

teacher resource guide

schooltime  
performance  
series



nai-ni chen  
dance company

*year of the  
black water rabbit*

arts  
education  
njpac





## about the performance

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company returns to NJPAC to celebrate the Lunar New Year with *The Year of the Black Water Rabbit*. This festive production features the company's iconic Red Lions dancing to a hip hop beat, a visit from the beautiful Golden Dragon and so much more. Acrobats, musicians and dancers will perform in red and gold outfits, which are said to bring good fortune to all who attend the performance.

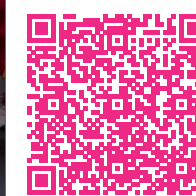
The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company was founded in 1988 by the late choreographer Nai-Ni Chen and her husband Andy Chiang. The couple shared a vision of creating

a company that was “a premier provider of innovative cultural experiences” to reflect the “hope and energy of the immigrant’s journey.”

Though Nai-Ni Chen passed away in 2021, her legacy lives on in the company’s performances. The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company continues to connect Chinese and American communities through dance and education.

## njpac on the mic podcast

with Andy Chiang



Scan the QR code to access the NJPAC on the Mic Podcast & show notes

**How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic**  
Scan the QR code or visit: [njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources](https://njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources) to access the podcast and the following show notes:

**Part 1: About** | *Pre-show audio, 7 minutes*

**Includes:** An introduction to the performance, artists & venue, welcome message

**Written and hosted by** Dania Ramos

**Additional writing by** Michael Aquino

**Sound editing and design by**

**Theme and outro music by** Slim Beats from NJPAC Hip Hop Arts and Culture Program

**Additional music performed by** Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company’s productions *Year of the Rat* and *Year of the Ox*

**Welcome message voiced by** Andy Chiang

**Part 2: Connect** | *Post-show audio, 10 minutes*

**Written and hosted by** Dania Ramos

**Additional writing by** Michael Aquino

**Sound editing and design by** Michael Aquino

**Theme and outro music by** Slim Beats from NJPAC Hip Hop Arts and Culture Program

**Additional music performed by** Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company’s productions *Year of the Rat* and *Year of the Ox*

**Opening question voiced by** Andy Chiang

**Part 3: Spotlight** | *Post-show audio, 18 minutes*

**Written and hosted by** Dania Ramos

**Additional writing by** Michael Aquino

**Sound editing and design by** Michael Aquino

**Theme and outro music by** Slim Beats from NJPAC Hip Hop Arts and Culture Program

**Additional music performed by** Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company’s productions *Year of the Rat* and *Year of the Ox*

**Interview guest** Andy Chiang

### About NJPAC On the Mic

NJPAC On the Mic is an audio resource that takes SchoolTime performances to the next level. This podcast series features three exclusive, curriculum-aligned episodes for all of NJPAC’s 2022-2023 SchoolTime performances. On the Mic offers students the opportunity to engage their listening skills, deepen their understanding of the performance and learn about the process of bringing a live or recorded production to life. This immersive audio experience features a theme song by students in the NJPAC arts education program.

# inspired ideas in the classroom

## Teacher Focus

## Student Activity

## NJ Student Learning Standards

P

### Prepare for the performance

**If you have...**  
**15 minutes:** Ask students to find China on a world map and make observations about its location. Introduce them to Chinese traditions, music and dance by watching one of the following videos: [Northern Lion Dance \(Singapore Zoo\)](#), [Prediction: What will happen to you in the Year of the Water Rabbit?](#)  
**25 minutes:** Do all of the above and ask students to listen to the book *Ruby's Chinese New Year*.  
**45 minutes:** Do all of the above and watch a video of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performing *Red Firecracker*. Use the questions in the student section as a springboard for discussion.

After watching the videos about Chinese culture, music, dance and the New Year, consider the following questions:  

1. What do you know about China or Chinese people? When looking at a world map, is China far away from the United States?
2. What do you predict you will see during the performance? What did you learn from the videos to support your predictions?
3. In response to the video "2023 Chinese Zodiac Rabbit Prediction," write a paragraph about one thing you think will happen in 2023. Provide evidence from the video that supports your prediction.

**English Language Arts**  
 NJLSA.SL1.  
 NJLSA.SL2.  
**NJ Arts Standards**  
 Standard 1.1  
**Social Studies**  
 6.1.5.GeoPP.6  
**Visual and Performing Arts**  
 1.1.12prof.Cn11a

E

### Experience the performance

Nai-Ni Chen, the founder of the dance company once said, "Dance is the movement of language." Encourage students to keep this quote in mind as they watch the performance. Explain to students that the dances that the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performs are rooted in Nai-Ni Chen's Chinese customs, beliefs, ceremonies and celebrations. Ask students to notice how costumes and music during a performance can help transport the audience to another place.

As you watch the performance, think about some of the following questions:  

1. What actions do the dancers perform?
2. How do they move (i.e., fast, slow, with strong or soft movements)?
3. How many dancers are on stage? Do they dance together on stage the whole show?
4. What props do the dancers use? How does their use of props tell a story?
5. How do the dances make you feel? What elements of the dances bring about those emotions?
6. What Chinese New Year traditions do you observe in the dances?

**English Language Arts**  
 NJLSA.SL1.  
 NJLSA.SL2.  
**Visual and Performing Arts**  
 1.1.5.Re7a  
 1.1.5.Re7b

R

### Reflect, respond and read

Replay *Red Firecracker* by Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. Encourage students to compare *Red Firecracker* with *Year of the Black Water Rabbit*. Facilitate a discussion using the questions in the student section. Reflect on aspects of Chinese culture the class learned about prior to the performance.  
 To celebrate the Chinese New Year, many people clean their homes to rid themselves of bad energies and make a fresh start in the New Year. While playing traditional **Chinese music**, ask students to assist in cleaning their space in silence. Encourage your students to pay attention to how their bodies are moving while they clean.

Rewatch the video of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company performing *Red Firecracker* and compare it with the performance you just saw. What does this clip have in common with *Year of the Black Water Rabbit*? What is different?  
 After cleaning your space with your class while listening to **Chinese instrumental music**, pose the following questions for discussion:  

1. How did cleaning together without talking feel?
2. Did you make any observations about how your body was moving while cleaning? Did you make any observations about how someone else's body was moving?

**English Language Arts**  
 NJLSA.SL1.  
 NJLSA.SL2.  
**Visual and Performing Arts**  
 1.1.5.Re7a  
 1.1.5.Re7b

F

### Focus

**Note to the Teacher:** As we facilitate lessons about culture, it is critically important that we have done the work to gain a foundational knowledge that honors the culture in genuine ways. This is especially important when the culture is not our own.  
 Share the following [video](#) about the Chinese tradition of giving red envelopes.  
 Read the background information about hongbao from **Student Activity Sheet 2**. If you have time, feel free to act out the mythological story with your students.

Read the background information about hongbao from your **Student Activity Sheet 2**. Watch the [video](#) to see how it is made in a traditional way. You can make your own hongbao by following this video. Alternatively, you can make your own version of what hongbao means to you by following the directions on the activity sheet.  
 You are welcome to use pencils, oil pastels, glue, tape, glitter, markers, different colored paper, etc.

**English Language Arts**  
 NJLSA.SL1.  
 NJLSA.SL2.  
**Visual and Performing Arts**  
 1.1.5.Re7a  
 1.1.5.Re7b  
 1.5.5.Cr2a  
 1.5.5.Cr2b  
 1.5.5.Cr2c

O

### Originate

Facilitate a discussion about traditions and the different types there are (i.e., *cultural, family, friends*). Then, ask students to think about their routines and rituals in the classroom. Develop a list of daily events that you and your students do together (i.e., *morning meeting, recess, birthday celebrations, deep breathing, stretching*).  
 Using one of your daily classroom routines as inspiration, ask students to co-create a dance that depicts the routine. Focus on the following:  
**Actions:** Students can practice different types of movements that relate to the topic they chose (i.e., *jumping, turning, traveling, open/closed movements, etc.*)  
**Energy:** Students can practice moving with different qualities that represent emotions, characters or imagery (i.e., *force, weight or flow*)  
 Refer to the following [video](#) for an overview of the elements of dance.

Take a moment to think about your culture. What do you celebrate and how? Can you share a story that depicts your culture or traditions? These answers can address family, friends, religion, sports and more to include all learners.  
 In groups, create a dance that depicts one of your classroom rituals or routines. Follow these steps when creating your dance:  

1. Choose the routine/ritual you will make a dance about.
2. Find a safe, open space to create and rehearse.
3. Work with your group to express your routine through movement. Include at least three actions: jumping, turning, traveling, open/closed movements, rising/sinking, stretching/bending, etc. Include at least two of the energy qualities: force (strong/gentle), weight (heavy/light) or flow (bound/free).
4. Add a beginning and an ending group shape (statue) that may resemble ones you saw in the Nai-Ni Chen performance.

**Dance**  
 1.1.5.Cr1a  
 1.1.5.Cr1b  
 1.1.5.Cr2a  
 1.1.5.Cr2b

R

### Rehearse

Allow your students time to rehearse their dances. Explain that their presentations do not have to be literal, but can represent the overall theme of their chosen ritual. Encourage them to use music or other audio if they choose. Ask students to perform for another group to give/receive constructive feedback.

You might find it helpful to create a checklist for your creative process:  

1. Rehearse your presentation with your group.
2. Perform your presentation for another group and give/receive feedback.
3. Make revisions as needed.
4. Be ready to share the performance with the whole class.

**Dance**  
 1.1.5.Cr3a  
 1.1.5.Pr6b  
 1.1.5.Pr6c

M

### Make magic

Give students a deadline by which to finish their presentations. Create a performance area in your classroom. Create a rubric together to provide feedback and for students to self-assess. Provide students with a reminder of audience etiquette before the performances begin. Encourage students to explain their inspiration and creative process before each performance.

It's your turn to take center stage! Share your creative piece with your peers. Ask your audience for feedback and comments. Self-assess your performance using the criteria your class created on the rubric.

**Dance**  
 1.1.5.Cn10a  
 1.1.5.Cn10b  
 1.1.5.Pr4a  
 1.1.5.Pr4b  
 1.1.5.Pr4c



# curriculum standards

## NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards

**1:** Generating and conceptualizing ideas.

### FIND THE STANDARDS

For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:

NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS  
[corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](http://corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy)

NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS  
[socialstudies.org/standards](http://socialstudies.org/standards)

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS  
[nationalartsstandards.org](http://nationalartsstandards.org)

# common core state standards

## Dance

### 1.1.5.Cn10a

Describe feelings and ideas evoked by a dance that are observed or performed and examine how they relate to personal points of view and experiences.

### 1.1.5.Cn10b

Use an inquiry base to investigate global issues, including climate change, expressed through a variety of dance genres, styles and cultural lenses.

### 1.1.5.Cr1a

Use a variety of stimuli (e.g., music, sound, text, objects, images, notation, experiences, observed dance, literary forms, natural phenomena, current news) to build dance content.

### 1.1.5.Cr1b

Solve multiple movement problems using the elements of dance to develop dance content.

### 1.1.5.Cr2a

Select a choreographic device to expand movement possibilities, create patterns and structures and develop a main idea. Use dance terminology to explain movement choices.

### 1.1.5.Cr2b

Develop a dance study by selecting a specific movement vocabulary to communicate a main idea. Discuss how the dance communicates non-verbally.

### 1.1.5.Cr3a

Revise movement based on peer feedback and self-reflection to improve communication of artistic intent in a dance study. Explain movement choices and revisions.

### 1.1.5.Pr4a

Perform planned and improvised movement sequences with increasing complexity in the use of space. Establish relationships with other dancers, increasing spatial awareness and design (e.g., diverse pathways, levels, patterns, focus, near/far).

### 1.1.5.Pr4b

Perform planned and improvised movement sequences with increasing complexity in the use of time/rhythm by accurately transferring rhythmic patterns from the auditory to the kinesthetic and responding immediately to tempo changes.

### 1.1.5.Pr4c

Perform planned and improvised movement sequences and dance combinations applying a variety of dynamics and energy (e.g., fast/slow, sharp/smooth, strong/gentle, tight/loose.)

### 1.1.5.Pr6b

Rehearse a dance to improve group awareness, unison movement, consistency, and attention to detail.

### 1.1.5.Pr6c

Dance for and with others in formal and informal settings. Identify and modify the main areas of a performance space and body movements using production terminology (e.g., stage left, stage right, center stage, upstage, downstage).

### 1.1.5.Re8a

Interpret meaning or intent in a dance or phrase based on its movements. Explain how the movements communicate the main idea of the dance using basic dance terminology.

## English Language Arts

### NJSLSA.SL1.

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### NJSLSA.SL2.

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.



## Social Studies

### 6.1.5.GeoPP.6

Compare and contrast the voluntary and involuntary migratory experiences of different groups of people and explain why their experiences differed.

## Visual and Performing Arts

### 1.1.12prof.Cn11a

Analyze and discuss the role of dance in a global society. Examine genres, styles, historical time periods, societal changes and perspectives and how those changes impact dance in relation to the ideas and perspectives of the people from whom the dances originate.

### 1.1.5.Re7a

Describe recurring patterns of movement and their relationships to the meaning of the dance.

### 1.1.5.Re7b

Compare and contrast qualities and characteristics to another dance genre or culture. Use basic dance terminology and elements of dance to describe the qualities and characteristics.

### 1.5.5.Cr2a

Experiment and develop skills in multiple artmaking techniques and approaches, through invention and practice.

### 1.5.5.Cr2b

Demonstrate craftsmanship through the safe and respectful use of materials, tools and equipment.

### 1.5.5.Cr2c

Individually or collaboratively represent environments or objects of personal significance that includes a process of peer discussion, revision and refinement.

## vocabulary

### Acrobatics

The performance of extreme gymnastic feats, such as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze. Acrobatics require excellent balance, agility, and coordination. In China, this ancient art form traces its roots to the Xia Dynasty 4,000 years ago.

### BCE

“Before Common Era,” meaning any date prior to the year 1 CE (Common Era). BC (Before Christ) means the same thing as BCE. AD (Anno Domini, which is Latin for “in the year of the Lord,”) means the same as CE.

### Buddhist

Someone who practices Buddhism, a nontheistic religion (a religion that does not believe in a creator or god) or philosophy largely based on teachings attributed to Gautama Buddha, commonly known as the Buddha (“the awakened one”).

### Characteristics

Features or qualities that typically belongs to a person, place, or thing and serves to identify it.

### Choreography

The art or practice of designing combinations and sequences of movements of physical bodies. The person who creates the steps, combinations and patterns of a ballet or dance is called the choreographer.

### Culture

The customs, arts, social institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people or other social group.

### Erhu

A traditional Chinese two-stringed violin or fiddle, played with a bow. The erhu dates from the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD).

### Hongbao

a traditional Chinese gift of money presented in a red envelope.

### Immigrant

A person who migrates from one country to another, usually for permanent residence.

### Lunar

A term to mean relating to the moon or of the moon. From luna, the Latin word for the moon. Usually embodied in ancient Rome as a woman wearing a crescent crown on her head and driving a chariot with horse or oxen.



### Pipa (pronounced “pee-paa”)

A four-stringed lute, somewhat like a guitar. With over 2,000 years of history, the pipa is one of the oldest Chinese musical instruments.

### Repertoire

A stock selection of plays, dances or pieces that a company or performer knows or is prepared to perform.

### Taoist

Someone who follows the philosophical Chinese tradition of Taoism. This philosophy emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao which means the “way,” “path” or “principle.” The Tao Te Ching is a book that contains the basic teachings of Lao Tzu, whose writings are considered the keystone of this philosophy.

### Zodiac

A belt of the heavens within about eight degrees either side of the ecliptic, including all apparent positions of the sun, moon and most familiar planets. It is divided into 12 equal divisions or signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces).

## resources

### Websites

NJPAC’s Arts Education programs  
[njpac.org/arts-education](http://njpac.org/arts-education)

About NJPAC  
[njpac.org/about](http://njpac.org/about)

Year of the Black Water Rabbit NJPAC resources  
[njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources](http://njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources)

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company Official Website  
[nainichen.org/programs](http://nainichen.org/programs)

Spotlight on Nai-Ni Chen: *Not Alone*  
A modern dance performance at Aljira  
[aljirablog.tumblr.com/post/100252879993](http://aljirablog.tumblr.com/post/100252879993)

Chinese Zodiac  
[chinesenewyear.net/zodiac](http://chinesenewyear.net/zodiac)

15 Fun Facts about Chinese New Year  
[chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/new-year-facts.htm](http://chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/new-year-facts.htm)

Chinese Immigrants in the United States  
[migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states](http://migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states)

10 Disappearing Chinese New Year Traditions  
[chinahighlights.com/festivals/chinese-new-year-disappearing-tradition.htm](http://chinahighlights.com/festivals/chinese-new-year-disappearing-tradition.htm)

A Traditional Chinese New Year  
[ftwmagazine.com/a-traditional-chinese-new-year](http://ftwmagazine.com/a-traditional-chinese-new-year)

Celebrating on Chinese New Year’s Day  
[thoughtco.com/chinese-new-years-day-687469](http://thoughtco.com/chinese-new-years-day-687469)

Nai-Ni Chen:  
Whose Dances Merged East and West, Dies at 62  
[nytimes.com/2021/12/13/arts/dance/nai-ni-chen-dead.html](http://nytimes.com/2021/12/13/arts/dance/nai-ni-chen-dead.html)

PBS | State of the Arts  
Unity: Choreographer Nai-Ni Chen Remembered  
[pbs.org/video/unity-choreographer-nai-ni-chen-remembered-vo2hxg](http://pbs.org/video/unity-choreographer-nai-ni-chen-remembered-vo2hxg)

MIT | Slice of MIT  
A Computer Scientist Applies Systems Thinking to Dance  
[alum.mit.edu/slice/computer-scientist-applies-systems-thinking-dance](http://alum.mit.edu/slice/computer-scientist-applies-systems-thinking-dance)

### Videos

Making traditional hongbao  
[youtube.com/watch?v=6cFY59AONFA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=6cFY59AONFA)

Traditional Chinese Instrumental Music  
[youtube.com/watch?v=vuCe77vBYQM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=vuCe77vBYQM)

2023 Chinese Zodiac Rabbit Prediction  
[youtube.com/watch?v=LdSRCB7b5Pl](https://youtube.com/watch?v=LdSRCB7b5Pl)

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company Demo  
[youtu.be.com/lxGaPU1gFaA](https://youtu.be.com/lxGaPU1gFaA)

Watch auditions for Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company  
[youtu.be.com/skzcAgt5StU](https://youtu.be.com/skzcAgt5StU)

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company: Song of the Phoenix  
[youtu.be/hop81BHvn\\_A](https://youtu.be/hop81BHvn_A)

Traditional Chinese Dance  
[youtu.be.com/Nom1Bl1JJ3k](https://youtu.be.com/Nom1Bl1JJ3k)

Beijing residents celebrate Chinese New Year with fireworks displays  
[theguardian.com/world/video/2015/feb/19/beijing-celebrates-chinese-new-year-fireworks-displays-video](https://theguardian.com/world/video/2015/feb/19/beijing-celebrates-chinese-new-year-fireworks-displays-video)

Elements of Dance: Elements of Dance  
[elementsofdance.org/begin-here.html](http://elementsofdance.org/begin-here.html)

### Books

*Ruby’s Chinese New Year*  
Vickie Lee and Joey Chou. Henry Holt and Co. (2017)

*Bringing in the New Year*  
Grace Lin. Dragon Fly Books (2010)

*Chelsea’s Chinese New Year*  
Lisa Bullard and Katie Saunders. Millbrook Pr Trade (2012)

*The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*  
Iris Chang. Penguin Books (2004)

*Chinese Dance: In the Vast Land and Beyond*  
Wesleyan (2016)

# njpac staff

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## NJPAC Arts Education performances team:

Randal Croudy, Natalie Dreyer, Rosa Hyde, Danielle Vauters. On the Mic is an NJPAC Arts Education production, produced in partnership with CM Studios. NJPAC and CM Studios are located in Essex County, New Jersey, situated on the traditional territory of the Leni Lenape people.

## the arts in your school

**In-School Residencies:** NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs, and you'll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It's the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

**Professional Development:** Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC's forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school, and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you'll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at [artseducation@njpac.org](mailto:artseducation@njpac.org). Or visit [njpac.org/education](http://njpac.org/education)

Major support for SchoolTime provided by



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+ deceased

## study the arts at njpac

**Saturday Programs:** NJPAC's Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

**Summer Programs:** Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.