

dragonfly

UCLA CHINESE CULTURAL DANCE CLUB QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

C H I N E S E C U L T U R A L D A N C E C L U B A T U C L A



C C D C E V E N T S

As the big show day draws very near, let's take a look at our progress coming into Spring quarter so far. In the first week of the quarter, we had our first dry run. Everyone are excited to try on their new costumes and suddenly the dances look so much more colorful. It seems that everyone is getting familiar with the procedure of the rehearsals, which is just great! In this issue of Dragonfly our experienced dance members offer some insight into preparing for show day, what to do and bring; as well as past experience working as backstage and first hand experience as a performer in last year's Lotus Steps. In the featured article of this issue, we have our Junior dancer's mother Jeri reflecting on her time with CCDC through all these years — inspiringly echoing the theme of our Lotus Steps this year.

U P C O M I N G D A T E S

May 3, Tuesday (6pm–10pm): Worklight/ **Performance Fees Due**

May 7, Saturday (12pm–5pm): Families with Children from China Heritage Night

May 8–12 (10am–3pm): Lotus Steps flyering on Bruinwalk

May 13, Friday (8am–9pm): Tech Day

May 14, Saturday (8am–10pm): Lotus Steps!!

TBA: Leadership Info Meeting

TBA: Banquet

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1ST DRY RUN

—Photos by Michael Tran





THING SHOULD KEEP IN MIND ON
SHOW DAY + TECH DAY

- Lillian Chen

Things to bring:

- All **makeup** and hair supplies
- Safety **pins** for costumes
- All appropriate **undergarments** and dance shoes
- **Food** (make sure its at least somewhat nutritious and energy-replenishing)
- Any homework or other things to keep you occupied during downtime

Dancing can reveal
all the mystery that
music
conceals. - Charles
Baudelaire



Things to do:

- Keep **warm** and **stretch** regularly
- Be aware of **time** and what is going on even if it doesn't necessarily pertain to you
- **Practice** your dances! Find some of your fellow dancers and practice together
- Be **proactive** and take the initiative: if you don't know what's going on, ask questions
- Be aware of **where** your fellow dancers are and **what** they are doing
- **Relax!** Just have fun and don't focus too much on nerves or any other negative energy



CCDC SOCIAL EVENTS



Social is an essential part of our CCDC experience. It is the best way to get to know our group members not only in our own dance piece, but also from other dances.

Most of our socials are to do with food, from the free lunch at Buca di Beppo to formal winter social at Café Talesai, and more recently the social after dry run with delicious homemade food by our girls.

Here, Yessenia describes her experience in going to USC's annual Chinese dance show and supporting dancers with similar cultural interests.



USC CHINESE CULTURAL DANCE PERFORMANCE FIELD TRIP

-Yessenia Chaiu

Although it was a menacing, dreary, rain-bedazzled Friday night (which one may have otherwise spent lounging in pajamas with a cup of hot chocolate), a few of us CCDCers decided to bravely parade though the unforeseen climatic challenge and the foreseen traffic impediments of the 5:30 PM LA rush hour with the aid of 2 expert drivers artfully maneuvering behind the wheel. We arrived fashionably at 7:30 pm, traveling and exploring the beautiful architecture and landscape of the USC campus while rushing precariously through the rain to the auditorium in our soaked socks, matted hair, and flushed, but still lovely, faces.

The USC Traditional Dance team was putting on an annual showcase entitled, "A Dance to a New Year 2011," a colorful and exciting exhibition of modern and cultural Chinese dance pieces performed by a admirable group of about 20 girls in collaboration with the USC Wushu team. Although the club may seem small in number, its tight-knit family-like element without a doubt overshadowed its humble size.

The first half of the show was a collection of current and past repertoire which included classical Chinese, ethnic, contemporary, and Wushu dance performances. The most memorable piece in this section was the opening act, a famous Dunhuang piece known as the "Thousand Hand Bodhisattva." The gold on white costumes were intricately adorned with flowers and gems, and the movements of this dance, mimicking the thousand-hand omnipresence of Bodhisattva, were performed with precision and grace. The second act was themed, "The Chinese Cinderella," and dance pieces were interlaced together into one coherent storyline about a young girl, Ye Qian, and her story of abuse, loss, self-awareness, and love. *(continued on page6)*



MORE SOCIALS!

USC Field Trip



Cooking for social



Buca di Beppo



SOCIAL AFTER 1ST DRY RUN



Bruin Day



CPK Dinner Night



Café Talesai



(continued from page 4)

The highlight of "Dance to a New Year 2011" was the ability of the team to incorporate a wide array of different Chinese cultural dances into an adhesive, flowing plot, showcasing not only the success of their dancers but also the

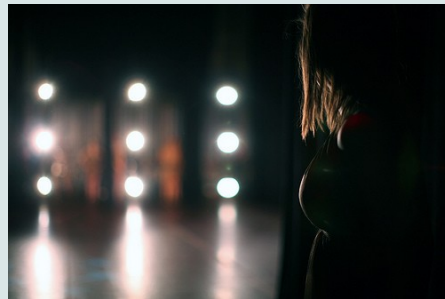
artful collaboration between members, instructors, and outside performers. It was CCDC's pleasure to be able to witness such an amazing night, and we will no doubt continue to support them in the future.

B A C K S T A G E N I N J A S

—Melissa Ly

The lights in the house dim to let people know that the show is starting soon. Behind the scenes, all the dancers are making their last minute checks, but how do the dancers know who is up next or if all of the dancers in their dance are all there? Backstage to the rescue!

The backstage team's job is to call dancers and make sure they are ready before it is their turn to light up the stage. Our job may seem simple and maybe even insignificant, but without a backstage crew, the dancers would have to guess if it is their turn next, and assume that all of their fellow dancers are next to them. We make sure the each and every dancer is perfect before they go on stage, and we help the show run as smooth as possible.



The best thing about working backstage is that you get to meet every dancer in the Chinese Cultural Dance Club at UCLA. Besides being in every single dance in the club, which would make for a very good workout, it is the next best way to get to know the club members. Another perk about working backstage is that we get to play with radios. They are such cool toys to play with while running around backstage, but in reality, it really helps us to communicate with each other. It helps us locate dancers that have magically disappeared or have gotten lost in the rush of things happening behind the scenes. The most satisfying thing about working backstage comes when the per-

formance is over. As a ninja working backstage, you get to say, "I helped make this show better by giving the audience a seamless, smooth show to enjoy."

From working backstage with CCDC for a couple of years now, the most important advice I can give to all the members preparing for the show is to stay hydrated, make sure you have had something to eat, take a deep breath and relax. If your body and brain has food, it will help you with remembering your dance, and the more nervous you are, the more likely you are to forget something. Every dancer in CCDC has practiced the dance so many times that your body will know what to do next, just go with the flow.

Advice for our backstage crew: just relax and do what we do at every rehearsal. If anyone has problems locating a dancer, stay calm, and radio it in. That dancer will be found and rushed up to make his/her cue. Break a leg, everyone! This will be our best Lotus Steps yet!



Dancing is moving to the music without stepping on anyone's toes, pretty much the same as life. ~ Robert Brault

FEATURED ARTICLE :**JUNIOR DANCER MOM REFLECTIONS: NINE YEARS WITH CCDC***—By Jeri Okamoto Floyd*

My daughters, Rachel and Jacquelyn, have participated in CCDC for more than half of their lives! Rachel began at age 6 and is now 15. At age 2, Jacquelyn began dreaming of the day she too could dance, finally leaving the sidelines and joining CCDC at age 5; she is now 11 years old. This year's performance will be Rachel's 9th and Jacquelyn's 6th Lotus Steps.

From the moment that my daughters were placed in my arms, I strived to give them opportunities to grow up with a positive self-image as American girls of Chinese descent. I knew from my own experiences as an Asian American woman, that a key factor in their identity development would be having encouraging role models, especially young Asian American women. Although I had this notion when Rachel was 6 and Jacquelyn was 2, I could not appreciate how formative their CCDC experience would prove to be for them nearly a decade later, and how significant it would be for the other transracially adopted children in the program.

It all began in the spring of 2002 when I received an email about Lotus Steps. The event sold out before we could get tickets, but I delighted in knowing that there were students of Chinese dance nearby at UCLA. Being a dancer had always been a meaningful part of my life -- from childhood until my husband and I traveled to China to adopt Rachel -- and I hoped that I could share that love with my daughters and also provide a fun way for them to learn more about their birth culture. I emailed CCDC inquiring about dance instruction for children. To my delight, I received an immediate reply from Josephine Louie, the founding Artistic Director of CCDC. Although she had never taught children's classes before, she was willing to give it a try; if I lined up the kids, she would find a studio for a summer Chinese dance workshop.

That summer, about a dozen children -- mostly girls ages 6 to 9 that I recruited from our Families with Children from China group -- attended Tuesday afternoon classes with Josephine at the Santa Monica Dance Studio. My daughter Rachel and current CCDC junior dancers Courtney Lewis, Celie Mednick and Riki Robinson danced that first summer. (Toddler Jacquelyn watched from my lap.) Dressed in white tights and ballet pink leotards and slippers, with their hair slicked back in pony tails or buns, the girls lined up tallest to smallest to begin and end each class, first greeting and then thanking their *lao shi*. Lyrical Chinese music played while the girls stretched, learned graceful arm movements and played follow the leader with Miss Josephine, practicing their baby lotus steps with hands clasped behind their backs. To learn proper posture, the girls balanced rice bowls on their heads while relay racing across the floor in teams. The girls loved the class and adored their new teacher.

After the successful summer workshop, Josephine requested permission from UCLA to include a children's dance class as part of CCDC's program. Six girls, including Rachel and Courtney, continued with weekly classes with Miss Josephine in the Bradley Hall dance room. In 2003, the little "Raindrops" performed with parasols in their first Lotus Steps at UCLA's cozy Northwest Campus Auditorium. Jo-

sephine continued to teach the girls until her retirement in 2005. In her final Lotus Steps, Josephine choreographed "Red Thread," a dance inspired by my daughters' journey from China to our family and featuring the junior dancers and my narration. Special music entitled "Rachel's Song" was composed for the dance. What a precious gift this dance was for our adoptive families.

Subsequent Artistic Directors Christina Chung and Patrick Pieng continued the tradition of teaching summer classes for the children and instructing them during the school year in preparation for Lotus Steps. As each beloved teacher moved on, the girls and their families hoped that a new student would want to teach them. The junior dance families are grateful to Jaclyn Tan, Mika Yokoyama, Gladys Liu, Jessica Liu, Cathy Shyong, Monica Tie, Lillian Chen, Yessenia Chaiu and many other volunteers for sustaining the tradition -- teaching the classes and leading the Big & Lil' Sisters program. The older girls have also been privileged to be included in dances with the college students.

Since 2002, the young men and women of CCDC have provided an amazing community and sense of welcome belonging for my children and the other junior dancers -- where they have literally grown up, maturing from their little pink leotards and missing front teeth to the standard black practice gear with brace-perfect smiles. It's been my pleasure to facilitate this ongoing collaboration between our families and CCDC (although it is a bit unnerving for us parents now that our older daughters blend in with the college dancers and know how to apply their own make-up like pros).

The CCDC junior dance program has presented a wonderful opportunity for my daughters and their friends to learn about Chinese culture through dance but, more importantly, it has enabled them to be surrounded by nurturing, talented and professional Asian American role models on a weekly basis. Year after year, our children have learned from their CCDC instructors, big sisters and mentors the values of goal-setting, commitment, discipline, scholarship, team work and, ultimately, that confidence and a sense of achievement come with a job well done. As little ones, they conquered their fear of performing on the grand Royce Hall stage. As teens, they are confident as emerging young Asian American women. They are beginning to envision themselves as college students and can more fully appreciate the extraordinary effort that it takes to be a good student and to dedicate oneself to a passion like dance. They have a newfound admiration for the dedication of their instructors and the CCDC leadership. The insights and triumphs are all the sweeter because they've been shared with their special friends and adopted sisters from China, season after season.

Being a part of the CCDC family for all of these years has been a dream come true. You have transformed many lives. Thank you CCDC!

*Each of us can look back upon someone who made a great difference in our lives,
someone whose wisdom or simple acts of caring made an impression upon us.
In all likelihood, it was someone who sought no recognition for their deed,
other than the joy of knowing that, by their hand,
another's life had been made better.
S. Wolf*

April 2011

REFLECTION ON LOTUS STEPS

—Cindy Zhou

There's nothing quite like performing at Lotus Steps. This year will be my fourth and final Lotus Steps and it will be one of the things I miss the most about graduating college.

While the show itself is only 2 hours long, the actual backstage experience lasts much longer. Lotus Steps really starts on Friday, the day before the show. That day, called Tech Day, is very important for the show. This is when the lighting for each dance is designed and when the dancers get a chance to finally rehearse the dances on stage dimensions. Because of all this, dancers are required to be inside Royce from 8am to 8pm unless they have class. I love Tech Day because the schedule is not so packed so there is a lot more opportunity for dancers to just hangout and talk (or study if you really want to). However, since we are not allowed to leave Royce unless we have class, dancers should definitely take lunch and dinner with them.

After the fun and relatively relaxing Tech Day comes the actual day of Lotus Steps. The day of Lotus Steps is usually very hectic. There always seem to be so much to do yet so little time to do everything. There are run-throughs on the actual stage and rehearsals for specific



dances in the rehearsal room. Any loose ends and unfinished lighting will also be done during the day. Of course there is also a lot of fun on the day of Lotus Steps. My favorite is socializing with everyone from my dance in the dressing room and posing for lots of crazy photos. The show itself is almost surreal. Around 5:00pm (dinner time) the immediacy of the show starts to finally sink in and everyone starts to get nervous. But by the time we line up in the wings, the butterflies are replaced by an amazing adrenaline rush. That's when I start to feel focused, calm and slightly invincible. I know that whatever I do on that stage will be better than anything I've done the entire year.

While everything leading up to Lotus Steps was fun, nothing beats when, as the curtain drops after the finale, I realize that our year of hard work has paid off and everything



To watch us dance is to hear our hearts speak. ~ Hopi Indian Saying

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Share Chinese Culture Through Dance

DRAGONFLY

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POSTAGE
REQUIRED

