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Pick of the Week

Craving Cultures

by [Gene Armstrong](#)

It's not unusual for performing arts showcases to feature a wide variety of performances. But comedy troupes, jugglers and rock bands? They'll all be part of the Fifth Annual ONE Love Multicultural Showcase, which is scheduled for Thursday evening, April 13--that's tonight, if you're picking up the *Weekly* on its official publication date--in the UA's Centennial Hall. Theta Nu Xi multicultural sorority is sponsoring the event.



Batucax

Theta Nu Xi is a relatively new organization. The sorority was founded in 1997 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Its mission is "to promote leadership, multiculturalism and self-improvement through academic excellence, involvement in and service to the campus and community, as well as being living examples of sisterhood across different races, cultures, religions, backgrounds and lifestyles."

The acronym ONE stands in for the Greek letters that represent the sorority's name. The UA chapter of Theta Nu Xi was established in 2003. Although Tucson audiences get to see arts showcases throughout the year--like the Family Arts Festival and Tucson Meet Yourself--this event is designed to show off the talents at the UA *and* in the surrounding community. The showcase is a celebration of the different ethnicities and cultures that coexist at the UA, according to a press release.

"It is through the arts, the sharing of our traditions without any stigmas or stereotypes, that the beauty of our unique heritages and cultural distinctness can be most easily transmitted and appreciated," wrote Theta Nu Xi secretary Pavla Senkyrikova in the press release.

"We offer the UA campus community a look into the richness of the world outside our own borders," Senkyrikova wrote.

The first showcase, in 2002, drew about 150 audience members, with more than 700 people showing up in the Modern Languages Auditorium in 2004. That prompted a move Centennial Hall last year, where more than 1,000 folks are expected to attend, said Opal Tometi, a UA graduate and one of the original organizers, via e-mail.

Tometi, formerly the event's chairperson, said, "People are constantly asking me when next it will take place, because they want to invite people from out of town so that they can see all the wonderful performance artists.

"I think it's a one-of-a-kind event, because there are so many cultures and talents represented at one venue. So, people are exposed to things they normally aren't privy to."

Tometi said that because the word "multicultural" is part of its title, the event's organizers have struggled with the definitions of culture. But it's all about inclusion, rather than exclusion.

"The goal is to show the beauty of cultures all around the world. Not only that, but to show contemporary cultures and talents that people have. Culture can be so many things. It can be referring to people's ethnic identity and the cultures therein or even what people create--for example, comedy troupes or break dancing."

Although the showcase is primarily one of performing arts, it's not hard to guess that the spirit of Theta Nu Xi is aligned with educator and researcher Paul Gorksi's "Working Definition of Multicultural Education."

In 2000, he wrote, "The underlying goal of multicultural education is to affect social change. The pathway toward this goal incorporates three strands of transformation: the transformation of self; the transformation of schools and schooling; and the transformation of society."

Which sounds like a good summation of the goals of the arts, no? Gorksi also wrote: "Multicultural education acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice."

Clearly, Theta Nu Xi is sympathetic to this end. In that spirit, donations at this otherwise-free event will be accepted to support Theta Nu Xi's philanthropic efforts through National Conference for Community and Justice. Among the performances included on the program will be Native American music and poetry, Mexican folkloric dance, Vietnamese dance, classical Indian dancing and Brazilian capoeira.

The UA's longtime improvisational-comedy revue, Comedy Corner, also will appear, as well as local bands. There'll be the rock 'n' roll of Orbital Bettie, the Brazilian drumming group Batuaxé, and G-Force Project, a world dance-music ensemble.

Tometi is obviously enthusiastic about the showcase, which has in past years presented performers such as Persian dancers, break dancers, salsa, a cappella singing, folk and reggae music.

"The artists are always so fantastic, and the audience always has a great time. It's great, because as people reflect on the showcase after they attend, they realize the beauty of the different peoples represented and hopefully gain more respect and love for our diverse world." The Fifth Annual One Love Multicultural Showcase will be held at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 13, in the University of Arizona's Centennial Hall, 1020 E. University Blvd. Admission is free.

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