T his upcoming summer quarter, Cal State East Bay will introduce a musical theatre piece based on the life and legacy of Mahalia Jackson, the proclaimed “Queen of Gospel.” Mahalia Jackson, nicknamed Hule, was one of the most influential gospel singers in the world.

Born on October 27, 1911, Jackson was raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. Jackson was a Baptist preacher, and her father was a Baptist minister. She became known as a gospel singer and eventually became one of the most influential singers in the world.

In 1950, Jackson became the first gospel singer to perform at New York City’s Carnegie Hall. As her career continued, Jackson fell under attack by people who felt that her music was becoming watered down for a more popular audience. However, Jackson did not let the discouragement affect her true calling to fame. In 1953, Jackson sang “How I Got Over” and “I’ve Been Scorned,” at his funeral. After Mahalia Jackson’s death in 1972 from heart failure, her legacy still remains.

The play, titled “Halie! A Celebration,” is under the direction of Darly V. Jones, associate professor of the theatre and dance department. For those who believe they have what it takes or would like to take on a challenge of a lifetime, the role of Ms. Mahalia Jackson, auditions will begin May 1 from 1 to 4 p.m. in the University Theatre.

BY TRACY ORZOCO
Staff writer

W hile James Logan High School will officially inaugurate its newest performing arts center May 22 with “The Show of Shows,” the first performance in the venue will be “El Ballet Folklorico” by James Logan’s own dance company May 15.

James Logan Dance director and student counselor, Jaime Huertas, started the group 20 years ago after a group of students expressed interest in dancing. “I was a dancer myself. I was asked to teach a few dances, I didn’t expect to start a dance group,” Huertas said. “Every year we had returning and new students and eventually we became a recognized dance company.”

Twenty years later El Ballet Folklorico prepares for one of the most monumental shows they have ever hosted.

Twelve five dancers are set to take part in the program which will include 18 traditional dances from six different Mexican regions.

“Preparing for a show of this magnitude is a production in itself,” said assistant director Lisa Moreno. “We are looking at six costume changes which is equivalent to about 50 individual costumes, along with shoes, hair pieces and accessories. For this particular show we will begin preparation six hours before.”

The newly built Performing Arts Center has a seating capacity of 599 people. Jaime Huertas expects a sold out show. Former dancers and radio personality Silvia Chacon will serve as master of ceremonies.

BY TRI NGUYEN
Staff Writer

T he Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival took place in early March in San Francisco. The event was held at the San Francisco Civic Center and was one of the largest events in the city. For the past 43 years, the event has been one of the Bay Area’s most prominent celebrations of Japanese culture and tradition.

The festival typically draws over 150,000 people to view the cherry blossom in full bloom. Traditional Japanese dance and music are also featured.

The first Cherry Blossom event was held in 1967. A brief look at the crowds makes it clear that the Cherry Blossom Festival is not just an Asian parade. People of every ethnicity are drawn to the festival. At the food stands, people tasted exotic dishes and traditional fare.

This year the festival’s colorful decorations were vibrant. People dressed in traditional Japanese clothing, some dressed in costumes. Traditional Japanese music could be heard in the distance. Women wearing traditional Japanese make-up and costumes entertained the crowd.

“I t’s very different to what one would expect,” said Chiitzi O’Brien, a first-time attendee. “Every year we can see that the crowd is growing,” said Tom Ono, a vendor at the festival. “The turnout this year was a little better than last year. The weather was great.”

The event is one of several Cherry Blossom festivals held throughout the United States. The most prominent one is the National Cherry Blossom Festival held in Washington, D.C. It is in commemoration for the gift of Japanese cherry trees from Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo to the city of Washington. The donation was an effort to strengthen friendship between the United States and Japan.