

Sunday, May 18, 2025

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company announces Premiere of New Work UNANiLLUSION By Evan Matthew Stewart and the Ahn Trio

Company: Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Venue: Ailey CitiGroup Theatre
Location: New York, NY

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The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, the renowned international touring dance company founded by Chinese American choreographer Nai-Ni Chen, and now led by Artistic Director Greta Campo and Executive Director Andy Chiang, will launch its 37th anniversary season at CitiGroup Theatre in the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center on Sunday, May 18th at 3PM. The production celebrates the 2025 Asian American Pacific Islanders Heritage Month, which will showcase Chen's distinctive cross-cultural style and the diverse influences that informed her work, as well as, new works created for the Company. The concert will include the launching of new collaborations with the renowned Ahns Trio. A new work titled UNANiLLUSION will be created for this celebration by the Company's Associate Choreographer Evan Matthew Stewart, to a recently commissioned music by the renowned composer Laurie Spiegel titled A Fall Afternoon and will be performed by the Ahn Trio live in the celebration.

Performances will take place Sunday May 18th, 3:00PM to 4:30PM at the CitiGroup Theatre of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center. Tickets are \$40 at the door, \$30 if purchased before April 15, 2025. Advance reservations can be made on the Company's website, nainichen.org/events. Audiences can get closer to the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company by purchasing VIP tickets to attend a cocktail reception after the show at Alley Studio 1A, hosted by our distinguished Board of Directors the Ahn Trio, and the Company's choreographers and dancers. Early bird VIP reception tickets, purchased before April 1, 2025 at \$50 (\$60 after April 1).

The celebration will feature one of Chen's most powerful dances, Unfolding, which explores the flow of energy and the dynamics in Korean Chan-Go music. It was developed in collaboration with Hanulsori. In addition to Unfolding, the performance will feature Tiger and Water Lilies, a dance Nai-Ni Chen created for contemporary ballet company, BalletMet in Cleveland, OH. The dance brings together constantly changing contrasting movement ideas, some from the serene beauty of nature inspired by water lilies and some from the graceful quickness of the tiger.

The program will also feature two excerpts of Shadow Force, beautiful and haunting dance, created during the pandemic to highlight the importance of human relationship and our longing for connection and love for each other.

The show will end with Way of Fire, Nai-Ni Chen's first exploration of the ancient Chinese theory that the cycles of creation and destruction correspond to the ever-changing phenomena of nature. The "Five" refers to the five elements: wood, water, fire, metal, and earth. Each element, as part of the forces of nature, creates another in harmony and destroys another in conflict. This exploration is focused on the element of "Fire". The dance was premiered in 2007 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

One of Nai-Ni Chen's most important collaborators is the renowned Ahn Trio who will be the Featured Guest Artist in this celebration of the Asian American Heritage Month. In a period spanning more than 15 years, Nai-Ni Chen has created more than 10 dances using the most well-known musical recordings of the Ahn Trio. The two groups toured together from 2012-2020 where the Company danced to the Ahn Trio's live accompaniments. In this concert, the Company will showcase Nai-Ni Chen's Shape of Water, made with commissioned music by Pat Matheney and will be performed by the Ahn Trio live. The dance and the music communicates the sense of calmness and dynamism that Pat Matheney felt while visiting Korea. The music was originally called Yurung, which meant Spirits in Korean.

About the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is a rare Asian American woman led professional touring company with programs for educational settings, community organizations and mainstage venues. The Company's mission is to be a premier provider of innovative cultural experiences that reflect the inspiring hope and energy of the immigrant's journey. It was founded with the vision that the journey of crossing cultures and adapting to a new home provides endless inspirations and opportunities for creative expressions that can enrich the human experience. Each one of the company's work is aimed to increase the visibility of the struggle, triumph, despair and joy of this experience. The Company's

productions provide authentic experiences and bring forth issues of identity, authenticity, and equality. The Company's worldwide touring is represented by Red Shell Management led by Edward Schoelwer.

Choreography is developed with dancers from diverse backgrounds, and each rehearsal is an immersive, boundary-crossing journey that contributes to the creative process under the direction of the choreographers. Our repertory of Nai-Ni Chen's original works bridge the grace and power of Asian arts and American dynamism which incorporated her broad influences. The company also preserves a variety of festive dances from different regions of China choreographed by guest immigrant artists bearing their tradition.

The Company began to tour in the early 1990s, originally on the East Coast, and later internationally. The dance company is multi-racial and multi-national and has collaborated with a wide range of artists from different disciplines and cultures. Musical collaborators range from New Music, jazz to classical, they include Joan La Barbara, The Chinese Music Ensemble of NY, Jason Kao Hwang, Huang Ruo, Kenji Bunch, Tan Dun, Glen Velez and most recently, the Ahn Trio. Award-winning designers and visual artists such as Myung Hee Cho, Jay Moorthy, AC Hickox and costume designer Karen Young. These collaborations provided us the opportunity to develop innovative productions that carry the timeless essence of the tradition.

In addition to domestic touring, the company has also performed at international festivals in Mexico, Canada, British Virgin Islands, Guatemala, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, South Korea and China with support from Fund for Mutual Understanding, The President's Committee for the Arts, Arts International and the State Department of the United States. Ms. Chen has received multiple Choreographer's Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and from New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Her work has also been commissioned by the Joyce Theater Foundation, the Lincoln Center Institute, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Dancing in the Streets, the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and New Jersey Performing Art Center.

Prominent Institutions, including the Lincoln Center Institute, the Joyce Theater, Dancing in the Streets, NJ Ballet, Ballet Met, Dancing Wheels, and Baraka Sele at NJPAC all have commissioned notable works. The most recent tour, "A Quest for Freedom", developed with the Ahn Trio, premiered at the Philadelphia NextMove Festival. The Company is currently in residence at New Jersey City University's A. Harry Moore for students with disabilities and in Elizabeth School #26, a school of mostly immigrant children.

Acknowledgement

Programs of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company have been 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, The New Jersey Division of Tourism, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, DanceNYC Dance Advancement Fund, the Hyde and Watson Foundation, E.J. Grassman Trust, The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, New Music USA, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, 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. WQXR is a media partner of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.

celebration, the Ahn Trio will join the company to perform one of their most celebrated collaborations: YuRung by composer Pat Metheny and the Trio will also play a number of new works that they have recently recorded.

The program will also featured an excerpt from the piece Shadow Force, a beautiful and haunting dance work created during the pandemic to highlight the importance of human relationship and our longing for connection and love for each other.

The company will end the program with Way of five fire, Nai-Ni Chen's first exploration of the ancient Chinese theory that the cycles of creation and destruction correspond to the ever-changing phenomena of nature. The "Five" refers to the five elements: wood, water, fire, metal, and earth. Each element, as part of the forces of nature, creates another in harmony and destroys another in conflict. This exploration is focused on the element of "Fire". The dance was premiered in 2007 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

About Nai-Ni Chen

Nai-Ni Chen (1959-2021) was a legendary choreographer who worked in NJ/NY area professionally for over thirty years since coming to the US in 1982. 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 grace and splendor of 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. 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 creating a new dance program for the university in collaboration with the Joffrey Ballet School as well as pioneering a program with the University's Laboratory School for children with multiple disabilities.

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Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
405 W 55th St
New York, NY, 10019

Schedule
May 18, 2025: 3:00pm

