STA debuts nation’s first international program

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China’s musical scene is poised for a boost as the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA) on Jan 11 launched China’s first international program in musical theater in collaboration with the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA).  
AMDA is one of America’s most prominent institutes for the performing arts with a history spanning more than 50 years. About 30 percent of Broadway actors were trained at AMDA. According to Wang Luoyong, a professor at STA and the first Chinese actor to perform on Broadway, 70 percent of the actors in the multiple Tony Award-winning play Hamilton graduated from AMDA.  
“The main purpose of establishing this new program is to train a strong team capable of presenting good stories from China,” said Wang.  
Born in 1958, Wang performed on Broadway in the 1990s and featured in the acclaimed Miss Saigon and other famous plays. He later worked on a series of films in the US and China before becoming a professor at STA.  
Musical productions, especially those from Broadway and western countries, have enjoyed enormous success in Shanghai. But while dozens of Broadway shows are performed in the city every year,  
China’s own musical scene has yet to produce a show that has enduring popularity.  
Wang noted that this is partly because of the inadequate training for musical talents in China. According to him, musical students in China share a common weakness — insufficient intellectual and cultural training. He added that the selection criteria for talents hardly help the situation, saying that actors are mostly chosen based on their looks instead of performing ability.  
Kim Huang, project director of the international college and international programs at STA, said that students will get to strengthen their basic performance skills and proficiency in English during this one-year program at STA in Shanghai.  
Following the completion of the preparatory course and English proficiency test — students must score at least a 6.5 in their IELTS — participants will be eligible to further their studies at AMDA’s New York campus and study for a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in their chosen field, such as music theater, acting, dance or performing arts.  
The first-year tuition fee for the new program at STA costs 180,000 yuan ($28,172) while studying at AMDA from the second year till the completion of the whole course costs $38,000 per year.  
“The musical is an imported product. If a foreigner wants to learn martial arts, he must do it in China,” said Wang, referring to why it is necessary for Chinese actors to study the performance arts in the US.  
Another perk of studying at AMDA, said Wang, is the academy’s role as a platform for musical and film castings. He pointed out that professors at AMDA occasionally help students secure audition opportunities.  
Apart from AMDA, STA has also collaborated with overseas universities such as City University London in Britain and the New York Film Academy in the US to provide programs related to the performing arts as well as art management and design.

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