



March 2011

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN



**LOOKING BACK AT
FEBRUARY
AND THE
CHINESE NEW YEAR**

February was a great time in southern California, especially the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles, to see and enjoy a variety of performances in honor of the Chinese New Year. Rather than celebrate on a specific day, events were held every weekend from fairs with booths displaying many items for sale to fantastic song and dance performances at major venues such as the Pasadena Civic Auditorium or the San Gabriel Mission Playhouse.

Most outstanding were a troupe of acrobats from China who presented the "Culture of China: Festival of Spring." Their name is misleading "Guangzhou Soldier Acrobatic Troupe" but there was nothing militaristic. Their feats were incredible. Young women balanced and tossed plates and hats while riding very high unicycles, a couple "danced" on elastic ribbon in a "love theme" a la Cirque de Soleil, a magician did some tricks that befuddled the audience, young men leaped, twisted, turned, and balanced each other into the air and onto their shoulders from balance beams that they themselves were balancing. If you think you have seen Swan Lake, see the young man and woman perform a pas de deux with her "en pointe" on his head. Jugglers always make it look so easy but for his finale this juggler had so many balls that I lost count how many he was able to juggle at one time. How the performers were able to contort their bodies will still be a mystery. The costuming and music is always lyrical, colorful and stunning. The entire show is a must see for everyone of every age.

Other Chinese Associations brought over other song and dance performers whose programs were equally exciting and worth an evening out. Sadly, most of these shows are only publicized to the Chinese-American audience so I would highly recommend checking out "The China Press" website or the websites of the auditoriums during this period. Promoting some of these engagements is the "Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council of P. R. China and the China Overseas Exchange Association." The Chinese Consulate could also provide referrals.

Another great experience is the "Chinese Tea and Music in Dialogue" Ceremony. More than just pouring tea and enjoying the great flavors, the Chinese, along with the Koreans and Japanese, have made drinking tea an art. The contemporary art of drinking tea derives from the Ming dynasty. The Taiwanese have worked to bring about this ceremony in a great renaissance. They include singers, calligraphers, musicians, and skilled people to carefully pour and provide the tea. The attendee should appreciate the tea cups, smell the tea's fragrance, taste the tea, and listen to the sound of the tea being poured. As Lin Ku-Fang, a current practitioner and leader of tea ceremonies has commented, "through tea and music, we combine similar aspects based on the spheres of life, seasonal changes, mountains and water, yin and yang. As a result, the participant can enter into the artistic world through any one of the different senses." More information is available from the Culture Center of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office of Los Angeles and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC (Taiwan).

*Nancy Pearlman, Executive Director
Educational Communications*



**BEANNOCHTAI
NA FEILE
PADRAIG AGAIBH!**

*(That's blessings of the
feast of Patrick on you!)*



This month belongs to the Emerald Isle. Can you guess which is the national color of Ireland? Wrong! It's Blue! Their language is Gaelic and the Irish brought over some of their vocabulary. If in a rage you smash something to smithereens, you're doing it in Irish! If you have plenty of something, you may have it galore which is from the Irish phrase "go leor" (pronounced gull-yor). When Irish immigrants came over with their accented English, people started talking about their Irish Brogue, thinking that meant "accent". It doesn't. Brog means "shoe". They wore such clunky shoes that they were identified by them and the word also got attached to the accent!

*contributed by
Preston Ashbourne*



**ABOUT THE
EARTH CULTURES PROJECT**

Earth Cultures is one of the projects of Educational Communications, a non-profit 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization founded in 1958, dedicated to improving the quality of life on this planet. The organization produces documentaries and works with several performing groups and individuals through its Earth Cultures Project to promote cultural awareness and provide education through the arts.



WORDS FROM LIANA'S WORLD

Contributed by
Liana Hovhannessian

THE TAMMIE LIFE

When you become a Duquesne University Tamburitzan you are automatically considered a member of the Tammie family. This family involves friends, people who share the same interests for music, song, and dance, and people who can work together even if there is a quarrel happening offstage. When it comes down to it, this family is made up of talented people from all over the world who all combine their talents into one historic show. However it is not a simple task getting in. There is a three-part audition process one must go through. First you must submit a tape that shows what your personal talents are in dance, song, and instrumental (It is mandatory to do all three, but you can specialize in one area). If the tape is approved you get a call back to the Tamburitzan building where for a whole day you learn a bunch of choreography that you must pick up fast, or for musicians various musical pieces. Lastly if you made it past one and two you are interviewed by the director, either in person or by phone if you live far away. You also have to be accepted into Duquesne University to be in the Tammies.

I am proud to say I am a Tammie Alumni. I was in the group from 2006 to 2010. To be a Tammie you are only allowed four years in the group, and are required to be a full-time student (12 credits or more) at Duquesne University. I am from the state of California while Duquesne and the Tammies are based in Pittsburgh, PA. It wasn't easy being so far away from home, at least for the first year when I was just settling into my new life. I was only nineteen when I joined. Luckily it was not hard to make friends.

Each year we would put together a new show in the summer before school started. We called it our Training Camp, or the less formal name that we had for it was Tammie Boot Camp. During this time we only had 25 days to put a brand new show together. Not only were we learning styles in dance and music we already knew, we had to learn things that for some seemed completely foreign. For example, someone who had a classically trained background like me, who was taught to be upright all the time and be as light as I could, had a hard time being flat-footed and low to the ground, something that some of the Balkan dances require. At the same time it was really fun to learn new ways in which people around the world express themselves and their culture through dance and music. With all members having such diverse backgrounds from one another in this type of art, everyone was able to help each other out with things they knew, that others did not.

During the school year we would all go to our classes, study for exams, write papers, and work on what ever presentation was due. But when it came to be Friday we would go to classes early and have rehearsals later in the day from 5pm to 10pm. When the weekends would arrive, that was when we were no longer just regular students but performers for audiences all around. There is a story I remember from when I was little about a princess who would sneak out at night, dance with the gypsies nearby and wear out her shoes. When it became morning all was back to normal without anyone knowing what happened. When I would get on the Tammie bus those Friday nights after practice I felt like I was sneaking off to "dance with the gypsies". We would go to different states to perform, sleep on the bus during nights, as it would take us on to a new place with new stages and new faces in the seats in front of us.

When Monday came around we were back into our same old school routine,

taking tests and doing our homework just like any regular student in school. We all had different types of majors. There were some who were Music majors, Business majors, Pharmacy majors, Early Childhood Education majors, and for me and a few others it was Digital Media Art. People always asked me if there was a Dance major at Duquesne but unfortunately there never was or is to this day.

Not only did we see each other on the road or on a stage somewhere, like friends usually do, we would hang out in each other's dorm rooms, order Chinese food, watch movies, and chat until it was two in the morning. One of my friends and I would go practice dance steps during the week over at the campus' Power Center (the place for students to go if they want to work out or dance in the dance studios for free), working on things we needed to get better at or clean up for the show. Some of the musicians would do the same during the week if they needed to practice music from the show they were not so comfortable with.

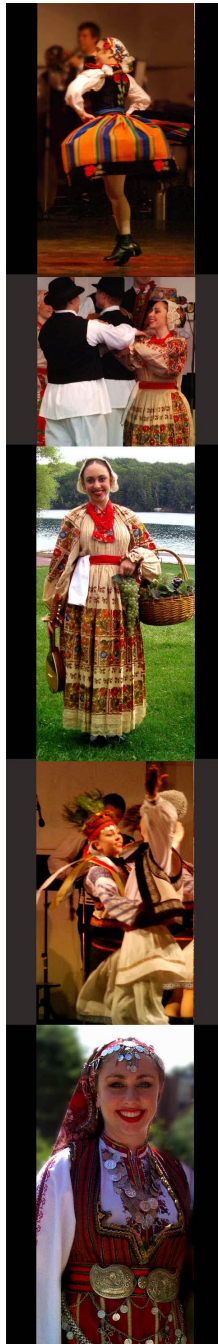
I must say the Tammie life was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that not many are able to experience. It was not always an easy life but completely worth it in the end, and all that hard work made me grow as a person and as a performer. In today's world folk dance and music are not really on the best selling charts and are considered a dying art by many. Traditional clothing is becoming harder and harder to come by, dance steps are transforming by the minute, traditional folk music and lyrics are not being heard as they once were. Since 1937 the Tamburitzans have focused on preserving this folk culture of the world. Having once lived The Tammie Life made me a more knowledgeable person not only in the culture of folk dance and music, but of people today from all around from all the traveling we did. I was able to get an education at Duquesne University with the help of the Tamburitzan scholarship, and do what I love most . . . dance.

If you would like to see **The Duquesne University Tamburitzans** live on stage you can go to their website at:

www.duq.edu/tamburitzans/

There you can see their show schedule, pictures, and more.

✿ For those based in California, the Tammies will be here in May with a brand new show.





VOLUNTEER AND DONATION OPPORTUNITIES

Educational Communications always needs volunteers in the office. If you are interested in volunteering please call Nancy at (310) 559-9160.



Visit the Earth Cultures Project website to find easy ways to donate to any of our projects. Use "goodsearch" to search the web as you always do, and a small percentage goes to the non-profit of your choice. Sign up for "eScrip" or "GoodShop." Spend as you would anyway and donate to your cause at the same time. We hope you'll choose Educational Communications in Los Angeles as your non-profit of choice.

Your donation will help bring the arts back to education under the Earth Cultures Project, or help fund other projects of Educational Communications.

Support the Arts & Education!

LINKS OF INTEREST

MUSEUMS

Bowers Museum

<http://www.bowers.org>

Craft & Folk Art Museum

<http://www.cafam.org>

Metropolitan Museum of Art

(search the database for works of art, costumes & more)

http://www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/

Museum of Latin American Art

<http://www.molaa.org>

Pacific Asia Museum

<http://www.pacificasiamuseum.org>

ONGOING ACTIVITIES IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

Current Cultural Happenings Around Los Angeles

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/caltechfolkdance>

Olvera Street in Los Angeles

<http://olvera-street.com>

Folkworks (click on "calendar")

<http://www.folkworks.org/>

FOLK DANCE & FOLK MUSIC INFORMATION

Dick Oakes' Folk Dance Pages

<http://www.phantomranch.net/folkdanc/folkdanc.htm>

Folkways (ethnic music)

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/index.aspx>

ARTS AND CULTURES

Smithsonian Magazine

Arts & Cultures

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture>

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

<http://www.folklife.si.edu/>

EARTH CULTURES PROJECT

contact information

www.earthculturesproject.org

Reach us by phone at

(310) 559-9160

or by email at

info@earthculturesproject.org

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 351419

Los Angeles, CA 90035-9119