



**Arts Education for Young People**  
2010-2011 Season

**CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

**TEACHER GUIDE**

Kupferberg Center Performances

The Teacher Guide is a convenient source of background information, mini-lessons, and pre- and post-concert activities that coordinate with the performance and Student Guide to encourage learning across the curriculum. Most activities can be easily adapted to suit different age groups. This Guide supports the "Blueprint for Teaching & Learning in the Arts," and includes City and State Learning Standards. Click on the URL's to link directly to suggested websites. Feel free to reproduce these materials, as well as Student Activity Pages that may be posted on this website.

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Please send documentation (photographs, compositions, etc.) of class activities based on this guide so we can share your successes with other schools attending Revelations performances. Thanks!

### **ABOUT THE PERFORMERS**

**Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company** is a multicultural troupe of dancers founded by choreographer and dancer Nai-Ni Chen in 1988. Chen was four years old when she began studying traditional dance in Taiwan. She subsequently expanded her studies to include Peking Opera martial arts, female dramatic movement, and modern dance. In 1982, Chen came to study in the U.S. and now makes her home here.

The themes of her work are inspired by the poetic drama of Chinese traditional legends and the highly abstract, elegant lines found in Chinese calligraphy. Her company has been the recipient of several grants from the National Endowment of the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, as well as awards from the Toronto Chinese Performing Arts Festival and the International Mei Society in Taipei, Taiwan for outstanding contribution to the Chinese American community and to Chinese dance. Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is one of the most widely toured professional Asian American dance companies in the United States.

#### **Curriculum Focus: Language Arts**



#### **Mini-Lesson: How Language Changes**

- NYC Language Arts Standards: 4a
- Teaching Point: Trace the development of language from picture to ideas
- Coordinate with Student Guide: *A Picture Says a Thousand Words / Write It - in Chinese / Movement in Space*

#### **Activity 1: Write in Chinese**

"Prithee, wouldst thou kindly break thy fast with me?" How many of your students, if asked this question, would realize they were just invited to breakfast in Elizabethan English? Use this example to engage your students in a discussion about the ways in which spoken language is continually evolving. Have them give examples of "old-fashioned"

expressions vs. "contemporary" expressions (and contemporary expressions from a few years ago as compared to the expressions for the same ideas the students are using

today). Xerox and show them a page from *The Canterbury Tales* or another early English poem for a look at medieval English. How much can they understand? Look at the characters in the Student Guide and do the activity together. Compare the ancient pictographs to the modern-day ideographs. How are they similar? Did the ideographs retain any of the original elements of the pictograph?

### **Activity 2: Trace calligraphy in the air**

- NYC Arts Standard: 4
- Teaching Point: Feel the flow of the calligraphy and find the similarity between it and the flow of dance movements
- Coordinate with Student Guide: *Movement in Space*

Students can first trace the calligraphy in the air with their finger. Place the opposite hand on the shoulder in order to feel the muscles working as they trace. Then try using the whole hand, the elbow, and the shoulder. How could they trace the pictograph using their whole body? This is a good problem-solving exercise for kinesthetic learners in particular.

### **Activity 3: Write an original story based on Chinese Legends**

- NYC Standards: 1c, 1d, 2b, 4a, 5b
- Teaching Point: Your New Year *porquoi* story should answer the question "Why...?"

Whole Group: Read "*Cat and Rat: Enemies Forever,*" which appears below. This traditional folktale retold by Colette Chooley answers the questions "Why do cats hate rats?" and "Why are the years named after animals?"

### ***Cat and Rat: Enemies For Life (The Story of the Zodiac)***

One warm spring morning, Buddha called all of the animals of the earth together for a racing contest. Buddha needed twelve winners, each to be rewarded guardianship of one Chinese lunar year. Twelve Chinese lunar years made up the Chinese Lunar calendar. The first to win would start the Chinese Lunar Calendar then whoever comes in second would be next, and then the third place winner, and so on until all twelve years were guarded. Then the cycle would start again. Thirteen animals appeared before Buddha to race: Rabbit, Rooster, Tiger, Snake, Horse, Monkey, Dog, Pig, Bull, Ram, Rat, Cat and Dragon. Buddha hedged his bets on Dragon, his personal favorite whom he considered the luckiest of the animal kingdom. Before the race started, Rat whispered to Cat. "Hey, I know how we could get ahead in the race. My cousin found a shortcut and gave me this map." "Ooh, good thing," said Cat. "I'll stick with you so we can be winners of first and second place." So Cat and Rat readied for the race, with the shortcut map in Rat's hind pocket. "On your mark! Get set! Go!" All of the animals began to run. With that, Buddha went to the finish line, waited for the animals, and meditated. In between prayers, Buddha sipped on his lemonade. When Rat and Cat came upon the shortcut shown on the map, Rat said to Cat, "Here is the beginning of the shortcut. Let me ride on your back because I can't read the map and look over the grass at the same time." Cat agreed and took directions from Rat. They cut through the woods, over a stream, and up a hillside. Over the hill, they saw the finish line. Cat almost ran down the hill to the finish line. "Wait Cat, not yet! If we cross the finishing line now, you'd get there too early and Buddha would surely say you cheated," Rat exclaimed. "Right," Cat panted. He was exhausted from carrying Rat through the woods, over a stream and up the hill. Cat then asked, "What are we going to do for now?" "Let's rest here and wait until the first animal shows up. We'll run down the hill then," said Rat. So Rat and Cat waited and rested. Cat was so tired he fell asleep in the sunshine. Rat heard a rumble coming around the hill. It was Bull, slowly but surely making his way to the finish line. Rat turned to sleeping Cat and before he could wake the feline, crafty Rat had an idea! Buddha had finished his third lemonade when he saw Bull on the horizon. As Bull neared, Buddha saw a small animal run from the hillside and jump on top of Bull. It was Rat! Bull started to shake the little animal off but to no avail. The little animal climbed his way to Bull's nose and hung on to dear life. As Bull crossed the finish line, Rat stuck out his nose past Bull's and won first place. Buddha declared Bull second place. Bull was so upset that anger filled his eyes with redness. He couldn't show his anger in front of Buddha so he stood in a corner, brooding. He knew inside that he was the winner and that Rat had cheated.

Buddha sighed, but could not do anything but watch Rat shamelessly dance and gloat about his cunning while sitting on top of his trophy. While Rat's gloating was going on, Tiger came in third and Rabbit in a hurried fourth. Dragon came in fifth, and when asked to explain why by a disappointed Buddha, Dragon said that a village nearby had been in trouble and that he had to help them. Snake came in sixth, trying to avoid the hooves of seventh place Horse. Ram was eighth. Lagging behind was Monkey wearing a party hat, just glad to make the finish line and waiting for the party after. Rooster came in on tenth place, chased to the finish line by eleventh-placed Dog. Buddha and the eleven animals waited for the twelfth winner. Cat woke up from his nap, stretched his back and looked for Rat. Cat heard a noise over the hill. He looked and to his surprise, he saw Buddha with eleven animals having a party. In the middle of the crowd was Rat, wearing the first place winner ribbon. In horror, Cat ran down the hillside, and was crushed by the footsteps of Pig wagging by. "Oh, excuse me," Pig apologized to Cat while crossing the finish line. "Buddha, I'm sorry I'm late. I would have been here earlier, but I wanted to finish my chocolate dessert first." Cat groaned, picked himself up and crossed the finish line. "Oh Cat," said Buddha, "I already have my twelve guardians. I don't have any more awards to give you." Rat snickered at Cat then lied, "I tried to wake you, but you never woke up. It's too bad for you that you overslept." "You fiend!" the Cat screamed he lunged towards Rat. Rat jumped out of the way to avoid the sharp claws of Cat. Cat chased Rat until sundown. Buddha honored the contest winners by awarding them the Chinese Lunar year guardianships which, to this day, are represented by in order: Rat, Bull, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Ram, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. Cat is not a guardian of any Chinese Lunar year, and when I see my cat chase little things, I can only imagine the kind of hatred he still holds for those crafty little Rats.

Individual Work: Write your own version of a New Year story, using the *Porquoi* format, i.e.: *Why do we use firecrackers at New Year? Why do we give lucky money? Why do we do a Lion Dance?*  
Share: Students read stories to writing partners. Teacher selects several to be read to the whole group.  
Extension: Publish stories on computer with illustrations.

**Curriculum Focus:**  
**Dance, Music**  
**Visual Art**



**Background: Learn About Traditional Chinese Dance**

- NYC Arts Standard: 4
- Coordinate with Student Guide: *Chinese Dance: What to Look For*

Traditional Chinese dance can be divided into two broad categories: **Court Dance and Folk Dance**. Court dances date back to the Qin Dynasty (220 B.C.). These were performed in the emperor's palace. By the Tang Dynasty (600

A.D.), this form of dance became extremely sophisticated and was depicted in the poetry, paintings and sculpture of the period. The two forms of court dance included those based on martial arts fighting forms and those based on the Confucian etiquette and ritual codes. Aspects of these ancient court dances are still seen embedded in traditional Peking Opera performances and in ancestral ritual ceremonies in Confucian temples. Folk dances celebrated various aspects of life. The dances reflect the over 50 indigenous ethnic groups in China, varying from region to region in movements, music, choice of props and costume. Although performed throughout China, The Dragon Dance and Lion Dance performed during New Year Celebrations have variations both in costume and movements from region to region.

**Dance Activity: Make a dragon dance costume**

- NYC Arts Standards: 1, 2, 4
- Teaching Point: Move together as a unit
- Coordinate with Student Guide: *The Lion Dance / Take It Home: Make a Paper Dragon*

1. Make lion's (or dragon's) head from a cardboard box. Decorate it with glitter, large Styrofoam or felt eyes, teeth, and crêpe paper streamers. Attach a large cloth to its back, long enough to cover three children. 2. The other students can parade with their paper dragons, or take turns tossing it a ball, or giving it paper money to "eat." Develop a dance piece. Invite parents in to see the dances, song, and perhaps a story or two that you can act out! Alternatively, create a dragon's head with a cloth large enough to accommodate 10 children comfortably. Make one or

more dragons or lions. Select several students to play drums, gongs, woodblocks and cymbals. "Wake" the dragon and have the leader lead the "dragon" through the halls, wishing "Gung Hay Fat Choy" to all the classrooms you pass!

**Music Activity: Learn a Chinese New Year Song**

- NYC Arts Standards: 1, 2, 4
- Teaching Point: Create motions based on the things people do to get ready for the Lunar New Year
- Grades: K-2

**Gung Hay Fat Choy**

Log onto <http://www.nancymusic.com/Gunghayplay.htm> for an audio clip of the song, as well as other songs and activities for Chinese New Year. Sing as a finger play with simple hand motions, or pass out rhythm instruments and have children play on the chorus. Or, use as a circle dance, holding hands and walking around on the chorus, and stopping to make hand motions on the verses.

**Chorus: (Keep rhythm by patting hands together -- one hand up, then the other)**

Gung Hay Fat Choy, Gung Hay Fat Choy  
Sing Happy New Year, Gung Hay Fat Choy

The new moon tells us, exactly when **(hold up one hand in C shape for crescent moon)**  
To celebrate with family and friends. **(clap hands in rhythm)**

Clean up the house and get out the broom **(pretend to sweep forwards, then back)**  
Sweep out the old year, bring in the new.

Bring out the apples, the oranges too **(hold out one fist, then the other)**  
Their colors bring us joy and good luck too.

The dragon dances, the lanterns light **(place hands together, snake around)**

The firecrackers light up the night **(alternate right and left fist out with fingers opening quickly to mimic fireworks).**

Music: Nancy Stewart ©2003 Friends Street Music BMI

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. Chords are indicated above the notes.

Staff 1: Gung hay fat choy (Chords: G, Em)

Staff 2: Sing Hap - py New Year Gung hay fat choy (Chords: D, C, G)

Staff 3: 1. The new year tells us ex - act - ly when  
2. Clean up the house and get out the broom  
3. Bring out the ap - ples the oran - ges too  
4. The dia - gon danc - es, the lan - terns light (Chord: Em)

Staff 4: to cel - e - brate with fam - i - ly and friends  
Sweep out the old year, bring in the new  
Their col - ors bring us joy and good luck too  
The fire - crack - ers light light up the night (Chords: D, C, D, G)

## **Visual Arts Activity: Make a Chinese lantern**

- NYC Arts Standards: 2, 4
- Teaching Point: Lanterns are used as part of the Lunar New Year Celebration.

Make Chinese lanterns out of colored paper following the illustration. Children can walk or dance freely with lanterns as the song is sung.

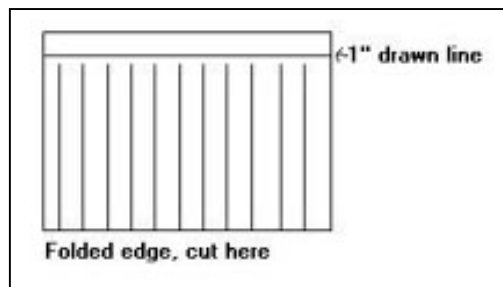
1. Fold a piece of colored paper in half the long way.
2. Staying within  $\frac{1}{2}$ " margins, make cuts an inch apart through the fold.

(Do NOT cut through the line!)

3. Open the paper, and staple the top and bottom so that fold goes around the middle.

4. Make a handle out of yarn or paper.

Decorate with animal faces that can be glued on before folding and cutting, or with glitter or sequins after the lantern is done.



Resource: For more craft ideas, visit: [http://crafts.kaboose.com/holidays/chinese\\_new\\_year.html](http://crafts.kaboose.com/holidays/chinese_new_year.html)

## **Curriculum Focus: Social Studies**



### **Mini-Lesson: Learn About China**

- NYC Social Studies Standard: 3
- Teaching Point: Use your compass rose and map key to discover the geography of China

### **Activity 1:** Coordinate with Student Guide: *Where in the World is China?*

Answer the Student Guide questions using the map.

Extension: Provide a topographical map of China. Using the map key, have students locate the varied environments of China. Assign small groups each environment to research the flora and fauna of that environment, and the clothing and customs of the people who live within that region.

### **Activity 2: Create a Venn diagram**

- NYC Social Studies Standards: 1,2,4
- Teaching Points: Learn about traditions using lights in various world cultures

Compare and contrast the use of lights or candles by different cultures. Make a list of festivals/holidays together on a large chart or board, and then have students research each festival to find out the significance of the lights, and how each holiday or memorial is celebrated. Fill in the details on the Venn diagram. Examples: Diwali; Hanukkah; Kwanzaa lighting ceremony; Christmas trees; Eid al-Fitr, literally the "Festival of Breaking the Fast," where lanterns are lit in the home; Thai culture also has a light festival, where the lights are put in little boats and sent off with wishes; lights used as memorials by various cultures—this has become an international symbol.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Web Sites**

[www.nainichen.org](http://www.nainichen.org) (Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company's website)

[www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/China/index.html](http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/China/index.html) (Six Paths to China, good research tool)

<http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/china.html> (folktales from China)

<http://www.eastrisinglion.org/liondance.asp> (history of the Lion dance)

[http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/social\\_customs/dragon\\_lion.htm](http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/social_customs/dragon_lion.htm) (All about the Dragon Dance; Zodiac stories)

<http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/geo/land.htm> (topographical map of China)

## Reading List

*Celebrating Chinese New Year* by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, photos by Lawrence Migdale.

*Chinese New Year for Kids* by Cindy Roberts.

*Celebrating Chinese New Year: An Activity Book* by Hingman Chan

*The Dancing Dragon* by Marcia K. Vaughan

*Sam and the Lucky Money* by Karen Chinn

*Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year* by Kate Waters

*Lantern and Firecrackers: a Chinese New Year Story* by Jonny Zucker

*Happy, Happy Chinese New Year!* By Demi Hitz

*Dragon Dance: A Chinese New Year Lift-the-Flap Book* by Joan Holub

*Long is A Dragon, Chinese Writing for Children* by Peggy Goldstein

*The Dragon's Tale and Other Animal Fables of the Chinese Zodiac* by Demi



GO to this site to find out your sign on the Chinese zodiac:

<http://www.teasetc.com/tea/article.asp?ID=49>

## 2012 is the Year of the Dragon.



The Dragon represents the fourth year in the 12-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac.

### Characteristics of the Dragon

Three words that best describe people born under the dragon sign are charismatic, tempestuous, and *lucky*. In fact, the Chinese culture considers the dragon to be one of the luckiest signs of the zodiac. Dragons are very generous by nature, and even if they hit bad luck, it doesn't seem to last for long. The confident dragon will simply continue

on its way with determination. Dragons are honest and straightforward, steadfast, true and loyal to their friends—but watch out if you cross them!

### Famous people born in the Year of the Dragon

Joan of Arc, Susan B. Anthony, Florence Nightingale, Sigmund Freud, Mae West, John Lennon, Bruce Lee, Keanu Reeves, Orlando Bloom, Colin Farrell, and Sandra Bullock.

**REVELATIONS** is made possible thanks to generous support from the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, The Kupferberg Foundation, The New York Community Trust, and the Selma and Max Kupferberg Family Foundation. This series is supported in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council, and with the support of Queens Borough President Helen Marshall.



**REVELATIONS: Arts Education for Young People** is presented by Kupferberg Center Performances, Queens College, CUNY.

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