



HA KWOK CHEUNG GROUP

Dragons and Lions

HA TAK-KIN is charged with carrying on a near century-old legacy of promulgating rich Chinese tradition.

“It has been 90 years and over four generations since the founding of our company,” says Ha Tak-Kin, current president of Ha Kwok Cheung Dragon & Lion Dance Team. Starting out as a martial arts institution, the company provides top-notch lion dance performances and traditional martial arts demonstrations in Hong Kong.

“We strive to provide best quality services to our clients while promoting Chinese culture and values. We also organize various activities and competitions supporting the sustainable development of Chinese heritage, and to inspire the youth to be confident as well as encourage them to serve the society.”

Place in History

“We basically grew alongside Hong Kong’s development,” says Ha. “In the 80’s, when the economy of Hong Kong blossomed, lion dance performances took place frequently, not only during festivals. In a place where Chinese culture blends perfectly with its western counterparts, the demand for professionally conducted commercial exhibitions had risen considerably.”

While maintaining the strict standards of quality in its performances, Ha Kwok Cheung Group takes into account the specific needs of its clients. In making note of the purposes of the activities in which it participates, as well as other pertinent information such as program sequences, the company seeks to wholly understand each client’s objectives and desired results, to further advise on how to optimize all efforts.

“Our company is one of the most famous lion dance troupes in the world. Our 90 years of experience in large scale outdoor activities, roster of high-calibre professional performers, and champion-



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ships in many global lion dance competitions bring our clients much confidence.”

Maintaining the Edge

In the mature Hong Kong lion dance performance industry, internal competition grows increasingly fierce. Diversified services are crucial in meeting customers’ demands and winning their patronage. From the colours and patterns of lion harnesses and props, to event planning, stage construction, and even public relations, Ha Kwok Cheung Group goes to great lengths to cover all the bases.

Training and retaining talent is another key issue. There seems to be an industry-wide disinterest from the younger generation, which the company remedies by committed involvement in the extra-curricular activities of a number of schools. A handful of promising lion and dragon dance performers have also

been discovered outside Hong Kong, who then join the troupe’s ranks.

Future Generations

Being a disciple of Chinese tradition has not restricted the company from innovating. “To spice up performances, we’ve invited well-known dancers to create the cross-cultural hip-hop lion dance, along with traditional steps of ‘big head doll’ (大頭娃娃). We are set to stage a brand new hip-hop dragon dance this year. While providing innovative and inventive performance services, we simultaneously promote the lion and dragon dance culture to the youth,” says Ha.

Many other opportunities lie outside Hong Kong as well. “Along with the rise of the Mainland market, we set up regional offices in Shanghai and Beijing for a lion and dragon dance performance and cultural exchange in 2011, which was a huge success. We hope to expand to other large cities such as Chengdu and Dalian. Among our more ambitious plans, we are contemplating the construction of a martial arts-themed hotel in Shanghai, so tourists can truly experience China’s rich lion and dragon dance culture.”

Ha Tak-Kin has made great strides in keeping Ha Kwok Cheung Group alive; many changes have taken place to achieve such longevity, and more will. “Lion and dragon dance may seem to be an antiquated industry to others. As the old martial art institution system is no longer applicable, we have adopted modern commercial systematic management. We overhaul and tune everything up, from the company’s image and branding to the quality of performers, in an attempt to jump outside sheer tradition and match the pace of the times.” ■

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