

Thursday, January 19, 2023

Friday, January 20, 2023

10AM & 12:30PM

An NJPAC SchoolTime Production

Nai-Ni Chen

Dance Company

Year of the Black

Water Rabbit

Artistic Director
Greta Campo

Director of Creative &
Contemporary Dance
PeiJu Chien-Pott

Director of Traditional
Dance & Preservation
Ying Shi

Lighting Design/
Stage Management
Jennifer Fok

The Company

Greta Campo, Candace Jarvis, Rio Kikuchi, Evan Matthew Stewart,
Yao-Zhong Zhang, Namhui Kim, Emma Branson, Esteban Santamaria,
Kyle H. Martin, Sarah Botero, Thibaut Witzleb, Mireille Lorenzo

**As a courtesy to the performers and fellow audience members, please be sure to silence all mobile devices.
The use of recording equipment and the taking of photographs are strictly prohibited.**



Made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts,
a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts

program

Lion in the City

Commissioned by the New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Choreography by PeiJu Chien-Pott &

hip hop dance legends DJ Kwikstep and Rokafella

Assistant Choreographer Yvonne H. Chow

Lion Dance Master Henry Lee

Costumes by PeiJu Chien-Pott, Rokafella, Javier Valencia of SoHarlem

Music Composition by DJ KS360/Kwikstep

with traditional drumming by Henry Lee

Performed by

Evan Matthew Stewart, Esteban Santamaria, Emma Branson

One of the most popular dances performed in the Chinese New Year celebration. The Lion Dance is a prayer for peace on earth, as the dance displays how a child is able to play with a ferocious beast in harmony. There are many styles of The Lion Dance in China. This year, the Company is celebrating the 50th anniversary of hip hop and memorializing the pioneering spirit of Nai-Ni Chen, who began working with DJ Kwikstep and Rokafella in 2017 and developed a dialogue between her contemporary Chinese dance and hip hop. We thank the Jersey City Theater Center for the development space for this work in Jersey City.

Peacocks Under the Moonlight

Choreography by Nai-Ni Chen

Music: Dai minority folk music for Hulusi

(a reed instrument from the Yunnan province)

Performed by

Rio Kikuchi, Namhui Kim, Emma Branson

There are more than 55 ethnic groups living in China, and each group has unique dances and music. The peacock is considered to be a sacred bird among the Dai people in the Yunnan province. The dancers take on the role of the peacock with their grace and elegance, solidifying this dance as one of the most beautiful from that province. Many of the movements in this piece are derived from real actions of the peacock, such as drinking water, walking, running and grooming its feathers.

The solo musical instrument, the Hulusi, was primarily used in the Yunnan province by the Dai and other non-Han ethnic groups, but is now played throughout China. Similar to the Bawu, another free reed pipe, the Hulusi has a pure, clarinet-like sound.

Long Spear Dance

Arranged by Nai-Ni Chen

Music by Peking Opera percussion music

Costumes: Traditional Beijing opera costumes

Performed by

Yao-Zhong Zhang

This dance combines the beauty and grace of Chinese opera technique with the excitement of martial arts. The dance tells the story of a young warrior preparing to defend his homeland in battle. Even as he displays concentration and strength, he is determined to keep the peace. The dramatic tension is shown through silent poses and athletic movements.

Raindrops

Choreography by Nai-Ni Chen

Music by Robert Rich, Sainkho Namtchylak

Costumes by Olu Orondava

Original Lighting Design by A.C. Hickox

Performed by

Rio Kikuchi, Namhui Kim, Mireille Lorenzo, Sarah Botero

For this dance, Nai-Ni Chen drew inspiration from Keelung, the Taiwanese city in which she was born. The city is also known as “Rain Harbor.”

Yung Ge (Harvest Dance)

Arranged by Wei Chen with Nai-Ni Chen

Music & Costume: Traditional Han folk music and costumes

Performed by

The Company

Yung Ge is one of the most popular folk dances of the Han people in Northeast China. During harvest time or the Lunar New Year celebration, villagers gather in the fields and dance with fans, handkerchiefs and drums to welcome the New Year. Their movements are stylized, energetic and are usually performed to a repetitive drum beat.

program

Dragon Festival

Choreography by **Nai-Ni Chen**

Music: **Chinese Traditional**

Costumes by **Hilary Blumenthal**

Performed by

The Company

The most spectacular folk dance performed in the Chinese New Year celebration, Dragon Festival highlights the auspicious powers and natural grace of the dragon. The dragon is a spiritual and cultural symbol that represents prosperity and good luck. In this dance, the dragon descends from heaven, blesses the earth and swims down to the ocean where it is offered a pearl by a pearl goddess. Blue flags symbolize water and bountiful rainfall in the coming year. Colorful ribbons are displayed as a prayer for the prosperity of the community. For those fortunate enough to see this dance as part of the Chinese New Year, their coming year will be filled with peace, harmony and food fortune.

meet the directors

Greta Campo began dance training in her native Milan at the Carcano Theater, where she was first introduced to Martha Graham's work. At age 19, she began the Professional Training Program at the Martha Graham School in NYC and eventually joined Graham II, performing in both ensemble and solo roles. She performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company both nationally and internationally as a member of the corps. She completed the Teacher Training Program at the school. Greta received the 2016 Rising Star Award from Fini Dance Festival. She joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in 2012. Aside from dancing with the company, she teaches classes that serve several communities, including children with disabilities, public school students, college students and masterclasses with Nai-Ni Chen. Since 2020, Greta has been teaching

the company style, Kinetic Spiral, via Zoom. She joined in on different projects with Buglisi Dance Theater in 2019.

PeiJu Chien-Pott, *Director of Contemporary/Creative Dance*, is an internationally acclaimed contemporary dance artist from Taiwan. She is described as "one of the greatest living dancers," celebrated for her work as a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and performances in the Graham repertory. On the theater stage, she was a principal actress in the latest Kung Fu musical *Dragon Spring Phoenix Rise* at The Shed, choreographed by Akram Khan. She holds a BFA in dance from the Taipei National University of the Arts, where she was honored with the Outstanding Alumni Award. Other accolades include a Bessie for

meet the directors

Outstanding Performance, the Premia Positano La Danza Léonide Massine for Best Female Contemporary Dancer, Capri International Dance Awards and numerous awards in her native Taiwan. She has also been featured in the 2014 and 2017 issues of *Dance Magazine*. PeiJu currently serves as a faculty member at The Ailey School, and her commercial work is represented by MMG New York.

Ying Shi, *Choreographer/Director of Traditional Dance and Preservation*, is from Beijing, China. She received her bachelor's degree in Chinese dance from the Beijing Dance Academy and her master's from the School of Arts at Peking University. Her extensive experience teaching Chinese classical dance includes the Ailian Chan Dance School (Beijing), the Beijing Dance Academy and the Tsinghua University Dance Troupe. As a young dancer, she was a member of the Nanchang Song & Dance Troupe in the Jiangxi Province. She joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in 2013 and established her own school in 2019. She is the gold medal award winner of the Overseas TaoLi Cup professional division in 2019

Jennifer Fok, *Lighting Designer and Stage Manager*, is a Chinese-American lighting designer based in New York City. Her designs center around reimagining classics, exploring new work and collaborating with interdisciplinary arts in movement, dance and music. She is interested in telling stories that explore the vulnerability of the human condition and pushes us to examine the uncomfortable aspects of our shared humanity. Jennifer received her BFA in

guest artists

theater production and design from Ithaca College. Select designs have been seen at Long Wharf Theatre, The Know Theatre of Cincinnati, Gibney Dance, HERE Arts Center, Portland Stage, The New School for Drama, Bates Dance Festival, NCPA Beijing, Flynn Space, Ars Nova, Luna Stage, The Theater at Monmouth, Ensemble Studio Theatre and Company One Boston among others.

Ana “Rokafella” Garcia is an NYC native who has represented women in hip hop dance professionally over the past two decades. She co-founded Full Circle Productions, Inc., NYC's only nonprofit hip hop dance theater company, with her husband Kwikstep. She directed a documentary highlighting the B-Girl lifestyle entitled *All the Ladies Say*, “previously presented as a SchoolTime program. She also worked within the NYC public school system and at various community centers to set up programs that help expose students to a career in dance. In addition to being featured in rap music videos, tours, films and commercials, she choreographed for festivals and concerts such as Lincoln Center Out of Doors, MoMa's Hip Hop Kitchen and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Outside of dance, she recorded original songs and poetry as part of NJPAC's Alternate Routes and Little Island festivals. Presently, Rokafella is an adjunct professor at The New School and a DANCE NYC Annual Symposium Planning Committee member.

Gabriel “Kwikstep” Dionisio is a hip hop dancer, choreographer, dj, actor and artistic director born and raised in New York City. From a young

guest artist

age, he began to pursue the techniques known as popping, boogaloo and locking. His first tour was with the “New York Express” on a 12-city tour around China at the age of 19. By 1991 he had won a Bessie award for choreography and founded the internationally known Full Circle Productions with his wife Rokafella. He was a principal dancer in companies such as Rhythm Technicians and GhettoOriginal who were the creators of “Jam on the Groove” which was nominated for a Drama Desk Award in 1996. He has done commercial work for Dr. Pepper, Levi’s, Stride Gum and a Spike Lee commercial for IAM.com. He has also appeared in films, TV and video work which include Brown Sugar starring Sanaa Lathan, Missy Elliott, KRS-One, Fabolous and VHI *Hip Hop Honors* to name a few.

Henry Lee is a martial arts (Wing Chun, Lion Dance) teacher and community activist. His experience in the art of Chinese Lion Dance started in NYC Chinatown at an early age through a community youth group, and under the instructions of several Kung Fu masters of his time. In 2006, he formed the Asian American Dragon and Lion Dance Association to promote and preserve the art of both dances. It quickly grew to become one of the most important resources for dragon and lion gear in the United States. Today, Henry continues to teach traditional dance to children grades K – 12 at the Bergen Chinese School in Tenafly, NJ. He continues to serve as the president of OCA NJ.

Full Circle Souljahs are a Bronx-based street dance company/crew supported by the nonprofit organization Full Circle Productions, Inc. Under the direction of world-renowned hip hop dance duo Kwikstep and Rokafella, the vision is to preserve and embrace New York City’s hip hop culture as it evolves on stage, in a cypher, in classrooms and in your heart. Inspired by the street and brought into theaters, Full Circle offers a complete spectrum of hip hop culture that is approachable and straight from the soul.

Yvonne Huatin Chow, *Assistant Choreographer of Lion Dance*, is a first-generation Chinese American queer woman from the Bay Area, CA (Ohlone land). After high school, she moved to the birthplace of hip hop, NYC (Lenape land) to immerse herself in a culture and art form that spoke deeply to her. She is a choreographer, educator and curator and currently serves as the director of operations and education director of H+ Hip Hop Dance Conservatory. In 2015, she founded House of Chow, a repertory company created to honor her family lineage and provide purposeful leadership to the next generation of Asians in hip hop dance. As a dance advocate, Yvonne represents H+ at the United Nations ECOSOC and serves on the Steering Committee of the NY Dance and Performance Awards.

Candace Jarvis, *Dancer*, originally from Brampton, Ontario, began her professional training at Bold Dance Company under the direction of Emilio and Stephanie Macri. She continued her training at The Ailey School as a certificate student. She has

meet the dancer

performed works by many choreographers including Amy Hall, Tracy Inman, Carlos Dos Santos and Norbert De La Cruz III. In 2013, she performed in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and took part in Robert Battle's New Directors Choreographer's Lab at The Ailey School. Candace was a former member of Awaken Dance Theater under the direction of Rebekka Nodhturnt. In 2015, she earned her certificate of honors from The Ailey School Certificate Program and joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.

Evan Matthew Stewart, *Dancer*, originally from Buffalo, NY, began his dance training at Miss Barbara's School of Dance and, at the age of 10, continued to advance his training at David deMarie Dance Studio in various styles like tap, ballet and jazz. He also attended the Royal Academy of Ballet (Buffalo, NY) under the direction of Beth Waddell and, while in college, attended the Joffrey School of Ballet's New York City Summer Intensive. In 2016, he graduated from the University of Buffalo with a BFA in dance and a minor in counseling. Since moving to NYC, he has had the opportunity to work with Ebony Williams and perform for her at Jacob's Pillow. He is also a dancer in the hit film *In the Heights*, directed by Jon Chu and choreographed by Chris Scott.

Rio Kikuchi, *Dancer*, was born in Tokyo, Japan. At the age of three, she began ballet training at Studio Benus in Japan and was later introduced to tap and jazz. In 2017, she moved to New York and was offered a scholarship

to study at The Ailey School. In addition, she received a scholarship to the Alonzo King Lines Ballet Summer Program in 2019. She has worked with Ronni Favors, and Darshan Singh Bhuller and performed *Memora* with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater New York City Center in 2018.

Namhui Kim, *Dancer*, was born and raised in Tokyo and is of Korean heritage. She began her training with Hiromi Dance Company in ballet, jazz, tap, theater and voice. She performed in many theater productions such as *Annie* that toured Japan. Namhui came to New York City in 2017 to pursue a BA in dance at Hunter College, where she got opportunities to train in the Parsons Dance summer intensive, and the winter intensives with Monica Bill Barnes & Co. along with Doug Varone and Dancers as a full scholarship student. She also received training at The Ailey School as a professional division student in 2019. She has also danced in works by Blakeley White-McGuire, Larry Keigwin, Peter Cheng, Jessica Castro, Rebecca Margolick, Jamie Thompson and Karisma Jay.

Thibaut Witzleb, *Dancer*, is a graduate of the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and the Ailey School where he earned a Horton Teaching certification. He had the opportunity to dance in *Revelations* with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City Center in 2019, which was broadcasted on network television. He also took part in Jacquelyn Buglisi's *Table of Silence* 9/11 Memorial in Lincoln Center for the past three years. Thibaut danced with Mosley's

meet the dancers

Hearts of Men Diversity of Dance, International Ballet Festival of Union City, Ballet Beyond Borders International Los Angeles and Fordham and Columbia University. Thibaut also worked for the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Paul Taylor Dance Foundation and the *Dance Magazine Awards* in 2019 and 2020.

Esteban Santamaria, *Dancer*, is from Colón, Panamá, and graduated SummaCum Laude with a BFA in dance from the Universidad de Panamá and from The Ailey School. Esteban is a former company member of the Ballet Nacional de Panamá and Graham 2. Esteban also performed with the Martha Graham Dance company in Europe.

Emma Branson, *Dancer*, began dancing at Tri-Cities Academy of Ballet in Richland, Washington under the direction of Debra Pearse Rogo. Augmenting her dance education, Emma attended summer dance intensives such as the Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Program, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Paul Taylor Dance Company, American Ballet Theater and The Juilliard School. Emma is a recent graduate of the Boston Conservatory at Berklee on scholarship where she earned her BFA in contemporary dance performance and represented as the Wendy McCain Dance Scholar. While finishing her studies, Emma was an apprentice with Complexions Contemporary Ballet where she performed Dwight Rhoden's works all over the United States and Europe. She has worked in choreographic residencies with and performed works by Dwight Rhoden, Helen Pickett,

Francesca Harper, Maleek Washington, Margo Sappington, Rex Wheeler, Daniel Pelzig and more.

Yao-Zhong Zhang, *Dancer*, came from Shanghai, China, where he graduated from the Shanghai Kuan Opera School with a major in the male warrior role. He performed with the Shanghai Kuan Opera Theater for 10 years before moving to New York, where he also performs with the Tong-Ching Chinese Opera Company. He has been a member of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company since 2000.

Kyle H. Martin, *Dancer*, was originally from Montclair, NJ. Kyle began his dance training at Sharron Miller's Academy for The Performing Arts. He continued his training at The Ailey School where he graduated with honors from the certificate program. Soon after, he joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's second company Ailey II from 2018-2020 where he traveled internationally and domestically. Kyle has performed works by Twyla Tharp William Forsythe, Wayne McGregor, Matthew Rushing, Robert Battle, Judith Jamison, Hope Boykin, Christopher Huggins, Pascal Rioult, Ray Mercer, Frederick Earl Mosley, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Pascal Rioult, Pedro Ruiz, Christian Von Howard, Bradley Shelver, Yoshito Sakuraba and Norbert De La Cruz. Kyle also has appeared in *Dance Teacher Magazine*, Tommy Hilfiger's Pride Campaign and *Out Magazine*.

meet the dancers

Sarah Botero, *Dancer*, is from North Bergen, NJ. Sarah earned her BFA from SUNY Purchase College's Conservatory of Dance. She continued her training in The Ailey School Scholarship Program. She has had the opportunity to perform in works by Hope Boykin, Manuel Vignoulle, Rena Butler, Brice Mousset, Bradley Shelver and Earl Mosley. She is currently an apprentice with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. Sarah also has a passion for teaching and hopes to pursue being a dance educator.

Mireille Lorenzo, *Dancer*, is a graduate scholarship student from The Ailey School. She has been dancing since the age of six, where she studied at the Dance Theater in Manila, Philippines in affiliation with The Australian Conservatoire of Ballet in Melbourne. She is currently an apprentice at the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, DanKerr & Dancers and is a ballet teaching assistant for the junior division at The Ailey School. She is an ABT Certified Teacher for ABT's National Training Curriculum from pre-primary to level three. She was trained as a certified Horton teacher by Ana Marie Forsythe.

about nai-ni chen

Nai-Ni Chen (1959-2021), was the choreographer and founding artistic director of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, one of the few professional touring Asian American dance companies led by a woman in the United States. Since the Company's inception in 1988, she created a wide-ranging repertory – from dances that

originated thousands of years ago, to highly abstract modern works which were presented in numerous theaters throughout 41 states in the United States and in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Coming from a rich dance background, Nai-Ni Chen was a renowned traditional dancer in Taiwan and served on several ambassadorial culture missions to 19 countries around the world. An early member of the Cloud Gate Dance Theater in Taiwan, she came to America to seek her own voice in the world of contemporary dance in 1982. Winning critical acclaim worldwide, she received the Choreographer's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Her work was commissioned by the Joyce Theater Foundation, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the Lincoln Center Institute, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Dancing in the Streets and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. She taught master classes and set her choreography at colleges and universities throughout the United States such as Ailey School, Case Western Reserve and Long Island University. She also taught at dance festivals in Russia, Poland, Taiwan, China and Mongolia. As a guest choreographer, she created works for Dancing Wheels Company of Cleveland, Ohio, Ballet Met's in Columbus, Ohio, New Jersey Ballet and also for several opera productions in New Jersey.

In New York, she taught at Mary Anthony Dance Studio, Peridance and New York University,

about nai-ni chen

where she received her master's in dance and dance education. She was a principal affiliate artist of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center since its inception. On television, Ms. Chen was an often-featured artist on Sino Vision and PBS's State of the Arts. For her contribution to the community, she won numerous awards as "Culture Ambassador" from OCA, NJ Chinese American Chamber of Commerce and others.

meet the company

Bridging the grace of Asian elegance and American dynamism, the **Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company** is a premier provider of innovative cultural experiences that reflect the inspiring hope and energy of the immigrant's journey. The company's groundbreaking works have focused on themes from ancient Chinese legends that reflect issues of the present time to purely abstract, contemporary dances inspired by the art of Chinese calligraphy. An Asian-American company that celebrates the cross-cultural experience, the Company's productions naturally bring forth issues of identity, authenticity and equality.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company has been presented at some of the most prestigious concert halls such as the Joyce Theater, Lincoln Center in New York, Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts in California, the Raymond F. Kravis Center and the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center in Florida. The company appears annually at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Queens College, the College

of Staten Island and on Ellis Island. Internationally, the Company has been presented by international festivals including Open Look Festival in Russia, the Silesian International Contemporary Dance Festival and the Konfrontations International Festival in Poland, the Chang Mu International Dance Festival in Korea, the Meet in Beijing International Arts Festival in China and the Tamaulipas International Arts Festival in Mexico.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company has received more than 20 awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and numerous Citations of Excellence and grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Advancing Dance Education, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is currently in residence in New Jersey City University pioneering a program with the University's A. Harry Moore Laboratory School teaching dance to urban children with multiple disabilities.

njpac on the mic

For post-show resources, please visit:
njpac.org/education-program/nai-ni-chen-dance-company-year-of-the-black-water-rabbit-resources

acknowledgements

**A very special thanks to the
Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company**

Board of Directors:

Gina Andriolo, *President*

Ronald K. Chen, *Vice President*

Eileen Koski, *Secretary*

Theresa Shubeck, *Treasurer*

Nai-Ni Chen*

Andrew Chiang

Robert Sage

Victor Davson

Patricia Mayer

Marisa Pierson

*deceased

Programs of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company have been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/ Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor and the New York State Legislature, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, DanceNYC Dance Advancement Fund, the Hyde and Watson Foundation, E.J. Grassman Trust, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, New Music USA, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, American Dance Abroad, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters' Cultural Exchange Fund, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, PSEG, Proskauer, WAC Lighting and the Glow Foundation. WQXR is a media partner of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.

Major support provided by:



**Generous support for NJPAC's
SchoolTime Performance series
provided, in part, by:**



Generous support for NJPAC Arts Education provided by The Joan and Allen Bildner Family Fund, Broadridge Financial Solutions, Inc., The Arts Education Endowment Fund in honor of Raymond C. Chambers, Jennifer A. Chalsty, Judy and Stewart Colton, Toby and Leon Cooperman, Mimi and Edwin Feliciano, The Izzo Family, Don Katz & Leslie Larson, McCrane Foundation, Inc., care of Margrit McCrane, The MCJ Amelior Foundation, Albert+ and Katharine Merck+, NJ Advance Media, David & Marian Roker, The Sagner Companies/ The Sagner Family Foundation and an anonymous donor.

+deceased

acknowledgements