

Just DANCE

By Lauren Kirkwood / Staff writer

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Flourishing colorful fans, spinning across the floor and executing splits in midair, the Tiyani Dance Team brought the excitement of traditional Chinese dance to the second floor of the Art-Sociology Building in the group's first rehearsal last night.

The 11 team members practice four times a week to master the techniques of multiple Chinese dance styles. For founders senior finance and neurophysics major Rosie Zhang and senior special education and studio art major Joyce Yu, forming this group allowed them to bring a piece of their culture to the campus.

"Ever since we were young, we did Chinese dance on and off, and we wanted to continue but we realized there was no Chinese dance group on campus," Zhang said.

Zhang and Yu said it all started last semester when they took DANC138C: Introduction to Ethnic Dance: Chinese Folk Dance with Xuejuan Feng, who graduated from the Beijing Dance Academy, the only higher education institution devoted to dance in China, Zhang said.

In the class, they met other students who were interested in forming a team, and secured Feng – who is getting her graduate degree in dance at the university – as a faculty sponsor of their group. The team was approved as an official student group last semester.

Now, the team has several performances lined up, Zhang said, including a show at TASA Night Market – an event held during the spring by the Taiwanese American Student Association – and one at the Asian American Student Union's International Night.

Members of the group who also grew up learning Chinese dance said the traditional style the team practices is different from many other forms of dance, in part because of its narrative qualities and its multifaceted forms.

"There's a lot of grace and expression – you tell a story with Chinese dance," Zhang said.

Members also noted there are different styles for all 56 ethnic groups in China, each featuring a different set of moves, positions and emotions. Often the different forms correspond to the environment of its origin, whether the landscape is made up of mountains, rivers or plains.

"For Mongolian, it's really strong, but for Dai, it's more womanly and curvy," sophomore public health major Valerie Chou said.

Zhang said she looks forward to seeing how the team moves forward into the future.

"As our performances improve and we get better, we hope to perform in the community as well," she said. "It's our last semester here. We're making our last mark."

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COMMENTS