

lifestyle

"I think of giving up all the time. But I know there is so much more I can do."

— Miss Chua Yun Chun

ANG HWEE MIN

She was about to do her honours year in chemistry at the National University of Singapore but after returning from a six-month exchange programme at the University of Connecticut in 2008, Miss Chua Yun Chun decided to pursue dance full time instead.

Miss Chua, or "Chun", whose younger sister is local musician Inch Chua, told The New Paper that dance has been her hobby since she was six, when she started ballet classes.

She danced on the side until university.

In Connecticut, she travelled to New York City on weekends for dance workshops and became so good, she was hired for commercial gigs.

Miss Chua, now 30, said: "Until university, I didn't think I would ever dance full time."

"Then I met people in New York who asked 'why not?' or 'what if?' that got me thinking."

Her mother was against it at first, but Miss Chua convinced her to let her try dancing full time in Singapore for six months.

She said: "Six months turned to a year, a year turned to two years, and now I'm here."

From 2008 to 2013, Miss Chua worked in dance studios here and danced with famous choreographers such as Nap-pytabs, also known as Tabitha A. D'umo and Napoleon Buddy D'umo, Emmy-winning married choreographers.

She worked with singers such as Wang Lee Hom and BY2 with record label Ocean Butterflies Music.

CURVEBALL

After a broken engagement in 2013, she applied for a one-year dance programme at the Broadway Dance Centre in New York and was accepted.

Miss Chua said: "I was ready to settle down, but life really threw me a curveball."

For six months, Miss Chua ate only bread and sandwiches to pay off her loans and save money for the move.

In 2014, she moved to New York and has been based there since.

Miss Chua said New York gave her more opportunities and jobs as a dancer, instructor and choreographer.

The city is also the birthplace of hip hop, a style of dance that Miss Chua wants to continue pursuing.

She said: "There is so much edge in hip hop. I like the dynamic energy."



Miss Chua's mother now supports her decision to dance full time after initial objections. PHOTO: NICHOLAS ACCENTURA

Singaporean dancer pursues her passion and finally ends up in the Big Apple

She's in a New York state of mind



Miss Chua chose New York as it is the birthplace of hip hop. PHOTO: GENE GETER

In New York, she danced or choreographed at least one show a week.

She also danced for the SG50 festival in New York in 2015 and for Double It, an off-Broadway production in December 2015, which was directed by New-York-based Chinese theatre director Chen Shi-Zheng.

In February last year, she co-choreographed Cinderblock: An Old Skool Funky Tale, a production by the prestigious Jofrey Ballet School in New York, which actress Charlize Theron and choreographer Laura Dean also attended.

Her mother is now fully supportive of her dance career.

HOMESICK

Miss Chua said she misses home and hopes to come back some day.

But she is not done with New York yet.

She added: "I think of giving

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up all the time. But I know there is so much more I can do."

Miss Chua is learning more about breaking and partner dancing, and she plans to compete more in New York this year.

She also wants to help Singaporean dancers find opportunities in New York and vice versa.

Miss Chua said: "I can't dance or teach forever, so I want to pave the way for other dancers."

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US retail giant drops Ivanka Trump's brand

US fashion retailer Nordstrom has dropped the Ivanka Trump line of shoes and clothing, citing slow sales after a campaign to boycott stores doing business with the new US president's family.

The retailer said it "makes buying decisions based on performance", and cutting some of the 2,000-plus brands it carries "is part of the regular rhythm of our business".

"Each year we cut about 10 per cent and refresh our assortment with about the same amount. In this case, based on the brand's performance we've decided not to buy it for this season," Nordstrom said in a statement released to US media.

"Like with everything we buy, we make those decisions season by season," it wrote on Twitter.

Nordstrom's decision follows the #GrabYourWallet campaign urging customers to boycott stores doing business with the Trump family and companies that have supported him.

The movement was started in October by two women after President Donald Trump's crude "grab them by the *****" comments in a 2005 recording were made public.

#GrabYourWallet co-founder Shannon Coulter wrote on Twitter: "Yes! Those who voted against Donald control US\$7 trillion in spending. Never forget it. Never forget our power. Together, we can change a lot."

The site grabyourwallet.org lists companies they support boycotting and gives reasons.

Ms Trump, who serves as an adviser to her father, licenses her name to branded products including shoes, handbags and clothing. She also designs and sells jewellery.

Trump Organization officials have said she intends to resign from management positions in her and her father's company, although according to the watchdog website ProPublica, that has yet to happen.— AFP