teacher resource guide

schooltime performance series

nai-ni chen dance company

year of the black water rabbit

arts education njpac
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.

**about the performance**

**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.

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How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic

Scan the QR code or visit: njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources

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 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
### Prepare for the performance

**Teacher Focus**
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.

**Student Activity**
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, how far away is it?  
2. What do you predict will happen 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.

### Experience the performance

**Teacher Focus**
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.

**Student Activity**
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 or without force)?  
3. How many dancers are on stage? Do they dance together or separately?  
4. What props do the dancers use? How does the use of props tell a story?  
5. How do the dancers make you feel? What elements of the dances bring about those emotions?  
6. What Chinese New Year traditions do you observe in the dances?

### Reflect, respond and read

**Teacher Focus**
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.

**Student Activity**
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?  

### Focus

**Teacher 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.

**Student Activity**
Read the background information about hongbao from 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 the video. Alternatively, you can make your own version of what hongbao means to you by following the directions on the activity sheet.  

### Originate

**Teacher Focus**
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).

**Student Activity**
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 create different types of movements that relate to the topic; they choose (i.e., jumping, turning, moving, open/closed movements, etc.)  

**Teacher Focus**
Energy: Students can practice moving with different qualities that represent emotions, characters or imagery (i.e., force, weight or flow).

**Student Activity**
Refer to the following video for an overview of the elements of dance.

### Rehearse

**Teacher Focus**
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.

**Student Activity**
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.

### Make magic

**Teacher Focus**
Give students a deadline by which to finish their presentations. Create a performance area in your classroom. Create a rubric 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.

**Student Activity**
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 the class created on the rubric.
NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards
1.1.5.Cn10a
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.Re6a
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.

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.

English Language Arts
NJ.SL.1.1
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.
**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.

**Eruhu**
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, Scorpion, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces).

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**Websites**
NJPAC’s Arts Education programs

**Japanese New Years Day**

**Chinese Immigrants in the United States**

**Chinese Zodiac**

**Chinese New Year**

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**Books**
Ruby’s Chinese New Year

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**Videos**
Making traditional Hongbao
Traditional Chinese Instrumental Music
2023 Chinese Zodiac Rabbit Prediction
Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company Demo
Watch auditions for Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Traditional Chinese Dance
Element of Dance: Elements of Dance

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**Resources**
Aljira
Rhesus (a traditional dance at Aljira)
"Spotlight on Nai-Ni Chen: Not Alone"
A modern dance performance at Aljira

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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. Or visit njpac.org/education

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

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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.

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