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藝文淑世 定心穩步

Art Meliorism Makes the World a Better Place

時常有人問我，「藝文淑世」到底是個什麼樣的概念？

「淑世主義」(meliorism)是由英國十九世紀女性小說家艾略歐特(George Eliot)所提出的概念，她認為在極度的悲觀與樂觀主義中間，應該有一個中庸而務實的處事哲學。當人們面臨社會動盪、或個人的不如意時，除了一面倒地肯定或否定一切，尚可以透過思考的努力、智慧的運用以及具體的行動來改善自己與社會的境遇，人的價值也能因之浮現。這種精神與中國儒家的理念極為相近，儒家發源於列國紛爭的時代，面對混亂的時局，也依然對社會抱持希望；這種希望不是烏托邦式的空言，而是透過實際的作為，一步一腳印地改善社會。

中文裡大多將「淑」字當作形容詞，為「美好」之意；在「淑世」概念裡則當作動詞用，意指讓世界變得更美好。當國樂藝術與淑世主義結合，那就是更進一階的藝文淑世精神，透過人類的音樂行為，讓更多美好的事情發生，讓社會朝向真善美的方向發展。

TCO劇院的年度歌劇《蔥仔開花》，便是藝文淑世的最好例證。《蔥仔開花》描寫馬偕夫人張聰明女士的生平故事，張女士原名張蔥仔，原為受盡欺凌的童養媳，但她卻不向命運低頭，以堅毅的態度逐步學習漢字與英語，最後不僅改變了自己的人生，還隨著馬偕牧師走遍臺灣、環遊世界，協助淡水「理學堂大書院」的籌建工作，自己更成為女學堂的義務教師，對臺灣社會造成深遠的影響。北市國選擇這個故事，不但呈現了臺灣社會在西學啟蒙下邁向現代化的情景，更再現了一位貧弱出身、在波折中成長茁壯的女傑原典。

《蔥仔開花》原訂於6月底與樂迷見面，但因新冠肺炎疫情陡然加遽，北市國遵照防疫指引，以大眾安全為考量，決定延期演出。在惶然的社會氛圍下，北市國也希望與樂迷分享張聰明女士的堅忍毅力，一如她在逆境中永不言棄、茁壯自身，相信我們很快就會走到雲散霧開的那一日。屆時，所有藝術家的努力也都能開花結果，在舞台上與觀眾相會，以藝術之美，為經歷疫情動盪的社會提供溫暖撫慰的力量。

People often wonder, "What is art meliorism?"

The term meliorism is coined by female English novelist George Eliot in the nineteenth century. She believes that there has to be a position midway between extreme pessimism and extreme optimism. Something less intense and more practical. When tragedy hits and the world falls apart, people can do more than hoping in nativity or condemning in frustration. They can choose to confront reality and actually do something to improve and change the course of things or themselves. The power of thinking, devising and actualization are what makes people's true characters shine.

The philosophy closely resembled that of Confucianism. Confucianism originated from the warring states period. Though future seemed bleak and chaotic, there was always hope. People didn't sit in waiting for a utopia. They fight to make changes and take the future in their own hands one step at a time.

The Chinese word "shu" is generally used as an adjective to describe the possession of virtue and good behavior. Here "shu" acts as a verb, which means to make the world a better place. When the art of Chinese music and meliorism meet, the magic of music shall shape, sooth, educate and encourage the struggling hearts to make a difference and bit by bit make the world a better place.

TCO theater's *Formosa Bloom* is a testament to the power of art meliorism. *Formosa Bloom* tells the story of how Tiunn Tshong-Bing (nee Tiunn Tshang-A) never succumbs to the fate presented before her and step by step makes a life for herself. The once bullied child bride learns how to read and write Chinese and English from the beginning and later tours around Taiwan and the world together with Rev. MacKay. She even participates in the building of Oxford College in Tamsui and teaches at Tamsui Girls' School. She is an inspiration and a beacon for the people of her times. Our heroin lives in a time when western education first opens people's mind. She proves that even a girl from poverty can ascend into greatness despite the challenges and difficulties.

Formosa Bloom was scheduled to debut in the end of June. However, the outburst of the pandemic puts TCO's plan on pause. For the safety of all, TCO decides to postpone the show to a later date. TCO hopes that the wisdom and perseverance of Tiunn Tshong-Bing will lead us through all the pain and confusion to a bright future just like she has always done. When that day comes, all the artists will harvest the sweet fruit of their labor and again greet the audience with the power of art, culture and beauty to sooth and heal the damaged and broken hearts.