

January 18 - February 25, 2026

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company Celebrates Lunar New Year Year of the Horse

Company: Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

Venue: Various Locations

Location: N/A, XX

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The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company celebrates Lunar New Year: Year of the Horse with a lineup of performances in NYC, New Jersey, and beyond! In honor of the Year of the Horse, the Company, with artistic director Greta Campo at the helm, will present two world premieres by choreographers Lawrence Jin and Zhongmei Li.

Welcome the Lunar New Year with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company! This year, the celebration embodies the passion and energy of the Horse. Bring the whole family for a spectacular display of Chinese dance, contemporary dance, acrobatics, costumes and live music. With graceful movements and intricate choreography, the talented performers evoke the spirit of the Chinese New Year. To learn more and purchase tickets, visit www.nainichen.org/events.

Lunar New Year Performances:

January 18 – February 25, 2026 – Lunar New Year Celebration Tour

Celebrating the Year of the Horse (World Premiere Program)

Featuring premieres by Lawrence Jin and Zhongmei Li, this program blends traditional symbolism and contemporary vision. Audiences will experience the powerful Lion Dance—a centuries-old ritual invoking good fortune and driving away evil spirits—and the spectacular Dragon Dance, historically performed to summon rain, prosperity, and good luck—and associated with imperial authority, wisdom, and auspiciousness. The program also includes live music on authentic Chinese instruments and a lobby display of Lunar New Year cultural crafts, offering a multi-sensory immersion into Chinese traditions.

- Jersey City Theatre Center, White Eagle Hall, Jersey City, NJ (Jan 18)
- College of Staten Island, Staten Island, NY – presented by Enrichment Through the Arts (Jan 26-27)
- Kupferberg Center for the Performing Arts, Queens, NY (Feb 1)
- Jay and Linda Grunin Center for the Arts, Toms River, NJ (Feb 4-5)
- Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture, Bronx, NY (Feb 7-8)
- New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Newark, NJ (Feb 14-15)
- McLean Community Center, McLean, VA (Feb 18)
- Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA (Feb 25)

About the New Works

To honor the Year of the Horse, Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company presents two major new works:

- Lawrence Jin, a native of Hohhot, Inner Mongolia and graduate of the Beijing Dance Academy, will present a newly revised version of

Mongolian Festival, celebrating northern China's nomadic horseback culture. Jin's storied career includes principal roles with the Beijing Youth Dance Company and Bella Lewitzky Dance Company; today, he teaches at FA Dance School in New Jersey and continues to contribute to cultural exchange through choreography.

● Zhongmei Li will present an excerpt of *Ultimate Journey*, a forthcoming full-evening piece inspired by the Dunhuang Caves' ancient murals from the Silk Road era, evoking themes of cultural exploration, spiritual passage, and the transformative spirit embodied by the horse archetype.

Combined with the Lion Dance—a dynamic martial-arts-infused tradition symbolizing strength, wisdom, and protection from evil—and the Dragon Dance—a vibrant, undulating spectacle symbolizing power, dignity, and fortune—plus live instrumentals and cultural displays, these offerings underscore the Company's commitment to imaginative, culturally resonant performance.

This season, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company would like to thank the project support from the New Jersey Cultural Trust to help expand its marketing efforts.

LAWRENCE JIN began his dance training in his native hometown Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China. Lawrence graduated from the Beijing Dance Academy in 1986 and received the Best Performance Award in the National Professional Taoli Cup Dance Competition, the highest honor in Chinese Dance. He became a Principal in the Beijing Youth Dance Company, touring around the world. In 1990, he moved to NYC from Beijing and studied at Martha Graham Modern Dance School. In 1993, he joined Bella Lewitzky Dance Company in Los Angeles as principal dancer. He toured with the company nationally and internationally for 10 years. In 2003, he moved back to NYC and met Nai Ni Chen that year. In recent years, he has been teaching dance at FA Dance School in Livingston, New Jersey, one of the largest Chinese Dance academies in the State. Meanwhile, he also served as a judge in many Chinese dance competitions held by Chinese and American Dance Association in LA.

ZHONGMEI LI is a renowned dancer and choreographer whose career spans continents and encompasses both classical and contemporary forms. At just 11 years old, she was one of only a select few girls chosen to attend the prestigious Beijing Dance Academy, China's premier dance school. There, she received rigorous training in both ballet and traditional Chinese classical dance.

After several years of performing in China as a principal dancer, Li brought her artistry to the United States. She was awarded scholarships to study at highly respected institutions, including the Martha Graham Dance School and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater schools, further broadening her stylistic range and technical prowess.

In 1995, driven by a passion to share her cultural heritage, Li founded the Zhongmei Dance Company. Under her direction, the company became instrumental in introducing the beauty and complexity of Chinese dance to wider American audiences. Her company performed at numerous premier venues across the country, including the iconic Joyce Theater in New York City, where *The New York Times* lauded their performance as "commanding and majestic." In a Jennifer Dunning's profile of Li, she stated that Li "captured the combination of artistry and determination that enabled this engaging artist to arrive on the cultural scene with something never before seen by American audiences."

Beyond her company, Li has graced the Broadway stage, performing in the beloved musical *The King and I* at the Neil Simon Theater. She is also a regular guest performer with the acclaimed Aspen Santa Fe Ballet and she also earned her Master of Fine Arts degree from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts demonstrating her versatility and continued engagement with the contemporary dance scene.

Li's innovative spirit continues to thrive through her choreographic endeavors. She recently undertook the significant task of choreographing the dance portion of a new production of the opera *Dream of the Red Chamber* for the Minneapolis Opera Theatre, which premiered in November 2024. This ambitious project, sponsored by the Chinese Heritage Foundation, underscores her commitment to blending traditional art forms with new interpretations and her ongoing dedication to enriching the cultural landscape through dance.

GRETA CAMPO began her dance training in Milan before moving to New York to study at the Martha Graham School. She performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company during their 2012 NY season and joined Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in 2012. She has also performed with Buglisi Dance Theatre. Promoted to Artistic Director in 2021, she now leads the Company's cross-cultural mission, merging Asian-American dance traditions with contemporary modern movement. Her work—as dancer, educator and artistic leader—continues to honor the legacy and vision of Founder Nai-Ni Chen.

About Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company:

"Chen's phrases, part exoskeletal rigidity, part boneless grace, embodied an epic dignity."

- Village Voice

Choreographer/Dancer, Nai-Ni Chen, was a unique artist whose work crosses cultural boundaries. Each of her dances reflect her personal vision as an immigrant and an American female artist with deep roots in Asian culture. From this very personal perspective, she created new works that reflect current issues with global influences. Some of her works were developed in collaboration with renowned artists such as the Ahn Trio, Glen Velez, Joan La Barbara, and the members of the New Asia Chamber Music Society.

Bridging the grace of Asian elegance and American dynamism, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is a premier provider of innovative cultural experiences that reflect the inspiring hope and energy of the immigrant's journey. The company's ground-breaking works have focused on themes from ancient legends that reflect issues of the present time to purely abstract, contemporary dances influenced by a mix of cultures Nai-Ni Chen experienced in New York. An Asian American company that celebrates cross-cultural experience, the Company's productions naturally bring forth issues of identity, authenticity, and equality.

The Company has presented at some of the most prestigious concert halls such as the Joyce Theater, Lincoln Center in New York, and the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center in Florida. The Company appears annually at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Queens College, the College of Staten Island and on Ellis Island. Internationally, the Company has presented at international festivals including Open Look Festival in Russia, the Silesian International Contemporary Dance Festival, the Konfrontations International Festival in Poland, the Chang Mu International Dance Festival in Korea, the Meet in Beijing International Arts Festival in China, and the Tamaulipas International Arts Festival in Mexico.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company has received more than 20 awards from the National Endowment for the Arts and numerous Citations of Excellence and grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Advancing Dance Education, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is currently in residence in New Jersey City University pioneering a program with the University's A Harry Moore Laboratory School teaching dance to urban children with disabilities. For additional Company information, visit their website, www.nainichen.org; write to Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, P.O. Box 1121, Fort Lee, NJ 07024; or call (800) 650- 0246.

Programs of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company are made possible by the generous support of our Board members, 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 Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation (MAAF), the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, The New Jersey Arts and Culture Recovery Fund administered by the Princeton Area Community Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Hyde and Watson Foundation, E.J. Grassman Trust, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, New Music USA, the Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Dance/NYC Dance Advancement Fund, 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, and the Glow Foundation and the Dragon and Phoenix Foundation.

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<https://www.nainichen.org/events>

Schedule
January 18, 2026: 4:00pm
January 26, 2026: 10:00am
January 27, 2026: 10:00am
February 1, 2026: 3:00pm
February 7, 2026: 3:00pm
[more](#)

[< back](#)

[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)