

Impulse Dance Theater

WANG Hao's Impulse Dance Theater was established last summer after the choreographer was talking to dancer friends about his dream of establishing an independent dance troupe. They applauded the idea and encouraged him.

Wang, 38, is currently a choreographer and teacher at the Shanghai Ballet, and a former teacher at the Shanghai Theater Academy.

In the early career, Wang was a leading dancer of the Guangzhou Ballet, performed with the Singapore Dance Theater and was a soloist with the Victor Ullate Ballet Comunidad de Madrid.

"Our troupe has eight Shanghai-based dancers, and some of us are long-term friends," Wang told Shanghai Daily. "We have our own jobs, most as dancers and as teachers. Despite the disruptions to work and life caused by the pandemic, our passion for dancing remains the same. We feel the urge to express ourselves by creating

our own dance productions."

Impulse's maiden creation "The Game — Falling into Darkness" made its Shanghai debut earlier this month at the Shanghai International Dance Theater.

Wang described it as a ballet that draws inspiration from the popular board game "Werewolf Kills." In the game, one player gets "killed" every round before the survivors vote to decide who is the werewolf. Those with special identities — including the werewolf, seer and witch — have to disguise themselves to survive.

In the show, eight dancers are given double identities. Social topics like Internet violence, the wealth gap and extramarital affairs are woven into the performance.

"We picked a trendy game as the theme to make the dance more appealing to audiences," said Wang. "There is a lot of suspense and drama involved, as well as social issues... I have been greedy in involving so



Impulse Dance Theater debuted "The Game — Falling into Darkness" at the Shanghai International Dance Theater earlier this month. — Ti Gong

many elements, but the future direction of the troupe is to involve more stage acting."

Impulse Dance Theater members train and rehearse in their spare time, often working from 9pm until after midnight.

"We are motivated by our interest and passion for dance," said Fu Yiyang, a dancer with the Hong Kong Ballet.

Travel restrictions

interrupted Fu's performance schedule, so she finally decided to stay in Shanghai for the time being.

"There is no hierarchy among Impulse Dance Theater members," she said. "We contribute and exchange ideas freely, and follow our heart to create dance works."

According to Wang, most independent dance troupes around the world are facing

financial adversity. He has been relying on his own savings and support from some dance venues to keep his troupe running.

"Our purpose is not to make money, but to build a platform for devoted dancers, especially those without a fixed occupation for the time being," he said. "I'm sending out an invitation here: You are welcome to join the Impulse!"

synthesizer provide a different color tone," said Zhang. "I use them to explore the narrative feature in ballad."

Fei Yuanhong, vice general manager of Shanghai Culture Square, praised the quality of the balladeers' performance.

"Ballads might not attract as many followers as pop songs do, but the ballad is rooted in nature," said Fei. "The sincerity of ballads is valuable. Balladeers can sing to our hearts in this fast-paced era."

Like most theaters, Culture Square has been looking for ways to lure theatergoers back in the absence of foreign troupes and popular overseas stage productions.

"The venue will be open to more performance genres and innovative stage productions as long as they are quality works," said Fei.

From the Edinburgh Fringe Showcase to a Chinese chamber orchestra

FOR Zhao Yichen, a former organizing member of the Edinburgh Fringe Showcase, the impact of the pandemic was fatal.

He was employed as a performance agent in bringing overseas productions to China until coronavirus struck. Foreign programs were barred, and domestic events like the Xintiandi Performing Arts Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe Showcase were canceled.

"There has been very little work in the past three years," Zhao told Shanghai Daily. "After the two-month lockdown in Shanghai, I eventually made up my mind to change jobs."



Zhao Yichen takes advantage of his photography skills to promote the Xinyi Chinese Chamber Orchestra.

Zhao majored in art management at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and worked for a conference and exhibition company before his interest in the performing arts led him to become a performance agent.

Zhao worked as a part-time sports photographer last summer before taking on the job of operations manager of the Xinyi Chinese Chamber Orchestra, a 10-member troupe attached to the Shanghai No. 1 National Musical Instruments Factory.

Xinyi orchestra members perform at some of the factory's promotional activities and also provide quality control for new instruments manufactured at the site.

Zhao's responsibility is to seek out commercial opportunities for the orchestra to increase musicians' incomes.

"My previous working experience, including knowledge of the theater and performance market, has helped me a lot in this new job," said Zhao.

Making use of his photography skills, Zhao opened a social media account for the orchestra to post interesting

rehearsal sidelights.

"My previous experience taught me the importance of branding for a troupe," he said. "Our performers are professional, but the Xinyi orchestra has kept a relatively low profile. My job is to raise that profile."

One of Zhao's former colleagues, Xu Peiyao, also left the performance agent company and joined the team of the newly opened Theater Young.

A new performing arts venue in Yangpu District, Theater Young targets young audiences with creative performances by avant-garde artists and creators.

"We showcase independent troupes and artists who can deliver quality works and face financial burdens related to the pandemic," Xu told Shanghai Daily.

Zhao said the theater gives artistic creators a stage.

"Otherwise, many of them would give up on their aspirations because of lack of income," he added. "This is a hard time for performing artists. We all recognize the value of what we want to do. We just have to hold on to it."