

LISTEN TO DANCING? A NEW CHALLENGE TO AUDIO DESCRIPTION OF IMAGES

Appreciating dancing for ordinary people is something they take for granted; however, for visually impaired people, it is nearly impossible. In order to help the latter to overcome such a disability, Professor Chao Ya-ly from the Department of Mass Communication, who runs a workshop developing the technique of audio description, which is to describe images orally has just completed a project of describing dancing with this technique—and is at the pinnacle for such developments.

Usually the service of so-called ‘audio description’ to visually impaired people is provided without interfering any of the sound or dialog of the show during a viewing of a TV program, or a video. Such a technique allows description of the elements of time, space, relationships of various roles, set and even the facial expressions of the characters possible to the visually impaired people. Through this technique, they can overcome their disability to comprehend fully the meanings of these visual images described to them.

The project of combing this technique and dancing arose from the high sensitivity of visually impaired people have towards sound, so the “Magic of the Dance” , a dance that is part of the Irish “River Dance” series was chosen to be experimented upon. This kind of tap dance features fast and distinct beats so it was perfect to be accompanied with this service. By completing this experiment successfully, Professor Chao resolved the bottleneck of combining theory and technology in this field, setting up a milestone for allowing visually impaired people to enjoy main-stream art performances. The version of “Magic of the Dance” equipped with this service starts playing in every major city in Taiwan this week which will benefit those people who have thus far been on the fringe of visual art

performance. This service will enable them not only to listen to the music but also to 'see' the physical performance that accompanies it.

There will be eight performances of "Magic of Dance" in Taiwan during which several tap dancing teachers will lead the visually impaired people to immerse physically into the secret rhythm of tap dancing. Apart from them, individuals or corporations are warmly welcome to join in order to understand and support the development of this technique. For more information and show time please contact (02) 2625-2699.

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