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Wednesday

# The Echo

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# Campus Life

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## Students, community celebrate Chinese New Year

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Staff Writer

The UCA chapter of the Confucius Institute and the Chinese Student Scholar Association (CSSA) treated UCA students and Conway residents to a celebration of the Chinese New Year Friday night at Reynolds Performance Hall.

UCA international student Leo Hong said the gala, which was sponsored by Peking and Fu Lin restaurants of Conway and the Oriental Supermarket of Little Rock, marked the largest festival of the year for the country.

Hong said traditionally the people of China ring in the New Year by sharing a large family dinner, giving and receiving small gifts and shooting fireworks late in to the night.

"These fireworks, a huge component of the celebration, are so widespread that it is difficult to sleep on the evening of the holiday, as the sound of the festive displays is difficult to escape," UCA international student Shengcheng Wu said.

Although there were no fireworks in Conway, CSSA members entertained guests with multiple vocal and dance performances celebrating the start of the year of the Dragon on the Chinese calendar.

The evening's festivities began with a video montage of students' New Year's resolutions and



Lisa FERENCE Photo

*Dancers from the Sunshine Academy in Conway entertained the audience at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. ceremony, a day in service, held in Farris Center on Jan. 16.*

wishes, followed by a group dance piece to open the show and a warm welcome to guests from UCA President Tom Courtway.

The audience, comprised by a diverse group

of both students and community members, was dazzled throughout the night by musical performances from students including the two-man band Calm Down Monkey.

Calm Down Monkey performed acoustic renditions of songs by the Rolling Stones and Billboard newcomers Foster the People, giving guests a brief but spirited taste of their musical styling.

At one point during the evening audience members became part of the show for a game of "hot potato," during which guests were encouraged to share their resolutions and were rewarded with gifts for doing so.

Other highlights included impressive solo vocal performances by multiple CSSA members including UCA international students Milly Yin and Corrine Zhang, which showcased the seemingly endless talent of the group.

The evening was closed by a vocal performance in Chinese from local high school students, impressing the audience one last time and ending the festivities on a positive note.

The UCA Confucius Institute, one of only 24 such programs in the country, exists to strengthen the mutual cultural understanding between Arkansas residents and the people of China.

This magical evening accomplished just that, providing guests with a brief look into the unique and fascinating culture of the Chinese people. More information about the Confucius Institute and to view a list of upcoming events can be found website at [www.uca.edu/confucius](http://www.uca.edu/confucius).