



Cape Experience

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT • OUTDOORS • INDOORS

Music & motion

With Asian flair, percussion ensemble to perform in Eastham

By Laurie Higgins

Marching bands have long been a staple at football games and parades, but Winter Guard and Indoor Percussion is the fastest growing sector of the marching arts. It's a hybrid activity that combines music, marching, theatrics and athletics to create stunning performances meant to both educate and entertain.

The Spirit of America Winter Percussion Ensemble will perform its new indoor percussion show of music and motion on April 5 at Nauset Regional High School, Eastham.

The ensemble will also present its performance in schools from Orleans to Sandwich in upcoming weeks. The performances will feature a preview of the show the group will perform at the World Guard International (WGI) World Championships in Dayton, Ohio, later in April.

"It's really a spectacle," says percussion ensemble director Ian Hale. "It's not a traditional concert. There are all sorts of choreography, staging, set designs and costumes."

In 2012, the Spirit of America Winter Percussion Ensemble came in first place in its class for its division at the World Championships and the group hopes to repeat that success this year.

To decide what type of show they will present each year, they first look at what music they would like to explore. In recent years, the ensemble has done world music.

This year they decided to focus on Asian music with a theme of yin/yang. The show is called "Hero: The Dragons and Tigers Within," with a white tiger representing the feminine yin and a dragon representing the masculine yang. They are exploring the idea that opposites both attract and need each other for balance and harmony.

Part of the mission of the Spirit of American Band is to inspire and educate young people through music. With that in mind, the ensemble members not only learn how to perform the music, but also study the culture where the music originates. In the past six months, members have watched films, heard lectures and taken Taekwondo classes to learn more about the beauty and richness of Asian cultures.

"About 25 kids are part of the Winter Percussion Ensemble," says Paul Tingley, one of the directors and administrative assistants for the Spirit of America Band. "It's a competition group with kids from the age of 10 to 22. You can't be older than 22 to compete."

The Spirit of America Band is sponsored by the Community of Jesus, in Orleans. Most of the members of the ensemble are from Orleans, but you don't need to be a member of the Community of Jesus to join. The only thing necessary is a willingness to learn and become a part of a team.

"The winter percussion groups started because normal marching bands are typically active in the fall, during football season and then again in the summer with parades and band camps," Hale says. "A bunch of band directors started the winter percussion groups to keep the drum line active during the off season of winter."

Groups can compete both regionally and worldwide at events sponsored by the non-profit organization Winter Guard International, dubbed "Sport of the Arts" because of its mission to bring music to life through performance in a competitive environment. WGI began 37 years ago and over the years it has continued to grow exponentially.

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The ensemble is a competition group with local young people between the ages of 10 and 22.

Courtesy photo

If you go

What: 'Hero: The Dragons and Tigers Within,' a performance by Spirit of America Winter Percussion Ensemble

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, April 5

Where: Nauset Regional High School auditorium, 100 Cable Rd., Eastham

Admission: Free

Bonus: A fundraiser 'Dessert Auction' follows the performance.

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In 2012, the Spirit of America Winter Percussion Ensemble came in first place in its class for its division at the World Championships and the group hopes to repeat that success this year. Courtesy photo

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Last year more than 36,000 young people competed at the regional level and more than 12,000 competed at the Sport of the Arts World Championships to an audience of over 150,000 spectators. Hale says that more groups are expected this year and they had to move the competition to a larger facility as a result.

Competition falls into two divisions: scholastic, meaning members all attend the same school, or independent, which consists of ensembles that are not associated with a particular school. The Spirit of America Ensemble falls in the latter category.

“Hero: The Dragons and Tigers Within” is a six and a half minute performance. The ensemble will perform it twice during the

show at Nauset because there is too much for an audience to take in during one showing.

In addition to traditional percussion instruments, there will be Japanese Taiko drumming, spectacular choreography, lush costumes and an artistic set design. They will also do an exhibition of techniques to round out the performance. Afterward, the Spirit of America will hold a dessert auction, sponsored by the parents of the musicians, with all proceeds to benefit the ensemble’s trip to Dayton.

“The shows are very multi-faceted,” says Tingley. “They have an element of design and artistry that’s really pretty amazing to see.”

CROSSWORD

PREMIER Crossword

By Frank A. Longo

**BIRD
WATCHING**
ACROSS

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