

YOUTH

Expanding horizons

Young dancer appears on reality show alongside veteran celebrities, **Chen Nan** reports.

Dancer-choreographer Li Xiang is known for his techniques and expressive moves of traditional Chinese dance. He has devoted years to polishing his skills to display the beauty of traditional dance.

His recent performances on the reality show *Call Me By Fire*, which premiered on Aug 12 on Mango TV, a livestreaming platform, won him a larger fan base. Li, of course, seems more excited about taking on the role of "a singer" on the show.

"I wanted to join the show because it was challenging for me. I could try many new ideas, which I didn't have a chance to even think about earlier," says the 29-year-old, adding that *Call Me By Fire* is his first reality show, with cameras recording 24 hours a day to capture the participants training, performing and going about their daily lives.

"I admire artists who dare to break their own styles and keep their passion for creativity. As a dancer-choreographer, I want the audience to get a fresh sense of dancing and dancers."

Gathering over 30 male celebrities from different fields, like acting, singing and dancing, *Call Me By Fire* immediately became a hot topic on Chinese social media, with its distinctive lineup, including veteran Hong Kong actor-singer Jordan Chan, martial arts star Zhao Wenzhuo, rock singer-songwriter Chen Hui, who is the frontman of Chinese rock band The Face, and rapper Zhou Yan, better known by his stage name Gai.

They have built firm fan bases over decades and some had withdrawn from the limelight.

Last year, Mango TV launched a reality show, named *Sisters Who Make Waves*, which gathered 30 women celebrities all above the age of 30. The show was considered successful as the entertainment industry in China traditionally has favored women in their early 20s or even younger.

Call Me By Fire also has male celebrities competing in different groups. They live together and work as teams to brainstorm ideas and produce new work.

"Bringing these men together is a highlight of reality shows this year. Some of them are over 50 years old but still work hard to come up with new ideas. They also bring back memories since I grew

up watching their movies and listening to their songs," comments a fan on social media platform Sina Weibo.

Another fan comments: "The show sends a message that you can shine at any stage of your life as long as you never stop trying and learning."

Li says he finds the experience of being on the show very rewarding. "I live in a circle where most people I work with are dancers and choreographers. The reality show allows me to learn about other art forms and make new friends."

One day, he talked to Mc Hotdog, a veteran rapper, on the show as Li wanted to learn to rap with him.

"I surprised myself because I knew nothing about rap before," Li says. "I wanted to break my conventional stage image and I am glad I did it."

Born and raised in Jilin province, Li learned to practice basic skills of traditional dance at the age of 4 and his talent was recognized by his family, who supported him to further his study of dance.

In 2012, he got a degree in traditional Chinese dance from the College of Military Culture of the China People's Liberation Army National Defence University (formerly the People's Liberation Army Academy of Art).

He won a number of awards, including the Taoli Cup and Lotus Award, both top dance awards in China, and has gained a fan base by performing solo dances at the annual China Central Television Spring Festival galas, the country's most-watched TV program.

In 2020, he appeared on a talent show, *Dance Smash*, where Li impressed the audience with his choreography skills. His dance piece, *Xingzhe* (The Walker), of just 88 seconds about a lonely yet determined dancer, was staged in that competition.

Li says many Chinese dancers were "considered just backdrops performing behind pop stars" and that for a long time, their artistic value was underestimated.

"It has always been my goal to showcase the charm and power of the art form," he says. "Chinese audiences prefer watching TV or online coverage of performances instead of going to theaters to appreciate dance. But I know there's a wider audience waiting out there."

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn



Above: Li Xiang wows audiences with his dance piece, *Xingzhe* (The Walker), in the talent show *Dance Smash*. **Top:** The reality show *Call Me By Fire* offers Li (second from right) an opportunity to move his performing career beyond dancing and choreographing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Child champion hopes to checkmate his chess opponents

CAIRO — In one of the training classes of a chess academy at an Egyptian sporting club near Cairo airport, Adham Hossam, 10, was focusing to solve a quiz projected on the board by his coach, chess grandmaster Bassem Amin, the highest-rated champion in Egypt, the Arab world and Africa.

Despite his little body and baby face, Adham's eyes seemed sharp and his mind quick during the class at Wadi Degla Chess Academy, which gathered a dozen young chess players all dressed in yellow T-shirts carrying the name of Wadi Degla club and sitting at desks with a chessboard and a chess set on each.

Adham was recently awarded a prize from the Egyptian Chess Federation for ranking first among under-16 contestants in the Egyptian Chess Open 2021, and ranked 21st among all participants of all ages in the tournament.

He also won the first place this year in the under-10 boys category of Egypt's 2021 junior chess championship for players aged between 8 and 18.

"What I love about chess is the complicated situations that I enjoy solving," he says, adding that he loves maths and would like to become an engineer, like his father, when he grows up.

"I would like to be successful in both school and chess," Adham says.

Talking about his caring parents, Adham says: "My parents were so happy when I scored good results in chess. It was sweet."

When he has to play a chess game with his coach, he usually feels more worried and pressured than afraid. "It's more concern than fear when I play with Bassem Amin. I feel I am under pressure but not afraid," Adham explains.

His coach, Amin, who ranks as the 34th best player in the world, according to FIDE (International Chess Federation), displayed to Adham and his classmates a quiz on the board based on one of Amin's previous international games and they analyzed it together to find the best moves.

Amin describes Adham as "a very distinguished talent", saying that the boy listens to his coach, practices hard at home and his performance has greatly improved.

"Since I came to the academy, I concentrated with Adham in particular because he's talented and he has already achieved good results in previous African and



“What I love about chess is the complicated situations that I enjoy solving.”

Adham Hossam, 10-year-old Egyptian chess player

Egyptian championships," the chess grandmaster says.

Amin says starting young in the chess world and being wholeheartedly encouraged by parents are among what he and the little champion have in common.

Inas Mahmoud, Adham's mother, who always took him to chess class and waited for him outside until he finished, says they turn their home into a chess-training camp ahead of each tournament Adham plays in.

She says they try to strike a balance between Adham's pursuit of chess heroism and his study at school, adding that the boy is among the top students of his school.

"His father, I may say, is considered a coach assistant. He accurately follows up on Adham's training and also the academy here makes me feel there's a teamwork atmosphere surrounding the boy," she says.

Meanwhile, Hesham el-Gendy, president of the Egyptian Chess Federation, refers to Adham as "a project of making a big champion".

"Adham is one of the very distinguished junior chess players and he has already won a silver medal in an African junior championship in Namibia in 2019," he says, referring to the 2019 African Youth Chess Championship, Under-8 Open.

"He's lucky to be trained by Bassem Amin, who will transfer to him important experiences and game strategies, especially in chess openings," the head of Egypt's chess federation says.

XINHUA

International Education Column

If you are interested in this, please contact: i.education@chinadaily.com.cn

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

- 12 study areas world-ranked by QS
- Top-ranked in Italy for internationalization by CENSIS
- 5 BAs + 16 MAs taught entirely in English

OPEN TO THE WORLD SINCE 1868

Join us at Ca' Foscari University of Venice!



Contact: prospective.students@unive.it
www.unive.it/english



3rd in Asia Undergraduate Programmes 2022/23

and 16th in the World in Education (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2021)

A Government funded University in **Hong Kong**

Scholarship Opportunities






The Education University of Hong Kong | Global Affairs Office (GAO)
10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong
(852) 2948 7654 | (852) 2948 8198 | gao@edu.hk



FLY TOWARDS YOUR FUTURE

A Unique Model of Education in Spain

OCT^{1st} Open Admission Period

More info:  Recognized by:  

www.unav.edu • asia@unav.es

