

## LION OR DRAGON?



# A QUICK GUIDE TO LION DANCE

By Guiding Mountain Dragon &  
Lion Dance Association  
501(c)(3)



## ORIGIN STORY

There are so many origin stories to the Lion Dance! One of the most common is the one about the “Nian”, a monster that would terrorize villagers at the start of every year. One year, to protect them, the heavens sent down a Lion to scare the “Nian” away. When the Lion didn’t return the following year, the villagers created a costume and mimicked the motions of the Lion, successfully protecting their village from the “Nian” year after year! P.S. “Nian” also means “Year” in Chinese!

## QUICK FACTS

**Origins:** China  
**Born:** ~205 BCE  
**Performs:** All over the world!  
**Favorite Food:** Lettuce

## WHEN TO LION DANCE?

You can find Lion Dance during the Lunar New Year, at Grand Openings, Birthdays, Weddings, and more. Lions come out whenever a little extra luck and blessings could come in handy!

## INGREDIENTS FOR A HAPPY LION

Lions love lettuce! In Chinese, the word for lettuce (生菜) is homophonous to ‘making money’ (生财). Lions will eat the lettuce and spit it out to owners to “shower” them with wealth for the coming year. Tangerines (桔) serve a similar purpose in that they are homophonous to auspiciousness (吉). The loud noises of firecrackers help the Lions scare away bad energy and in return for their blessings, store owners and guests feed the Lions red envelopes filled with money in return for luck in the coming year!



Lettuce (生菜)



Firecrackers



Red Envelopes



Tangerines (桔)



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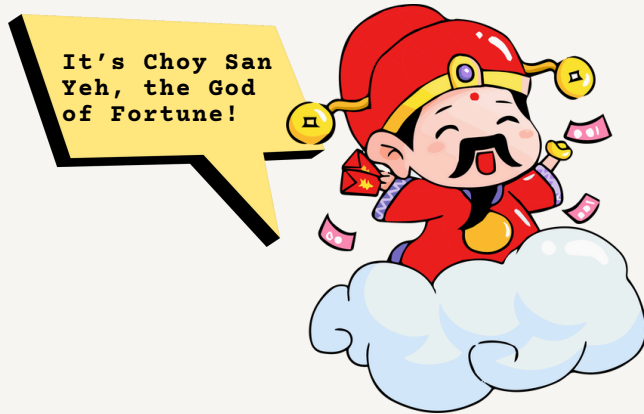
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## WHO IS THAT?



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## STYLES OF LION DANCE

Did you know that there are many, many types of lion dance around the world? One of the most common types of lion dance in the US is the Southern Lion, using either the modern Fut San or Hok San lion. There is also the Northern Lion, Hakka Lion, Hong Kong Lion, Chow Gar Lion, and more! All representing different cultures and traditions across Eastern Asia. Lion Dance is a very diverse and rich tradition that is celebrated by many cultural groups, each with their own unique ceremonies and history.

## AWAKENING THE LION & DRAGON

Did you know there is a process for awakening lions and dragons? Lions and dragons must go through an 'eye-dotting' (开光 - kāiguāng) ceremony before they can be used. Lions that have been eye-dotted will bear a ribbon (红花 - hóng huā) on their horn, signifying that they have taken on their sacred duty as protectors.

## MUSICIANS OF LION DANCE

There are many styles of music that accompany the Lion Dance. Each groups' music is based off of their particular lion dance style and history. Below are the common instruments that you will see used in traditional Lion Dancing. These instruments help give the lion energy to perform and drive away bad luck so good luck can come in. Performers have to train to learn the different beats on the drum, cymbals, and gong to know what music to play during different sections of the lion dance.



Drum (鼓)



Cymbals (钹)



Gong (锣)



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