

# The Making of the DGS 150th Anniversary Celebration Dinner Opening Performance

## The Beginning

It all started with a dream, a vision by Mrs. Dai and Mrs. Chiang to have all the girls of the Junior School involved in the 150th Celebration Dinner Opening Performance. "I hope all girls will have a memorable recollection of the event. When they come back to the school's 200th anniversary, they can reminisce and say to one another, "Don't you remember we all danced together in its 150th anniversary?" Mrs. Dai has expressed her vision in a newspaper interview. Mrs. Chiang also wanted to showcase some meaningful words formed by the movement of the students and to create an exciting atmosphere with lively music and a big group of students dancing.



## The audition, casting and preparation for rehearsals

Mrs. Chiang's idea was to have three dances and three "word formations" happening at the same time. We were lucky to secure the help of Ms Mandy Petty, Lecturer of theatre dance at the Academy of Performing Arts (APA) and Mrs. Deirdre Tcheng (parent helper who was formerly chairperson of the Hong Kong Ballet Group) to be our key choreographers. An audition was held on 22nd February, the first day of school after the Chinese New Year holidays. Over 160 students turned up. We were all impressed by the enthusiasm of the students and the talents displayed.



Work also began for costume around the same time. For this we must pay tribute to two parents who were particularly helpful – Miss Winnie Cheung and Mrs. June Lau. Winnie referred us to a website which specializes in dance costumes and June offered to use her China factory connections to help us make the other costumes. After some brainstorming, the costume for the Word performers was also worked out. A gold bodysuit was decided on so that the "words" would be gleaming.

## Rehearsals finally began

It was not until the Easter holidays that we had our first rehearsal. The three performing groups rehearsed separately in school and sometimes at the APA. Dr. Herbert Huey and Mrs. Estella Huey had kindly sponsored the use of the dance studios at APA and students were lucky to experience the superior facilities there. The Core dancers learned very fast and were extremely co-operative. After the four rehearsals during Easter, the three Core dances were more or less choreographed, just fine tuning and further practice were required.



At the same time, Mrs. Chiang practiced the Word formation at school. This was no easy task as the formation needed to take place on risers. There were only four sets of risers at school but at least nine sets were required, therefore the girls were only able to practise forming various letters (but not the words) by stretching their bodies, kneeling or bending. Miss R. Chu spent many late nights working on the arches and letter tops which facilitated the letters to be formed by a blend of body movement and props.



### The logistics

Mrs. M Leung, Miss E Poon and our PTA Vice Chair, Mrs. Yvonne Chiu, were vital in helping to work out all the logistics, from how to transport the girls from school to different locations to communicating with teachers. Mrs. Leung was so detailed and thorough that one day we received a logistics plan from her which was emailed at 4am!! That shows her commitment to ensuring that the event ran smoothly and safely for the girls. Lead parent helpers Mrs. Eunice Lu, Miss Winnie Cheung, Mrs. Conny Chan, Mrs. Anna Chow and their parent helper teams who were divided into BH (back of house) and FH(front of house) mums also worked tirelessly in helping to organize the lining up of the girls and sorting out their assembly, dismissal, make up and costume during the rehearsals and performance.

### The rehearsals during the school term

At the same time as our many logistics meetings and late night emails, the PE and music teachers, Mrs. L Fung, Ms E Poon, Mrs. A Nam and Mrs. C Chiang all used their lesson time to practice the dance steps for the Supporting dancers. During the three weeks, the music of the three dances resonated in different corners of the school and it seemed like the whole school was dancing. Lunch time rehearsals were also held for all the performing groups at the Hall and covered playground. The covered playground was out of bounds for almost three weeks during lunchtime!

A school rehearsal was held in Tsui Lam Sports Centre on 29th April. This was the first time all 3 performing groups rehearsed together. Each group was a bit overwhelmed by the performance of the other groups but the overall effect was rather sensational.

### Convention and Exhibition Center (HKCEC)

Moving from the rehearsal rooms to the performing venue is always a challenge for any performing group, especially for a group consisting of over six hundred students. But after the 4th May Dress Rehearsal, everyone was worried about the supporting dancers, who were supposed to just walk in but many at the back started running for fear that they will be left behind. It was rather messy.

Mrs. Dai turned out to be our saviour in turning around the Opening Procession. She suggested that instead of asking the girls to walk in, we should have them skipping and holding up the pom poms. When all the performers arrived in the dressing room at 2pm on 5th May, Mrs. Dai and Mrs. C Yeung gave a demonstration of how the girls should skip and wave their pom poms. All the girls started laughing and everyone was exhilarated. They all started practising the skipping. It was quite a sight!







## Show time

It was time to get ready. The performing groups left the dressing room one by one, everyone encouraging each other. Such a wonderful and heartening atmosphere! The teachers had thoughtfully prepared signs which say "Quiet!" to remind the girls to behave while waiting for their entrance. But to everyone's surprise, all the girls behaved so orderly that there was no need for those signs to be used. The Supporting Dancers waited in an area beside the Grand Foyer, only separated from the guests by a few partitioning boards. It was a remarkable sight. All 388 little cheerleaders lined up, holding their pom poms, waiting quietly, as if they all knew they needed to save their energy for the big moment!



At 7:20pm, the lights dimmed and the music began! The Supporting Dancers skipped out merrily waving their pom poms. The teachers in the waiting area enthusiastically reminded the girls to smile, "Feel like we are performing too," they said. In two minutes the Grand Hall was filled with smart little girls in different coloured cheerleading outfits and holding glittering pom poms. Then the Core Dancers showcased their jumps, twirls and cartwheels while the Supporting Dancers echoed their movements. Word performers also formed three words: "DGS", "HAPPY" and "BIRTHDAY". Finally it was the grand finale and the stage was transformed to a picturesque scene with vibrant colours.



Mrs. Doris Ho, supervisor of DGS, then went on stage to give her welcome speech. She was a bit emotional and "speechless" were her words. She was touched by the set up and the grand performance. The weeks of hard work all came down to tonight's performance, all the girls did their best and so well disciplined, so spirited. The whole show proceeded without a glitch! What more can one asks for!



We are truly blessed. As Mrs. Yvette Ho (our PTA Chair and Vice-chair for the 150th Anniversary Celebration dinner) said, for every aspect of the show we managed to get the right people to help. Each person devoted their time and energy selflessly to make this performance possible, to make this dream come true!

