

## Tradition, history, youth mesh in Lunar New Year celebration in San Jose

**Jose**

By Robert Salonga [rsalonga@mercurynews.com](mailto:rsalonga@mercurynews.com)

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SAN JOSE -- Tradition, history and youth meshed seamlessly in the annual Lunar New Year celebration at History San José in Kelley Park, with programs encompassing music, dancing, math and magic captivating attendees who went home with a healthy dose of cultural knowledge.

More than 150 people took part in the Sunday afternoon series of activities housed in and around the rebuilt Ng Shing Gung temple on the park grounds, which now serves as the city's Chinese American Historical Museum.

The Year of the Ram was kicked off with a series of traditional lion, ribbon and fan dances by students at the Orchard School Asian Cultural Dance Troupe, still strong as it celebrates its 20th year of performing.



*Dancers from the Orchard Asian Cultural Dance Troupe perform a Ribbon Dance at History Park San Jose during a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration in San Jose.*

San Jose organizers hope the event ignites interest in efforts to preserve their history and culture in a city that established five separate Chinatowns since Chinese immigrants began settling in the area in 1850. Today, however, with none of the ethnic enclaves survive.

"We want to welcome people to the museum and help them learn about the history and culture," said Brenda Wong, a retired teacher who now serves as president of the Chinese Historical and Cultural Project. "They can enjoy the performances and connect with different groups and communities."

### Abacus competitions

That cross-cultural connection was evidence in the makeup of the crowd, which while predominantly of Chinese descent showed a range of diversity. They also saw that in the performances by the dance troupe, which enlists students based solely on their interest in performing.

Among the participants of the fan dance was Orchard student Alejandra Saucedo, 9, whose aunt performed in the same troupe nearly 15 years ago.



*Dancers from the Orchard Asian Cultural Dance Troupe perform a Lion Dance at History Park San Jose during a Chinese Lunar New Year celebration in San Jose.*

"It's a great opportunity to learn about different cultures," said Laura Carrasco, Alejandra's mother. "She loves it. And she knows more of her classmates and has more friends at school."

While the performances were happening, dozens of families huddled around park benches building abacuses with the Chinese American Abacus Association, which promotes math

the ancient counting frames still widely used in Asian countries.

## Filipino folk dance

Rounding out the afternoon were performances by the Cadence Instrumental Musicians, composed of students from Lynbrook High School in San Jose and Kennedy Middle School in Cupertino. There was also a show by local magician Binh Do, otherwise known as The Marvelous Magician Binh.

Liz Chew, a retired longtime Orchard teacher whose family started the school's renowned student dance troupe -- featured recently at the Chinese New Year parade in San Francisco -- echoed Wong's sentiment that the event marked an opportunity to celebrate her personal heritage and value the contributions of others. To that end, her troupe's performance Sunday was closed by a rendition of tinikling, the signature Filipino folk dance.

"We want to learn about other cultures," said Chew, "as well as learn about our own history."

Contact Robert Salonga at 408-920-5002. Follow him at [Twitter.com/robertsalonga](https://twitter.com/robertsalonga).