instead of a direct adoption of national Chinese dance forms, Ying expresses an anxiety about Chineseness that does not reiterate an easy "one country" unification. This uneasiness corresponds Ying description of Hong Kongers as homeless.[83]

In *Awakenings in a Dream, Cursive Script*, Ying innovated on Chinese fan folk dance elements (generally of the *yangge* or *yunnan huadeng* versions) that express cheerful celebration, by adding quotidian movements and an anxious mood. She accomplished this alteration by slowing the movements down, stripping away the light bounce of the lower body, and using simple pedestrian walking steps instead. She drew a heavy paper calligraphy fan (rather than a flowing folk dance or classical dance fan) in circles and opened it with assertion and punctuation, not characteristic of the celebratory Han folk dances. By wearing a tight long black qipao and high heels, she implied femininity and restrictions on the female body. At times her gait appeared weighted like an older person and her posture slumped; gone was the light-hearted coy play with fans often found in Chinese folk dance. She stepped around two chairs near a mirror, both props which signifies a double identity as if a self-reflexivity on the dual identities of Chinese and Hong Kongese in Hong Kong. She expressed a sense of anxiety about Hong Kong's relationship with Chineseness via nervous glances and back-and-forth pathways as well

[83] Mui Cheuk Ying, Interview.

as movement that seemed to occur in fits-and-starts. Her frequent use of regression and repetition also added to this sense of ambivalence. Besides her qipao, the music also reflected Chineseness; Ying danced to *pingtan*, a musical form from Suzhou, China, which is sung in dialect. Chinese cultural elements—the qipao, the fan, and the music—elicited a Chinese resonance or shadow in this abstract postmodern work.[84] Through postmodern dance that emphasized pedestrian movement, Ying expressed measured concern, anxiety, and, even, burden in relation to this Chineseness. In addition, this solo showed a burden of performing femininity as Ying cast off the stereotypical female Chinese folk-dance movements.

The creative process that Ying took to create this solo involved what she refers to as "contact improvisation with the fan," different from her childhood studio training in Chinese dance or the standardized folk-dance classes at Mainland Chinese conservatories. In my experience learning both classical and folk-dance forms in Mainland China, fan work requires incredible dexterity and strength that is often disguised by the grace and nuance of the female dancer. Instead, in Ying's solo, the fan seemed heavy, slowly pushing through the resistance of the air, and weighing down Ying's arm. At times, she pushed the fan closed as if she did not want it to see it again. At other moments, she quickly opened and closed the fan above her head in quick succession and ducked several times out of the way as if the fan might hit her. She even placed the fan in her teeth as if containing it. The trembling of the fan, which often reads as decorative and energetic in *yangge* folk dances, read as nervous twitching in her solo. Finally, the dance ended abruptly as she faced the mirror one last time and dropped her fan just before the lights went out. This sudden drop would be a mistake in Chinese classical and folk-dance classes; in Ying's solo, it appeared as a rejection. Therefore, in this final product, her

[84] i-Dance festival, Y-Space, Video recording, 2014.

improvisations with the fan led to demonstrations of the fan's weight and effort. It also depicted the fan as an object of control—to be controlled or controlling her. Coupled with the other Chinese symbolism and anxious expression, this solo re-presented in i-Dance in 2014, well after its initial choreography in 1986, portrayed a representation of Chineseness that was neither decisive nor totally dismissive. The solo expresses an ambivalence toward homogeneous Chineseness or toward an easy "one country" unification with Hong Kong.

Producing Ying as an i-Dance collaborator and presenter also has influenced i-Dance's investment in funding and promoting local artists; in fact, this solo represents a watershed moment for freelance artists in Hong Kong. Ying's experience as a solo artist, rather than as a dancer in a company, led her to the decision to affect change in the local Hong Kong dance scene by becoming a politician. At the time that Ying became an independent dance artist (in the late 1980s), funding for independent artists barely existed. When she created her first solo (reconstructed for the i-Dance festival, as described above), she applied for funding from the Arts Development Council, but it refused to fund someone who was not associated with a dance company. She modeled her argument on the independent artists she saw in New York City; and, eventually, the Arts Development Council began funding individual artists. She continues to advocate individual artists and revised funding systems in Hong Kong, citing the company model as too corporate and passionless. When she and I spoke in 2016, she was serving on the Arts Development Council. In this role, she has designed funding for Hong Kong dancers to travel and promote their work outside of the city as a corrective to the international festivals in Hong Kong that merely bring in outside artists. According to Ying, outside funders became interested in Hong Kong around 1997, but few offered local artists the chance to develop or show their

work.[85] The i-Dance festival's support for Ying emphasizes its model of providing opportunities to local dance artists while also inviting in international artists, versus focusing solely on international funders and artists. The support i-Dance provides for local artists to explore outside of company and academic institution models also applies to Chinese visiting artists.

As Wen, Lai, and Ying take the opportunity to express their vision in Hong Kong, they have made connections between Hong Kong's relationship to China and the suppression of women. Chinese artists present work at i-Dance that does not necessarily represent Chineseness; and, if it does, they have the creative freedom to be critical, such as Wen's critique of the nostalgia of choreography that involved the suppression of Chinese women. Hong Kong artists, like Helen Lai and Mui Cheuk Ying, have the freedom to experiment with Chinese movement props or sources, such as from Chinese language, folk dance, and classical dance, to explore questions related to identity and power, particularly related to women. The nature of the Chinese nation-state, due to its hegemonic practices and colonial spread, could also be described in terms of patriarchy. Due to the promotion of Chinese folk and classical dance by the Chinese nation-state, the recognizable references to these dance forms allude to national masculinist Chineseness when performed in the context of a Hong Kong festival. The creative license permitted to both China and Hong Kong dancers via the "freedoms" offered by "one country, two systems," allows them the possibility to undermine or, even, critique this Chineseness and the feminized position Hong Kong holds both in relation to the West and to Mainland China. In the case of the three works I have analyzed, these three choreographers subvert a homogeneous Chineseness while also addressing patriarchy, portraying women who lack agency at the hands of men or even Chinese cultural symbols (i.e. being controlled by Chinese cultural symbols). The i-Dance

[85] Mui Cheuk Ying, Interview with Author.

festival does not necessarily advocate for China, yet it does not totally disregard it, expressing an ambivalence towards China. At i-Dance, Mainland Chinese dance artists are treated as equal collaborators while "one country" is sometimes undermined and re-imagined as the festival focuses on the international.

The i-Dance festival is composed of both pre-devised choreography and improvisation experiences that construct the Hong Kong and Chinese artists as both part of the "one country" and the "two systems." In workshop experiences, such as the week-long set of workshops during *Research Week*, Hong Kong, Chinese, and other international dancers approach fellow dancers as natural bodies, distinct from their socio-cultural and national identities. Through collective teaching and score-making structures, alongside open-ended improvisation, the dancers aim to form egalitarian relationships, different from the power dynamics between the nations they represent. They perpetuate the reputation of Somatics and improvisation as fostering individual creative freedom in protest of authoritarian dance forms and, perhaps, the authoritarian encroaching Chinese government. In line with an aim to involve China as a partner, but not a special partner, i-Dance does not require, yet welcomes, an interaction with Chineseness by choreographers who present work. Whether Hong Kong or Chinese artists, they present their work with the belief that the improvisation-as-rehearsal-process and postmodern genres chosen will stretch the work to international appeal and universal meanings. As promised by the freedoms offered under "two systems," i-Dance artists can feel welcome to critique Chinese traditions, Chinese dance forms, and Chinese gender hierarchies; moreover, Hong Kong artists can feel welcome to experiment with their relationship to Chineseness. In both the collaborative approach to *Research Week* and the presentation of pre-devised choreography by high profile

artists Wen Hui, Helen Lai, and Mui Cheuk Ying, i-Dance re-orients the identities of the dancers and undercuts the domination of Mainland China over Hong Kong.

Collaborating with the International

Across the three chapters of this dissertation, each institution—Danny Yung, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA), or the i-Dance festival—defines national identity differently. Danny Yung associates national identity with tradition via Chinese opera training and movement vocabulary. He also employs other Asian traditional art forms to represent other Asian nations, while stating the geographical collaboration through the frame of the urban in an attempt to offer Hong Kong a place at the table. The educational institution of HKAPA also defines national identity in terms of tradition, by aligning Chinese folk dance and classical dance with Mainland China and Hong Kong's participation in Chineseness. In addition, the administrators and faculty conceptualize national identity through particular canons of repertoire and canons of codified pedagogical structures. HKAPA's dance department emphasizes the national identity of China while more generally collapsing Euro-American identities into Western influence. Finally, i-Dance defines national identity through the geographic home of the dancers, rather than tying their conceptualization of the national to specific genres or traditions. Notably, i-Dance positions Hong Kongers as if Hong Kong is a distinct nation, although it does not meet this definition politically. The examples in each chapter also extend their definitions of national identity to their conceptualizations of the international in the face of Hong Kong's global image.

While the concept of "one country, two systems" permitted Deng Xiaoping to capitalize on the international monetary exchange that took place in Hong Kong, the i-Dance festival re-

considers Hong Kong as a creative node in a dance network, not merely a network of financial investment. This strategy mirrors the anti-capitalist stance of the Somatics, postmodern, and site-specific dance movements.[86] Festival directors Choi and Ma envision that one aspect of "i" is the international emphasis of the festival, addressing their goal: "To increase conversations and collaborations between international and local dance artists, and to increase the international impact of the Hong Kong dance field."[87] The i-Dance festival, therefore, puts Hong Kong on the map of Somatics and contact improvisation communities, adding visibility for the city. After i-Dance local artists and international artists make connections at the festival in Hong Kong, they invite one another to festivals and choreographic presentations in their home nations. By gaining more training in Somatics and contact improvisation, in particular, Hong Kong freelance dancers learn skills that make collaborations possible with members of Somatic and improvisation communities worldwide, such as in Australia or Berlin. Establishing a place on a European dance network contrasts the way that Danny Yung relates to Europe. Yung has staged his work *Flee By Night* in Berlin. At times, Yung has lived up to half a year in Berlin where he has been a research fellow at the Free University of Berlin for the International Research Center. He utilized this fellowship as a chance to reflect on his own performance and written work, and present Hong Kong as innovative to Berlin via his foray into innovative Chineseness.[88] This approach to Berlin might support his own professional development and boost his global status

[86] See: Doran George, "Unpredictable Manoeuvres: Eva Karczag's Improvised Strategies for Thwarting Institutional Agendas," 2019; Victoria Hunter, "Introduction," in *Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performance,* ed. Victoria Hunter (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).

[87] "Y-Space," YSpace, accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.y-space.org/about/y-space1/?lang=en.

[88] "Danny Yung," October 10, 2008, https://www.geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/v/interweaving-performance-cultures/fellows/fellows_2015_2016/danny_yung/index.html.

as an artist, but this can be viewed as more self-serving than i-Dance dancers joining a community of practitioners who relate through the same physical and pedagogical values.

Although the i-Dance festival is small and intimate compared to mainstage international festivals such as the Hong Kong Festival of the Arts that brings in countless globally-established international performing artists to upper middle class Hong Kong audiences, i-Dance hopes to elevate the image of Hong Kong dance abroad while it simultaneously nurtures the Hong Kong dance scene. The international artists who form a collaborative community at i-Dance, both from Asia and Western nations, do not necessarily represent established academic curricula or established choreographers with well-funded companies, such as the international artists who participate in the dance department at HKAPA. In addition, the numerous opportunities for learning from both local and international artists contrast with Danny Yung, who barely works with local artists. Of course, HKAPA is concerned with the training of local dancers; yet, its interaction with international artists tends to emphasize importing Western training or Chinese curriculum for students to adopt. In contrast, the i-Dance freelance dance artists connect with international artists via shared interest in Somatic and improvisation forms and expect to learn alongside one another.

While HKAPA showcases to visiting artists the ability of its dancers to take on multiple cultural genres, i-Dance highlights to a few international guests, some with little clout, Hong Kong dancers' openness to improvise with contact and with site. Moreover, there is certainly cultural capital[89] that is afforded the festival based on the presence of Western guest artists in a (post)-British colonial context, but their expertise is treated differently than the international

[89] Bourdieu argues that cultural capital that affects someone's social status is passively and consciously acquired through socialization. See: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

guests who adjudicate exams at HKAPA. The international guest choreographers and adjudicators at HKAPA attempt to help students reach objective standards of success and global standards of professional dancing on proscenium stages. Although the international guest artists at i-Dance also provide expertise to an extent (as teachers of workshops and speakers at i-Dance's mini-conference), their teachings occur in a festival format where they also collaborate with local artists. As an example, they might present choreographic work and then immediately improvise with local artists in the next section of the concert.

In contrast to HKAPA, the i-Dance international artists tend not to represent larger institutions, companies or universities, that might serve as spaces of employment for dancers, but rather create close relationships with Hong Kong dancers. These relationships established are smaller stakes, much less formalized than the relationships orchestrated by Yung. For example, i-Dance dancers Mimi Lo and Maru Yuen attended the Earthdance improvisation event with the late Nancy Stark Smith in Massachusetts and later taught her *Underscore* improvisation score in Hong Kong. By and large, the i-Dance directors invite artists they have met personally while touring their work internationally; these artists are generally solo freelance artists from the United States, Europe, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, in addition to China. Funding is made possible by presenting their work in solos and group improvisation, rather than asking them to set work on an ensemble like at HKAPA. Sometimes these artists are extremely influential figures, such as contact improvisers Stark Smith and Chris Aiken from the United States, Amsterdam-based improviser Katie Duck, and Singapore-born/Berlin-based contemporary dancer Daniel Kok. When the funding is sparser, fewer and less prestigious international artists join.[90] Given the directors' vision to energize and diversify the Hong Kong professional dance

[90] i-Dance festival (HK). Promotional Materials. 2019. The 2019 promotional leaflet, for example, even directly states its paucity of funding.

scene,[91] beyond presenting work and teaching workshops, international artists also share funding models, uses of technology with dance, and creative processes during small conference sessions at i-Dance. There are also more casual "happy hour" conversations set in the festival schedule during which international artists share their experiences. For example, i-Dance dancers treated Stark Smith as a dance history conduit during her "happy hour" chat, asking about her time learning alongside Steve Paxton and the development of contact improvisation over time.[92] In so doing, this particular model of inviting international artists, as opposed to Yung's or HKAPA's, treats "two systems" on an artist-to-artist level of conversation, both via movement improvisation and informal discussion.

Rather than many international dance festivals that solely market Hong Kong culture as a product to the world,[93] i-Dance sincerely seeks the development of the local dance scene, which counters the way that the Hong Kong government has promoted creative industries. Scholar Stephen Yiu-Wai Chu argues that via the branding of Hong Kong as "Asia's World City" as an extension of "one country, two systems," Hong Kong has positioned itself as a "hub of Asian creative industries but not as a base for local creative industries to grow on."[94] In this way, the city has modeled creative industries after its success drawing international business and investment. The directors of i-Dance see the festival as filling a gap in Hong Kong dance development, not fulfilled by HKAPA's production of Hong Kong dancers, by connecting

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[91] "Y-Space," YSpace, accessed October 23, 2019, https://www.y-space.org/about/y-space1/?lang=en.

[92] i-Dance Festival. Archival Video. Y-space. 2013.

[93] Mui Cheuk Yin bemoaned the fact that most dance festivals in Hong Kong do not help Hong Kong dancers travel elsewhere.

[94] Chu, Stephen Yiu-Wai. "Brand Hong Kong: Asia's World City as Method?" *Visual Anthropology* 24, no. 1-2 (2011): 46–58. 52.

members of the freelance dance community as well as contributing to dance research.[95] The i-Dance 2017 program is daringly explicit about this goal to address these needs in the discussions called, "Conference: Research Studies in Dance and Dance Archives in Hong Kong":

> It is difficult for the local academy to maintain its status on the global stage and unhealthy for the development of Hong Kong Dance in the long run when the research findings on dance remain inadequate and unpublished. This year's i-Dance festival (HK) Conference can stimulate discussion and provide more perspective.[96]

Due to the facts that the majority of participants in the festival are local Hong Kong dancers and the directors have focused their attention on local research and development, i-Dance stands out as an international exchange model different from the (post)-colonial government's promotion of creative industries as marketable to the world. In the i-Dance model, international artists, while sharing their knowledge, learn about Hong Kong work without merely consuming it because they learn alongside the dancers and form long-lasting professional and personal relationships.

Besides including participants, i-Dance engages with the international via how it relates to the audience of this festival. The i-Dance festival is geared toward a global audience of dance professionals, not general tourists, who might be living in or visiting Hong Kong. First, the i-Dance festival adjusts its language use for a global audience. Although Cantonese is most often spoken at audience talkbacks after Hong Kong performances, the i-Dance directors moderate bilingual talkbacks in English and Cantonese. The English spoken at the i-Dance festival caters to both Euro-American visiting artists and collaborators from various Asian countries who cannot read Chinese or speak Cantonese/Mandarin Chinese.

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[95] Ma, who earned a master's degree in Performance Studies from the University of Leeds, has told me that it is a problem for Hong Kong that the scholars at the academy do not publish and do not publish on local Hong Kong dance.

[96] i-Dance festival (HK.) Promotional Materials. 2017.

The i-Dance festival also makes many of its events accessible globally in a move that prioritizes expanding audience connections over selling tickets. It uses live feed technology, very popular in Hong Kong social media, so that global audiences can tune into the workshops and even some performances and improvisation jams. Note that i-Dance has been doing this well before it became necessary during the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis. For example, in 2014, I watched several workshops and performances in Hong Kong from Los Angeles before I became a participant the following year. Although it might seem too removed to watch dance this way, scholar Susan Kozel[97] argues that technology such as mobile phones and social media can facilitate intersubjectivity and intercorporeality—what she argues is a version of contact improvisation. Therefore, the live feed sharing of key aspects of the festival carries the potential of connecting international artists who do not have the funding to travel for the festival itself. This offering of a Hong Kong performance without charge counters the local government's framing of creative industries in terms of entrepreneurship and of heritage preservation in terms of marketing to increase tourist visitors.[98] Instead of co-opting "one country, two systems" as a reason to advertise Hong Kong via cultural export (HKAPA) or investigating Chinese cultural heritage (Yung), i-Dance creates low-stakes relationships with international artists and makes Hong Kong dance accessible to the globe.

In other words, the processes of import and export occurring at the i-Dance festival transpire differently than through Danny Yung and HKAPA. HKAPA has imported its curricula from China, Great Britain, and the United States as authoritative sources to create dexterous

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[97] Kozel, Susan. 'Devices of Existence: contact improvisation, Mobile Performances, and Dancing through Twitter. In Born, Georgina, Eric Lewis, and Will Straw. Eds. *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. 268-287.

[98] Chu, Stephen Yiu-Wai. "Brand Hong Kong: Asia's World City as Method?" 46–58.

dancers who can shift among numerous codified techniques. International guest artists, administrators, and adjudicators also have been imported to raise the standard in the dance department and to check progress of the students. The curriculum and international members of the department help the HKAPA dance department fulfill a vision of adhering to the mandate of "one country" while adopting the pluralism of "two systems." In terms of export, HKAPA then exports its dancers to prestigious professional dance companies worldwide. Instead of importing teachers and curricula to local students, Danny Yung imports Chinese performers from Nanjing to the Hong Kong stage. His work imports *kunqu*, a performance form originally from Nanjing, China, which is performed less in Hong Kong than Cantonese opera (*yueju*), in order to comment on Hong Kong's relationship with China. Although he most often represents the Chinese body on the Hong Kong stage, he sometimes then exports his work from Hong Kong to Europe, thus placing Hong Kong on the global stage via the Chinese body.

Yet another approach, the i-Dance festival imports international dance artists, including but not singling out Chinese artists, who have expertise in improvisational forms that are marginalized in Hong Kong. It also imports Somatic and improvisation pedagogies and movement vocabularies along with these artists; these pedagogies and movement vocabularies, although read as universal, promote a Western liberal ideology. The festival then exports some of the festival products via live feed. Compared to HKAPA and Danny Yung, then, the i-Dance festival orchestrates rhizomatic flows from artist to artist, which diffuses the power of a single institution and of Mainland China.

The examples in these three chapters choreograph the geography of Hong Kong differently. Due to the relationships between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese institutions and curricula, HKAPA positions Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city within China. The institution

acts as a modern version of Chineseness that can connect China to the rest of Asia and to Western institutions, such as universities and dance companies. Danny Yung's work treats Hong Kong at the scale of a city-entity that can parallel China, via the surrogate city of Nanjing. The relationships built between the Nanjing kunqu performers and other Asian performers in Nanjing, frame collaboration in terms of Asian regionalism. Traditional Asian artists meet to promote cultural heritage, bolster experimentation with kunqu, and explore their own creative license as artists. The pairings of artists are framed by Yung as city-to-city exchange in a way that empowers Hong Kong alongside China. Besides these two examples, the i-Dance festival demonstrates yet another conceptualization of Hong Kong's geography. Hong Kong is not the contributor to Asian cultural heritage as much as a location in a network of dance Somatics/improvisation practices. Dancers in Hong Kong are free to investigate Chineseness, but they are more concerned with individual agency and creative expression promised by American expansionism and the Somatics movement. Hong Kong's relationship to China is understated, even undermined, via choreographic presentations that source unreservedly from Chinese dance and via Asian and Western international collaborators who train local dancers in forms such as contact improvisation.

Thus, the solution of this festival to the conundrum of "one country, two systems" is to bring outsiders in, rather than to take dancers on international tours, in order to re-invent a version of a set of practices that allows Hong Kongers and Chinese to escape national identities; while at the same time, the festival also affirms those identities. By emphasizing close physical connections among members of various nations, including China and Hong Kong, i-Dance does not merely import representations of Chineseness nor export Hong Kongness as a marketable product; instead, the i-Dance festival attempts to join a global network of Somatics and

improvisation by inviting in international guest artists and by making performances accessible to global audiences via the English language and live-streaming technology. Western cultural capital bolsters the festival's image at the same time it also supports marginalized freelance artists (including local artists). Although international guests do bring their expertise in forms that have histories in Western cultural imperialism, local and Asian artists (including Chinese artists) also add their knowledge to the collective experiences. More than Danny Yung and HKAPA, the i-Dance festival privileges the relationships among dancers versus the relationships with academic institutions and arts organizations; i-Dance engages Somatics/improvisation as a means through which Hong Kong and Chinese artists, as well as international artists, can form these low-stakes, enduring relationships.

Conclusion

In summary, the i-Dance festival cultivates the presumably natural body as part of the festival's goal to connect local and international artists in non-hierarchical community. In contrast to the neoliberal body for export created by HKAPA or the Chinese body imported by Danny Yung, the i-Dance festival offers low-stakes connections, which signify collaboration between Hong Kong and China amidst an international Somatics/improvisation network. As opposed to HKAPA's adapting Chinese nationalist dance curricula or Yung's working with pre-Communist Chinese cultural heritage, i-Dance engages with Chineseness by inviting Chinese artists into the collective experience of *Research Week* and improvised performance. The production of the natural body grounds this meeting between Hong Kongers and Chinese artists and invited international artists. Rooting relationships and performance in improvisation techniques, which are a set of shared practices worldwide, glosses over universal assumptions

about authentic ways of moving and ignores the Western cultural imperialism still present. At the same time, i-Dance aspires to create a collective experience among artists from many nations and non-nations (Hong Kong) based upon a presumption of precultural harmony.

Within these improvisation practices and performances that tout egalitarianism, Hong Kongese and Chinese (not to mention Taiwanese) artists relate in terms of physical sensations and Somatic pedagogies without regard to the power relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China. The i-Dance festival also allows presentation of choreographic works by Chinese artists and Hong Kong artists that involve the ambivalent and, even critical, presentation of Chinese sources. The individual creative artistry of the dancers at i-Dance is supported as means for dancing Hong Kong's potential freedoms offered by "one country, two systems." Chinese artists, moreover, do not need to present Chineseness, such as with Danny Yung's *kunqu* performers. In the context of Hong Kong, where the Localist Movement has generated increasing anti-Chinese sentiment, Chinese collaborators share "freedom" of creative expression with Hong Kongers in a space where their national identities are re-defined as both part of "one country, two systems." Dance artists Wen Hui, Helen Lai, and Mui Cheuk Ying have all shared work that undermines Chinese nationalist masculinist agendas. Therefore, within the curation of the i-Dance festival, the Chineseness of "one country" is addressed, yet downplayed compared to the explicit promotion of established Chinese cultural forms by HKAPA and Danny Yung. The i-Dance festival problem-solves the pluralism promised by "two systems," via Somatics/improvisation training and postmodern dance as a Third Space beyond Chinese hegemony and British (post)-colonialism. The power relationship between Hong Kong and China, therefore, occurs rhizomatically through artist-to-artist contact, diffusing the power of a single institution and of Mainland China.

Epilogue
Gesturing Toward the Future: Dance in Post-"One Country, Two Systems" Hong Kong

Since beginning this dissertation writing in 2018, the three institutions of my analysis—Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, Danny Yung and his mainstage company Zuni Icosahedron, and Mandy Ming-yin Yim's and Victor Choi-wa Ma's i-Dance Festival—have faced significant challenges of operation due to school and theater closures during the Anti-Extradition Law protests of 2019 and the COVID-19 global pandemic beginning in 2020. During the Anti-Extradition Law protests, large-scale social unrest and a standoff between police and pro-democracy protesters at the Hong Kong Polytechnic College campus led schools and performance venues to close during November and December of 2020. Just a month later, all Hong Kong residents were forced to stay home during the first days of the COVID-19 pandemic as the virus spread outside of its origins in Mainland China. The threat of the disease and drastic public health measures (taken around the world as well) all but squelched the protest movement. Even so, likely in response to the endurance of the social unrest, the Chinese central government passed a new law in the name of Hong Kong security in June 2020 that effectively ended "one country, two systems." Although dancers have returned to rehearsing together while wearing masks, the full effect of the 2020 Hong Kong Security Law to the arts sector is still unknown. This epilogue asks a series of questions about how the institutions in these chapters might move forward after this recent termination of "one country, two systems."

First, it is important to understand the trajectory of the large-scale protests and what the security law, which can be view as a crackdown on future protest and dissent, entails. In the face of Chinese hegemony and in the absence of universal suffrage, social protest has become one of Hong Kong's most influential methods of political participation since 1997, including the 2003

protests against an anti-sedition bill (Article 23), the 2014 Occupy Movement/Umbrella Revolution for universal suffrage, and the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law protests.[1] Hong Kongers also participate in yearly vigils for Tiananmen Square victims. Although in 2020, Hong Kong police used the excuse of the global COVID-19 pandemic to attempt to suppress the annual memorial for Tiananmen Square,[2] thousands of people turned out regardless.[3] In an erosion of "two systems" free speech, that same same day, Hong Kong's legislature passed a law that criminalizes insulting, distorting, or altering the Chinese national anthem. These protests and rallies, through bodily risk, demonstrate Hong Kongers' physical demands for democracy and for upholding "one country, two systems." Before discussing where dance might fall in terms of the future of free speech in Hong Kong, I describe the Occupy Movement/Umbrella Revolution and Anti-Extradition Law protests in order to explain how the National Security Law attempts suppression of dissent.

The Occupy Movement/Umbrella Revolution in 2014 directly responded to a white paper from China's State Council that privileged "one country" over "two systems." The paper said: "The high degree of autonomy of HKSAR is not an inherent power, but one that comes solely from the authorization by the central leadership."[4] The same white paper upset Hong Kong's Bar

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[1] Yongshun Cai, *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong: Sustaining Decentralized Protest* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 29.

[2] "Hong Kong Police Block Tiananmen Square Vigil, Citing Coronavirus Concerns," NPR.org, accessed August 13, 2020, https://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/06/01/867117838/hong-kong-police-block-tiananmen-square-vigil-due-to-coronavirus.

[3] Verna Yu, "Hong Kong Protesters Hold Banned Tiananmen Vigil as Anthem Law Is Passed," The Guardian, June 4, 2020, sec. World news, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/04/hong-kong-tiananmen-vigil-ban-china-national-anthem-bill-protest.

[4] Quoted in Antony Dapiran, *City of Protest: a Recent History of Dissent in Hong Kong* (Hawthorn: Penguin Books Australia, 2017), 70.

Council by stating that for judges "loving the country is the basic political requirement."[5] In 2014, in three high-traffic areas of the city (Mongkok, Admiralty Bay, and Causeway Bay), Occupy protesters created the sense of collectivity and equality that, in the liberal imagination, accompany democracy. Like other Occupy movements around the globe, the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong created a sense of community and a structure of egalitarianism among protesters living together—a result of occupying public spaces that are associated with state power and financial institutions.[6] Each site had tents, supply stations, first-aid stations, and study areas.[7] Social media, like WhatsApp and Facebook, helped protesters organize and enlist volunteers; for instance, 3,500 people registered via Facebook to volunteer at the medical stations.[8] The encampments were marked by generosity, volunteerism, anti-materialism, inventiveness, political engagement, and inclusiveness without societal measures of rank.[9] Journalist and professor Jason Ng recounts that during his time at the Admiralty encampments, he found collective care, smooth operations, and an almost socialist lack of need for money. In addition to creative ways of expressing opinions about the government, such as the post-its/posters on the Lennon Wall, protesters created political artwork[10] in the encampments.

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[5] Antony Dapiran, *City of Protest: a Recent History of Dissent in Hong Kong*, 71.

[6] Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2015), 193.

[7] According to Yongshun Cai (82), Admiralty had 1846 tents, 24 supply stations, 7 first-aid stations, 1 study area; Mong Kok had 337 tents, 5 supply stations, 2 first-aid stations, 1 study area; Causeway Bay had 63 tents, 2 supply stations, 1 study area

[8] Yongshun Cai, *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong,* 81.

[9] Jason Ng, *Umbrellas in Bloom* (Black Smith Books, 2016), 166-170.

[10] Jason Ng, *Umbrellas in Bloom,* 219. The 12-foot scrap-wood sculpture, known as *Umbrella Man*, designed by a media graduate, became a symbol of the movement.

Music and dance were also common in the Occupy encampments[11]; in fact, many participants I met through i-Dance provided music or dance performance in support of the movement.[12] The dedicated participants with decentralized leadership became a hallmark of the movement; this lack of centralized leadership, which might have led to the movement's demise in the end, caused a disagreement of goals besides the unified commitment to endurance of living in the encampments.[13] After nearly 3 months, the local government cleared the encampments once they had "political cover"[14] in the form of legal action taken by taxi and minibus companies in the High Court system.

Although not ultimately successful in achieving universal suffrage, the Occupy Movement/Umbrella Revolution of 2014 galvanized pro-democracy and localist movements. Some Localists, citing the failures of the peaceful endurance of the 2014 encampments, advocated more violent protest methods, including directly confronting police.[15] The Localist movement has struggled to make inroads into Hong Kong government. Notably, in 2016, Edward Leung, the founder of Hong Kong Indigenous won 15% of the vote in his district for the Legislative Council. This support occurred after the violent Mong Kong clashes with police, during which Leung and his group called for protection of the Mong Kong street hawkers under

[11] See images here: "Hong Kong's Lennon Walls - in Pictures," The Guardian, July 11, 2019, sec. World news, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2019/jul/11/hong-kongs-lennon-walls-in-pictures.

[12] See image of Mimi Lo dancing: "Activists Mark Month of HK Protests," October 28, 2014, sec. China, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29797987.

[13] Yongshun Cai, *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong,* 93.

[14] Antony Dapiran, *City of Protest: A Recent History of Dissent in Hong Kong*, 82.

[15] "What Are Hong Kong's Localists Angry about?" BBC News, accessed October 25, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35547186.

the rubric of safeguarding Hong Kong's street culture. Wai-ching Yau and Baggio Chung-hang Luo (known as the Youngspiration duo) who were inclined toward Hong Kong Independence were elected to the Legislative Council in 2016, but the court vacated their seats due to their performative protests during their swearing in processes (holding a "Hong Kong is not China" flag, mispronouncing China as the derogatory 'Shina' or as the 'people's re-fucking of Chee-na').[16]

In 2019, an extradition bill again motivated Localists and pro-democracy supporters to take action. In brief, the now tabled extradition bill proposed to permit Hong Kong to transfer those wanted for crimes in Taiwan and Mainland China. The bill incited domestic and international disapproval due to the criticism that someone in Hong Kong could be detained in Mainland China and be tried by the Communist judicial system there. Hong Kong residents also feared that political activists would be tried in Mainland China.[17] These Anti-Extradition Law protests involved hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Hong Kong residents in single days of protest; the protests carried on for months. Some estimate that two million Hong Kongers, about twenty-five percent of the population, joined protests on Jun 16, 2019.[18] Over time, the protestors demanded more than just withdrawal of the bill. The slogan "Five demands, not one less" became a battling cry for the social protest movement. 1. Withdrawal of the extradition bill. 2. Investigation into police brutality 3. Retraction of the classification of protesters as rioters 3.

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[16] "Rebel Hong Kong Politicians Defy China at Chaotic Swearing-in Ceremony," The Guardian, accessed February 10, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/12/hong-kong-pro-democracy-oath-snub-china.

[17] Mike Ives, "What Is Hong Kong's Extradition Bill?," The New York Times, June 10, 2019, sec. World, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/10/world/asia/hong-kong-extradition-bill.html.

[18] "US Lawmakers Nominate Hong Kong Democracy Movement for Nobel Peace Prize," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, February 3, 2021, accessed January 20, 2021 https://hongkongfp.com/2021/02/04/us-lawmakers-nominate-hong-kong-democracy-movement-for-nobel-peace-prize/.

Amnesty allowed for arrested protesters 5. Universal suffrage for both Legislative Council[19] and the Chief Executive. Many protestors also called for the removal of Chief Executive Carrie Lam from office.[20]

Compared to the Umbrella Revolution/Occupy Movement, these protests involved more threat from police and more direct physical risk to Hong Kongers. Besides the large rallies and gatherings of protestors, protestors on the "front lines" used defensive tactics like barricading streets with pedestrian sidewalk rails or offensive tactics like Molotov cocktails and vandalism in metro stations.[21] These actions choreographed Hong Kong's public space as a patchwork of blocked paths and closed metro stations. Police repeatedly attempted to ban public assembly under the (colonial) Public Order Ordinance, citing public safety. Their tactics of *choreopolicing*, a term coined by Performance Studies scholar André Lepecki,[22] included clearing crowds of protestors with sometimes brutal aggression and water cannon trucks that sprayed blue-dye to mark protesters for arrest.[23] Between June and December, 2019, Hong Kong police used 16,000 tear gas rounds in addition to 10,000 rubber bullets, 2,000 bean bag rounds,

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[19] "Legco.Pdf," accessed October 25, 2019, https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr13-14/english/panels/tp/tp_rdp/papers/tp_rdp1122cb1-308-5-e.pdf.

[20] "Hong Kong Protests: What Are the 'Five Demands'? What Do Protesters Want?," South China Morning Post, accessed February 10, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/yp/discover/news/hong-kong/article/3065950/hong-kong-protests-what-are-five-demands-what-do.

[21] Ilaria Maria Sala, "Hong Kong's MTR Was an Unlikely Target for Protests - until It Showed Who Its Daddy Was," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, October 12, 2019, https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/10/12/hong-kongs-mtr-unlikely-target-protests-showed-daddy/.

[22] André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 13-27.

[23] "Water Cannon Fired at Defiant Hong Kong Protesters," BBC News, accessed February 10, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-49536000.

and 1,850 sponge grenades.[24] They arrested over 6,000 people during this time, all of which created more distrust in the police. Instead of the collective spirit of the encampments, anonymity marked the Anti-Extradition Law protests. Many protestors wore masks because of the excessive use of tear gas by the Hong Kong police, but also to hide their identities from police, and even from family members who disagreed with their actions.[25] Other peaceful demonstrations that incorporated bodily tactics included singing a new anthem, "Glory to Hong Kong," in shopping centers[26] and joining hands to form human chains in various locations across the city.[27]

With the slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, the Revolution of our Times"[28] the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law protests became associated with anti-China/Chinese sentiment and actions. "Hong Kong is not China" was also a common protest slogan; Chinese businesses were targets of vandalism; the phrase "Chinazi" was used to describe the Chinese authoritarian state in protest paraphernalia and social media postings; protestors illegally waved black Hong Kong flags that swapped out the Chinese red and depicted a blood-stained or wilted bauhinia flower instead of

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[24] Kris Cheng, "Hong Kong Police Used Crowd Control Weapons 30,000 Times since June; over 6,000 Arrested," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, December 10, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021. https://hongkongfp.com/2019/12/10/hong-kong-police-used-crowd-control-weapons-30000-times-since-june-6000-arrests/.

[25] "Opinion | The Mask I Wear on the Weekends," The New York Times, accessed October 24, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/30/opinion/sunday/hong-kong-protest.html?fbclid=IwAR0c0HofTwwvDS99HJ9t4uOWFY1nJsZcxXOK2CZjLuGTfMwtW8COUxPG2Tk.

[26] "Glory to Hong Kong: How the Protesters Got a New Song," BBC News, September 13, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-49661135.

[27] Austin Ramzy, "Hong Kong Protesters Join Hands to Form Human Chains Across the City," The New York Times, August 23, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/23/world/asia/hong-kong-protests-human-chain.html.

[28] "'Liberate Hong Kong; Revolution of Our Times': Who Came up with This Protest Chant and Why Is the Government Worried?" South China Morning Post, accessed October 25, 2019. https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3021518/liberate-hong-kong-revolution-our-times-who-came-protest.

the five-petal bauhinia flower that represents the five stars of the Chinese flag[29]; and some Mainland Chinese people were told to "Go back to China."[30] Some Mandarin Chinese speakers felt discriminated against.[31] It is worth noting that the central government of China also treated the protests as a threat to Chinese power across the globe. As an illustration, China responded to foreign support of Hong Kong protests as anti-Chinese, putting a number of foreign businesses in the position of denouncing pro-protest statements.[32] The protests, and any international support for them, were viewed by the central Chinese government as an undermining of "one country." The central Chinese government opposed Hong Kong independence vehemently.[33] Although the Chinese state faced negative consequences from the United States and Great Britain, it developed a strategy to squelch protests and threaten political activists in the form of the June 2020 Hong Kong Security Law.

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[29] "Designed as a symbol of unity, Hong Kong's flag becomes the focus of protest," CNN, July 6, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/style/article/hong-kong-flag-design-protest/index.html.

[30] "The Dirty Secret of Hong Kong's Protests: Hatred of Mainlanders," South China Morning Post, October 11, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3032041/hong-kongs-hatred-mainlanders-feeds-xenophobic-undercurrents-its.

[31] "Meet the Mainland Chinese Who Are Living in Fear in Hong Kong | South China Morning Post," accessed October 24, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/3031883/meet-mainland-chinese-who-are-living-fear-hong-kong.

[32] Including NBA, Blizzard, Apple, Google, Starbucks, see:
Terry Nguyen. "American Brands Are Trying to Play Both Sides of the Hong Kong-China Conflict," Vox, October 11, 2019, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/10/11/20910039/american-brands-hong-kong-china-conflict.

[33] "Efforts to Split China Will End in 'Bodies Smashed and Bones Ground to Powder' Says Chinese President Xi Jinping," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, October 14, 2019, https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/10/14/efforts-split-china-will-end-bodies-smashed-bones-ground-powder-says-chinese-president-xi-jinping/.
Although not spoken directly about Hong Kong, Chinese President Xi Jinping has said during the 2019 protests "Anyone who attempts to split any region from China will perish, with their bodies smashed and bones ground to powder."

Much has been written in the international press about the National Security Law as effectively the end of "one country, two systems" due to its erasure of semi-autonomy.[34] The law has criminalized separatism, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign governments, which permits the government to crack down on activists, in particular. Specific tactics seen in the protests, such as sabotaging transportation, will now be punishable by life imprisonment. Under the law, the Beijing government now ends Hong Kong's independent judiciary as one promise kept by "one country, two systems." The law allows the Beijing government to intervene in cases of national security, defined ambiguously, and to install security forces in Hong Kong that answer to Beijing.[35] In addition to encroaching on Hong Kong's independent judiciary system, the National Security Law infringes on Hong Kong's freedom of speech, including academic freedom. For instance, the protest anthem "Glory to Hong Kong" was banned in schools; the slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of our times" was criminalized as subversive; political cartoons have been suppressed; and books by activist Joshua Wong and pro-democracy lawmakers were removed from libraries. Eight people were even arrested for holding up a blank piece of paper—a protest tactic used by pro-democracy lawmakers to call out

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[34] "Every Person on the Planet' Affected: Hong Kong Security Law More Draconian than Feared, Say Analysts," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, July 1, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2020/07/02/every-person-on-the-planet- affected-hong-kong-security-law-more-draconian-than-feared-say-analysts/.; Matthew Henderson. "The Day Freedom Died in Hong Kong," The Telegraph, June 30, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/30/day-hong-kongs-freedom-died/.; "Hong Kong Makes First Arrest Under New National Security Law," Bloomberg, accessed September 1, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-01/hong-kong-makes-first-arrest-under-new-national-security-law?fbclid=IwAR2KC6UUdz8MVG7aFSZFfEATwV-aYqUVE4M2YnLjRwsAsA2sgdvwOy5X5Kk; Jennifer Williams, "China's New National Security Law Is Already Chilling Free Speech in Hong Kong," Vox, July 1, 2020, https://www.vox.com/world/2020/7/1/21309990/china-hong-kong-national-security-law-protests-arrests.; "'Worse than the Worst-Case Scenario': Lawyers Dismayed at Hong Kong National Security Law," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, July 2, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2020/07/02/worse-than-the-worst-case-scenario-lawyers-dismayed-at-hong-kong-national-security-law/.

[35] Javier C. Hernández, "Harsh Penalties, Vaguely Defined Crimes: Hong Kong's Security *Law Explained," The New York Times,* July 1, 2020, sec. World, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/world/asia/hong-kong-security-law-explain.html

the infringement on rights to expression.[36] The right to academic freedom of speech has concerned many educators; a Hong Kong primary school teacher lost their teacher's license after teaching students pro-independence material.[37] Jimmy Lai, the tycoon and owner of Apple Daily, a tabloid critical of China and Hong Kong, has been arrested, jeopardizing freedom of the press.[38] Since the National Security Law, several activists have fled Hong Kong,[39] and many more have been arrested. As recently as January 2021, 53 pro-democracy leaders were arrested under the National Security Law in the latest move against pro-democracy elections. Those arrested were involved in a primary election organized by the pro-democracy camp and were accused of planning to force the Chief Executive to resign by refusing the annual budget. Yet despite these threatening actions, Hong Kongers still resist, for example, by buying illegal books from small booksellers even after some booksellers went missing.[40]

How then might dance move forward during this era of cultural censorship and end of semi-autonomy? With its focus on the body instead of words and visual image, can dance more easily skirt the new law than political cartoons and books? If dance does not recite the words of

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[36] "The New Hong Kong: Disappearing Books, Illegal Words and Arrests over Blank White Paper," Los Angeles Times, July 11, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-07-10/this-is-a-cultural-purge-with-new-security-law-even-blank-paper-is-subversive-in-hong-kong.

[37] "Hong Kong Teacher Struck off for Allegedly Promoting Independence as Lam Vows More Action against 'Bad Apples,'" Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, October 6, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2020/10/06/hong-kong-teacher-struck-off-for-allegedly-promoting-independence-as-lam-vows-more-action-against-bad-apples/.

[38] Vivian Wang, "Jimmy Lai, Hong Kong Pro-Democracy Mogul, Is Ordered Back to Jail," *The New York Times*, December 31, 2020, sec. World, accessed January 20, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/world/asia/jimmy-lai-hong-kong-jail.html.

[39] "Explainer: How Beijing's Security Law Transformed Hong Kong - Month 3," Hong Kong Free Press HKFP, September 30, 2020, accessed January 20, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2020/09/30/explainer-how-beijings-security-law-transformed-hong-kong-month-3/.

[40] "The New Hong Kong: Disappearing Books, Illegal Words and Arrests over Blank White Paper," Los Angeles Times.

the protest slogans, can it fly under the radar of the Beijing central government and the Hong Kong security forces? Or is dance like a white piece of paper that does not mention the criminalized words yet implies the feeling of opposition to police based on where it is located in the city or who is authoring it? Will the marginal position of dance in Hong Kong society mean that it is less concerning to the local police and Beijing central government? Or will a specific reform of dance, as carried out by the Chinese Communist party during the Cultural Revolution, occur in order to strengthen Chinese national support? Will the Hong Kong government turn to supporting the arts again as a means for keeping colonial subjects happy and quiet? HKAPA, Danny Yung's, and i-Dance's relationship to Chineseness and to the international will affect their capacity to comply with the National Security Law enough to avoid threats and arrests.

The strategies utilized by HKAPA seem most likely to fair well during the post- "one country, two systems" era. HKAPA has been purposely building strong relationships with Mainland Chinese dance conservatories, inviting in Mainland Chinese professors as adjudicators, and adopting Chinese nationalist dance curriculum. Every dancer in the dance program is trained in Chinse dance forms, which signifies respect for Chinese culture and the importance of Chinese dance as a foundation for professional dance in Hong Kong. Due to the inclusion of Chinese ethnic folk dance forms, which have a history of representing multi-cultural unification of China, the curriculum also shows support for the Chinese nation-state bringing colonial subjects into the fold in the name of bolstering the nation-state. HKAPA's emphasis on Western dance science and Somatics, movement analysis, and dance history will likely stay the same as these are all colonial trends that seem likely to persist globally and grant the institution global prestige. It is hard to predict whether the Beijing central government will treat Chinese classical and folk dance forms as the Chinese national anthem and make some determination about the

way the forms cannot be altered. Because these forms are always inherently evolving, it might help their case that they can manifest in many kinds of choreographies, even resistive ones that might occur in low-stakes student concerts that poke fun at gendered pedagogies or question essentialist representations of ethnic minorities. On the other hand, Chinese folk dance and classical dance have such high standards of codification, that it is possible to make some mandates of uniform pedagogy between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

Danny Yung's work with kunqu performers begs similar questions now that the National Security Law has been enacted. Yung will benefit from the relationships he has formed with Mainland Chinese artists, especially his long-term working relationship with artists from Nanjing. At the same time he has worked to insert Hong Kong in the conversation about Chinese cultural heritage, he has also provided work in Hong Kong to many Mainland Chinese artists. He has purposely supported forums on the preservation of Chinese culture and performing arts, especially Chinese opera. Based on the company's annual reports, the company is also on good terms with Chief Executive, Carrie Lam. The cross-cultural frame he projects for his work via promotional materials and public lectures will please government officials who seek more harmony between China and Hong Kong. Like with Chinese classical dance and folk dance, it is doubtful the Beijing central government will launch reform of Chinese opera in Hong Kong and, instead, understand Yung's work as harmlessly cosmopolitan and obtuse. Nevertheless, whether he continues to work with kunqu or other Asian forms, Yung will need to be careful about the surtitles he overlays onto movement that state explicit contexts of governmental control, revolution, and obedience, especially if he continues his relationship with the high-profile Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Moreover, at one point in his career, Danny Yung was on a Chinese government watchlist, so this stain on his record might make Hong Kong

security authorities more interested in questioning whether his abstract work carries subversive meanings. It raises the question of whether kunqu abstraction will be overlooked as compared to political cartoons and books or whether this abstraction will be viewed as a degradation of a quintessentially Chinese cultural form.

Finally, of all the institutions, the i-Dance festival might need to be the most creative in carrying forward during this time. Although the festival has made strong connections with Mainland Chinese artists, it does not have the same bond with Mainland institutions as HKAPA or Danny Yung. Because it allows artists to question Chinese cultural practices and relies on dance forms that have a reputation as international, it cannot claim a long history of support for Chinese cultural products. Moreover, i-Dance's use of public sites outside of theaters might be censored if any sort of movement in public space is viewed as threatening in the context of interrupting pedestrian or traffic flow, such as during the Occupy and Anti-Extradition protests. In addition, many of the dancers associated with the festival did participate in the social protest movements. Because collusion with foreign governments is a part of what is criminalized in the new security law, i-Dance's vision to create space for Hong Kong on an international network might or might not be welcomed as a pursuit worth funding. Unlike HKAPA's promise of creating dancers who can be hired across the globe, there are few financial benefits for the Hong Kong and Chinese governments to host the smaller i-Dance Festival. The festival has never received the same extent of main-stage funding support from the local Hong Kong government, and one way to effectively censor the festival would be to deny funding for international guest artists. Without much official funding, however, there is also the possibility that this small festival could fly completely under the radar. It could advertise via word of mouth, carry on in warehouse spaces, and still serve as a festival where both Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese

artists could express anxiety and ambivalence about Chinese cultural products or the relationship between Hong Kong and China. Furthermore, the genre of contact improvisation will not be scrutinized in terms of its representation of China. In promotional materials, the framing of the genre might shift, such as an argument that it could provide non-sexual intimacy with others that will have been restricted worldwide during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Although the National Security Law has squelched the physical demands for universal suffrage during both 2014 and 2019 protests, dance educators and artists in the city can still carve out space for dissent. Even using the model of Mainland China itself, dance artists like Wen Hui of Beijing, do find ways to create work that does not tow the party line, even if it has to be shown at less-publicized events or toured outside of the country. The fact that dance is often overlooked as not intellectual and not political, could save dance from scrutiny by Hong Kong security forces that must answer to the Beijing central government. Despite authoritarian rule in Hong Kong, dancers can form communities of exchange within the city and internationally to support their learning of various genres and to innovate on aesthetics already present in Hong Kong. They can continue to ask questions of the role of British colonialism and Chineseness in their dancing through movement and spoken conversation. They can do the equivalent of buying forbidden books from small booksellers, such as by holding small workshops in warehouse spaces, or choreographing a performance that moves locations each time it is performed. They can call upon their myriad international connections; some might even flee Hong Kong. Sharing dance on social media might elicit international support for the dance artists, which could, in turn, prevent suppression of their work. For example, in 2019, i-Dance did not include its site-specific series due to the precariousness of bodies moving in public space during the Anti-Extradition Law protests; in lieu of producing site-specific choreography, directors Ma and Yim

put their own bodies in harm's way by filming (and sharing via social media[41]) several videos of dancing in the pedestrian walkways next to Lennon Walls (where countless posters, papers, and post-its support the protests). They engaged their international dance network to bring awareness of the state of politics in Hong Kong, much as journalistic photos of the protest movements in 2014 and 2019 made Hong Kong's plight visible to the world. Sharing dance on social media could also incorporate feedback for future online performances, such as through subscriptions, "likes" and "followers"—thereby eliciting a version of voting that points to the lack of real democracy.

Even if Hong Kong is suffering from a situation of (post)colonial re-colonization, Hong Kongers can draw on a rich history of dissent, during British colonial rule and during the brief era of "one country, two systems."[42] The Hong Kong people and artists have demonstrated physical resourcefulness and problem-solving and can again deploy these skills in the future of post-"one country, two systems." When I started writing this dissertation, I never imagined I would conclude with the conclusion of "one country, two systems"—that I would be writing about a historical moment that lasted just twenty-three years. It is impossible to know what comes next for Hong Kong, but this research has shown the great capacity of dance to navigate Hong Kong's shifting political landscape and to imagine alternative futures.

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[41] Y-Space. *12 OCT U Dance I-Dance P12*, 2019. https://vimeo.com/365018659.

[42] Stephen Chiu, Stephen Wing Kai Chiu, and Tai Lok Lui. *The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000.
See for a discussion of how the student protests of the 1960s were generative for the Occupy Movement in 2014.

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