

時尚精英

ELITE

LIFESTYLE

美容美妝
春季時尚
陽光住所
經典繪畫
股票投資

Angela Xiao: Dancing With
Grace and a Selfless Heart

篤心淨思 不負韶華

——專訪神韻舞蹈演員肖嘉祺

Sui Zhao Paintings: Celebrating
Chinese New Year Elegantly

歲朝迎新 畫中話傳統

Leonardo and the
Strength of Meekness

向內探尋

達·芬奇與「溫柔」的力量

Sweet Dreams, Sleep Tight

裝點臥室 打造甜蜜夢鄉

Naturally Harmonious:
Redefining California Living

自然與和諧 充滿陽光的加州生活

Simplicity
IS THE ULTIMATE
SOPHISTICATION

January-February 2020 \$6.99



Angela Xiao:
DANCING WITH
GRACE &
A SELFLESS HEART

篤心淨思 不負韶華
——專訪神韻舞蹈演員肖嘉祺

English text by June Fakkert
Chinese text by Astrid Wang

The late nights, six-day intensive weeks, and six-month-long tours don't feel like an overwhelming schedule to dancer Angela Xiao. What for many of us would be a great personal sacrifice, for her is a life well-lived.

"I don't like wasting time," said Xiao, who has been dancing for ten years with the world's premier classical Chinese dance company, Shen Yun Performing Arts. Exuding a fascinating mix of bubblyness and sincerity, she said that she feels lucky to be doing something purposeful; in fact, sometimes on vacation, she doesn't know what to do with her time.

Xiao loves the excitement of touring—trying new foods and learning new things—but after nearly a

從2009年起，肖嘉祺便隨美國神韻神韻團赴世界各地巡迴演出，她說這已是生命中無可取代的歲月。馬不停蹄的數月排練，長達半年的巡演，肖嘉祺一年之中鮮少有休息時間。如此緊湊的時程年復一年，若非擁有超人的意志，似乎難以走過這般漫長的時日。然而，她卻不認為這是一種犧牲，反之，她很慶幸自己擁有此般經歷。

美國神韻藝術團致力於復興中華五千年文明，透過純善、純美的演出，帶領觀眾領略神州大地的輝煌歲月。肖嘉祺身為其中一名舞蹈演員，她穿上各朝、各民族亮麗精細的服飾，展現或謙柔、或俏麗、或優雅的儀態。換下戲服後，她臉上的笑容依舊甜美，言談間卻透露出其眼界格局頗有古時志士之風，這使我們更加好奇是什麼樣的歷練造就了她……



Angela Xiao casts aloft her long, silky sleeves in *Sleeves of the Tang Palace*, a classical Chinese dance piece that illustrates the spirit of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), a dynasty of high cultural civilization. With their silky sleeves cascading through the air, the dancers bring an era of ancient splendor to life. (Courtesy of Shen Yun Performing Arts)



decade of traveling all over the world, she doesn't rely on novelty to keep her going. Rather, a big part of what keeps her on point is consciously working on her outlook to overcome those subtle negative thoughts that otherwise build up and make long-term commitments difficult.

"I've had to learn to be more selfless," she said. "When you put yourself first, it actually just causes a bunch of troubles." Due to the nature of her art, this selflessness is also a key to improving her dance skills.

FACING HER SELF

In ancient Chinese culture, there was awareness that spiritual principles were behind the workings of natural phenomenon, as well as guiding the events of a person's life. It was held that to produce great art, artists must align themselves with spiritual principles. People of high caliber would have brightly shining spirits and transmit some of this light to others through their art. The art of someone with a negative outlook would be dark and spread unhappiness.

For Xiao, there is very practical and tangible application of this in her art. She explained to *Elite Lifestyle Magazine* how, beneath the gorgeous costumes and perfectly timed moves, confident selflessness gives her dance life.

"You can't escape yourself," she said. "In classical Chinese dance, you show your inner self because when dancing—you can't hide anything. People can see your personality," she explained.

"Sometimes my moves are too small, and I feel like that's connected with my personality ... [So] I try to be more open," she said.

EXPRESSING FEELINGS THROUGH DANCING

A dancer's emotion is also directly addressed in classical Chinese dance training, through a skill called *bearing*. "Bearing emphasizes internal spirit, breath, intent, personal aura, and deep emotional expression," the Shen Yun website explains.

Left page: Angela Xiao was born in China and grew up in Canada. She moved to New York to study classical Chinese dance, which eventually enticed her to pursue the art form as a career. (Courtesy of Daniel Ulrich)

Top and skirt by ESCADA
Location courtesy of Sotheby's International Realty
(MLS ID 4957096)



Angela Xiao performs in *A Renewal*. In this classical Chinese dance piece, deities from a golden celestial paradise descend to Earth, incarnating in the grand imperial court of China's Han Dynasty. (Courtesy of Shen Yun Performing Arts)

美源於心 思形於外

神韻舞臺上的女演員們將中國古代女性的柔美展現地傳神到位，從裝束服飾到動作儀態，皆帶出了各朝文化之獨特韻味。肖嘉祺這些年來體悟到這種美的詮釋，其實根植於心，「我們在跳舞時，那種美就是很自然地流露，我覺得首先是必須豐富你的內在。」她說。

中國古典舞與古代的精神文明息息相關，古時人們修身養性，在生活中嚴格自律，因為這些內在的涵養會體現在各方面。自古許多文人的經典創作，都能令後人切身體會「讀其文如見其人」，字裡行間的情感與哲思，幾乎與其人特質相應。文字尚且如此，何況是舞蹈？

Bearing is one of the more advanced skills. For Xiao, it comes more naturally to her in court dances, which are her favorites.

She has also played a number of different character roles. Each role presents a unique challenge because she needs to understand the character's emotions.

She recalls one of the first roles she played—a goddess of mercy. After being cast, she felt that it was a good opportunity to cultivate greater mercy and compassion in herself.

Other roles have required her to portray more human emotions, including ones that she would normally not experience; for example, those of a mother on her deathbed. For her to understand these feelings and give them form through her movements, it takes great empathy and letting go of her self.

CULTURAL INSPIRATION

The sparkle and grandeur of ancient Chinese court life has intrigued Xiao since she was young. Now, after a decade of performing classical Chinese dance, she's come about as close to it as possible in the modern era.

Xiao grew up in Canada, having moved there when she was only four years old. However, she was lucky enough to have her grandparents living with her; they kept her connected to her roots by telling her many Chinese children's stories.

In her teens, she read the four Chinese classic novels; her favorite is *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. And she has an affinity for the poem "The Sea" written by the Han Dynasty warlord Cao Cao. In it, he describes his great delight in gazing at the ocean. "It makes me feel very refreshed after reading it," Xiao shared with *Elite*.

In addition to performing with Shen Yun, Xiao has studied at Fei Tian Academy of the Arts, a private school in upstate New York, where she was further immersed in traditional Chinese culture through in-depth, bilingual courses in history and Chinese language.

Two of her current favorite historical characters are Emperor Taizong and his wife, Empress Zhangsun. Following his father's death, Taizong became the second emperor of China's Tang Dynasty—the dynasty that is considered China's golden age.

作為一名舞蹈藝術家，倘若能養成端正的品格，也能創造出更加純淨的藝術，並藉由表演傳達給觀眾。這與中國古典舞訓練中，一項名為「身韻」的進階技巧也有緊密關聯。神韻官方網站介紹：「身韻強調內在的精神、氣息、意向，個人氣質以及深層的情感表達。」中國古典舞豐富的表現力，與舞蹈家對身韻的掌握息息相關。

她進一步提到：「中國古典舞的身韻是個自然展現內在的舞蹈，有人說過『跳舞時無法隱藏任何東西』，當你跳舞時，觀眾便可藉此看出你的人格。」虛有其表無法帶給人真實的觸動，那種源自內心的柔美，才能融化人心。因此在精進舞藝的路上，除了在技巧磨練上下足了功夫，她在心境提升的過程中更有諸多感悟。

面對自我 謙遜為首

「有時候我很擔心別人怎麼看我，我的表現會有所保留，就無法讓自己完全表現出來。」肖嘉祺談到，過去她太過在意旁人的眼光。她還分享了近來有些新的反思：「有些障礙是我太害怕犯錯……有時候我會下意識地去想，別人可能覺得我不夠好，其實最好是不要害怕自己做得太多，必須不去害怕在別人面前展現自己。」

她發現這種害怕與擔心的負面情緒是多餘的，因為在表演的當下，已然將自我展現，台下的人自然也看得清楚，「只有在你不害怕犯錯時，才會學到更多」，後來她明白了表演時無需徒增憂慮，只需心無旁騖地展現自己。

此外，她還談到另一個使自己無法進步更快的阻礙，就是害怕找出自己的錯誤。平時練習，他們都會透過錄像來協助修正動作，起初她並不想面對影片中的自己，現在她會想：「我該做的就是承認那樣的自己，然後去修正它。」舞蹈之路，學無止盡，唯有正視不夠完美的自己，才能向前邁進，她相信時刻保持謙遜肯定是好的，「承認自己有所不知，才會知道的更多。」

見賢思齊 懷志前行

肖嘉祺雖自小就隨家人從中國移民至加拿大，但與東方文化的連結卻未間斷，姥爺時常在她耳邊講述一些經典的中國傳統故事，耳濡目染下，使她從小就對古代文化有所認識。也因此，即使在西方教育下成長，她也未曾丟失中文能力。後來她決定進入美國飛天藝術學院，學習正統的中國古典舞。十多年來的舞蹈歷程，讓她與中華文化產生了更加深厚的連結。

如今，她身為團隊中的資深演員，早已學會將生活周遭的一切，化作提煉自我的養分。她回想自己曾扮演過觀音菩薩一角，在被指派此角後，她認識到這是一個絕佳的機會，促使自己在日常中培養更多的善念與慈悲的胸懷。近來，她讀到一位女性歷史人物為長孫皇后，她對其賢淑的品德深感佩服。



In the 2016 NTD International Classical Chinese Dance Competition, Angela Xiao portrayed Lady Wenji, a poet and musician who lived during China's late Eastern Han Dynasty. She spent part of her life as a captive of the Xiongnu until 207, when the warlord Cao Cao, who controlled the Han central government in the final years of the Eastern Han, paid a heavy ransom to bring her back to Han territory. Her twelve-year ordeal became a legend that has been celebrated in ancient Chinese classical poetry, paintings, and dramas. (Courtesy of Larry Dye)

His wife then became empress and was known for her tolerance, wisdom, and personal sacrifices for the country.

For example, when she fell ill, it was suggested that the emperor donate more money to temples so that the divine might be inclined to bless her and restore her health. But Empress Zhangsun objected to this, saying that her death would be determined by fate and that the country's resources should not be wasted on trying to change her destiny.

Empress Zhangsun passed away at age 36, but before she left, she made two requests of her husband:

長孫皇后身為一國之母，從未將自己的私利置放於前，一心一意為社稷著想。其中最著名的一例就是她力阻唐太宗任命兄長（長孫無忌）任朝廷重職。長孫皇后離世時年僅36歲，在她去世前，仍心繫家國，不忘叮囑皇上：遠小人、任重直諫忠臣；不要讓她的家族外戚於朝中掌大權；她自覺無功於社稷，故請皇上別為她建造陵寢，薄葬即可。

長孫皇后的一生的賢良事蹟，日月可鑑，供後世敬而效之。肖嘉祺表示：「我特別欣賞她在別人看不見的地方，睿智地扶持國家。她並不去顯耀她所造就的一切，但她為了讓國家更好，付出了許多。」這種無私，正是她想學習的氣度。

Angela Xiao performs in *Elegance in the Middle Kingdom*, a classical Chinese dance piece during which ladies grace the courtyard, dancing with embroidered fans. (Courtesy of Shen Yun Performing Arts)



that under no circumstance should he promote her family members who didn't hold merit (some were profiting off their relationship to the empress) and that again, the country should not waste resources on building her a fancy tomb.

Xiao said that she admires the empress's intelligence and selflessness.

"I like how she intelligently supported the country behind the scenes. She didn't show off what she accomplished, but she contributed a lot to make the country better," Xiao wrote in a follow-up interview email.

INGREDIENTS

FOR GOOD

COLLABORATION

Reflecting on the life lessons that being a part of such a close-knit group has taught her, Xiao said that it's important to care for others and have a realistic perception of your own abilities. If you care too much about what others think of you, it makes things harder.

When helping someone correct a mistake, it is important to always be kind. However, if it's her own mistake, she says that it's best to face it head-on and fix it, not letting fear get in the way. "The fear of making mistakes is a barrier. ...You learn more if you're not afraid to be wrong."

She also constantly strives to be humble, and to keep an open mind. "It's always good to be humble," she said. "You know more when you admit you don't know something."

如今，她對自己最大的期望是變得更加自信與大氣，並且擁有豁達、寬大的胸襟面對生活中的一切。或許正因心有此願，這些年來她所欣賞的事物大多都具備這般特質。她喜歡盛唐的浩蕩、喜愛李白詩境裡的瀟灑、更愛曹操千古名作裡的人生感悟。學會欣賞這些格局廣闊的人事，不僅拓展她的視野，對其品格陶冶亦有所啟發。

無悔的歲月

「人們總是在想：人生的意義是什麼，長大後要做什麼……」她未曾有過那樣的迷茫，因為神韻帶她找到了人生的使命。「我覺得我特別幸運，能夠從年輕時就開始做一件如此有意義的事。」神韻再現中華文明五千年的歷史精粹，她說：「傳統文化之所以重要，是因為你可以從歷史中學習，所有的一切都是重複的。」能讓觀眾透過一場演出體會其中深意，意義非凡。

「我也很喜歡在舞臺上的感覺，我覺得每一年的開場節目，我的感受特別多，在開場後看到觀眾，然後我能感覺到與他們產生某種連結。」在長達半年的巡演中，她坦言這種感覺是很重要的動力。過程中，她可能會感到疲憊，但每當回想起開場

後的那種感覺，她便想加倍珍惜每一次的演出機會。這般心繫觀眾的單純念想，伴她走過十餘載的舞臺人生。

在肖嘉祺分享習舞路上的所思所想後，我們才明白，神韻舞台上帶給觀眾的美好有多珍貴。那些精準的舞步、精湛的技巧、優柔的神態、刻骨的情懷，無一不是靠每一位神韻藝術家一步步精心淬煉、日夜鞭策自我而成，他們十年如一日的付出，只為看見每一位觀眾由衷地一展笑顏。



觀滄海 The Sea

By 曹操 Cao Cao

東臨碣石， I come to view the boundless ocean
以觀滄海。 From Stony Hill on eastern shore.
水何澹澹， Its water rolls in rhythmic motion
山島竦峙。 And islands stand amid its roar.
樹木叢生， Tree on tree grows from peak to peak;
百草豐茂。 Grass on grass looks lush far and nigh.
秋風蕭瑟， The autumn wind blows drear and bleak;
洪波湧起。 The monstrous billows surge up high.
日月之行， The sun by day, the moon by night
若出其中。 Appear to rise up from the deep.
星漢燦爛， The Milky Way with stars so bright
若出其裡。 Sinks down into the sea in sleep.
幸甚至哉， How happy I feel at this sight!
歌以詠志。 I croon this poem in delight.

English translation of the poem by Xu Yuanchong.

