

Kupferberg Center for the Arts Presents
Accelerating the Arts: Revelations 2017-2018

TEACHER GUIDE
CHINESE NEW YEAR

This Teacher Guide is a convenient source of background information, mini-lessons, and activities that coordinate with the performance guide to encourage learning across the curriculum. Most activities can be easily adapted to suit different age groups.

About the Performance

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is a multicultural troupe of dancers founded by choreographer and dancer Nai-Ni Chen in 1988. Chen was four years old when she began studying traditional dance in Taiwan. She subsequently expanded her studies to include Peking Opera martial arts, female dramatic movement, and modern dance. In 1982, Chen came to study in the U.S. and now lives here. The themes of her work are inspired by the poetic drama of Chinese traditional legends and the highly abstract, elegant lines found in Chinese calligraphy. Her company has been the recipient of several grants from the National Endowment of the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, as well as awards from the Toronto Chinese Performing Arts Festival and the International Mei Society in Taipei, Taiwan for outstanding contribution to the Chinese American community and to Chinese dance. Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is one of the most widely toured professional Asian American dance companies in the United States.

The Lion Dance

The Lion Dance is a popular New Year tradition that is over a thousand years old. Two dancers, one placed in the head and the other in the tail, move the lion costume from the inside. The drum, gong, and cymbals, representing the lion's roar, accompany its movements. In China, local business owners hide red money envelopes inside lettuce leaves and dangle them above their doors for the lion to find. Approaching the treat cautiously to make sure there are no fire-crackers, the curious lion "eats" the treat, keeping the money and "spitting" out the lettuce leaves. The lion brings luck and good fortune to the business, while the money helps support the dancers, usually a local martial arts troupe. This custom is called "choy chang" or "picking the greens."



2018 is the Year of the Dog

Year 2018 is under the auspices of Earth Dog sign and the **ruling number is 9**.

Earth Dog year – 2018 is governed by star 9, which, during 2018, will move in the middle of Luo Shy square and will bring prosperity in all the houses and their occupants, regardless of the zodiac sign.

Curriculum Focus: Social Studies

Mini-Lesson: Learn About China

Activity 1: Where in the World is China? (coordinate with Student Guide)

Teaching Point: Use your compass rose and map key to discover the geography of China

Answer the Student Guide questions using the map.

Extension: Provide a topographical map of China. Using the map key, have students locate the varied environments of China. Assign small groups for each environment to research the flora and fauna of that environment, and the clothing and customs of the people who live within that region.

Curriculum Focus: Language Arts

Mini-Lesson: How Language Changes

Activity 1: Write in Chinese (coordinate with Student Guide)

Teaching Point: Trace the development of language from picture to ideas

“Prithee, wouldst thou kindly break thy fast with me?” How many of your students, if asked this question, would realize they were just invited to breakfast in Elizabethan English? Use this example to engage your students in a discussion about the ways in which spoken language is continually evolving. Have them give examples of “old-fashioned” expressions vs. “contemporary” expressions (and contemporary expressions from a few years ago as compared to the expressions for the same ideas the students are using today). Xerox and show them a page from *The Canterbury Tales* or another early English poem for a look at medieval English. How much can they understand? Look at the characters in the Student Guide and do the activity together. Compare the ancient pictographs to the modern-day ideographs. How are they similar? Did the ideographs retain any of the original elements of the pictograph?

Curriculum Focus: Dance, Music, and Visual Art

Mini-Lesson: Learn About Traditional Chinese Dance

Activity 1: Make a Paper Dragon (coordinate with Student Guide)

What to Look For:

Traditional Chinese dance can be divided into two broad categories: Court Dance and Folk Dance. Court dances date back to the Qin Dynasty (220 B.C.). These were performed in the emperor’s palace. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (600 A.D.), this form of dance became extremely sophisticated and was depicted in the poetry, paintings, and sculpture of the period. The two forms of court dance included those based on martial arts fighting forms and those based on the Confucian etiquette and ritual codes. Aspects of these ancient court dances are still seen embedded in traditional Peking Opera performances and in ancestral ritual ceremonies in Confucian temples. Folk dances celebrated various aspects of life. The dances reflect the over 50 indigenous ethnic groups in China, varying from region to region in movements, music, choice of props, and costume. Although performed throughout China, The Dragon Dance and Lion Dance performed during New Year Celebrations have variations both in costume and movements from region to region.

DANCE ACTIVITY: MAKE A DRAGON DANCE COSTUME

Teaching Point: Move together as a unit

1. Make a lion’s (or dragon’s) head from a cardboard box. Decorate it with glitter, large styrofoam or felt eyes, teeth, and crêpe paper streamers. Attach a large cloth to its back, long enough to cover three children.
2. The other students can parade with their paper dragons, take turns tossing a ball, or giving it paper money to “eat.” Develop a dance piece. Invite parents in to see the dances, song, and perhaps a story or two that you can act out! Alternatively, create a dragon’s head with a cloth large enough to accommodate 10 children comfortably. Make one or more dragons or lions. Select several students to play drums, gongs, woodblocks and cymbals. “Wake” the dragon and have the leader lead the “dragon” through the halls, wishing “Gung Hay Fat Choy” to all the classrooms you pass!

SUPPORT FOR ACCELERATING THE ARTS

Accelerating the Arts is made possible by the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation and The Kupferberg Foundation. Additional funding is provided, in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz.

Copyright © 2017, Kupferberg Center for the Arts

