

Jin Xing Dance Theater

<http://www.jinxing-dance-theatre.com/en/index.asp>

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About the Company

Jin Xing Dance Theatre was established in 1999 as the first independent contemporary dance ensemble in China. The company performed extensively in Asia, America and Europe. The repertoire includes major works such as Shanghai Tango(2000), Carmina Burana (2000), Shanghai Beauty(2005), Made in China-Return of the Soul(2007) and The China Project(2009). The company currently exists of 15 dancers representing different regions and minorities in China. Thanks to its founder, artistic director and choreographer Jin Xing the company represents the leading contemporary dance troupe in China.

About Jin Xing



Jin Xing (directly translated: golden star) started her remarkable life journey 1967 in Shenyang, Liaoning province. She was born to parents from the country's Korean minority at a time when China was caught in the throes of the Cultural Revolution. At the age of nine, she managed to enroll in the famous military dance ensemble in Shenyang, whose teacher was one of the best in classic ballet in China.

At the age of 17 she received the Best Dancer of China Award. At 19 she became the first Chinese dancer to win a grant in New York from the Asian Cultural Council of America and the American Dance Festival. She studied with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Jose Limon. In 1991 she won the "Best Choreographer Award" of the American Dance Festival for her creation "Half Dream". Jin Xing then decided to move to Europe. While there, she had several educational visits and appearances with various ensembles in Rome and Brussels. In 1993 Jin Xing returned to China where she became teacher for the National Choreography and Modern Dance Training workshops commissioned by the Chinese Ministry of Culture. In 1994 she resigned as Colonel from the Chinese military dance company.

This move out of the Chinese establishment didn't slow down Jin Xing. She continued her successful career with the creation of "Black and Red" which received the Ministry of Culture award. This was the first time this award was given to a contemporary dance performance. In the beginning of 1996 she founded the Beijing Modern Dance Ensemble, which was the first modern dance troupe in Beijing. Since 1999 she has lead her own "Jin Xing Dance Theatre". It is China's first independent modern dance and performing group. With excellent productions like "Shanghai Tango", and "Carmina Burana", the company is acclaimed both nationally and internationally. They have appeared in festivals such as La Biennale di Venezia, Dance Umbrella London, Impulstanz Vienna and Steps in Switzerland. Besides her achievements in the field of dance Jin Xing is also a talented jazz singer and has held lead roles in theater and movie productions.

Jin Xing founded the Shanghai Dance Festival in 2006 as part of her mission to develop Chinese culture. Her strong engagement in the cultural world received international recognition. In 2004 she was awarded as an honorary member of ELIA, the European League of Institutes of the Arts. In November 2006 she received an honorary doctoral degree from Dartington College of Arts in the UK. Jin Xing not only represents the new generation of present day China, her name is a synonym for courage, freedom, self-responsibility and the power of an artful spirit.



Modern Dance in China

Development of modern Chinese dance has followed a long and tortuous road. Broadly speaking, in the process of the development of Chinese modern and contemporary dances, it seems that all forms of dances without specific national characteristics and classical patterns could be included in Chinese Modern Dance.

Chinese modern dance pioneers like Wu Xiaobang, Dai Ailian and Jia Zuoguang had intensive professional training in western modern dances. In their dancing, they not only retain the spirit of freedom and innovation, but more importantly, they pursue the national character of China and the trends of the time and combine that with what they were taught. Dance Classics of the Chinese Nation in the 20th century represented by great works such as *March of the Volunteers*, *Song of the Guerrillas*, *Fire of Hunger*, as well as Wu Xiaobang's motto "to dance to the rhythm of the times" should be considered treasures of the Chinese Modern Dance.

At the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Wu Xiaobang set up the Tianma Dance Art Studio to promote his own teaching system that originated from modern dance. His works of this period include *The Great Ambuscade*, *Three Variations of Plum Blossom*, *Wild Geese Landing On the Sand*, which abide by a traditional cultural spirit. Also, we have *Shepherd Boy Learning Chinese Characters*, *Soccer Dance* and *Butterfly*, which were based on modern life. His principles of art remained the same, however, and the above-mentioned works couldn't compete with the dances he created during the Anti-Japanese War in terms of their influence. Later, the pursuit of modern dance in China faded with the closing of the *Tianma Dance Art Studio*.

Chinese modern dance began to create a new development trend at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s with the deepening of China's reform and opening-up. It was in the recent ten years that China directly brought in "authentic" Western modern dance and started new explorations into this field. Guangzhou, the pioneer of Chinese reform and Beijing, the political capital and cultural center became the bases for modern dance.

In 1987, the first experimental modern dance class opened in Guangdong Province; in 1991, the Beijing Dance Institute officially launched the modern dance teaching and research office. Many well-known Western modern dance experts were invited to China successively to give systematic training in shape and choreography. They were Sarah Stackhouse, Ruby Shang, Douglas Nielson, Claudia Gittleman, Lucas Hoving, Birgit Akesson, Ren Lu Wang and Chang Ching, etc., from the United States, Britain, Sweden, Canada, and Australia.

Soon after, young Chinese modern dancers began to emerge on the world stage with their unique style. The pioneers were Qin Liming and Qiao Yang from the Guangdong Modern Dance Class. They clinched the gold medal of the pas de deux at the Fourth Paris International Modern Dance Contest in 1990 with the dances *Passing Voice* (choreographed by Cao Chengyuan) and *Impression of Taiji*. Later in 1994 and 1996, gold medals at the sixth and seventh Paris international modern dance contests were again snatched by Chinese Xing Liang and Sang Jijia. Aside from performing works by Cao Chengyuan, both of them presented *The Light* and *Dangling* created by themselves. To experts in world modern dance circles' surprise, Chinese artists began to rapidly enter modern dance circles with their works of international standard and the charm of the Orient.

Lesson Plans

Representation of Chinese Minority Group in Propaganda Art

Aim: How have Chinese minorities been represented through propaganda art?

Objectives: Students will examine Chinese propaganda posters from the late 1950s to the early 1980s that were aimed at minority groups. Through the analysis of these examples of propaganda art, students will examine:

- Attitudes toward ethnic minorities as reflected through the images of these groups and the purposes being served by a particular piece of propaganda
- Roles assigned to minority groups since the conception of the People's Republic of China.

Materials: Reproductions of Chinese propaganda posters. There are several publications on this subject. However, you can also examine images of these posters on the Internet. Two very useful websites are Stefan Landsberger's Chinese Propaganda Posters Page (www.iisg.nl/~landsberger/) and Li Yu's work Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Propaganda Posters, 1957-1983 (<http://mclc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/minzu/>). Both sites provide analyses of the role of propaganda posters in China, as well as background information on many examples of this art.

Background Information:

Propaganda art was instrumental in the efforts to establish the foundations of the People's Republic of China. Mao Tse-tung emphasized the importance of art as a revolutionary instrument at a forum in Yen-an in May of 1942:

"Comrades! You have been invited to this forum today to exchange ideas and examine the relationship between work in the literary and artistic fields, and revolutionary work in general. Our aim is to ensure that revolutionary literature and art follow the correct path of development and provide better help to other revolutionary work in facilitating the overthrow of our national enemy and the accomplishment of the task of national liberation. ...The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind."

Talks at the Yen-an Forum on Literature and Art, May 2, 1942

After having served the purposes of liberation, art became the instrument to bring all the Chinese together in a nation-building effort. Minority groups had to be "educated" in order to assist in the efforts to bring progress to China.

Propaganda posters aimed at minority groups tried to communicate the idea of national unity while emphasizing the individual characteristics of each nationality (Landsberger). Peoples are shown in their traditional costumes coming together in many occasions through music and dance, maintaining their traditional way of life while attempting to achieve progress.

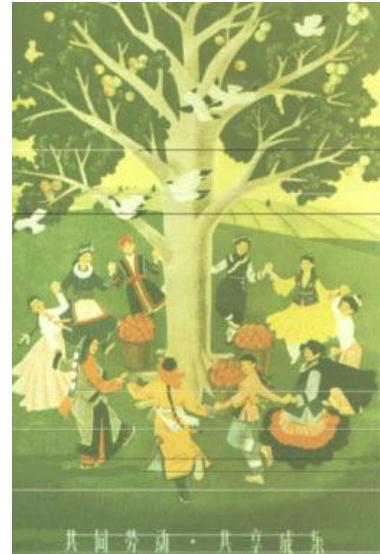
An examination of the symbols used in the posters, the messages these communicated and the government purposes served by this form of propaganda reveals some recurring themes. Li Yu's work established how minority groups were often associated with the themes of social prosperity, lack of progress and education, national security and national unity.

Motivation:

In order to model the process of analysis of propaganda posters, an example can be shown to the class. The poster *Share the Labor and Share the Fruit* (1957) can be used to introduce the activity.

Questions for discussion:

- Describe the scene depicted in this poster.
- What are the images/symbols being used in it?
- How are the visuals reinforcing the message of this poster?
- What do you think the Chinese government hoped that the target audience would do? What purpose was being served by this poster?
- This poster was produced in 1957. What was taking place in China during this period? Why would the government be interested in emphasizing the kind of message we see in this poster?

**Procedure:**

- 1) Students work in groups of no more than four members to analyze several posters provided by the teacher. They should be provided with a handout containing questions to facilitate the discussion. (See handout 2)
- 2) Each group explains the poster to the rest of the class. Images of these posters should be made into transparencies or arranged in a power-point presentation to allow the entire class to observe them closely.

Summary:

A final discussion should identify common themes in the propaganda posters:

- How were minority peoples represented in these posters?
- What do the illustrations say about the way minority peoples were perceived by the majority of the Chinese people? Are some of these perceptions still common?
- What effects do you think this kind of portrayal has had on minority peoples?

Application/Follow up:

- 1) Think about possible issues and concerns relevant to minority peoples in China today. Create a poster encouraging the people to address these matters.
- 2) Examine other Chinese propaganda posters. What attitudes and actions are these inducing?

Treasures Along the Silk Roads

Overview:

Using slides of objects from the exhibition Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China, Gansu and Ningxia, 4th to 7th Century, students will generate word maps that act as creative writing prompts. The archaeological finds from western China act as entry points to introduce students to the rich cultural and artistic exchanges on the Silk Roads. The students first encounter the artifacts through brainstorming through the teacher's oral prompts. The prompts are designed to encourage students to reflect on the cultures and history of the past through their own experiences and knowledge. The resulting words or phrases are used to generate original writing samples. The activity concludes with a discussion of these impressions, then returns to the artifacts' historical, cultural, and artistic contexts.

Objectives:

- Students will analyze slides of artifacts as cultural and social representations of the Silk Road civilizations
- Students will utilize the writing process to create a word map and creative writing sample using standard written language conventions
- Students will appreciate the creativity and craftsmanship of artifacts from ancient history as represented by the Monks and Merchants exhibition

Grade level:

Middle or high school students

Time required:

1 - 2 class periods

Materials:

- Monks and Merchants website with art images (<http://sites.asiasociety.org/arts/monksandmerchants/index.html>)
- pencils
- unlined paper
- Silk Roads map (<http://www.silkroadproject.org/tabid/177/default.aspx>)

Assessment:

Students will generate a word map and creative writing sample from the images in the Monks and Merchants slide packet

Procedure:

1. Introduce students to the Gansu and Ningxia (pronounced Gan-soo, Ning-shah) regions of China, showing them on a map where this area is located. Explain that the slides depict artifacts found along the Silk Roads from a time span dating between the 2nd and 7th century CE. Many of the items were excavated in tombs around the region. The artifacts offer a view of life along the Silk Roads in these ancient times through pictures, models and sculptures. Some pieces represent a confluence of cultures, religions, and artistic styles. Consider the pieces as a collection of the treasure trove of artwork celebrating the exchanges across the Silk Roads.

2. Hand out unlined paper and pencil to each student. Explain to them that you will be showing a series of slides. For each slide, you will ask them to jot down responses to a phrase or question. The responses should not be made in a list -- spread them around the paper as a collage of words that can act as a story starter later. Slides could be shown from a few seconds to a minute, it is important for students to write the first ideas that come to mind. Impress on students that there are no "wrong" responses. The word map will act as a writing tool for a story or poem later.
3. Show slides one by one. For each slide read the prompts, allowing at least five seconds for each response. Have students generate word maps as you read the prompts. Do NOT read the descriptions of the artifacts to the students at this time.
4. Ask students to use their word maps to generate a poem or short story based on one or more of the word prompts and the slides that were shown.
5. When students have completed writing, have them share the products with the class.
6. Show students the slides one more time. This time, read the descriptions of the artifacts to the students as they are presented. You may choose to generate more imaginative responses from the students by using both the writing samples and the descriptions of the objects. Highlight the importance of art as representations of life and culture, and how the diversity of artifacts indicate the movement of people and the exchange of goods and ideas on the Silk Roads.

Background information about burial objects in ancient China:

As early as the Neolithic period (8th to 2nd millennium BCE), Chinese tombs were furnished with grave goods like pottery, tools, weapons, and even horses and human sacrifices. Scholars believe that this practice indicated a belief in the afterlife. By the 5th century BCE, animal and human sacrifices were replaced by clay models while certain luxury items and daily necessities continued to be buried with the deceased. Many clay models are in the shape of servants, buildings, and other daily necessities. For archaeologists, the tombs and their burial objects became a sort of time capsule, as they are primary sources of information about daily lives in ancient China.

Slide 1: Striding cavalry horse

Horses held special importance along the Silk Road, as the work animals of the nomadic people and, as with this figure, as part of a military force. These animals were vital to maintaining Chinese military strength. In 2nd century BCE, military expeditions to Central Asia brought stories about the so-called "blood sweating" horses with exceptional stamina and speed. The quest to possess the best horses was one of the reasons for Chinese military and diplomatic missions to Central Asia. This bronze figure of a horse was found in a tomb as part of a large procession of model horses, mounted warriors, chariots, and escorts.

Eastern Han dynasty, 2nd century CE

Bronze

Height: 36.5 cm

Excavated from a tomb in Gansu province

Prompts:

What is one adjective to describe the character of the horse?

Where would you like to ride this horse?

[Slide 2: Tomb brick with scenes of animal husbandry](#)

A herder looks after his goats and two oxen on this brick that was excavated from a burial site. This is one of many bricks from the interior of the tomb that had pictures of daily life painted on them.

Six dynasties period, c. 220-317

Clay with pigments

Height: 17 cm; Length: 43.5 cm; thickness; 4.8 cm

Excavated from a tomb in Jiayuguan (Jah-yu-gewan), Gansu province

Prompts:

What did the man call to his animals?

What are two products that came from these animals?

[Slide 3: Cavalryman and horse](#)

This clay figure shows both man and horse covered with armor. This clay figure was likely shaped in a mold, worked by hand and then placed in a kiln for firing at temperatures between 800 °C and 1100 °C before the finished paint.

Six dynasties period, c. 386-535

Clay with pigment

Height: 43.5 cm. Length: 43.8 cm

Prompts:

What were the words this man said to his family before he left?

What are two items the man carried with him?

[Slide 4: Dancing Central Asian figure](#)

The costume of this figure tells us that this is a Sogdian (pronounced Sog-di-en). Sogdians were people who inhabited an area called Sogdiana, in modern-day Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. They were important merchants on the Silk Roads. In Chinese courts of the Tang dynasty, the most valued dancers were Sogdians. Notice the figure's large nose, which is another visible feature artists used to distinguish a Sogdian from a Chinese.

Tang dynasty (618-906)

Bronze

Height: 13.7 cm

Gansu province

Prompts:

What is the name of the dance this man is performing?

List two reasons for celebration.

Slide 5: Seated Bodhisattva

Buddhism, one of the world's oldest belief systems, was transmitted from India through Central Asia and into China by monks traveling with merchants and diplomats along the Silk Road routes. Monks carried portable images like this one as a visual reminder of the teachings of the Buddha, which centers on compassion and overcoming the sufferings of the world. This seated Buddhist figure wears a Chinese-styled robe rather than an Indian costume. The artists in this region consciously adopted Chinese features and adornments in their representations of the Buddha, attesting to a confluence of different cultures and artist traditions.

Six dynasties period, c. 386 - 535

White smooth soft stone

Height: 18.9 cm.

Ningxia Autonomous Region

Prompts:

Name the sounds of meditation

What would be the Buddha's wish for the world

Slide 6: Wall painting of an Apsara

What is left of this wall painting allows us to see that bright, rich colors were used to create the apsaras (pronounced ap-sa-ra), music-making celestial creatures who often accompany Buddhist deities. This fragment comes from one of the walls of the Maijishan (pronounced My-jee-shan) Caves where hundreds of religious paintings are found. Artists often depict apsaras with billowing drapery and scarves to indicate that they are in flight.

Six Dynasties period (c. 557-581) to Sui dynasty (589-618)

Height: 48 cm; width: 40 cm

Cave 78, Maijishan Caves, Gansu province

Prompts:

What does the apsara figures see from their celestial (heavenly) stance?

What is the first line of a song the apsara might be singing?

Slide 7: Gold Byzantine Coin

This gold coin pictures the Byzantine emperor Justinian I. In his hand is a globe topped with a cross, signifying that the whole world is subject to him. The other side of the coin shows an angel holding a cross. This coin was excavated from the tomb of Tian Hong (pronounced Tee-en Hung) who died in 575 CE. The discovery of foreign coinage in Chinese tombs demonstrates that they may have been collected as precious objects rather than for their use-for foreign currency would have no intrinsic monetary value outside of the countries of origin on the Silk Roads.

Byzantine, 6th century

Gold

Weight: 2.5 g; diameter 1.65 cm

Tomb of Tian Hong, Guyuan, Ningxia Autonomous Region

Prompts:

What are two items this coin was used to buy?

What was the job of the last owner of this coin?
Proceed to the last page for an extension exercises.

Extensions:

The students have given the objects an individual story or 'history' in their writing accounts. Have the students investigate the 'real history' by writing on one of the artifacts or about the time and place in which the object originated. Report findings to the class. Be certain to indicate connections to cultural, artistic, religious, and economic exchanges that these artifacts may represent.

Additional Resources

China From The Inside- PBS for Educators

<http://www.pbs.org/kqed/chinainside/edlesson1.html>

Comprehensive curriculum including lessons, interactive maps, quizzes, and streaming video about modern issues in China

East Asia Unit- Joslyn Young

<http://joslynyoung.weebly.com/east-asia-unit.html>

Comprehensive Unit on East Asia. Includes lesson plans on Ancient and Modern China. Complete with assessments, unit plans, and worksheets.

National Geographic- China- What's Next?

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/china/whats-next/hessler-text>

Informative article about China's rising expectations.

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/video/player?titleID=1496340467#/?titleID=china-from-above&catID=1>

Video with aerial pictures of some of China's greatest landmarks.

Dance Magazine- "Beijing's Gone Modern"

<http://www.dancemagazine.com/issues/February-2009/Beijings-Gone-Modern>

Article about the growth of modern dance in Beijing and its history.

China Cryptogram

Directions: Unscramble the words by placing the correct letter in the shaded boxes. Use the numbered boxes to complete the answer to the riddle.

RIDDLE:

There are more students of this in China than there are people in the United States.

LLYRGPHIACA



6 7 5

SFOCNIUUC



10

JEIBGNI



3

SSCCTIKOPH



8

DTNSYAY



4

1

SAACUB



WSCCKHAIR



2

ANADP



AEDJ



9

ANSWER:



1 2 3



3 4 5 6 7 8 2



6 9 4 5 10 9 5 3

Analyzing Propaganda Posters

Title: _____

Year it was produced: _____

- 1) What images are used in the illustration? What colors are used?
- 2) How is *(are)* the minority group(s) represented in the illustration?
- 3) What message is the illustration conveying? If you did not know the title of the poster or if you could not read the message that it contains, would you be able to describe the message that the artist was trying to convey?
- 4) What did the Chinese government try to encourage with the production of this poster?
- 5) What kinds of attitudes or ideas about minority groups is this poster reflecting?

This guide was created for teachers taking part in the yearlong Teacher's China Workshop. The workshop is a yearlong exploration for teachers in our area to learn more about the Chinese culture, history and art. The workshop was organized by the Lied Center of Kansas, KU's Center for East Asian Studies, The Spencer Museum of Art and KU Theatre. There will be additional guides as we journey through the various Chinese focused events and performances here at KU.

We hope the general public finds these guides useful as well.

