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Saturday, April 10, 2021

South Orange Performing Arts Center presents Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in AWAKENING

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

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The South Orange Performing Arts Center proudly presents the award-winning Nai-Ni Chen dance company in a 60-minute virtual presentation Saturday, April 10 at 7:30PM. Sponsored by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the 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. Tickets are \$10, and free for SOPAC members. To purchase tickets, contact SOPAC at (973) 313-2787 or visit <https://www.sopacnow.org/events/nai-ni-chen-dance-company/>. The Box Office is currently available by phone M-F, 12-4 p.m.

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 hope and energy of the immigrant's journey. The company's ground-breaking works have focused on themes from ancient Chinese legends that reflect issues of the present time to purely abstract, contemporary dances inspired by the art of Chinese calligraphy. An Asian-American company that celebrates the cross-cultural experience, the Company's productions bring forth issues of identity, authenticity, and equality.

The featured dances include two world premieres along with two works created in 2019. The program will also feature an interview with Nai-Ni Chen by renowned dance critic Robert Johnson. She speaks about her inspiration and the deeper themes of each dance, further enhancing audience appreciation of her works.

Program Highlights

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.

Truth Bound (2019) 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 (2019) 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.

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, the 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 SOPAC

Since 2006, SOPAC has been serving as a premier performing arts center in the region. SOPAC offers innovative artistic and cultural experiences for diverse audiences in an intimate, inviting environment. The arts center hosts a variety of live performances, community events and education programs for all ages. SOPAC is home for Seton Hall University Arts Council's performances, including Classical Concert Series, Jazz 'N the Hall performances and Seton Hall University Theatre productions. SOPAC programs are made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. The South Orange Performing Arts Center (SOPAC) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. For more information, visit SOPACnow.org. SOPAC is grateful for the generous support of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and BCB Bank, our season sponsor.

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company
75 Broad Street, New York, NY 10004
New York, NY, 10004
6467654773

<https://www.sopacnow.org/events/nai-ni-chen-dance-company/>

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