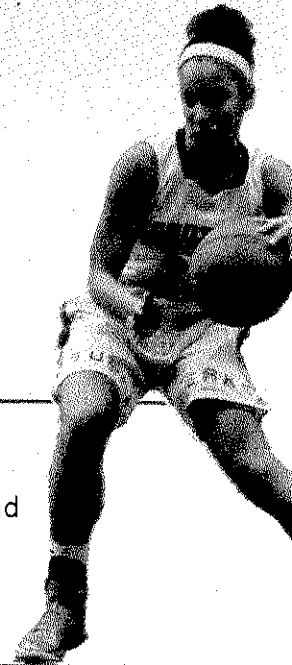


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The Beijing Art Troupe performs Feb. 7 at Reynolds Performance Hall. UCA is one of only five universities in the United States to host the Beijing Art Troupe.

Chinese culture showcased at spring festival

BY CARINA ALVAREZ
Assistant News Editor

The Chinese Spring Festival Gala showcased Chinese culture and traditions in its 10-scene performance Feb. 7 in Reynolds Performance Hall.

The festival, which was sponsored by the UCA Confucius Institute and the Hanban Confucius Headquarters in Beijing, featured the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) Students Art Troupe.

The UIBE Students Art Troupe includes 17 students from Beijing, majoring in fields such as economics and finance.

The opening scene, called "Good Day," included a solo song and featured a colorful, dancing dragon that danced its way through the audience.

The second scene gave the audience a look into Sichuan Opera through a common stunt known as "face-changing." "Face-changing" is where the performer, who is clad in traditional Chinese clothing, changes his mask in seconds to reveal different masks.

One of the more captivating scenes showed four dancers representing the Dai minority group in a dance known as "When The Peacock Comes."

The four performers wore a two-piece outfit that faded from blue to white and was accentuated with silver rhinestones.

They completed the outfit with a peacock feather in their hair.

Their delicate and graceful movements resembled those of a peacock landing on a riverside.

Not all of the scenes were traditional to the Chinese culture.

One performance was a rap/pop song.

At the beginning, the main performer said, "This is my time. It's my stage."

Two girls with silky cocktail dresses joined the male rap singer in a crowd-pleasing trio.

The most bizarre scene was the Peking Opera, which combined music and dance with a spectacular costume.

This performance was set apart because of the dancer's facial expressions.

Her face seemed emotionless and almost surreal as she tiptoed extremely fast across the

stage, which created a gliding effect.

Her shrill voice combined with a satin cloth that twirled with each movement of her hands kept the audience alert.

Three members of the audience participated and tried to twirl the cloth as well.

Romeo Kiamadji, an international student from Niger, said the experience was intense.

"I was really nervous but I did it and I really enjoyed it. The Chinese culture is really a great culture," he said.

Other scenes included an upbeat dance of the Xinjiang minority with flamenco-inspired music, a violin player with 17 years of experience and a duet who performed Alan Jackson's "Little Bitty."

Sophomore Patrick Bell, who is learning Chinese, said his professor invited him to attend the Chinese Spring Festival.

"You got professionals out there and it's amazing," he said of the performance.

The most anticipated act was the "Dazzling Roller," which featured an acrobat balancing on rolling pins on top of a platform.

A total of three pins supported the acrobat at a height of about seven feet in the air as he made a complete turn, which left the audience gasping and awing.

Chinese exchange student Yaqiong Sun said the peacock dance was her favorite.

"The dancers are very beautiful," she said.

She said the Spring Festival is also known as the Lantern Festival because many lanterns are hung in the streets and homes.

"The lanterns contain an easy question that you can answer," she said. "If you answer it right, the owner will give you gifts."

Martial arts performer Pei Whang, senior accounting major said the troupe practices three to four times a week.

He said the troupe will have seven performances in six days.

"Only two of us have been here [in America] before," he said. "To me, it's a whole new feeling. There are very friendly people and clean air."

According to the Chinese calendar, 2012 is the year of the dragon, which is also known as the long year.

Guo-ou Zhuang, director of the UCA Confucius Institute, said the New Year celebrations last two weeks, with the last day being the lantern festival.