

Kalamazoo RESA Presents  
Red Firecracker  
Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company  
Date/Time: Tue Oct 22, 2024 10AM, 12:30AM  
Location: Miller Auditorium

Dancers: Yuchin (KiKi) Tseng, Sarah Botero, Madeleine Lee, Kathryn Taylor, Lorenzo Guerrini, Caleb Baker, Maxwell O'Connell, Yaozhong Zhang.

Technical Director: Rebecca Nussbaum

Artistic Director: Greta Campo

Rehearsal Director: Candace Jarvis

Choreographer: Nai-Ni Chen

### Synopsis

In the ancient times, before there was a Chinese New Year Celebration, in a faraway village in China, people lives joyously together in harmony with nature. But, every 365 days, a monster called Nian comes to terrorize the people. The Villagers trained themselves in martial arts to defend themselves, but even the greatest warrior among them is not able to defeat the Nian Monster. The villagers, with nowhere to turn, prayed to the gods in heaven for help.

Finally, the villager's prayers to the gods are answered and the monster is repelled from the village. In order for everyone to remember what they needed to do every 365 days, they used the name of the Monster, Nian, to be the same for the word "Year". To celebrate another year absent of the Monster, people say "Guo Nian", meaning the danger of another Nian visit has passed. On the New Year's Day, people greet each other saying "Gung Xi, Gung Xi" ("Greetings"), they wear red clothing, give red envelopes to children, covering everything with red color, and play loud firecrackers to ward off the Nian. Red is the color the monster is most feared of and signifies good luck in Chinese culture.

### Dances

#### Dance of the Peach Flowers

Music: Chinese Folk Music arranged by Guo Brothers and Lyu Hong-Jun

Lighting Design: A. C. Hickox

Costumes: Nai-Ni Chen

Dancers: Yuchin (KiKi) Tseng, Sarah Botero, Madeleine Lee, Kathryn Taylor.

The legend of the Peach Flower Village was recorded by the poet/philosopher Tau Yuan Ming in the fourth century. It tells of a peaceful agricultural community with no central authoritarian control, hidden away from the rest of the world. The people lived in perfect harmony with the land.

#### TaiPing Drum Dance

Music: Chinese Folk Music

Costumes: Nai-Ni Chen

Dancers: Max O'Connell, Caleb Baker, Yuchin (KiKi) Tseng, Sarah Botero, Kathryn Taylor

"TaiPing" means peace in Chinese. This dance originated in the Northeastern China, a mountainous region with long, cold, snowy winters. Each spring when the snow starts to melt and the flower starts to bloom. Young men and women get together, sing and dance with their drums to celebrate the coming of the spring and pray for peace.

### Way of Fire

Music: Tan Dun

Lighting Design: Susan Summers

Dancers: Yuchin (KiKi) Tseng, Sarah Botero, Madeleine Lee, Lorenzo Guerrini, Caleb Baker

A movement exploration that showcases the ancient Chinese theory that the cycles of creation and destruction correspond to the ever-changing phenomena of nature. The Fire refers to one of 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. Here, Fire represents the energy within us, it is the driving power that keeps us moving forward. The element wood creates fire, while water destroys it.

### Long Spear Dance

Music: Peking Opera Percussion Music

Dancer: Yaozhong Zhang

This dance combines the beauty and grace of Chinese opera technique with the excitement of martial arts or Kung Fu. A young warrior prepares to go onto the battlefield to defend his homeland. Even as he displays his concentration and strength, he is determined to keep the peace. The dramatic tension is shown through the contrast between silent poses and athletic movements.

### Ribbon Dance

Music and Costumes:

Dancers: Yuchin (KiKi) Tseng, Sarah Botero, Kathryn Taylor.

The Ribbon Dance is probably the most representative Chinese folk dance seen around the world. The ribbons symbolize a cloud, which carry the gods and the goddesses in the sky. The patterns of the ribbon which dancers make are meant to encourage the gods to come down to earth to make the fields full and the harvest good. It was said that the ribbon dance originated in the Han dynasty over 2000 years ago.

### Coinstick Dance

Music: Chinese Folk Music.

Dancers: The Company

It was said that The Coin Stick Dance came from the Hubei province in China. This dance is usually performed in pairs of dancers, and the stick is made from bamboo. The coins are put into the bamboo stick to make interesting sounds when the dancers shake and hit the stick on their body and the floor as they dance with it in celebration.

## Festival

Music: Chinese Traditional

Dancers: the Company

Many dances were created for special celebrations in China. In this dance, blue flags symbolize the water wave to pray for enough rain falls to ensure a good harvest in the agricultural society. Colorful ribbons symbolize the prosperity of the village. The procession outside of the village temple further enhances the festive atmosphere.

## About the Artists

Greta Campo - Artistic Director, began dance training in her native Milan at the Carcano Theater, where she was first introduced to Martha Graham's work. At age 19, she began the Professional Training Program at the Martha Graham School in NYC and, after a couple of months, she joined Graham II, performing in ensemble and solo roles. She performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company in their 2012 New York Season and has also traveled nationally and internationally with them as a member of the corps. She completed the Teacher Training Program at the School. Greta received the 2016 Rising Star Award from Fini Dance Festival. Ms. Campo joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in 2012, besides dancing she teaches for several teaching projects with the Company, including dance classes for kids with disabilities, for public school kids, she has taught college students and masterclasses with Nai-Ni Chen. Since the Pandemic Ms Campo has been teaching the Company Style, Kinetic Spiral, via Zoom. She joined different projects with Buglisi Dance Theater in 2019.

Shi Ying - Choreographer/Director of Traditional Dance and Preservation. is from Beijing, China. Ying received her Bachelor's Degree in Chinese Dance from the Beijing Dance Academy and her Master's Degree from the School of Arts at Peking University. Her extensive experience teaching Chinese Classical Dance includes the Ailian Chan Dance School (Beijing), the Beijing Dance Academy and the Tsinghua University Dance Troupe. As a young dancer, she was a member of the Nanchang Song & Dance Troupe in the Jiangxi Province. She joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in 2013 and established her own school in 2019. She is the gold medal award winner of the Overseas TaoLi Cup Professional division in 2019.

Candace Jarvis - Rehearsal Director, originally from Brampton, Ontario, started her professional training at Bold Dance Company under the direction of Emilio and Stephanie Macri. She continued her training at The Ailey School as a Certificate Student. She has performed works by many choreographers including Amy Hall, Tracy Inman, Carlos Dos Santos and Norbert De La Cruz III. In 2013 Ms. Jarvis performed in Alvin Ailey's Revelations Cast of 50 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and took part in Robert Battle's New Directions Choreographers Lab at The Ailey School. Ms. Jarvis was a former member of Awaken Dance Theater under the direction of Rebekka Nodhurf. In 2015 she earned her Certificate of Honors from The Ailey School Certificate Program and joined the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company.

Becky Nussbaum (she/her) is a NYC based Lighting Designer with a background in dance and theater. Her design work has been presented all around NYC and Chicago. She is fortunate enough to spend her summers in the mountains at the Vail Dance Festival out in CO, which gives her the opportunity to work with companies such as ABT, NYCB, Martha Graham, Ballet Hispánico, BalletX and many more. [beckynussbaum.com](http://beckynussbaum.com).

## Dancers

Max O'Connell (Dancer) is originally from Cortland, New York, and is a graduate of UNCSA's BFA Dance program. Max spent two years with Graham 2 after a season with the First National Tour of "Fiddler on the Roof," directed by Bartlett Sher and choreographed by Hofesh Schechter. He now lives full time in New York City with his long term partner and their dog Maisy.

Kiki (YuChin) Tseng (dancer) was born and raised in Yilan, Taiwan. She received a full tuition scholarship to train at the Harid Conservatory in Florida for two years where she received vigorous training in classical ballet technique, upon which she enrolled in SUNY Purchase College in New York. In 2021 she graduated summa cum laude with a BFA in Dance Performance and a BA in Arts Management, and she was the recipient of the 2021 Outstanding Senior Award for Dance at SUNY Purchase for highest level achievement of artistry, academic and citizenship. In the fall of 2021 Kiki became a member of Graham 2 where she had the privilege to perform many historical works by Martha Graham. Kiki has performed professionally with Buglisi Dance Theatre and Mason Lee Dance Theater.

Madeleine Lee (Dancer) grew up in Los Angeles, California where she trained at Julia Bourlina's School of Classical Ballet. After attending LA County High School for the Arts, Madeleine joined The Ailey School in New York, graduating from the Scholarship Program. Now, having graduated from Graham 2, Madeleine is excited to be part of the Nai Ni Chen Dance Company!

Kathryn Taylor is a dance artist with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company in New York City. She has also danced with Graham 2, Dance Ensemble Singapore, and Revelations Dance. She received her BFA from the Conservatory of Dance at SUNY Purchase in 2019 with a minor in Asian Studies. She was a recipient of the Study Abroad Grant, affording her a semester's study at the Taipei National University of the Arts. She also completed the Advanced Study Certificate

Program at the Martha Graham School. She owns a small handmade dance-wear business called Fire Ox Dancewear and loves making K-pop dance covers.

Sarah Botero Dancer is from North Bergen, NJ. Sarah earned her BFA from SUNY Purchase College, Conservatory of Dance. She subsequently continued her training in The Ailey School Scholarship Program. Sarah has had the opportunity to perform in works by Hope Boykin, Manuel Vignouille, Rena Butler, Brice Mousset, Bradley Shelver, and Earl Mosley. She is currently an apprentice with Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. Sarah also has a passion for teaching and hopes to pursue being a dance educator.

Yao Zhong Zhang, Dancer came from Shanghai, China, where he graduated from the Shanghai Kuan Opera School with a major in the male warrior role. Mr. Zhang performed with the Shanghai Kuan Opera Theater for ten years before moving to New York, where he also performs with the Tong-Ching Chinese Opera Company. He has been a member of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company since 2000.

Caleb Baker (dancer) came from a hip hop background who began his technical dance journey at the age of 19. He trained at the Academy of Ballet Arts Studio, studying Vaganova ballet technique and Russian character. He later joined the Hillsborough Community College dance program as a dance major and earned his Associates in Dance Emphasis. Caleb has traveled and studied at multiple summer programs including the Alonzo King Lines Ballet and the American Dance Festival summer pre-professional programs. Since graduation, Caleb has performed professionally as a member of REVolutions Dance Company and danced professionally with Busch Gardens, Yahweh in Motion Ministries Inc., and in commercial works such as the BET's First Wives Club. Caleb is looking forward to working with Nai Ni Chen Dance Company in the upcoming season.

## About Nai-Ni Chen

Nai-Ni Chen (1959-2021) Founding Artistic Director/Choreographer is a Bessie Award winning choreographer, a pioneer of Asian American Dance, and a cultural icon in the Chinese American dance community. She has built a diverse repertory of over 90 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 her 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 Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She was a principal affiliate of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and was a resident artist of

the Harlem School of the Arts. For her contribution to the Chinese American culture, she has received awards from the New Jersey International Institute, the Organization of Chinese Americans, and Chinese American Chamber of Commerce. She has also served on Dance related panels for the National Endowment for the Arts.

#### About Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company

Bridging the grace of Asian elegance and American dynamism, The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is a leading force in creating innovative cultural experiences that capture the hope, resilience, and energy of the immigrant journey. Through its productions, the Company fosters cross-cultural understanding while addressing important themes of identity, authenticity, and equality. 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.

The Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company has been presented at some of the most prestigious concert halls such as the Joyce Theater, Lincoln Center in New York, Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts in California, the Raymond F. Kravis Center, 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 been presented by international festivals including Open Look Festival in Russia, the Silesian International Contemporary Dance Festival and 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 Company pioneered a program with the A Harry Moore Laboratory School teaching dance to urban children with multiple disabilities. For additional Company information, visit our website, [www.nainichen.org](http://www.nainichen.org); write to Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, P.O. Box 1121, Fort Lee, NJ 07024; or call (800) 650- 0246. TThe Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company is represented by Red Shell Management Tel: 646-808-5780 Email: [ed@redshellmgmt.org](mailto:ed@redshellmgmt.org); More information can be found on [www.nainichen.org](http://www.nainichen.org)