



Scoping out a new career – Jason Lam

By Andrea Viney

‘Go for SCOPE, it is a great program and you should be thinking about your future, because unexpected things do happen.’ This is Jason Lam’s advice to other dancers wanting to make plans for their future. And he should know. While the dream of being a professional dancer began in his early teens, Jason’s career took a few twists and turns before and after reaching that goal.

After several rejections from the *Australian Ballet School* early on, Jason decided to go to university instead, studying a Bachelor of Digital Media. This led him into Film-making and Projection Design and landed him right at the centre of the industry he loved. He convinced the choreographers he was designing for them to let him dance as well. From then on, doors opened and the work snowballed. Jason realised the importance of being adaptable.

For five years Jason enjoyed consistent performing work around Australia with the likes of the *Tasdance*, *Opera Australia*, *Sydney Dance Company* and with various independent projects. Then came an unexpected set-back; a collapsed lung, meaning Jason had to reassess his direction and ‘at the very least prepare a back-up plan’. It was at this time he applied for SCOPE.

Since beginning the SCOPE program, Jason has headed off in yet another career direction, further broadening his vocational repertoire. He is currently in his first year studying Graduate Medicine at Flinders University in South Australia. It is a huge change from his usually creative career, but Jason is excited about the new direction. His aim, with the help of SCOPE, is to secure a new career somewhere in medicine, possibly Paediatrics so he can work with children.

Already, Jason has had enormous support from SCOPE throughout this transition. During the application phase to get accepted into medicine, Jason’s advisors helped with interview and exam preparations. Now almost one year in, with an ‘overwhelming volume of work’ and new financial pressures for Jason, SCOPE is offering a different kind of support. ‘Scope has helped immensely with financial matters in growing my textbook menagerie and associated equipment. It has also been great having the support of Kay and Andrea.’

Describing his university study as ‘the all consuming monster of my life’, Jason says it would be easy to leave dance behind, but he is thankful for the encouragement from his SCOPE advisors to maintain some links with dance. ‘The phone conferences [through SCOPE] are great to maintain those contacts and links, especially when you’re not as part of the scene anymore – it’s just like when I go and see a show, I get inspired to get back into dance,’ he says. Talking with like-minded people who are going through a similar stage in their career, is often all that’s needed to keep the passion ignited.

Once a week, Jason still enjoys teaching at a small ballet school in Adelaide and finds it fun and rewarding to help people of all ages reach their goals. He directed the Med Revue at Flinders University and recently designed for both *Leigh Warren and Dancers* and *Australian Dance Theatre*.



Next year, Jason is looking forward to performing with the *Adelaide Symphony Orchestra* in 'The Peasant Prince' directed by Graeme Murphy. Working on his 'time-management' skills through SCOPE, Jason hopes that as well as his new career in medicine, he can go on teaching, make a few more films and continue his design work, to always stay connected to dance.