May, 14-28, 2021

South Orange Performing Arts Center Celebrates AAPI Heritage Month to offer Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company's New Work AWAKENING Free

Company: Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Venue: Online
Location: New York, NY

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

Maplewood Township, South Orange Village, SOMA Cross Cultural Works and the AAPI Community unite to recognize and celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. These organizations stand in solidarity, the focus is on education, healing and creating joy as we honor the richness and diversity of Asian and Pacific Islander cultures with an exciting lineup of family oriented activities and programs. As part of the celebration, the South Orange Performing Arts Center will share Nai-Ni Chen's new program Awakening free on demand throughout the Month of May.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is an innovative international touring dance company that has been a leading force Asian American contemporary dance since its founding. It's director Nai-Ni Chen has led her Company of 8 diverse dancers to create new dances and performed in festivals and residencies in Europe, Asia, and South America while maintaining close relationships with immigrant communities and educational partners in New Jersey, especially in schools serving students with disabilities. In this year of the pandemic, crisscrossing the world with Zoom, Nai-Ni Chen has been developing new relationships with dancers and choreographers on her new dance platform, The Bridge. These relationships and Ms. Chen's distinctive experience as a female Asian American Immigrant choreographer inspired her to make a series of new, socially relevant work in a rare 60 minute long production titled Awakening that reflects her unique perspective as an Asian American immigrant woman choreographer. The program also includes comments and interviews by noted dance expert/writer, Robert Johnson.

Highlights include Chen's Truth Bound, Introspection, Luminescence, and Shadow Force. The program will be offered by SOPAC free, please register at: https://www.sopacnow.org/events/nai-ni-chen-dance-company-vod/

Program Highlights

Truth Bound was developed during a residency in Trier, Germany in reaction to the crisis of faith and trust today utilizes newspapers as costume and Chen herself as the seeker on a journey. German dance critic Eva-Maria Reuther of Volksfreund said: "Using their body and visual language sensitively created fantasy and poetry. Tradition and experimentation are combined with precision and dynamics."

Introspection is a new work where the choreographer, in response to the call for equity and justice, is looking at her company, her dancers and her own identity. As each dancer illuminates each other with lights of their own, the audience and dancers begin to see the same person from different perspectives.

Luminescence (premiere) was created in response to the choreographer's increasing dependence on the power of nature to be physically and mentally resilient during the pandemic. The dance is her ode to nature's grace, magic and wonder where she found sanctuary. Through this dance, Nai-Ni Chen wishes to remind us that humans coexist with other life forms on earth. To discover the beauty in nature and to respect and protect the environment is essential to our continued survival.

Shadow Force (premiere) is one of the darkest dances the choreographer has made as she witnessed the struggle of the country and its

people to stay united under powerful forces from different sides.

About Nai-Ni Chen

Nai-Ni Chen has been making dances professionally for over thirty years since coming to the US. She has built a diverse repertoire of over 80 original works and toured to major venues in the US and international festivals in 12 countries around the world. A cross-cultural choreographer who aims to bring audience across the cultural boundaries, she has developed unique movement and choreographic styles that reflect the Chinese cultural traditions she studied in Taiwan since youth and the dynamic spirit of modern dance that she acquired in New York from luminaries such as Mary Anthony, Bertram Ross, Doris Rudko and Patricia Rowe. Nai-Ni Chen has received multiple Choreographer Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She has been a principal affiliate of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and was a resident artist of the Harlem School of the Arts. Her contribution to the immigrant cultural experience has been honored by OCA and the International Institute. As a lifetime dance educator, she was the recipient of The Distinguished Service to the Field Award from the Association of Teaching Artistes in 2020 at Lincoln Center and her work with students with disabilities has been recognized by the 2018 Innovator Award from the Cultural Access Network. Commissions have come from the Joyce Theater Foundation, the Lincoln Center Institute, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Towson University, Dancing in the Streets, New Jersey Ballet, Ballet Met, and the Cleveland Dancing Wheels. Nai-Ni is currently in residence in New Jersey City University where she created a new dance program for the university in collaboration with the Joffrey Ballet School as well as pioneering a program with the University's A Harry Moore Laboratory School, serving children with multiple disabilities. Programs of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company are 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, th eMid-Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF), the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, The New Jersey Arts Recovery Fund, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Hyde and Watson Foundation, E.J. Grassman Trust, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, the Cultural Ministry of the People's Republic of China, the Live Music for Dance Program of New Music USA, the Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, the Rapid Response Program of American Dance Abroad, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters' Cultural Exchange Fund, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, PSEG, Proskauer, WAC Lighting, the Glow Foundation.

About the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

Bringing the dynamic freedom of American modern dance together with the elegant splendor of Asian art, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is one of the most visible Asian American dance companies in the United States. Ms. Chen's unique choreography transports audiences beyond cultural boundaries to the common ground between tradition and innovation, discipline and freedom, and form and spirit. Since its inception in 1988, the company has earned a broad base of public support and has toured extensively to major performing arts centers throughout more than thirty states. Presented by some of the most prestigious concert halls in the United States, from the Joyce Theater in New York to the Ordway Center in Minnesota and the Cerritos Center in California, the Company has mounted more than twenty national tours and nine tours abroad. Ms. Chen's work has been presented by such acclaimed international festivals as the Silesian International Contemporary Dance Festival and the Konfrontations International Dance Festival, both in Poland, the Chang Mu International Arts Festival in Korea and the Meet in Beijing International Arts Festival. The Company was also honored by a distinctive grant award from both the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities and the Department of State to represent the United States in a seven-city tour arranged by the Tamaulipas International Arts Festival in Mexico. Also, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company has the unique honor of having received more than fifteen awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and numerous Citations of Excellence and grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. In addition to its extensive season of touring and performing, the company has developed Arts in Education residency programs in school districts to bring culture and arts into educational settings. It's colorful and engaging in-school assembly program "The Art of Chinese Dance" has been presented in hundreds of schools in NJ, NY, CT and PA, reaching hundreds of thousands of youth. The Company is currently in-residence at New Jersey City University and assisting NJCU in the development of a new BFA in Dance. For additional Company information, visit www.nainichen.org; write to Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, P.O. Box 1121, Fort Lee, NJ 07024; or call (800) 650-0246.

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
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Schedule
May 14, 2021: 8:00pm
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