



Members of the Grant Avenue Follies, ages 60-76, will perform at the close of each "Almond Eyes" show.

## 'Almond Eyes' recreates '40s famed Asian dancing duo

- July 13, 2009. By Diane Daniel

The Grant Avenue Follies, a San Francisco troupe of Asian American chorus girls who began performing in San Francisco as early as the 1940s, will perform on the California State University, East Bay stage July 24 and 25, following the Highlands Summer Theatre production of "Almond Eyes."

The original musical by Jay Chee and JoAnn Yuen, directed by A. Fajilan, is based on the life of dancer Dorothy Takahashi and her partner, Paul Wing Jew (shortened to Toy & Wing for marquee appeal), who were known as the Asian Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.

Discrimination on the West Coast during World War II dashed their dreams of fame in Hollywood, and their careers concluded with the demise of the famed Chop Suey Circuit in San Francisco, where Asian American performers (known as "Orientals") entertained in elaborate supper clubs during the 1940s and '50s.

Through Broadway-style music, dance and comedy, "Almond Eyes" tells an uplifting story of love, breakups and reunions that are interwoven with the state's Asian American history.

Several members of the Grand Avenue Follies, who are now ages 60 to 76, will recreate a dance number to close CSUEB shows. Toy, now 91, is scheduled to attend opening night.

Tickets to the performances at 8 p.m. Friday, July 24, and 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, July 25, are \$18 for general admission; \$15 for youth, seniors and alumni; and \$10 for CSUEB students with an I.D. They may be reserved at [http://class.csueastbay.edu/theatre/Ticket\\_Reservations.php](http://class.csueastbay.edu/theatre/Ticket_Reservations.php)<sup>[5]</sup> or (510) 885-3118.

Highlands Summer Theatre continues Aug. 7, 8, 14 and 16 with "Romeo and Juliet," by William Shakespeare, and directed by Melissa Hillman.