



Roman Gokhman Emerald

Two of the youngest members of the Waka Daiko drumming troupe perform at the 18th annual Oregon Asian Celebration.

Annual event celebrates Asian culture, diversity

Local citizens and the Asian community united this weekend for the 18th annual Oregon Asian Celebration

Roman Gokhman
Campus/City Culture Reporter

With shakes and rattles and pulsing gong beats, the Chinese lion dance — a traditional ceremony to ward off evil spirits and welcome good luck and fortune — kicked off the annual Oregon Asian Celebration on Saturday.

About 18,000 people attended the two-day celebration, which was presented by the Eugene/Springfield Asian Council, and grew out of a small reception to entertain a group of delegates from Taiwan 18 years ago.

"When this event started, no one knew the words 'cultural diversity,'" spokeswoman Carrie Matsushita said. "It's an opportunity to see how diverse Asian cultures are. You can experience Asian cultural diversity under one roof."

The lion dance was orchestrated by the Chinese-American Benevolent Association. CABA members and South Eugene High School students Matt Lee and Mia Cadwell, two of the four lion dancers, said the celebration brings awareness to Eugene and the rest of the state.

"They get more exposure to Asian culture," Cadwell said.

Other performances early Saturday included taiko drumming, Japanese koto music and traditional Filipino dancing.

Waka Daiko, a taiko drumming troupe, was the first to perform —

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Carrie Matsushita
spokeswoman

drawing hundreds of spectators to the stage.

The drums are traditionally used in religious ceremonies, festivals and for communication between villages, drummer Kathy Cunningham said.

"It's a universal language — everyone responds to music," she said.

Japanese koto player Masumi Timson, whose instrument is a type of harp, performed several songs, emphasizing the importance of pauses in her music.

"In Japan, we say 'silence is golden,'" Timson said.

University Asian Pacific American Student Union Outreach co-Di-

rector Jason Cummings and University Kultura Pilipinas Director Jeff Boyce spoke about the need to instill cultural pride into Asian and Asian American youth.

"Culture is a beautiful thing," Boyce said.

Boyce and Cummings also performed a poem about what it means to be an Asian in the United States.

Besides entertainment, the celebration featured 70 vendors selling everything from pottery, paintings and wall hangings to kimonos and other clothing, souvenirs and acupuncture treatments.

The Eugene-Springfield Asian American Youth presented a room for children's activities and games. Children folded origami and played other traditional games and newer fare as well, such as the hit arcade game Dance Dance Revolution.

Foods from China, the Philippines, Korea, India, Pakistan, Laos, Japan, Polynesia, and Taiwan were served in a separate room.

Salem resident Linda Kaufman, who, along with her 6-year-old granddaughter Tracey Kaufman, attended the celebration for the second straight year said the event was important because Oregon does not have much cultural diversity.

"Diversity is something to be treasured and not feared," Kaufman said.

Contact the reporter at romangokhman@dailymerald.com.

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time: 6:30 pm-8:30 pm

place: IRC (above the post office in the EMU)

Event is **FREE** and open to all students. Popcorn and drinks will be provided!

For more information contact:
Shun Yanagishita at froggie581@hotmail.com
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