



CHINESE L

Last year the 6th Meadowvale Venturers performed a Lion Dance for the residents at Yee Hong for Geriatric Care, as well as for the rest of the Scout Group members. I enjoyed the experience very much because I've always wanted to play an instrument for the Chinese Lion Dance. I may not know how to play the gong

Lion Dances are ancient and traditionally performed every Chinese New Year to welcome the New Year and chase away bad luck. They are also popular at weddings and other events. It's thrilling to hear the drum beat, the gong sound and cymbals clang! And the lions are fascinating to see in action. There are different styles of lion costumes, but they all look magnificent.

I've seen many Lion Dances on Chinese New Year, yet the dance never fails to amaze me over and over again. I love the drum the best out of the instruments. It's the loudest and the most important instrument because it leads the other instruments. You must also know the proper rhythm to beat out when you wish the lion to do a certain act at a certain time. The lion's dance matches the

properly, but I was delighted to at least participate in the performance and watch while my friends performed as lions. We put a lot of effort into it and I think we did a great job, even though we were amateurs. However a Chinese Lion Dance isn't just a show. There is a reason behind the dance.

beat of the instruments. Either the lion or the drum can lead the rhythm and tell the other person what to do by their action/ beat.

The greens that the lions pretend to eat and throw at the audience represent wealth. If you manage to catch the greens, it is supposed to bring you good luck. With the greens there is a red envelope; this is to pay the group for putting on the performance. The lion-head dancer must take it and slip it in his pocket without dropping it. A symbol of good luck, it's also believed that the envelope is there to reward the lion for its effort in chasing bad spirits away. Sometimes there may be a scroll of calligraphy to unfurl by holding one end with its mouth and letting it unroll.



*A search for greens
will bring wealth to
those who catch it.*

Photos: 6th Meadowvale Scout Group

LION DANCE

by Lucienne Pang

Two Dances, Two Costumes

There are two Lion Dances, Northern and Southern. The Northern Lion Dance differs from a Southern Lion Dance, from how the dancer moves to how the costume looks. With a mane and lots of fur, the Northern Lion costume looks a bit like a lion with wide eyes. The Northern Lion moves its legs more with the beat of the instruments, while the Southern Lion moves its head to the beat. Now I realize that the Lion Dances I've seen so many times have all been Southern Lion Dances.

The Southern Lion is showier looking with fancy decorations making it look more like a pretty dragon instead of a lion. Evil spirits are deflected by a mirror on the forehead. A horn on its head represents the phoenix, the beard represents a dragon, and the tail and ears represent a unicorn. These magical elements in the costume symbolize the lion's courage, energy and wisdom.



The Venturers prepare to start the Lion Dance.

Beautiful costumes of the Southern Lions.



include the 3-star movement, the 7-star movement and then the high dance. I remember that the lion also has to bow three times. The person being the lion's head has to learn all the proper ways of moving it in order to make it look like a real lion. However, I believe the person acting as the lion's tail has the hardest time. He or she has to crouch down during the whole performance, which may take a while. If they do not crouch down properly the lion would appear like a hunchback to the audience. The lion is to represent joy and chase away bad spirits; a hunchback lion definitely won't appear as a great figure!

I'm glad to be Oriental and have the privilege of watching Lion Dances. Next time you hear that a Chinese New Year is coming up, ask your Oriental friends if they know any

places that would be hosting a Chinese Lion Dance! It'll be lots of fun! \X

- by Lucienne Pang, 6th Meadowvale (ON) Venturer Company.

Chasing Bad Spirits

A Lion Dance is usually performed by a lion dance team or team of people from a Kung Fu school. They've been trained to do the Lion Dance or beat the instruments for the lion to dance along with. Many people believe that Lion Dances are part of the martial arts. I never thought of it before, but it does require skills such as hard work and strength — not to mention courage — to hold up the lion's head and dance in front of an audience. Sometimes there may also be a fat monk (also called a "Buddha"), at the beginning of the dance to wake the lion so it can chase away the bad spirits. However I've only seen a Lion Dance with a monk in it a couple of times. It's more common to see the lion dancing by itself for the whole dance.

Bad spirits are believed to walk in straight lines so the lion walks in zigzags to confuse them. As a little kid I always thought that was how a lion was supposed to walk; I had never noticed much about the dance until we started to learn how to do it.

In order to scare away the bad spirits, the lion has to be energetic. Before eating the greens, the dance must

Linking to Strategic Directions # 4 & # 6.

Check it Out!

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