



Tracing Footsteps: Honoring Diverse Voices Through Dance History in NYC

Into the Heart of Chinatown: Hidden Voices

Yin and Yang: Opposites in Balance

“The dance between darkness and light will always remain— the stars and the moon will always need the darkness to be seen, the darkness will just not be worth having without the moon and the stars.” — C. JoyBell

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What are some of the traditional beliefs and practices of China still evident today?
- How do the concepts of Yin and Yang represent opposites in balance?
- How can we observe and experience Yin and Yang in nature and the everyday world?

OBJECTIVES

- *Introduce the significance of Yin and Yang as a concept/belief.*
- *Identify and explore examples of Yin and Yang in nature and everyday life.*
- *Experience movement exploration based on Yin and Yang energy and qualities.*

INDICATORS OF STUDENT LEARNING

CONTENT – Students will know:

- Ancient Chinese beliefs are still at the root of practices today.
- Yin and Yang are complementary opposites that interact with each other.
- Yin and Yang concepts and qualities can be observed and experienced in nature and everyday life.

SKILLS – Students will be able to:

- Learn a warm-up based on Tai Chi/martial arts movements
- Explore movement inspired by images of Yin and Yang
- Identify the Yin-Yang symbol
- Observe Yin and Yang energy in the movement of peers

ACTIVITY SEQUENCE:

The first lesson of this dance unit introduces the ancient Chinese concept of **Yin** and **Yang** as opposite forces that are complementary and balanced. Students will learn a warm-up based on Tai Chi and martial arts exercises, which will be developed and varied throughout the 10 sessions. This lesson will frame and identify the **Yin-Yang** symbol, and **Yin** and **Yang** energies and qualities in nature and everyday life. After a guided movement exploration and improvisation, students will have a “sneak peak” at the Chinese calligraphy character for Peace and Equality as a preview to the next lesson.

Introduction (3-5 min.):

This lesson introduces Yin and Yang, the concept of opposite forces as complementary, and an example of ancient Chinese philosophy about the nature of the world, then and now.

Yin and Yang - Opposites in Balance

Like Tai Chi, many cultural ideas and practices in China have ancient roots. An example of these traditions can be seen in the philosophy and the symbol of **Yin-Yang**. The philosophy of [Yin and Yang](#)** originated in the 4th century BC in [Taoism](#)**, a way of thinking about the nature of the world. More a philosophy than a religion, Taoism found balance in opposites and believed that opposing forces can be complementary. The **Yin-Yang** symbol reflects this idea: two teardrop shapes in black and white interlock to make a circle:



Yin - soft, cool, wet, nighttime, dark, smooth, quiet, water, intuitive, winter, moon.

Yang - hard, warm, dry, daytime, bright, active, upright, moving, summer, sun.

(Note: Yin is traditionally considered female, and Yang is considered male. This curriculum leaves the Yin and Yang qualities more open.)

- *What opposites do you notice in the descriptions of Yin and Yang?* (Cool/warm, hard/soft, winter/summer, for example). The teacher may document student responses, charting the opposites.

Yin and **Yang** interact and highlight each other's natures through their contrasts. Both are necessary for a healthy whole. These opposites balance each other. One could not exist without the other – day becomes night becomes day. **Yin** and **Yang's** natures and forces are thought to be part of all aspects of the world, from thought to action to nature itself. For example, an egg is made up of **Yang** (eggshell) and **Yin** (the soft center).

Warm-up (7 min.): • Introduce New York City-based choreographer, [H.T. Chen](#)** , and explain that he developed movement exercises based on Tai Chi and martial arts for his dance company, HT Chen and Dancers. • Play [Yin Yang Warm-up](#) (1:00 - 2:04)

Lead students through breathing, stretching and circling, in order to prepare students for learning the Push Mountain and Horse Stance exercises in Lesson 2.

- **Breathing** – Inhale as arms float to front, wrists soft. Exhale as arms float down, knees bending softly. Inhale on 4 cts. and exhale on 4 cts.
Note: No Video for Stretching/Circling, Paint Yin, Strike Yang - Use written descriptions for directing students.
- **Stretching/Circling** - Stretch the full body vertically, horizontally, diagonally front-to-back. Circle the head, shoulders, elbows, wrist, hands, fingers, ribs, hips, knees, ankles
- **Paint Yin** - Using the hands as paint brushes, softly paint side-to-side upward toward the ceiling, then paint softly side-to-side downward toward the floor. Add more “paint” to your hands/brushes. Turn and paint the whole space around you in your favorite color.



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- **Strike Yang** - Using your hands as the brushes, strike out into the space to paint one “spot” with the tips of your fingers. Strike, fast, sharp! Strike out in space to paint spots in all directions - high and low. Use your elbows, knees, feet, or head as the paint brush. Dot the space with powerful, slashing strikes. Stop with one last strike - freeze! Melt the energy out of your brush and come back to center.

Exploration (7-8 min.):

Guide students in an exploration of **Yin** and **Yang** energy, using images from the contrasting qualities of both. Beginning with a **Yin** shape inspired by the moon (curved, concave), ask students to use shape, body parts, path and effort to explore the soft, curved, quiet, lyrical qualities of **Yin**. Use the **Yin** actions of float, flow, drift and curl in the arms, hands, head, back, legs and whole body. Let the **Yin** energy carry the body into space in smooth, curvy paths. Then, beginning with a **Yang** shape inspired by the sun (convex, radiating), guide students in using shape, body parts, and effort to experiment with the bright, sharp, direct qualities of **Yang**. Use the **Yang** actions of strike, slash, press and burst in the arms, legs, back and whole body. Let the **Yang** energy carry the body into space outward and upward in strong, straight paths.

Development/Sharing (5-7 min.):

Divide the class into two groups. Ask students to choose **Yin** or **Yang** energy and “become” that energy in a short improvisation. One group will view the improvisation as the other group moves, then repeat the process, changing roles.

“Secret Nature” Yin-Yang Improvisation:

Find your own beginning spot in space. At this moment, only you know whether you are a **secret Yin** or **Yang**. Picture the **Yin-Yang** symbol and the teardrop shape of both the black and white parts of the circle. Make the teardrop shape from the symbol, whether you are **Yin** or **Yang**. Feel your **secret Yin** or **Yang** energy moving in just one body part: hand, shoulder, foot. With the rest of the body still, move that one body part in **Yin** energy (soft, smooth, curving) or **Yang** (sharp, powerful, expanding). Stay in place and let the movement of your **Yin** or **Yang** body part become bigger. Transfer the **Yin** or **Yang** energy to another body part: head elbow, back. Let that **Yin** or **Yang** body part lead the whole body into space, traveling with the whole body as **Yin** or **Yang**. Find someone else who



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seems to have your same **Yin** or **Yang** energy, and move closer to that person. “Talk” to each other in **Yin** or **Yang** energy. Now move again with the whole body as **Yin** or **Yang**. Find someone in the room who seems to have the opposite energy from your **Yin** or **Yang**. Move closer to that person. “Talk” in your opposite **Yin** and **Yang** energy. Next, pull your **Yin** or **Yang** energy inward until it is small and subtle - **secret**. End with the whole body still and only the smallest, **secret Yin** or **Yang** energy still moving in one body part.

Trade places with the other ½ of the class as movers and viewers.

Ask viewers to observe and give feedback:

- *Did you notice particular classmates who seemed to embody **Yin**? **Yang**?*
- *What did you notice about their movement that makes you identify them as “**Yin**” or “**Yang**”?*
- *Do you prefer **Yin** or **Yang** energy? Why?*

Culmination/Next Steps: (5 min.):

In this session we are exploring the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang as opposite forces that balance and interact with each other. The Yin-Yang symbol of the black and white divided circle is a visual way to show that concept. In the next lesson we will explore another way of using visual symbols in Chinese language: Chinese calligraphy. Let’s take a “sneak peek” at the symbol or calligraphy character that represents **Yin-Yang** together - BALANCE or EQUAL:



BALANCE is written in 5 parts, or strokes:

1. Horizontal line across the top from the left - **Dash**
2. Small diagonal underneath from the left and down - **Dot**
3. Small diagonal underneath from the right and down - **Dot**
4. Horizontal line across from left to right - **Across**
5. Vertical line down the center from top - **Down**

OR : Dash, Dot, Dot, Across, Down

Memorize the stroke order, and then draw the character on paper. Draw it in the air with the hand, another body part (elbow, feet, shoulder), and then the whole body.

Relaxation (2 min):

Repeat the Tai Chi breathing from the beginning of class 4 times, slowing with each breath.

EXTENSIONS

- Create **Yin-Yang** duets from the **Yin** images and qualities (moon, winter, water, darkness, clouds, quiet, smooth, dark, soft) and **Yang** images and qualities (sun, summer, mountain, daytime, bright, hard, active, upright). *What music would you choose for Yin? Yang?*
- Investigate the meaning and nature of **Yin** and **Yang**: [Yin and Yang**](#) [The Meaning of Yin and Yang**](#)
- Research and do a presentation on **Yin** and **Yang** Yoga - teach several **Yin** poses and several **Yang** poses. [Yin and Yang Yoga**](#)

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES EXTENSIONS

- Modification suggestions:
 - Allow multilingual learners and students with disabilities to have time to preview class materials and videos before the lesson.
 - Multilingual learners can respond to written prompts in their home language and then use translation tools to submit their work.
 - Chunk written and verbal directions into single step directions with additional support of pacing guidelines.
 - Allow students to respond in multiple modalities, including auditory (spoken word, music), visual (pictures, Language of Dance symbols), kinesthetic (movement), etc.
 - Allow students additional work time or extended deadlines.
 - Pair multilingual learners in work groups with a peer who can assist in translating materials.
 - For ESL students translations can be provided via google translator.
 - Voice typing can be accessed by hitting Ctrl+Shift+S.



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- Tools for Vision Impairment (Magnifier or Reader Support) can be accessed under Tools- then - Accessibility Settings

For additional support strategies visit: [Dance: Arts and Students with Disabilities Compendium](#)

RESOURCES

[Yin Yang Warm-up](#)

[Music Resources - MS and HS](#) - Musical resource list for this unit

[H.T. Chen](#)**

[Video of the hidden meanings of Yin and Yang](#)**

[The Meaning of Yin and Yang](#)**

[Taoism](#)**

[Yin and Yang Yoga](#)**

[LMA Chart Main](#)

**Note that NYCDOE and 92 Street Y do not monitor these external websites.



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