Tufts International Club hosted its annual Parade of Nations this past Saturday in Cohen Auditorium, celebrating the diversity of international identities at Tufts, according to Parade of Nations Co-director Shanice Kok.

According to Kok, a junior, the event featured performances by a number of student groups, including Pulse, Wuzee and La Salsa.

“We try to build a culture show of all the diverse performance groups on campus,” she said, adding that culture shows usually showcase a specific type of talent. “We try to reach out to a lot of people … I think this year we did a really good job of having a really diverse group of performances.”

“It was very interesting to see how all these groups represented different parts of the world,” fellow Parade of Nations Co-director Ellis Juan told the Daily in an e-mail.

Kok said that some of the groups featured this year that had not participated in previous years included Tufts African Dance Collective, BEATS and S-Factor.

“This is the first time in a while we’ve had an a cappella group,” she said of S-Factor. “They sang one song in Hebrew, which was great.”

Kok noted that the organizers wanted to feature more singing in the show this year. Seniors Leslie-Ann Flego and
Marcy Regalado performed a medley of love songs, one of which was in Spanish.

“The Parade of Nations celebrates and brings to knowledge Tufts’ diverse student body and international culture,” Juan, a sophomore, said. “With a school as international as Tufts, the Parade of Nations serves as a yearly culmination of our rich cultural history.”

Kok explained that this year’s Parade of Nations encountered difficulties with organization and preparation because of snow days and a delayed start in advertising. The directors estimated that an audience of between 120 and 160 attended the event, which was a smaller audience than in previous years.

Senior Anna Zhou also received the Oliver Chapman Leadership and Community Service Award during the event. According to Kok, the annual award — established in memory of Oliver Chapman, an international student from Panama who passed away in 1992 — recognizes a senior who has been an avid participant in Tufts campus life, usually an active member of the international community.

The event concluded with a flag show in which students represented their countries of origin in front of the audience by carrying their countries’ flags across the Cohen stage. Kok estimated that about 20 nations were represented at this year’s flag show, compared to over 30 countries last year, although multiple students represented each country.

“It’s always a really fun thing where there’s blasting music and people just [walk] down the aisles,” Kok said. “Some of them are in their national costumes, and I’m just amazed that they brought them to Tufts.”

Sophomore Sibonay Koo, a Chinese-American student who grew up in Singapore, said that she enjoyed performing with La Salsa and watching the flag show.

“The audience, despite its relatively small size, was very enthusiastic,” she said. “I really appreciate events such as Parade of Nations since they acknowledge and validate all these identities on campus that often get buried. With a lot of the people in the show, they’re involved in so much other stuff … you often forget about their national and cultural identities. It’s nice to see them affirmed and brought to the fore.”

Martha Rimniceanu, a sophomore from Romania, was originally disappointed that the International Center did not have a Romanian flag, but the International Center soon remedied the situation.

 “[The International Center] went and bought a Romanian flag for me, which was really sweet of them,” she said. “I’m grateful that they got one because I got to add to the show by representing my country.”

Looking ahead, Juan would like to incorporate more audience participation into the show, while Kok said that they are considering making it an unticketed event.

“Parade of Nations is something that I look forward to every year,” Kok said. “It’s definitely very stressful … getting it all together … but it always turns out really well, and I always have so much fun backstage that it’s worth it.”