

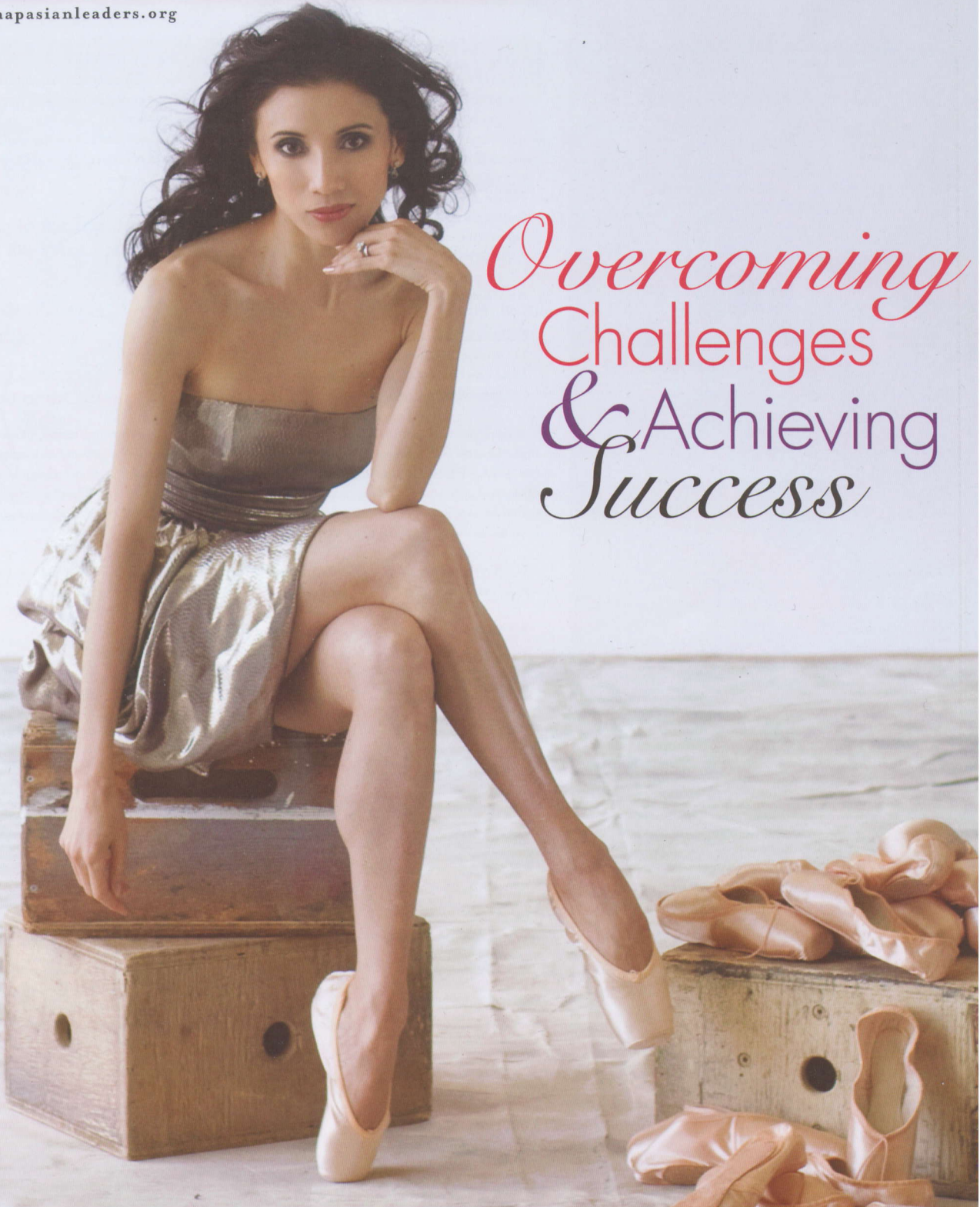
Asian LEADERS

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*Overcoming
Challenges
& Achieving
Success*

NAAAP
100
TOP ASIAN PROFESSIONALS



Chan Hon Goh: Dancing to the Top and Bridging Cultures Along the Way

By ASHLEY SILVERIO

Chan Hon Goh is a classically trained Prima Ballerina who has performed with international ballet companies in Europe, Asia and North America. Besides her role as an artist, she is a community leader, entrepreneur, author and the Director of the Goh Ballet Academy. She has worked with the North American Association of Asian Professionals (NAAAP) in Toronto, Canada since 2003.

Ms. Goh is renowned for her artistry and pioneering spirit both on and off stage. She was the first person of Chinese descent to be named Principal Dancer of the National Ballet of Canada. Over

the span of her international career, she has performed with the Royal Danish Ballet, Singapore Dance Theatre, Hong Kong Ballet, National Ballet of China, Queensland Ballet, Washington Ballet as well as the Suzanne Farrell Ballet, amongst others.

For Ms. Goh, dance is second nature. Her parents were principal dancers with the National Ballet of China and founded Goh Ballet in Vancouver. "Once I started to dance, I had the full ability to speak with a new language and express my body through movement," Ms. Goh said.

Her finely tuned understanding of the communicative quality of dance stems, not only from her experience as a professional ballerina, but also as an individual who has used dance to bridge cultures.

When she was eight years old, Ms. Goh emigrated with her family from Beijing, China to Vancouver, Canada. In those early years, which she recounts in her award winning autobiography *Beyond the Dance: A Ballerina's Life*, she recalled living in a basement apartment with her parents, wearing hand-me-down clothes to school, learning English through

immersion and enduring bullying by classmates.

"Having those [challenges] made me strive for accomplishment," Ms. Goh said. "Even at eight years old, I vowed that this would never happen to me again so I had better make sure that I'm good at everything I do."

She fostered her passion for dance by training at her parents' dance school, Goh Ballet, and then joining the National Ballet of Canada in 1988. She became the principal dancer in January of 1994.

"As a professional, dance took on new light," Ms. Goh said. "I took on various

characters, learned to interpret artistry and put my life experiences into play." She has earned accolades at international competitions, including the Genée International Ballet Company and Prix de Lausanne International Competition of Dance.

Ms. Goh is also a successful entrepreneur. In 1996, she started a dance supply company called Principal by Chan Hon Goh with her husband Chun Che. Mr. Che is a dance teacher and choreographer. The company's line of pointe shoes and dance slippers has been sold across Canada, the United States and Japan. The company supports dance competitions, festivals, nonprofit events and the Chan Hon Goh Scholarship Fund annually.

In her current roles as entrepreneur and Director of Goh Ballet, she continues to break ground by forming partnerships in the corporate world and teaching younger generations about the value of dance and health. For her success across disciplines and borders, Ms. Goh is a pioneer.

"Whether or not there is a perceived glass ceiling is irrelevant to career goals," she said. "You must pursue your dreams full-heart-

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Photo by Sian Richards, Courtesy of The National Ballet of Canada.

edly, be realistic, take criticism as constructive, do not let people beat your confidence down and find a support group of people that will be covering your back."

Ms. Goh retired from dancing professionally in 2009. She now has more time to spend with her husband and 4-year-old son. She admits that finding the right work-life balance is vital. According to Ms. Goh, finding the time to be imaginative makes her more productive and allows her to grow certain things creatively. In May 2010, Ms. Goh was presented with the Mandarin Profile Award by Fairchild Television for her inspirational story to new immigrants.

Ms. Goh finds energy and inspiration from people and continues to make efforts to reach out in innovative ways. She is active in the NAAAP community. In the past, she has served as a panelist at the 2003 NAAAP Convention in Toronto and NAAAP Toronto's 2006 Workplace Diversity Symposium. ■