

Asia Fest 2016 performances captivate sold-out audience

BY CHERYL WANG

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As the curtains drew back in the auditorium, the animated conversations and excited laughter of the audience turned into a hushed silence. In the center of the stage, participants of Asia Fest took to the spotlight.

On Jan. 16 2016, NCSSM hosted its annual Asia Fest in the ETC auditorium. With about 150 performers and over 650 NCSSM students, parents, and faculty in the audience, Asia Fest is considered one of the most highly anticipated and attended events of the school year.

Presented by Asian Cultures Club, Asia Fest celebrates the diverse culture of the NCSSM community by showcasing a variety of Asian music, dance, and cuisine.

Every winter, students, parents, and faculty members gather in the auditorium for this amazing show.

This year, Asia Fest featured 19 acts. From Bollywood

skits to piano battles, the performers as well as the crew members and committees put on an incredible celebration.

Asia Fest began with the March of the Flags. Students in colorful clothes representing a variety of different cultures and nations opened the show with a presentation of the flags of many Asian countries.

Then, led by NCSSM current seniors Kunal Lodaya and Rima Patel, members of NCSSM Raas dance team performed a traditional Indian folk dance.

The show then presented "Veena: A Voyage" by Gayathri Raghavendra, a martial arts performance, and Tinikling, a traditional Filipino

photo courtesy of Adam Schmidt and Curie Shim



NCSSM's Raas dance team opens Asia Fest in traditional dress.

dance.

The variety of talents at the show was highlighted next by an entertaining Bollywood skit, a piano battle, and Tasneem Essader's spoken word presentation.

NCSSM's a capella group, the Unichords, then followed with an exciting mash-up of Heartless by Kanye West and Khabi Khabi, a song sung in

Hindi.

More dance performances continued with ICIDIC (I Came, I Danced, I Conquered), Bollywood dancing, Kwave's Korean pop choreography and Fusion.

Other acts such as Vinitha Ravindran's Carnatic Violin, the Asian Pop Band and Multicultural skits, and Youngmin Shin's Crayon also lit up the stage.

The showing of the "What are You" video also wrapped up the show by addressing the often derogatory questions Asians are asked in the U.S., and highlighting the unique characteristics of individuals and their backgrounds.

Ending the show, members of the NCSSM Bhangra team delivered an exhilarating performance of a Punjab Indian dance.

"Asia Fest was an amazing experience. Watching it during

my junior year made me want to participate; I then decided to join four dance groups. It was crazy trying to remember all the choreography but it was so much fun to be able to do it this year," says senior Jackie Warren who was in Tinikling, Raas, ICIDIC, and Bhangra.

The acts of this year's *continued on page 2 »*

TEDxNCSSM hosts fifth annual conference

BY MAX SCHLENKER

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Along with offering a one-of-a-kind experience to students, faculty, and Durham community members, TEDxNCSSM 2016 made history in more ways than one.

Months before the conference, students competed in the first ever TEDxNCSSM Student Speaker Competition, sharing their personal stories with the conference theme of "Resistance."

After a difficult decision process, two talented NCSSM students, seniors Kimberly Andreassen and Jessica Yao, were chosen to speak, joining three other esteemed guests: Anku Madan, Tania Katan, and Dr. Vanessa Woods.

In honoring the TEDxNCSSM tradition of having an alumni speaker at every conference, Madan inspired the audience with his experience starting Undercover Colors, a company that has received national recognition for creating nail polish that changes color when in contact with common date rape drugs.

As an NCSSM alumnus, he connected with many of our current students in conversations after his talk.

Travelling from Arizona to speak at TEDxNCSSM, Katan shared with the audience her exciting new campaign, #ItWasNeverADress, intended to encourage women to work against common gender stereotypes.

Her feminist message resounded with many of the audience members, and she stayed after the conference to talk and answer questions.

Last but not least, Woods ended the conference with her take on the popular evolutionary theory "survival of the fittest." An anthropologist and best-selling author from Duke University, Woods explained that through studying the behavior of primates - particularly bonobos - she determined that sometimes, "survival of the friendliest" is a more accurate statement.

Audience member senior Arjun Bhatt found her talk to be quite impressive, saying "[Woods] got me thinking about friendliness, and how staying friendly can be important for a population to survive and thrive. Sometimes the smartest thing to do is to simply be nice."

In addition to the two student speakers, even more NCSSM talent was put on

photo courtesy of NCSSM TEDx Facebook page



NCSSM students welcome guests and speakers at the day of the conference by checking in visitors.

display during the event. The annual TEDxNCSSM Art and Music Competitions produced incredible student artwork and compositions.

Senior Karly Andreassen and junior Nishma Vias were selected to showcase their painting and photograph respectively, Andreassen's titled "Get Bent" and Vias' titled "Silver Lining." The musical work of senior Simon Marland titled "Guidelines" provided the audience with comforting bumper music, and will be featured in all of the official TEDx videos released in the

coming weeks.

In the groundbreaking spirit of TEDx, the 2016 conference was also unique due to its partnership with UNC-TV.

Videographers are typically hired from the local Durham area, but UNC-TV graciously offered to film the entire event free of charge, and to handle the videos in postproduction to ensure that TEDxNCSSM reaches as many viewers as possible.

Organizing an event like TEDxNCSSM is no easy task, but Amy Sheck, Dean of Science, and her team of almost

20 students volunteered their time and hard work to make the 2016 conference the most exciting TEDx event yet. "It took the time and talents of a lot of people," said Executive Committee member senior Alisa Cui, "But all of that energy spent definitely paid off on the day of the conference."

While certainly a community event, TEDxNCSSM is designed to help spread new ideas and conversations throughout the student body. Current Unicorns made up almost half of the distinguished audience, and a had a lot to say about the conference after having some time to reflect.

Junior Joshua Zhou, said that "There is a great difference between hearing TEDx talks and being present at one. Through TEDxNCSSM, I fully sensed the excitement and passion driving each speaker, making it an inspiring experience for me."

With TEDxNCSSM 2016 in the past, Unicorns may be anxious for more TEDx talks and videos. Luckily, now there are only eleven more months to wait for TEDxNCSSM 2017.