

CITY OF SAN JOSE'S Arts Express Program Presents:

Chinese Performing Artists of America
Asian New Year Celebration

Teacher Guide

Grades 4-6

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About the Arts Organization

Founded in 1991, Chinese Performing Artists of America (CPAA) was created to introduce Chinese culture as an integral part of American society through the performing arts. Although the Bay Area has the largest population of people of Chinese descent in the United States, Chinese culture remains ambiguous to many people, sometimes even Chinese Americans themselves. CPAA presents Chinese arts of exceptional beauty and richness so that these cultural treasures can be shared by the community. CPAA's principal performers are professionally trained, award-winning artists from China. They include choreographer Yong Yao, composer Phil Young, and Executive Director and producer Ann Woo. CPAA's repertoire includes dance, music, martial arts, and acrobatics, many of which are original works.

About the Program

This program, which takes place during the Asian New Year, introduces students to Chinese culture through dance. The program begins with an introduction to Chinese culture and performing arts. Students are then taken on a journey through China with dances that highlight Chinese history and mythology, folk dances featuring some of the 56 ethnic groups in China, and traditional Han dances. The program also includes demonstrations of Kung Fu by skilled martial artists.

Learning Objectives

Students will--

- Learn about the diversity of Chinese performing arts and culture through experiencing a series of dance pieces;
- Develop an understanding of and acceptance for Chinese culture;
- Feel empowered by and proud of their own cultural traditions.

Historical and Cultural Context

An Introduction to Chinese Culture

- Chinese culture, one of the most ancient cultures in the world, developed along the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers. While other ancient civilizations have declined or fallen, the Chinese civilization has continued to evolve for thousands of years to the present day.
- The breadth and depth of Chinese culture resulted from the continuous assimilation of hundreds of tribes in Asia since the Stone Age.

- Today, 20% of the world's population is comprised of 1.3 billion Chinese. Even though English is the international language, more people use Chinese on a daily basis than any other language.
- The influence of Chinese culture on the rest of Asia and the West can be observed by objects and concepts which have been adopted from China, such as porcelain china, silk, alchemy, and kung-fu, to name a few.
- China is home to the Great Wall, the biggest man-made structure on earth, and 56 ethnic nationalities. Among the 56 nationalities, "Han," with a population of 1.2 billion, is the largest single nationality in the world.
- China is the only country that has a continuous history of 5,000 years with relatively complete written records of major events. Chinese calligraphy, which evolved from ancient hanzi, has become a highly regarded art form in its own right.
- In China there are hundreds of dialects spoken by many regional groups. Hanzi is the single written language in which all Chinese people can communicate. It plays an important role in the history of China as a unified country.

An Introduction to Chinese Performing Arts

- Chinese dance, music, and martial arts were developed from religious and hunting rituals that were daily activities of primitive tribes.
- The oldest Chinese musical instrument still played today is called "xun," a clay pot with several wind holes, invented some 7,000 years ago.
- Chinese dances with props and costumes decorated with feathers can be traced back to celebration ceremonies after a successful hunt in prehistoric times.
- As early as 200 BC in the Han Dynasty, performances were highly sophisticated, even by today's standards. Ancient paintings, literature and unearthed pottery revealed a full repertoire of performing arts such as:
 - Acrobatic feats like juggling, balancing, and wire walking;
 - Martial arts incorporating swordplay, archery, and fist sets;
 - Dances with fans, silk ribbons, lanterns, and dragon props;
 - Solo & ensemble music, and opera;
 - Magic acts involving cutting strings, disappearing and reappearing fish or human bodies.
- Special performances were presented in theaters specifically designed for stage shows. Outdoor performances extending for several miles with hundreds of thousands of participants were recorded during the Sui Dynasty of the 6th Century. Even today Chinese dance, music, acrobatics, magic shows, and martial arts continue to dazzle audiences all over the world.

Vocabulary

Silk--A fabric made from the thread spun by silkworms, invented in China.

Kung Fu—A Chinese martial art.

Loong—The Chinese word for Dragon.

Preparation for the Program

1. Review the Introduction to Chinese Culture and ask students what they associate with it. Have students identify some of the many Chinese inventions. Ask if there are any students in the class of Chinese descent and have them share something about their culture.
2. Review the information about Chinese Mythology (see website below) and discuss themes in Chinese myths with students. Have them watch for mythological themes in the first part of the presentation.
3. Look at a map of China and identify some of the regions where China's ethnic minorities live (e.g. the Dai, Yi, and Vah people). Discuss how the geographic location of various tribes might impact their lifestyle and customs. Have students look out for dances from some of these tribes during the presentation.

Curriculum Connections--CA Visual and Performing Arts Standards

Note: The California Visual and Performing Arts Standards were created based on the premise that each student is receiving comprehensive and sequential arts instruction in all four major arts disciplines. Since this is rarely the case, the following standards may not correspond to the grade levels served by the Arts Express program.

Historical and Cultural Context

- 3.2 (Grade 3) Describe and demonstrate ceremonial and folk/traditional dances that show work activities (e.g. harvesting, fishing, weaving)
- 3.3 (Grade 4) Perform and describe dances that reflect the geographical place in which the dances are performed (e.g. deserts, rain forests, islands)
- 3.3 (Grade 5) Select traditional dances that men, women, or children perform and explain the purpose(s) of the dances.
- 3.4 (Grade 2) Describe dances seen in celebrations and community events.

Aesthetic Valuing

- 4.2 (Grade 3) Explain and demonstrate what it means to be a good audience member.
- 4.3 (Grade 4) Describe ways in which a dancer effectively communicates ideas and moods (strong technique, projection, and expression).

Resources

Chinese Civilization: www.china.org.cn/e-gudai/6.htm

Chinese minority groups: www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/minority/minority.html#table

Chinese mythology: www.chinavista.com/experience/myth/myth.html

Extending the Experience

CPAA also offers hands-on Chinese culture workshops to schools. Chinese artists demonstrate silk ribbon and fan dances, swordplay, and Chinese dance basics; students are then given the opportunity to learn parts of the ribbon and fan dances. For more information, see the contact number above.

CPAA also offers a number of classes such as dance, martial arts, Chinese painting, and instrumental music at our campus, the CPAA Arts Center: 10123 N. Wolfe Road #2027, Cupertino, CA, 95014. The Center is inside the Vallco Mall, above the ice skating rink.

