

“Next up, number 2316,” said one of the judges.

“Oh! That’s me!” I smiled and excitedly walked toward the stage.

However, as I approached closer and closer to the stage, my heartbeat began to increase rapidly. My sweaty hands slid on the rail that lead up to the stage. Millions of thoughts began running through my head. “What if I forget my routine? What happens if I make a mistake in front of the audience?”

When I stepped onto the stage, I looked up and saw that every pair of eyes in the room was focused on me, judging my every move. The music began and the tune filled my mind and I naturally began tapping my foot to the rhythm of the beat. My feet corresponded to the music, and my entire body soon initiated into an artistic motion. I gradually entered into my own peaceful realm where nothing in the world seemed to matter but the synchronization of my steps with the music. As I stepped into the world that I had created, I recalled how my journey began...

As a child, I have always wanted to learn different styles of dance such as hip-hop or jazz, but my parents wanted me to learn Chinese folkloric dance.

“What’s so interesting about Chinese cultural dance?” I thought. I was disappointed because I wanted to learn cool, hip-hop moves and then show them off to all my friends.

However, I soon learned that Chinese folkloric dance was a unique style. It merges traditional meanings and modern techniques into one art form. Not only do I still develop new techniques with every dance, but I also learn about my cultural background and the significance behind my movements. Each step captures the dance, the poetry and the music of Chinese history. One such dance is the “Peacock Dance,” which symbolizes good luck, beauty, and honesty. Dancing the “Peacock Dance” has inspired me to live joyfully and spread happiness to others

around me. The more I was exposed to Chinese cultural dancing the more my passion of intertwining different cultures grew. I have been dancing avidly for 10 years and I plan to continue dancing throughout my life.

During the summer of my junior year, I was involved in the American Chinese Dance Association, a cultural exchange program. My team and I traveled to China to exchange different dance styles and techniques with other dancers. Even though we lived across the world from one another, we were able to come together and share our different experiences. I finally understood the meaning of dancers coming from different backgrounds yet still sharing the same passion. With each synchronized step, we all discovered the beauty of dance that brought us together.

As the music slowly ended, the applause from the audience jolted me back into reality. I looked up toward the judges and smiled. No longer was I trembling from nervousness, but rather a sense of satisfaction filled my heart. I realized that dance is much more than a showy sequence of movements demonstrating one's abilities and techniques. Dance is a means by which an artist can connect to his or her audience. Although I was happy that I won the competition, my joy came from knowing that I had successfully connected with my audience, sharing my experiences, character, and culture through my dance.