

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company announces new additions, works, and collaborations for 2023/2024 Season

Company: Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Venue: Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
Location: Queens, NY

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The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is commencing a new season with fresh commissioned works, collaborations, and the addition of new dancers following their recent performances in Seattle, WA, and Tennessee. New dancers joining the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company include: Caleb Baker, Alexzander Larson, Ke'ala O'Connell, and YuChin (KiKi) Tseng.

As one of the leading Asian American professional dance companies in the United States, the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is committed to creating works that reflect the immigrant experience and perspectives. Nai-Ni Chen collaborates with both emerging and traditional dance choreographers within the Chinese American community, fostering a deeper understanding by bridging cultural boundaries. In 2022, with support from the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), the Company commissioned "Lion in the City," a collaboration featuring Hip-Hop legend Rokafella, Kwikstep, and Lion Dance master Henry Lee, working alongside renowned dancer/choreographer PeiJu Chien-Pott.

For the 2023-2024 season, with support from NJPAC, the Company is commissioning two new works. The first from a unique creative team, including choreographer Aloe Ao Li and digital media artists Anna Borou Yu and Jiajian Min, collaborating to develop a new work titled "Reincarnation." This piece draws inspiration from Aloe's experiences living among the indigenous community of the Derung Tribe, also known as the Dragon People, in the mountains of Yunnan Province, Southwestern China. Isolated from urban centers, the Derung Tribe has its own language and unique religion, known as Derung shamanism. This indigenous group has a deep connection to their natural surroundings, with their way of life intrinsically tied to their mountainous environment. "Reincarnation" expresses Aloe's awe for life, death, the unknown, and the unknowable.

In "Reincarnation," Aloe collaborates with media artists Anna Borou Yu and Jiajian Min, both members of the New Museum's cultural incubator, NEW INC, aimed at advancing technology in the arts. The artists will create a multimedia stage design that reflects the culture and spiritual essence of the new work.

In addition to "Reincarnation," the Company is also commissioning a traditional Mongolian dance titled "Mongolian Festival." Choreographed by Mongolian dancer/choreographer Lawrence Jin, who has been a member of the world-renowned Bella Lewitzky Dance Theatre and China's Beijing Academy Dance Company, this dance is renowned for its powerful steps and expressive upper body movements, capturing the essence of the nomadic way of life. Jin grew up in inner Mongolia, China. In this dance, he focuses on the generous spirit of the Mongolian people, the powerful Mongolian warriors and the respect they have for the great prairie that is essential for the nomadic life. The dance portrays aspects of Mongol herders' daily activities, including milking cows, cooking, hunting, household labor, celebrations, and traditions. This culturally rich and dynamic performance will be accompanied by traditional Mongolian music, creating a captivating and immersive experience for the audience.

Both of these new works will premiere in New Jersey at the NJ Performing Arts Center, and in New York City at the Kupferberg Center in Queens College and at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. They will also be showcased in the McLean Community Center in the Washington DC area, as well as the Omaha Performing Arts Center, in Nebraska.

About the Artists

Ao Liu (Aloe) is a performance artist, dancer, and choreographer. She is currently the Performance Director with CAAM Chinese Dance Theater in St. Paul. Aloe has performed extensively throughout China, Asia, and Europe, including the Shanghai World Expo and the Beijing Olympics. She was a principal and soloist with China's renowned dancer/director Liping Yang, known as the "Peacock Princess," for eight years. During this period, Aloe was a principal in world-famous Chinese dance productions, including "Dynamic Yunnan," "A Shangri-La Spectacular," and "The Beautiful South." A graduate of the Yunnan Arts Institute, her contemporary dance performances have been showcased in Kunming, Macau, and the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, MN.

Lawrence Jin began his dance training in his native Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China. Jin 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 a principal dancer. He toured with the company nationally and internationally for ten 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. He has also served as a judge in many Chinese dance competitions held by Chinese and American Dance Association in LA.

Anna Borou Yu is a new media artist, interdisciplinary researcher, and dancer. She is the Art Director of MYStudio, an experimental design group in Boston, integrating humanity, art, performance, and technology. Anna is also the XR Track Member at NEW INC, Ambassador of Arte Laguna Prize, and listed on AACYP Top 30 under 30 in 2023. She engages in the contemporary interpretation of cultural heritage, embodied exhibition, and cognitive performance in extended reality, and translation between media from artistic expression to science research. Her artworks have been featured at Venice Biennale, Arte Laguna Prize, Hermes Creative Awards, Lumen Prize Longlist, Ars Electronica Art Gallery, ACM SIGGRAPH Asia Art Gallery, IRCAM FORUM at NYU, Chengdu Biennale, and more. She has worked as a Fellow and Project Lead at Harvard FAS CAMLab and taught interdisciplinary Design Studios at Tsinghua University, China Academy of Art, and Central Academy of Fine Arts.

Jiajian Min is an architect, new media artist, and creative entrepreneur. He is the Executive Director of MYStudio and the XR Track Member at NEW INC, focusing on mixed reality multimedia design and Generative AI creative tools. He has worked as a Project Lead at Harvard FAS CAMLab, co-founded HarvardXR Conference, and taught interdisciplinary Design Studios at Tsinghua University, China Academy of Art, and Central Academy of Fine Arts. Jiajian's research has been published by ACM SIGGRAPH Asia, IEEE AIART Workshop, and more. He has lectured and reviewed at Harvard University, Yale University, Brown University, RISD, NYU, UCSD, and more. Jiajian has been selected as one of the 2023 Forbes China 100 Most Influential Chinese.

About Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company:

Choreographer/Dancer, Nai-Ni Chen (1959-2021), 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 perspective, she created new works that reflect current issues with global influences. Many of her works were developed in collaboration with renowned artists such as the Ahn Trio, Glen Velez, Joan La Barbara, Rokafella, The Chinese Music Ensemble and 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.

