



Unity in diversity



Rickards celebrates cultural variety, student talent at Pangaea production

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For nearly 25 years, Rickards High School has offered its students a unique opportunity to study through the International Baccalaureate Program. This rigorous curriculum is designed for academically motivated students of different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds.

Rickards students and their parents come from 51 different countries and 39 different languages are spoken in their homes. It's no wonder that this rich diversity is celebrated annually with a school-wide production called Pangaea.

Though there have been several supercontinents during Earth's geological history, the most recent is Pangaea, which incorporated almost all the landmasses on the planet. More than 200 million years ago, the action of plate tectonics began to slowly break Pangaea apart, rearranging the pieces into what we now recognize as our world. Using the unified supercontinent as a source of inspiration, Rickards students produce a varied, energetic, and action-packed event to an audience of more than 500 supporters.

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TOP: Wenxin Song plays the guzheng. PHOTO BY ANNA WIMAN
ABOVE: FreshMores dance group. PHOTO BY ANYA PRESTON

Pangaea

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The planning for this year's Pangaea performance began as soon as last year's ended. With 17 different acts and more than 100 performers, it would be safe to assume that a professional was overseeing the production or, at the very least, a faculty member was taking an active directorial role. In fact, the event from start to finish was student driven. Twelfth-graders Zayn Ahmed and Saniya Pradhan were eager to accept the challenge.

"It's basically completely student run," explains Saniya who served as the stage director. "I am obviously biased but I think it's the best thing that Rickards does. There's just a lot of passion and a lot of hard work and I think that people can really appreciate that and see it in the show."

Zayn was the technical director and he has a family history with the show. "My older brother was in charge of Pangaea. When I was in seventh or eighth grade, I sat in the back of the booth in a chair, just watching them get everything ready. I felt really interested and it opened my eyes about what's really out there in Tallahassee. That a high school would have this event was really cool."

Students exhibited their talents in a variety of art forms including salsa dancing, video production, Bollywood dancing, stage combat, guitar, singing, modeling traditional and regional folk costumes from dozens of countries, and playing the guzheng, a Chinese string instrument with more than 2,500 years of history. Rickards students were also joined by a number of alumni, students from other schools, and community members.

Rickards 11th-grader Sharry Solis was part of the Tallahassee Mabuhay Dance Company's performance. "When I started doing Pangaea, I was in middle school at Fairview and it just carried on from there. Our dance group is full of people from other schools and it brings not only Rickards together but people from other schools together. They invite their friends and their friends invite their friends, and the crowd is really big. It makes everyone feel more together even though we might go to different high schools or colleges, we still have a sense of togetherness."

Sharry is also in charge of the salsa club and she was inspired by the collaborative effort she experienced in preparing the choreography for Pangaea. "I wasn't expecting to be choreographing at all, I wasn't expecting to be in charge of two acts," Sharry said. "There are a lot of other people who helped me out. It's people who I never would have thought would be confident enough to get out of their



Wilfred and Mamie Odom are captured by Anya Preston, Rickards student photographer, as they perform rap.



Apurva Srivastava plays the guitar at Rickards.

comfort zone and choreograph a piece for all of us to share. I feel like I've seen a lot of people grow from this and I grew so much myself. I learned how to become a better leader and I feel like just being part of Pangaea can help you grow in ways that you'd never imagine."

Tenth-grader Amanda Wiman worked backstage during last year's performance. This year she tried something new. "I learned a lot about how to work the technology booth and the light system. I want to become a bigger part like Zayn and Saniya in the future."

Now that the 15th documented



Pangaea production is over, conversations are already taking place about next year's event.

"After the show, we always discuss what we did wrong and what we can do to make it better," said Rickards world language teacher Robert Amstutz. For the past four years, he has acted as the production's facilitator and he has seen an outpouring of support from the school's administration, faculty, and staff. This year was no exception. "Everyone in the school came together to make sure that whatever we needed to do would work."

In looking forward and preparing to pass the torch to Pangaea's next leaders, Saniya said, "it feels like we're carrying on a legacy and the fact that we're celebrating our diversity sends a really powerful message." Amanda agreed and added "they say we're the next generation and we're going to be taking over. I think that it's important that we're showing all the cultures coming together."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the assistant director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

Aries (March 21-April 19). people around you today, your average crew. There will be your gracious management of talents, crotchets and flaws.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). tions they wish you would ask waste your time trying to craft turn it around and quickly get course.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). shape under the crushes of co sure that you'd want to do so enriched by the influence of o be changed very much anyway

Cancer (June 22-July 22). A become even more compelling from learning will override an consciousness you may feel in ask

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Bein or project causes distortions o of the minutiae blinds you to you'll have to step back in ord

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). M right. You don't know where o one will tell you. Unlike a jeal surprise meant for you, the un your startling glee.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). W words, no touch, no eyes and of your beloved. You'll find yo substitutions" situation today.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). life to look like a magazine. B result as you seek a sense of p harmony in your environment this end.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. can rummage through to find tools, such as lenses that will o world. Just remember that the discovering, not for living in.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19 special quality within itself. It pact the world. If it is ignored this reason, today, you'll be su

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) your ideas than to protect the porters and challengers will sp process. Together you will leap ness.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). specialty of yours, but not tod you digging heels into the dir this place. You and you alone

Today's birthday (March widely beloved. You'll influen way. It's about what you stand work. You're devoted to furth way of operating. Your best fi — you'll just feel it. There will November. Cancer and Virgo a bers are: 7, 42, 21, 29 and 38.

TODAY IN HISTOR

Today is Wednesday, March There are 277 days left in the y

On this date in:
1638: Swedish colonists set
1936: German Chancellor A whelming victory in a plebiscit
1962: Jack Paar hosted NBC final time. (Johnny Carson deb October.)

1973: The last United State Vietnam, ending America's dir the Vietnam War.

1992: Democratic president acknowledged experimenting two" while attending Oxford d inhale and I didn't try it again.