

A Global Dance Party for the Masses

An annual multi-cultural dance collaboration kicks off.

By [Roxanne Ray](#)

Posted in [Arts](#), Volume 37 No. 23



The kids will take the stage Friday.

On December 3, Seattle Theatre Group will present its annual Global Dance Party, a festive event featuring dance performances by several local and regional youth dance groups.

Global Dance Party is an offshoot of DANCE This, a program initiated twelve years ago by Vicky Lee, STG's Director of Education and Performance Programs.

"There is so much young talent and cultural diversity in the Pacific Northwest," says Liz Young, STG's Education and Community Partnership Manager.

Young says Lee created DANCE This as "a catalyst for dance groups from diverse styles to come together for collaboration and cultural exchange."

Each Autumn, Global Dance Party brings back dance groups from the prior summer's DANCE This performance and pairs them with a couple of new dance groups, to foster artistic and personal development of youth participants and invest in young talent in the Pacific Northwest.

Asian American dance groups have been regularly represented in these collaborations.

"In the past we have had the incredible opportunity to work with amazing artists from the Chinese Girls Drill Team to Morningstar Korean Dance to Cambodian dance," Young says. "Each one has brought an incredible sense of historical tradition, precision, dynamics, rhythm, and intricate detail to our stages."

Following each group's performance, the show will end with a cross-cultural collaborative finale choreographed by guest choreographer Amy O'Neal, who also serves as Artistic Director, choreographer, and performer of the companies locust and amy/tinyrage.

O'Neal also filled this role for Global Dance Party in 2009. "Last year in our rehearsal, I was so delighted at how open everyone was. Every group was willing and able to mix it up and got really into it," she reports.

This year's finale will pose new challenges. Last year, O'Neal says, "I knew most of the groups from the Dance This program. This year, there are some groups I have never met or seen, so it will be interesting and exciting."

O'Neal says a primary goal is "making sure I am not disrespecting any tradition."

"Some cultural forms are very particular and purist about what can be changed and what cannot, as well as what context a particular movement can exist in," she says. "Some dances have to be done to specific kinds of music, so I like to ask what is fair game and what I have to stay away from."

Another challenge arises in the choreographic process. "Finding movements that can be done all together for a big group can be challenging because of the difference in styles and all the variations of how different bodies perform that particular style."

A third challenge is the short rehearsal period. "Since I don't have a lot of time to work with everyone, two rehearsals in fact, I look at rhythm first," O'Neal says. "The majority of cultural dance forms are grounded in a specific rhythm, so I look for the ones that are connecting the most instantly and use them to bring the group together."

She says, "I love observing and finding the similarities in rhythm and shape and putting two different dance forms right next to each other to create a sort of movement conversation."

One dance crew, the Vicious Puppies Crew, reports that the experience has been very rewarding. "Each showcase experience is humbling and inspiring; this is our main source of motivation," says VPC. "That motivation pushes us individually and as a family as our striving for excellence advances and helps us achieve all-around greatness."

Global Dance Party has helped the Vicious Puppies attain these goals. "We, as a crew, intend to contribute to the community in great ways like we have received ourselves," they say.

Liz Young of STG expects this artistic youth development to continue. "We are always on the hunt for new groups!"

"It is incredible what happens when you get a hundred serious young dancers from different cultures learning from and with each other," she adds. "Possibilities are endless."

***"Global Dance Party" performs on December 3, at the Moore Theatre, 1932
Second Avenue, Seattle.***