teacher resource guide  schooltime performance series

nai-ni chen dance company

year of the green wood dragon

arts education njpac
The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company returns to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center to celebrate another Lunar New Year and the coming of spring 2024 with the Year of the Green Wood Dragon. This festive production features amazing dancers, musicians and acrobats. You’ll experience leaping lions, flying dragons, acrobatic dancers and beautiful music played on traditional cultural instruments.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company was founded in 1988 by the late choreographer Nai-Ni Chen and her husband, Andy Chiang, Executive Director. 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.”

Sadly, Nai-Ni Chen passed away in 2021. Still, her legacy lives on in the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, which continues to connect Chinese and American communities through dance and education.
About NJPAC On the Mic

NJPAC On the Mic allows students to engage their listening skills and deepen their understanding of creative content. This installment features three exclusive, curriculum standard-aligned episodes that supplement Year of the Green Wood Dragon, presented as part of NJPAC's 2023 – 2024 SchoolTime Performances series. This immersive audio experience features a theme song by students in the NJPAC arts education program.

How to listen to this episode of NJPAC On the Mic

Scan the QR code or visit njpac.org/arts-education/teacher-resources to access the podcast and the following show notes:

Part 1: About | Pre-show audio, 6 minutes
Includes: An introduction to the performance, artists & venue, welcome message
Welcome message voiced by Andy Chiang, Executive Director, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

Part 2: Connect | Post-show audio, 9 minutes
Includes: Reflection questions, a look at the Chinese zodiac and Chinese New Year traditions
Opening question voiced by Andy Chiang

Part 3: Spotlight | Post-show audio, 9 minutes
Includes: An interview with Andy Chiang, discussion starters
Interview guest: Andy Chiang

Additional Episode Credits

Series producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos
Written and hosted by Dania Ramos
Additional writing by Sharon Adarlo and the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Theme and outro music: NJPAC TD Jazz for Teens program
Additional music from Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company productions Year of the Rat & Year of the Ox
Sound editing, sound design, & voiceover by Michael Aquino
### Inspired Ideas in the Classroom

#### Teacher Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepare for the performance</th>
<th>If you have ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes: Listen to the first podcast episode, NJPAC On the Mic: About, for an introduction to the performance, what to expect at the theater and a welcome message from Andy Chiang, Executive Director of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. Ask students to raise their hands when they see acrobatics, martial arts or a prop in the video of Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes: Help students locate China on a globe or map. Explain that Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company’s work is rooted in Chinese customs, beliefs, ceremonies and celebrations. Have students watch a video on the Chinese New Year and an example of the Chinese Dragon Dance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 minutes: Ask students to read the article on the Chinese dance customs and lead a discussion using the questions in the student section. Have students complete Activity Sheet 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Experience the performance | Explain that dance is language that expresses ideas and emotions through movement and gesture. Dance can also include props, masks, costumes and sets. Have students watch the following video and lead a discussion on the elements of dance. Preview Activity Sheet 2 before the performance.  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflect, respond and read</th>
<th>Reflect: Remind students that Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is an Asian-American organization that celebrates cross-cultural experiences by merging traditional and contemporary dance. Using the questions in the Student section, lead a discussion on how the arts bring different cultural groups together and why learning about other cultures is important.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respond: Have students listen to NJPAC On the Mic: Connect for a look at Chinese zodiac and Chinese New Year traditions. You’ll be prompted to pause the audio twice to allow students to respond to reflection questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read: Have students complete Activity Sheet 2 individually. Then, split the class into pairs. Ask partners to identify an answer they have in common and one question they answered differently. If time allows, have students share their answers with the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Have students listen to NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight for an interview with Andy Chiang, executive director of Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. You’ll be prompted to pause the audio to allow students to share responses to the discussion prompts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain that Year of the Green Wood Dragon features Chinese traditions that help people feel connected to each other. Many cultural dances provide happiness and help the community satisfy their needs. The Dragon Dance highlights the value of pursuing wisdom, and is said to bring rain that enables a good harvest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize that different cultures have traditions to celebrate the New Year: some summon good luck and prosperity, while others seek to let go of misfortunes. Facilitate a discussion around students’ cultural backgrounds and family traditions, including those related to the New Year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Originate</th>
<th>Divide the class into two groups. Ask students to create two lists of action words: one with words associated with good luck and another associated with chasing bad luck away. Both groups will create two dances: one that incorporates the words associated with good luck (ex. knocking on wood) and another that chases away bad luck (ex. cleaning).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invite students to include dance elements they saw during the performance, including stationary and traveling movements, different levels, shapes, small and big movements, expressions and a connection to the mood or tempo of the music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have students set their dances to the music selections for good luck and chasing away bad luck.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Rehearse | Allow students time to organize and rehearse their dances with the music. They may write notes or make drawings to help memorize the dance steps. With permission, you may videotape students’ work for self-assessment and revision. Encourage students to rehearse their dances until they feel confident performing them.  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make magic</th>
<th>Organize a sharing event in which both groups show their work. Designate a performance area and an area for the audience. Review the expectations for appropriate behavior for performers and the audience. Establish a protocol for audience response.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refer to the Elements of Dance video to refresh students on dance vocabulary when they offer their feedback written on sticky notes. With permission, dances can be recorded and shared with parents and other classes. Collect the notes and stick them on a piece of chart paper. Allow time for students to read the feedback on their group’s dance piece.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepare for the Experience the performance

Originate
Rehearse
and read
Reflect,
Preview

Encourage students to rehearse their dances until they feel confident performing them.

Have students set their dances to the music selections for different levels, shapes, small and big movements, expressions and a connection to the mood or tempo of the music.

Invite students to include dance elements they saw during the performance, including stationary and traveling movements, with good luck (ex. knocking on wood) and another that chases away bad luck (ex. cleaning).

Many cultural dances provide happiness and help the community satisfy their needs. The Dragon Dance highlights the

Explain that Year of the Green Wood Dragon features Chinese traditions that help people feel connected to each other.

NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight

Listen to the first podcast episode, NJPAC On the Mic: About. Then, watch the video clip of Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company and raise your hand when you see acrobatics, martial arts or a prop.

30 minutes: Watch the video on Chinese New Year and the example of the Chinese Dragon Dance. What did you notice about the dancers in the video? For older students, what did you learn from the text in the video?

40 minutes: Read the article on Chinese dance customs and discuss the following questions with the class: What is the significance of the Dragon Dance in Chinese culture? How has its purpose changed over time? Next, complete Activity 1.

NJPAC On the Mic: About
15 minutes:
Listen to the podcast episode about Chinese New Year and the significance of the Dragon Dance.

NJPAC On the Mic: Connect

Listen to NJPAC On the Mic: Connect and respond to the reflection quotes when prompted.

NJPAC On the Mic: Spotlight

Participate in a discussion about New Year’s traditions:
1. What traditions does your family practice for the New Year?
2. Make a list of good things that would help a community be prosperous
3. Make a list of unfortunate things that a family or community might want to let go of

Think about the following questions: What did you learn about Chinese culture through this performance? Why is it important to learn about other cultures?

Respond: Think about the following questions: What did you learn about Chinese culture through this performance? Why is it important to learn about other cultures?

Read: Complete Activity Sheet 2. Review your answers with a partner and identify an answer you have in common and a question you answered differently.

As a group, create two lists of action words: one with words associated with good luck and another associated with chasing away bad luck. Choose two or three actions from each list and create two dances that incorporates these actions.

Include dance elements that you saw during the performance, including stationary and traveling movements, different levels, shapes, small and big movements, expressions and a connection to the mood or tempo of the music. Refer to the Elements of Dance video if you need more examples.

Set your dances to the music provided by your teacher.

Rehearse your group dances. Combine the parts of your dances so it flows smoothly. Decide if there are going to be solos and/or partner sections. You may choose to have a dance leader who indicates when to change from one part to the next. If available, watch a video of your rehearsal to self-assess and revise your work.

It’s showtime! Share your creative piece with your peers. Explain the reasons for your choreographic choices.

Give and receive feedback by responding to the following prompts on sticky notes:
1. What were the strengths of the performance?
2. What were the interesting details of the dance?
3. Do you have any questions about the dance?
4. What were the feelings that dance brought up for you?
**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)

**NJ Visual & Performing Arts Standards**

1. Generating and conceptualizing ideas.
2. Organizing and developing ideas.
3. Refining and completing work.
4. Selecting, analyzing, and interpreting work.
5. Developing and refining techniques and models or steps needed to create products.
6. Conveying meaning through art.
7. Perceiving and analyzing products.
8. Interpreting intent and meaning.
9. Applying criteria to evaluate products.
10. Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to create products.
11. Relating artistic ideas and works within societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

** NJ Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills**

9.4.2.CI.2
Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work.

9.4.5.CI.3
Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals with diverse perspectives to expand one’s thinking about a topic of curiosity.

9.4.5.GCA.1
Analyze how culture shapes individual and community perspectives and points of view.

9.4.8.GCA.1
Model how to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and respect.

9.4.8.GCA.2
Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives through active discussions to achieve a group goal.

**NJ Comprehensive Health and Physical Education**

2.2.5.MSC.2
Explain and demonstrate movement sequences, individually and with others, in response to various tempos, rhythms, and musical styles.

**NJ 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.

**NJSLS Arts 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.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.
1.5.5.Cr2a
Experiment and develop skills in multiple
artmaking techniques and approaches,
through invention and practice.

1.5.5.Cr2b
Develop a dance study by selecting a specific
movement vocabulary to communicate a main idea.
Discuss how the dance communicates non-verbally.

1.5.5.Cr2c
Individually or collaboratively represent environments
or objects of personal significance that includes a
process of peer discussion, revision and refinement.

1.5.5.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.

1.5.5.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).

1.5.5.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.

1.5.5.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.)

1.5.5.Pr6b
Rehearse a dance to improve group awareness, unison
movement, consistency, and attention to detail.

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.

1.5.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.

Social-Emotional Learning
NJSEL Relationship Skills Sub-competency 16
Utilize positive communication and social
skills to interact effectively with others.

Social Studies
6.1.5.HistoryUP.7
Describe why it is important to understand the
perspectives of other cultures in an interconnected world.
Acrobatics
The performance of gymnastic feats, such as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze. Acrobatics requires excellent balance, agility and coordination. In China, this ancient art form traces its roots to the Xia Dynasty 4,000 years ago.

Characteristic
A feature or quality that typically belongs to a person, place or thing and serves to identify it.

Chinese zodiac
The Chinese zodiac is a classification system based on the lunar calendar that assigns animals and related personality traits. It is similar to the Western zodiac, which aligns symbols with star constellations. The Western zodiac is broken down into twelve months, and the Chinese zodiac follows a twelve-year cycle.

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 a choreographer.

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

Cross-cultural
Cross-cultural events and works focus on comparing cultures and identifying differences and similarities. Cross-cultural interactions help to develop important interpersonal skills. Working with people from other cultures develops empathy, acceptance and tolerance to other cultures’ ideas, talents and experiences.

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

Folk dance
A folk dance reflects the life of the people of a country or region. They are communal dances originating in rural areas and were performed for pleasure or cultural pride. Some examples of folk dances include Irish jigs, Virginia reel, square dances, circle dances, jarabe Tapatío, huayno, bomba, cha-cha-cha and tarantella.

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 relating to the moon or of the moon derived from Luna, the Latin word for the moon. It was embodied in Ancient Rome as a woman wearing a crescent crown on her head and driving a chariot with horses or oxen.

Martial arts
Martial arts are codified systems and traditions of combat practiced for many reasons, such as self-defense, competition, entertainment, preserving a nation’s intangible cultural heritage, physical, mental and spiritual development, and military and law enforcement applications.

Pipa (pronounced pee-paa)
A four-stringed lute, similar to a guitar. It is a Chinese musical instrument with over 2,000 years of history.

Prop
A prop, formally known as theatrical property, is an object that actors or dancers use during a performance or screen production that is not part of the set or costume.

Symbol
A thing representing something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.
About NJPAC
njpac.org/about

Year of the Green Wood Dragon NJPAC Resources
njpac.org/education-program/nai-ni-chen-resources/Nai-Ni Chen Dance

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
nainichen.org/programs

Chinese Zodiac
chinesenewyear.net/zodiac

15 Fun Facts about Chinese New Year
chinahighlights.com/travelguide/festivals/new-year-facts.htm

Chinese Immigrants in the United States
migrationpolicy.org/article/chinese-immigrants-united-states

FTW Magazine | “A Traditional Chinese New Year”
fwmagazine.com/a-traditional-chinese-new-year

ThoughtCo | “Celebrating on Chinese New Year’s Day”
thoughtco.com/chinese-new-years-day-687469

Elements of Dance | Elements of Dance
elementsofdance.org/begin-here.html

10 Disappearing Chinese New Year Traditions
chinahighlights.com/festivals/chinese-new-year-disappearing-tradition.htm

Spotlight on Nai-Ni Chen: “Not Alone – A Modern Dance Performance at Aljira”
aljirablog.tumblr.com/post/100252879993/spotlight-on-nai-ni-chen-not-alone-a-modern

PBS | State of the Arts Unity: Choreographer Nai-Ni Chen Remembered:
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

Chinese Customs and Traditions: Dragon Dance
https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/dragon_dance.htm

2023 Chinese Zodiac Dragon Prediction
thechinesezodiac.org/year-of-the-dragon

Videos
Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company YouTube channel
youtube.com/@dragonxlion

Traditional Chinese Instrumental Music
youtube.com/watch?v=VuOe3ty8YQM

Chinese Dragon Dance Folk Life
youtube.com/watch?v=vi9sZTEHoL8

National Geographic | Hong Kong’s Dazzling Fire Dragon Dance
youtube.com/watch?v=0qCGkm6-wDc

Dragon Dance Prop Master
youtube.com/watch?v=Li16XwqooxM

Culture Trip | Mesmerizing Chinese Dances You Should Know
culturereview.com/china/articles/8-mesmerizing-chinese-dances-that-you-should-know

Books
Chinese New Year (On My Own: Holidays Series)
by Judith Jango-Cohen
Carolrhoda Books (2005)

New Year (A Lunar New Year Book for Kids)
by Mel Zihan (Author), Qin Leng (Illustrator)
Aldana Books (2021)

All About China: Stories, Crafts and Games for Kids
by Allison Branscombe & Lin Wang
Tuttle Publishing (2018)

Celebrating Chinese New Year
by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith and Laurence Migdale
Holiday House (1998)

The Chinese in America: A Narrative History
by Iris Chang

Chinese Dance: In the Vast Land and Beyond
by Eugenia Chu
Rockridge Press (2021)
Charles F. Lowrey & Carmen S. Villar
Co-Chairs, NJPAC Board of Directors

John Schreiber
President & CEO

Jennifer Tsukayama
Vice President, Arts Education

Shannon Pulusan
Special Assistant to Vice President, Arts Education

Mark Gross
Director, Jazz Instruction

Rosa Hyde
Senior Director, Performances & Special Events Operations

Victoria Revesz
Senior Director, Arts Education Operations

Natalie Dreyer
Director of Curriculum & Collaborative Learning

Roe Bell
Director of Program Operations & Advancement

Kristine Marrone
Director, CRM & Business Operations

Ashley Mandaglio
Assoc. Director, Professional Learning & Programs

Trentor Borde
Senior Manager, Programming & Performances

Daniel Silverstein
Senior Manager, Onsite Programs

Randal Croudy
Manager, Youth & Emerging Artist Development

Steven Hayet
Manager, CRM & Business Operations

Alonzo Blalock
Manager, In-School Programs

Angela Peletier
Manager, Professional Learning & Training

Justin DePaul
Office and Facilities Manager

Demetria Hart
Coordinator of Faculty Relations

Antonella Sanchez
Senior Coordinator, Program Operations

Kendall Lipham
Coordinator, Programming & Performances

Josef Woodson
Creative Lead, On-Site Programs


+ deceased