

Collegian Profile

- Helena Huang (2012) -



Helena Huang graduated in 2012 to find herself travelling to New York on a full scholarship with Fei Tian College. This is her story:

I had never really considered being a professional musician, nor did I have high hopes when I submitted my audition recordings, however I knew that it was a once in a lifetime opportunity and a good learning experience to study abroad. I did not expect my 'life' to start so early, especially when I had never left home before or even obtained my driver's licence!

After finishing my HSC Exams in mid-November, I flew to New York with a one way ticket, accompanied by my mother and younger brother.

Fei Tian College, I soon found, was unique in that it encompasses students from all around the world participating in world class training programs in classical dance and music. The College is bilingual (English/Chinese) and also offers academic education. A typical day for me was soon to become a mix of academic and music classes, orchestra rehearsals, and self-practice sessions. It took me a while to settle down and get used to things like the climate (it is so humid!), the currency (5c is bigger than 10c?) and being recognized as someone with a funny English accent.

As I studied to reach my dream of being a performer, I was also becoming truly independent and responsible for myself. I came to realise the love and genuine care from my parents that I had previously taken for granted at home. I learnt how important family is, particularly since I now have to do my own laundry, cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, paying bills and looking after my health and wellbeing, as well as keeping up with my studies and daily practice.

During the Spring Semester year at the College, to my surprise I was selected to participate in some of the shows in the orchestra from Shen Yun Performing Arts as part of the practicum course. I played second flute in the orchestra of Shen Yun's 'touring' company (one of four companies) completing 80 shows around the United States. Shen Yun Performing Arts is a world class premier of classical Chinese dance and music touring simultaneously around the world under the four large companies with a new program every year. You can imagine me trying to perfect about twenty dance pieces, rehearse with the group, its dancers and a digital production backdrop whilst also meeting the demands of a professional orchestra! To be honest it was very tough and stressful. At the beginning I cried a bit and had very low self-confidence since; there was very little time, pressure to keep a high standard of performance, and maintain my grades.

Tears do pay off! I gained an experience like no other and I am very grateful to be one of a few individuals to have this chance. I have been to more places in the United States than I have been in Australia, I have made friends and acquaintances with many talented people and, most importantly, I have developed countless memories.

Being on tour and living in New York has made me realise how lucky and privileged I am. I have found my place in society and my path in life. From studying at the College and touring with Shen Yun, I have discovered more about the essence of traditional Chinese culture and its morals and values, and spiritual outlook towards life. The hours of practice and hardships are worth it all to share good things with others and to see an audience's reaction at the end of a show.

Never give up! Even if in reality you feel utterly hopeless, just keep working because hard work does eventually really pay off.