

# A Comparative Study of Community Dance Management Models in Australia and China—Beijing and Tasmania as an Example

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## Abstract

Community dance is a socialized expression of urban life. Using a literature research approach, this paper compares the community dance management models in Beijing and Tasmania and finds that there are differences in the development process of community dance in the two cities: the degree of government support, the professionalization of the management organization system, and the value orientation. In addition, the study proposes suggestions for improving the management of community dance in China. The management of community dance in China can improve its management effectiveness in three ways: integrating cultural atmosphere and policy guidance resources, stimulating multiple social forces to participate in community dance, and broadening funding sources and enhancing the social power of community dance, so as to promote a more benign development of community dance as a public art form in China.

**Keywords:** community dance, arts management, Beijing, Tasmania

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Purpose and Background of the Study*

Globally, different communities have diversified means of socializing, which applies to the community dances (Rowe, Buck & Martin, 2015). Community dance is a practice where professional dancers engage with different communities in society to develop dancing performances (Kuppers, 2019). Community dance plays a critical role in allowing the community members to express themselves by engaging their bodies in artistic means (Yang, 2018). Hence, there are numerous positive consequences associated with the community dance. First, the dance boosts the physicality of the members and relaxation of the body and aids in eradicating risks of mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Rowe, Buck & Martin, 2015). Further, community dance encourages individuals' creativity. Most importantly, through engagements in community dance, people can learn more, understand and appreciate their culture (Rowe, Buck & Martin, 2015).

The urge to explore and understand the diversified culture of people is the primary driver for employing this research topic. The impact of community dances in linking individuals with their culture cannot be ignored. The history and customs which is important in every culture may be portrayed in a style of dance, a graceful community dance, brilliant props and costumes, slow movements and swift that catches the eye of everyone (Amans, 2017). Community dancers may be amazing storytellers, telling the narrative in every motion and rhythm of their dance. Every community dance has a story that must match the subject matter or concepts it seeks to portray. A community dance cannot be made without a narrative. In order for it to be understood by other cultures, it must have a back story. Community Dance is incredibly significant in terms of introducing the aspects to grasp about our culture to other people. It is also the way that other folks might have reverence, wisdom and give value to our culture and practices. It allows other cultures to tell what the tales behind their dancing are. Further socialization and friendship are enabled as well as helping reduce social crimes since people

are engaged in the activity (Yang, 2018). The main purpose of this study is to find out what needs to be improved in the management and development of community dance arts in China through comparative and analysis. Therefore, the author chose Tasmania and Beijing in terms of the development and management of community dance arts in the two regions to compare the differences between the two regions, through which to draw out the shortcomings of China, so as to learn from the good development model of Australia.

### *1.2 Current Status of Research*

#### *1.2.1 History of Community Dance*

Globally, community dances have been used as platforms to support the cultural and artistic appeals, and the participants have appreciated their value (Kuppers, 2019). The concept of community dance was invented in the mid-1970s and 1980s in the United States and has since grown spontaneously in all directions across the globe (Amans, 2017). Across China, since ascending to the power of the Chinese Communist Party has made use of community dances where it has consistently insisted that art should be used to mobilize the masses, particularly the Yangge dance (Wilcox, 2020).

In addition, Tasmania has also made ground shaking advancements in engaging the community dance. For instance, Tasmania Regional Arts (TRA), which has partnered with Mature Artists Dance Experience (MADE), are the leading dance project as far as community dance is concerned (Kuppers, 2019). This project is undertaken across three regions of Tasmania: South, North West and North East. The desire for participation has driven the success of the Tasmanian Dance project from the communities where the project has explored identity and space as witnessed by community members of these regions (Amans, 2017).

When considering the role of community dance in the development of contemporary conditions at world, it can be concluded that it has tremendously aided and supported the development of communities through those community dances. First and foremost, this has enormously aided in forming morality and other beautiful teachings in the society that are not available to specific individuals or can only be comprehended via those dances (Kuppers, 2019). These dances have also helped people in memory formation, allowing community members to recollect all of the teachings and lessons addressed by the community dances (Chen, 2018).

According to Yang (2018), apart from bringing people together on occasion, these dances also develop our homes and the community by ensuring that the community is fully united, which can be seen that when new generations appear in community and follow the daily acts that are approached through community dances. In this way, the community develops with the same culture by handing it over to other generations. Community dance performances bring people together to celebrate their accomplishments and may serve as an upbeat and celebratory focus for underserved areas (Rowe, Buck & Martin, 2015). Dance may be used to deliver health education information in a fun and participatory way. Community dances is needed in the development of people's values and skills. With adequate proof, community dances have been shown to have a beneficial positive influence on the growth of a country rather than destruction. Bringing people together is a significant act to observe in society, yet it is also rare; therefore, it should be managed and treated seriously once obtained (Amans, 2017).

#### *1.2.2 Strengthening Community Dance Management*

The spontaneity of community dance in China generates discord in the country (Chin, 2014), such as the noise threat and invasion of public areas of the dancers. Therefore, an art administrator who can arbitrate and manage disagreements to ensure that the community dances are safe and conflict-free are needed. They can establish a movement that will allow them to openly communicate with the Beijing people and handle the rising concerns from the community dances (Chin, 2014). After listening to the residents, the art administrators should discuss the options with the same individuals to determine if the people themselves can safely resolve the problem through public and freedom of speech. Another way that art administrators can deal with conflicts in community dances is to ensure that there is supervision by law personnel, including the police, as the community dances are held so that they can maintain law and order during those events and ensure that no conflicts occur during the community dances.

Art administrators may also ensure no disputes during community dances by enacting laws that must be obeyed during those events and establishing sanctions for individuals who do not follow the rules. Making the country's community dances more instructional than competitive will also make them safer and lessen the tensions within its community dances. This may be accomplished by educating residents about the act and purpose of community dances in the community. When these steps are implemented, these conflicts will decline in China precipitously.

### *1.3 Research Question*

#### *1.3.1 Similarities and Differences in Beijing and Tasmania Community Dance Management Model*

There are much notable contrasts between the community dances in Beijing and Tasmania. The explanation for this variation is because of the gap between the two regions brought by the causes the act of executing their community dances. In Tasmania, many selected dancers represent the community, whereas in Beijing, anybody who have the capacity to perform is allowed to engage in the performance, regardless of the age (Yang, 2018). Another difference is that Beijing has taken community dancing far more seriously than its Tasmania counterparts (Wise et al., 2020).

Beijing takes its traditions and preparations for the festivals seriously (Xinhua News Agency, 2007). Therefore, community dances are valued in traditional festivals and dance events are organized. The Beijing art administrators are also highly enthusiastic and outstanding in their efforts to develop the most incredible community dances in the world (Wise et al., 2020). In terms of the similarities of community dance management model between the Beijing and Tasmania, it is argued that both are active in community dances and use them to display their abilities and handwork (Chen, 2018).

### 1.3.2 Ways of Improving the Community Dance Management Model in China

Beijing may enhance its community dance management model by ensuring that the dances are performed for the right reasons and that no disputes arise during community dance events. In addition, it can also focus more on developing their community dance acts to ensure that they improve their actions and that the community dance in the nation has the desired impact on the community (Xie, 2003).

### 1.4 Research Methods

This study will use qualitative research, which involves all non-numerical data, using the literature research method as the primary research method. The literature research method will be based on collecting past articles published by researchers on community dance, compiling and studying relevant literature in the field, and developing the author's own personal new understanding after examining the literature. After identifying the research topic, the author searched, organized and researched the literature to finalize the literature review to present her personal opinion and better support the subsequent overall research work. Browsing through RMIT library and Google scholar, journal articles, newspaper articles and webpage has been very helpful to this research. Using the literature research method through comprehensive analysis and reasoning, the author obtained the similarities and differences between community dance in Beijing and Tasmania and made recommendations to improve the management model of community dance in China.

## 2. Beijing Community Dance Management Model

The Chinese word for 'community' includes the word 'land', which originally means the god of the land and the places and activities associated with the worship of the god of the land, and also refers to the blocks of farmland divided by ridges of land (Jiang, 2007). It can be seen that the community designations all have strong elements of farming culture, representing the locality of residence and the sense of cultural belonging of the gathering. Thus, although the concept of community in Western sociology was only introduced to China in modern times, traditional Chinese society has actually had a sense of community and a community space for the self for a long time. In traditional Chinese farming culture, dance has always been a part of the culture. For example, 'Yangge' is a traditional dance in Beijing, the connotation of which is that after a year of hard work, people strengthen connections, maintain relationships, and release emotions in singing and dancing activities (Gerdes, 2008). This shows that the emergence and evolution of community dance in Beijing is always related to the local historical and cultural background; in turn, based on the specific historical and cultural background, community dance generates a cultural meaning with local Chinese characteristics.

### 2.1 The Evolution of Community Dance in Beijing

In recent years, a unique form of dance has taken root in China, which is a kind of fitness, recreational and performance dance activity organized by the masses in town parks, squares or open spaces, which is different from theater dance or community dance art, and is a self-initiated and self-entertaining activity of the masses. This kind of mass spontaneous organization of dances in squares and parks is different from the organized normative manageability of community dances, because there is no specific place and manager, and this kind of dance is only an expression of recreational activities. This type of spontaneous self-recreational dance is mentioned because community dances emerge from the changes in this type of dance. Regarding the emergence of community dance art in Beijing, from an internal point of view, its emergence comes largely from the result and product of the development of square dance itself. First of all, after the square dance in Beijing has developed to a certain scale, some backbone forces involved in square dance activities are no longer satisfied with the simple and repetitive movement form of square dance and the purely fitness-oriented activities; they want to put more energy into the dance activities and get aesthetic pleasure beyond fitness. As a result, these backbones gathered together and formed some smaller groups. They began to gather frequently to dance together and gradually formed a well-defined division of labor. Then, being not satisfied with the simple gymnastic

movements of square dance, they began to look for various resources to learn artistic dance. In addition, being not content with getting dance repertoire and information from the Internet, many teams began to invite professional dancers to create brand new programs for them and guide the teams in rehearsals. Finally, pursuing more platforms to perform instead of only in squares and parks, they began to move towards various types of stages to show themselves, in this way, Beijing Community Dance was formed. Therefore, in the case of Beijing, square dance is the foundation of community dance, which in turn is the further development and evolution of square dance.

From an external point of view, the emergence of community dance is a product of China's social transformation. In this context, the so-called 'social transformation' can be simplified as a shift from a collectivized social structure lacking civil society to a modernized social structure with a mature civil society. China's transformation into a modern civil society requires a form of community dance that is compatible, especially in Beijing. As a cultural center, the active expansion of cultural diversity is also the responsibility of the capital, thus giving rise to the form of community dance. First, the content of community dance activities has a higher aesthetic pursuit, which is conducive to improving the aesthetic level of citizens. Secondly, community dance is organized on a small scale, which is more conducive to meeting the cultural needs of different people. However, community dance in China is still in its infancy and lacks a mature management system, it is still mainly expressed in the form of 'square dance'.

## *2.2 Characteristics of Beijing Community Dance Management Model*

### *2.2.1 Having an Open Space for Activities*

In terms of the activity space of community dance, China's transition from an agricultural society to a modern society has transformed the relatively fixed dance space centered on the village or hamlet, while decoupling it from specific customs of time. The community space in the city has become more of a place to accommodate individual hobbies and daily behaviors, such as neighborhoods, streets, squares, parks, clubs and so forth. Thus, open spaces of activity and free time for participation constitute new communities that are not entirely limited by residence and geography. The emergence of Internet video social platforms has even transcended the traditional physical space in a certain sense to form a new type of virtual community space. Many groups for community dance exist in a Chinese sports social software called Keep, where professional leaders within the group initiate online teaching and seminar activities. Besides, since the new crown epidemic hit the world in 2020, people have been recording dance videos and teaching dance online, communicating, imitating and spreading the word to each other, greatly expanding the value and meaning of the existence of this new virtual space.

### *2.2.2 Accommodating Typological Groups of Personalities*

As China's industrialization has replaced the monoculture of labor production, the agrarian-centered and relatively consistent group cultural pursuits have become difficult to maintain. Group cultural values that were higher than individual lives such as land, harvest, together with clan lines were weakened. As a result, more diverse and individualized groups emerged. In addition, the process of industrialization in China freed people from labor, and the time for production was greatly reduced, so that people had more time at their disposal, hence some interest based on demand was born. For example, street dance, national standard dance, Yangge, fitness dance and so forth, which are popular in community dance, often correspond to different types of people in society, closely related to their age and occupation, and also correspond to their different interests and needs. As China's industrialization and urbanization have disrupted the way agricultural societies are structured; the bonds between community members have also changed. The relatively stable and unbreakable kinship or ethnic ties that existed in agrarian societies no longer exist. Rather than being brought together by familial blood ties, the people dancing in Chinese urban communities are free to participate, resulting in a flexible and loose community of values or interests. What worth noting is that, in addition to social needs such as interest and interaction, the functional value of dance in Chinese urban society has been greatly expanded, and there is much room for the growth of new types of needs with clear directions such as fitness, shaping and therapy.

### *2.2.3 Value Orientation of Serving the Society*

A realization of the value orientation of Chinese society reveals that China emphasizes socialist values, and Beijing, as the administrative and cultural center of China, embodies this socialist value well. The development of culture and art in Beijing reflects this social value in sports, art, and creativity, thus the development of art also reflects this value of serving the community more under the government's advocacy. In the management and development of community dance, the attitude of the public service sector emphasizes more on the need for community dance to serve the society for the general public. For example, in 2019, Beijing held an event of community dance into the Beihang community of Huayuan Road Street, an event sponsored by the Beijing Culture and Arts Foundation, with the theme of promoting the spirit of Chinese socialism. It emphasises on recognizing and maintaining the individual differences of the masses in dance, making the masses truly

confident in front of dance, and encouraging them to dance with a euphoric and happy mood under a good social system appreciation and dance performance, so that they can truly feel the joy of learning dance and have an all-round and healthy development of body and mind. Faced with such a management model, there will be less creativity for some of the community dance art participants. It may even affect the organizational form of community dance. For example, New York organized the dance parade NYC, which featured 10,000 dancers and about 200 groups performing more than 100 styles of dance (Clark, 2022). The essence of the event is the desire to express oneself through dance, a form of community dance that may not be possible in Beijing.

### **3. Tasmanian Community Dance Management Model**

Dance is a major form of expression in the Australian outdoor lifestyle, and it has become a habit to express emotions through dance in some public places, and public outdoor events have increased the participation of dance in the community (Silby, 2011). Tasmania has a rich and diverse arts culture and community dance has been supported and developed, and in the context of this cultural support, Tasmanian community dance is being discovered and recognised in a community interactive way. In addition, Australia has a very large number of talented dancers, a growing understanding of and participation in dance, and the gradual integration of Australian indigenous culture into community dance resulting in a unique style of Tasmanian community dance.

#### *3.1 Cultural Diversity of Community Dance*

The community is the unit between the state and the family. The image of a community does not just represent itself, but also the attitude of the state and government towards each individual family and person. The choice of which country and city to live in should start with a sense of community, and in a country as culturally rich as Australia, showing some of the wonderful cultural arts that the community brings to the table is also a reflection of how well integrated the community is. Dance plays an important role in introducing the diversity of Australia's geography and cultural forms, with immigrant Australians from various countries taking inspiration from Australian culture and bringing in their traditional community ritual dances for cultural expression (Silby, 2011). The integration of culturally diverse dances performed in the community also reflects the communal inclusiveness of Tasmanian community dance in the management of its development. Tasmanian Aboriginal culture is also an important part of Australian culture, and dance as a rich expression of Aboriginal culture is well represented in Tasmanian community dance, which is still practiced by Tasmanian communities as an important cultural practice in Aboriginal communities. This factors all reflects the cultural inclusiveness of Tasmanian community dance in its management.

#### *3.2 Government Provides Funding Sources*

The Tasmanian Community Dance Project is run by the Tasmanian Regional Arts Organisation and funded by the Australia Council for the Arts (Silby, 2011). Collaboration between local government and arts organisations has facilitated the development of community dance in Tasmania and has led to a significant breakthrough in participation in community dance in Tasmania, with three new contemporary dance works being developed and presented in the north-east, north-west and south of Tasmania, which are closely linked to and based on the community (Ausdance & Tasdance, 2012). Tasmanian community dance is recognised by government departments, public policy and government subsidies, which can bring about better development of community dance arts, and the public sector's focus on community dance arts can contribute to the formalisation of management and relatively stable economic resources. The partnership between government and arts organizations has been an important catalyst for the development of community dance. It has also strengthened contacts with social welfare agencies, local governments, and sports organizations to promote the significant development of community dance. The appropriate attention from the national government level has also led to a more stable management of community dance, and community dance has been able to better promote the art of dance, develop a larger dance audience, and promote the overall development of community dance in Tasmania.

#### *3.3 Complete and Professional Management System*

Tasmanian social forces support for community dance activities is more fully organized and moving towards professionalism. Firstly, the community dance program is run by Tasmanian Regional Arts and is guided by professional dancers. Through the resources of the organization and professional dancers entering the community to teach dance, it is able to better promote the art of community dance. Tasmanian Regional Arts will also work with other social organizations to promote community arts and culture, establishing a new model between dance and community (Australia Council for the Arts, 2010). This shows that a good management model has a positive impact on the development of community dance art. Besides, participation in community dance has increased; people communicate more in the community, and dance is used as a way for people to come together in the community (Silby, 2011). At the same time, social media and mass media have broadened people's awareness of dance, bringing people closer and reflecting the power of social interaction that Tasmanian community dance brings.

#### **4. Recommendations for Improving the Management Model of Community Dance in China**

##### *4.1 Combination of Cultural Atmosphere and Policy Guidance*

At present, Beijing still lacks public cultural spaces that concentrate high-quality artistic resources. And community dance art management is a complex task. Community dance in Beijing is stuck in mass spontaneity, freedom of activity, irregular hours, and lack of professional participation. What is more, the atmosphere for engaging in community dance is not relaxed enough. Beijing, as the capital, is more responsible for being a socialist cultural center, and the publicity is mostly related to policies, slogans and socialist values. However, due to the physical and mental pressure brought by daily work and life, people need to reconcile through games or artistic aesthetics in order to relax their bodies and ease their minds. Therefore, society should allow the public to actively, flexibly and regularly participate in public cultural life as much as possible, fully releasing their artistic creativity in a relatively free and open environment, and truly bringing into play the public nature of social art resources. On this basis, Beijing needs to build a high-quality art public space that is open to the public, with an artistic atmosphere and the participation of professionals. The establishment of such public cultural space requires strong government support and generous policy guidance. For Beijing, to develop the art of community dance, its prerequisite is a relatively broad base of dance audiences, and to expand the audience, it needs to cultivate public interest in dance. Therefore, Beijing should vigorously develop dance-related public cultural endeavors, for example, in the form of municipal construction, venue support, and media support, all of which constitute external conditions for the public to access the arts. In addition, the National Theatre and related popularization series activities, subway publicity advertising, bus body advertising, are all convenient ways to enhance the popularity of art resources. At the same time, the Internet and new media technology can be used to further narrow the gap between art activities and the audience. Therefore, we should pay attention to the integration of social resources in China's public art and cultural service system.

##### *4.2 The Participation of Various Social Forces*

Resource sharing is a necessary way that can lead the public to actively participate in community dance art and bring community dance closer to life. This requires not only the leadership of government forces, but also the stimulation of the joint efforts of multiple social forces.

First, social forces can participate in community dance through public welfare activities, using public art facilities such as urban corridors and squares to make community dance art activities more humanistic. When designing art public facilities, instead of overly pursuing the quantity of their physical space, it is more necessary to focus on the creation of the atmosphere of their intangible space. Because stimulating the atmosphere of the invisible space means that community dance art activities will have more platforms for display and sharing.

Secondly, the participation of social forces also includes activating the resources of existing dance artists and strengthening the influence of their personal brands. Currently, the main form in China is to carry out master lectures, seminar series and creative art workshops to realize the art into the community and into the people. These activities form a shared model between artists and the public, and outstanding dance masters can also be promoted through public lectures on television and video instruction on websites, allowing more audience to actively participate in community dance regardless of geographical constraints. In addition, after these activities, the public will also pay attention to the artists and the art platforms they own, thus constantly broadening the public's artistic vision.

Finally, social forces can participate not only in community public art activities, but also in building community museums, art centers and other cultural institutions such as street community museums. Dance public creative sharing activities can also use museums, small theaters and art centers as carriers to help the formation and transmission of community cultural atmosphere. This can enable people to be inspired by the art of dance in community life and also contribute to the development of community dance art on a broad and effective basis.

##### *4.3 Broadening Funding Sources to Enhance the Social Power*

Community dance managers should strengthen the responsibility mechanism, through the existing resource conditions of different communities, to improve the use of community arts activities, broaden the channels of raising funds, in addition to cooperation with the government to get support can also cooperate with other social organizations to gradually complete the equipment of community arts activities. At the same time, community dance should enhance the participation of the masses, vigorously promote related activities, fully mobilize the masses of community dance, choose cultural forms that are more acceptable to the residents, and highlight dance participation in a planned manner according to the characteristics of different ages, occupations and identities. For example, the children's dance competition on Children's Day, the dance exhibition and exchange activities for young people, and the traditional festival dance competition on Mid-Autumn Festival and Lantern Festival for elderly people. This type of activity using holidays can add actual publicity to community dance as well as strengthening the emotional exchange between people in the community and add community dance to the

building of social arts and culture. As a mass activity, community dance requires the collective efforts and cooperation of the majority of residents. Only by persistently bringing into play the advantages of social collectives in the long term can the development level and scale of community dance be fundamentally improved.

## 5. Conclusion

Community dance is a typical manifestation of contemporary urban social activity and vitality, which requires the joint participation of the public, not only in dancing, but also in experiencing creation, cultural transmission and other aspects, and is the basis for the benign development of dance art. Thus, by comparing the community dance management models in Beijing and Tasmania, the following differences can be identified: First of all, government's guidance and support is the main driving force for the development of community dance in Tasmania, which is a top-down development process, while community dance in Beijing is mainly driven by the masses' spontaneity, a bottom-up development process. Secondly, Tasmania has professionals and arts organizations working together to promote community dance, while Beijing does not have a well-developed system of community dance management organizations or professional interventions. Thirdly, Beijing's community dance is guided by the value of serving the community, while Tasmania is a multicultural value system. But the two regions also share similarities, such as the diversity of dances in the communities. At present, there are still many problems that need to be solved in the management of community dance in China. The learning of the management model of community dance in Australia makes China aware of the proper leadership of the government and the participation of various social forces is the key to the success of community dance. The development of community dance is an operable way to popularize and socialize the art of dance, and is likewise an effective way to promote social art education. Paying attention to community dance and its management mode is the only way to lay a good and extensive foundation for the prosperity and enhancement of community dance art.

## Declaration of Authorship

I hereby certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award, the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved program; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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