

Cultures come alive at International Week

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Staff Writer

African and Asian Day began with a bang; literally.

Drummer Obo Addi got people off their feet to sing and move to his music last Thursday. Obo Addi was just one of the many performers during the International Celebration last week.

A Mexican-American student, Mary Potts, began Latin America, Spain and Native American Day on Wednesday.

She started by singing traditional songs. After that, students from both first and second-year Spanish classes sang and recited poetry. Potts and her partner followed with a traditional dance.

During her performance, people began to loosen up, dance and enjoy themselves. People started to buy tamales and other Spanish foods because of the tantalizing aroma.

Students from the Latino Leadership class began karaoke. They put words to songs up on an overhead projector so anyone who wanted to sing along.

Some of the songs were *Adoro, Como fui a enamorarme de ti, Vivir sin aire, Pachuco, Me gustas mucho* and *Bidi bidi, bom bom*. Potts led most of the singing because she knew most of the songs.

Because of difficulty with the transparencies over the projector, students were singing the wrong words or sometimes even the wrong song. The students still had fun, laughing while they were singing. Potts kept encouraging people to sing saying,

"If you're not singing, put your hands in the air; come on everybody!" Everyone just kind of laughed at her, and didn't really do it except for some of the Spanish class.

After messing up considerable

amounts of time, Potts dared to ask, "We're doing pretty good, aren't we?" She laughed and followed this with, "Don't answer me!"

Tenochtitlan, a Mexican dance troupe, then took the stage. They performed various dances from different Mexican states. After this group of dancers, the Spanish and Latin American portion of the day was over.

A tribal elder began Native American Day with a flute performance and a chant to start the ceremonial. Native American dancers performed after this ritual. After the dancers, Katherine Quartz explained the native oral tradition.

Thursday, African and Asian Day, began with Obo Addi. Addi is best known for his percussion, singing and dancing. He started his performance by coming on stage beating his drum with a small rod curved at the end. The drum was about one-and-a-half feet in diameter and was covered in orange and black fabric. He beat his drum for a solid 10 minutes! He never seemed to tire of the music that he made.

"People 65, 70, 80... they put their canes down and when they gonna dance, they straight again," said Addi. "There's something in the music."

He then continued on to another instrument resembling a xylophone. He played on this for a good 10 minutes. Everyone gave polite applause, and some even cheered, but he wasn't satisfied.

"Sometimes Americans don't realize the beauty in our music... even our funeral music is very rhythmic."

He then played the same instrument, and the same song, and asked people to sing with him.

"Why don't everybody move up, I know this is your lunchtime, but come on people."

People of all ages left their egg rolls, rice, pot stickers and fortune cookies. They moved up to the front two rows of chairs. Addi played his

instrument and sang, and the crowd sang with him. After this he sat down with his drum and sang a song about a beautiful woman whose legs had been cut off. She needed someone to take care of her and the chance to take care of someone.

The whole time he was singing, his eyes were closed. He was inside the song.

While explaining the origin of the song, he said, "We take things from people and give it a name... Americans do it too, like Breakdance is ours."

After this song, he had people sing, but not words, just sounds while he sang in his native tongue. The whole room clapped and sang and moved to the rhythm.

After Addi, children from the Japanese Magnet Program at Richmond School came to the stage. They sang songs, including *We are all friends, Cherry Blossoms* and *It's a Small World*. These were sung in Japanese, of course. The children were fifth-graders and they spend half of their school day in English and the other half in Japanese.

Ellen Wolfson, director of International Week, was disappointed about the amount of people who attended the celebration. She says that in previous years, this event has been in the Community Center, and drew hundreds of people. This year, it was held in Gregory Forum, and at times there were as few as 15 people watching the event.



PHOTOS BY SARAH WELCH / Clackamas Print

Top: Mary Potts (right) and partner dance a traditional Spanish dance. Bottom: Native Americans pound their feet to the rhythmic beat of drums.

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