

## Unique Pan Asian Dance Festival Held at Burnsville Performing Arts Center

The event took place at the Burnsville Performing Arts Center, the first ever Pan Asian Arts Dance Festival showcased 42 Asian dances from 20 different dance groups. The audience enjoyed a whole day of dance entertainment from 9:30am to 5pm over the Memorial weekend on May 29. Each group showcased 2 of their best dances competing for Modern Dance and Traditional Dance winners. Motion Crew, N.W.A, MidKnight Sun, and Modern Indian Dance Academy R.G.K Dance Fitness & Studio started the event performing Modern Dance style with hip-hop moves, break dance stunts, and modern Bollywood dance.

MidKnight Sun performed a compelling dance to showcase girl power, through the culture of Hmong Hip-hop by incorporating various forms of modern hip-hop styles together with a Hmong twist.

Modern Indian Dance Academy R.G.K. Dance & Fitness Studio is the first dance Academy in the Minneapolis area to offer classes in the exhilarating and beautiful Bollywood dance styles of India all year round. Bollywood dancing is a commercial name for modern Indian dancing. It's a combination of classical Indian dance (which is the base), folk dancing such as Bhangra and sometimes has a Latino and Arabic influence. It's fun and very expressive and there's a lot of deep meaning behind music in the films. You can actually express what the music means, through the graceful movements of the body.

Following the Modern Dance Competition are the Traditional Dance Groups.

Bhutanese Dance Group, Renuka Humagai and Shara Motey, danced to "Mati Ghar." The song is about the time after they get married, they will go to the husband's house, but the home of his parents' house is "mati ghar."

Silver Skies, a Hmong dance group, with 6 strong and beautiful dancers, they performed the "Peacock Dance"

and the "Flower Fairy."

CSE Stars, a dance group from the Hmong Charter School, Community School of Excellence, performed to "Hmong Alphabet" and "Colorful Hmong Village." For many years, decades, centuries, Hmong people has been living in lands of others. Therefore, only imagination can guide this group. They imagine our land to be as colorful as the colors on their costumes. Blue representing the ocean surrounding our country; pink, white, and green representing the glorious blossoms; yellow representing the beautiful weather; and qeej, representing that they are Hmong.

Minnesota Bright Stars, a youth dance group from Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association. Minnesota Bright Stars performed to a dance called "Rhythm of Asia" showcasing the beauty of Asia.

Wendy Vang, one of the very few unique artistic solo dancers in the field of Hmong Traditional and Cultural Dance, and Performing Arts. She has been dancing for almost 6 years and has also recently begun to choreograph some dances of her own through historic knowledge and ancestry practice of the Hmong ethnicity in addition with her own ideals and style. Wendy performed to "Mekong River Crossing of the Hmong Tribute Dance" and "Snake Goddess" or also known as Dragon dance, which portrays deities or originators of mankind in many flood legends and superstition in myths of ancient Hmong folklore and mythology. Wendy Vang also performed a third dance called "Through Mountain's Grassland" for the general show.

Fireflies consists of 16 Hmong girls that comes from all areas of the Twin Cities. Fireflies is one of Dao Lan Dance Studio's youngest girls that has been performing and competing for the last 2 years. They performed to the "Fish Dance" and another dance called "Modernized Little Girls." Choreographed by Dao Lan, this piece was dedicated

to the children's parents for their ongoing supports and for giving the children the experience to go beyond and achieve their love for dancing.

Established in 2002, the Twin Cities Chinese Dance Center ("TCCDC") is a non-profit performing arts and educational organization founded with the goal of promoting the understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture. TCCDC performed to "Chu Yao" and "Heavenly Road," a road that is a gift, a bond that has united all the people from all over the country.

Hmong Heroes has been dancing together for 2 years now studying under Acclaimed Hmong Choreographer Mai Vang and Acrobatic Teacher Jenny Vang. As all-boys dance group, with strong physical abilities, they have focused on acrobatic and martial arts, along with Hmong and Chinese dance styles. Hmong Heros performed to the "Drum Dance" and "Country Boys."

Karen Cultural Organization of MN danced to "Karen Done Dance" and "Karen Traditional Dance." On New Year's Day, at marriage ceremonies, and on other significant days, the "Karen" (Koh-Ren) people of Burma gather, hold hands, sing a song and perform the traditional Don Dance. This dance depicts a style of life that has been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. The song tells of the unity of a people striving to preserve their traditions and their memories.

Mu Gung Hwa Korean Dance Academy is a small dance school in the northwestern Minneapolis suburb of Osseo, MN. Mrs. Eun Hye Lee, has been teaching dance since 1989. She instills in her students a great love of Korean dance, art and music. The "Janggu chum dance" performed in the first round is an example of dance and drumming that which was done in the villages at harvest time. Mu Gung Hwa Korean Dance Academy's second dance was "Buchaechum." Widely regarded as the most unique Korean traditional dance, this splendid dance with luxurious dresses and brilliant fans of painted blossoms illustrates the beauty of vivid colors and the harmony of group movements.

Nkauj Ntxuam Dej started dancing at Dao Lan Dance School five years ago. They recently took 1st place in the traditional dance category at the 2010-2011 MN Hmong New Year. They danced to "Enchanting Fan Dance of Springtime" and "Charming Dance of The Peacocks." A group of passionate peacock princesses dance in a forest of Bamboo trees under the mist. The vivid colors of the dress and slow and rapid twirling dance movements create of the dress displays the elegant movement of the peacock.

Mulan performed to a Miao Dance "Live in the Mountain" and "A Girls Reflection." Mulan is one of six teams from Dao Lan Dance Studio. Mulan Dancers have been dancing together for two years now and consist of Hmong girls ages 9 years old to 13 years old. Instructor Dao Lan created both of Mulan's dances to showcase the Asian origin, ethnicity and culture. It has been written in history that the Hmong culture dates back to at least 2,000 B.C. in China. Over the years, through warfare, the Hmong has been dispersed throughout the world but there are still many "Miao" or Hmong relatives in the ancestral country of China. Like the character in the movie *Mulan*, girls often struggle with their identity in their culture - caught between the dutiful female role and the desire to be true to oneself. "A Girl's Reflection" depicts a struggle that is not only felt by many females in the Asian culture but could be universal to all females.

MN SunShine has been dancing together for the past 11 years, studying under Internationally renowned Hmong Choreographer Mai Vang, they have focused on Hmong, Chinese, Laos, and Bollywood dance style. MN SunShine performed to a Bollywood dance and another piece called, "Sun Dance." Sun Dance, like its name is a dance choreographed of MN SunShine Dancers playing around with the sun. Combining the group formation and synchronized movement, the dancers wear long uptight, bottom-wide skirts flipping with their legs, along with elegant hand and arm gestures to resemble the sun.

Rainbow Dance Group

consists of girls' age from 8 to 12. They have been dancing together for the past 2 years, studying under well-known Hmong Choreographer Jennie Vang. Rainbow dancers performed to the "Va Dance" and the "Flower Dance," portraying the beautiful Peony Flowers. Along with graceful rhythm, girls wearing flower costumes, holding the peony flowers, they danced together to celebrate the Blossom Season.

Nkauj Hmoob Yw Pheej danced to a Thai dance and a Hmong dance called, "Hais Lus Hmoob Ua Ke" (Say Hmong Together). The song is about speaking in Hmong together. The singer sings in Thai and then translates the words into Hmong and vice versa. The dance routines are expressing the lyrics in the song and with the music. Although, the motion of this dance is very energetic, it still has the beauty of body movements, the joyful facex, and the beauty of pretty hand movements of the traditional Hmong dance.

Ocean Dance Group consists of girls ages from 9 to 13 years old, they have been dancing together for the past 3 years, studying under Acclaimed Hmong Choreographer Mai Vang. They have often participated in 30 or more performances annually at festivals, schools performance, and Hmong New Year's celebrations. Ocean performed to the "Bamboo Dance" and the "Qeej Dance". Qeej is a Hmong music instrument, and it is played in major Hmong holidays and ceremonies. When playing, the musician has to perform the mandatory steps, which include spinning (to confuse evil spirits which may try to prevent the soul of the deceased from joining his ancestors) and larger circular patterns (which indicate the journey on horseback of the soul). Choreographer Mai Vang adapts the tradition and incorporates with graceful dance movements and enhances with group formations to honor the Qeej.

The Japanese dance group Sansei Yonsei Kai continues the long-standing tradition of the Japanese American community in the Twin Cities. Sansei Yonsei Kai was formed

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**Above:**  
MN SunShine

**Right:**  
Motion Crew

**Far Right:**  
MidKnight Sun

*Photos courtesy*  
**Pan Asian Arts Alliance**



over 35 years ago. All members are volunteers committed to the Japanese tradition of dance. Sansei Yonsei Kai dancers perform at many festivals and celebrations in the Twin cities as well as educational programs such as the Festival of Nations, Como Park Lantern Lighting Festival, Dragon Festival and the MN State Fair. As a group of multicultural dancers they foster the understanding and awareness of Japanese culture through the recreation and presentation of traditional and contemporary ethnic dance. Sansei Yonsei Kai performed a general performance as they danced to a popular Japanese song- "Fuji" "Sukiyaki."

Asian Media Access Dance Group performed a Finale with a marvelous ribbon dance. Combining all 5 different groups within AMA, 82 students came together and showcased the ribbon dance for the closing of the Pan Asian Arts Dance Festival.

The competition results were: Motion Crew placed 1st

and MidKnight Sun placed 2nd for the Modern Dance. Nkauj Ntxuaj Dej placed 1st. TCCDC placed 2nd, Karen Cultural Organization of MN placed 3rd, MN SunShine placed 4th and Audience Favorite, and Mu Gung Hwa Korean Dance Academy placed 5th for the Traditional Dance. Audience Favorite Award went to the MN SunShine. The event ended with final performances from the award winners of the the first ever Pan Asian Dance Festival and successfully concluded a day-long event. For more final scores, event news and photos, please visit [www.panasianartsalliance.org](http://www.panasianartsalliance.org).

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