



In the process of making Plastic Bag Lion Dance, I consulted with Lion Dance teams in Austin, TX. Members and teachers of **Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team**, **Heavenly Dragon Lion Dance Association**, and **Summitt Dragon Lion Dance Team** generously shared their knowledge of Lion Dance, their experiences being part of a Lion Dance team and its importance to the community for this zine.

I also held a plastic bag yarn workshop at the Asian American Resource Center, and a paper maché lion head workshop at The Museum of Human Achievement. Participants generously shared their experiences with lion dance and plastic bags with each other and for this zine.

Lion Dance originated in Guangdong, China during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) (2000 years ago!). Since Guangdong is a coastal region, the tradition spread to many other parts of Asia, such as Vietnam, Korea and Indonesia, which all have their own versions of the tradition. Lion Dance also possibly took inspiration from traditions from other regions of Asia and other parts of the world.

Learn more about Lion Dance teams and see a Lion Dance performance




Heavenly Dragon Lion Dance Association
heavenlydragonliondance.com

 @heavenlydragonliondance




Summitt Lion And Dragon Dance Team
summittliddt.com

 @summittliddt



Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team
tddt.org

 @tddtaustin

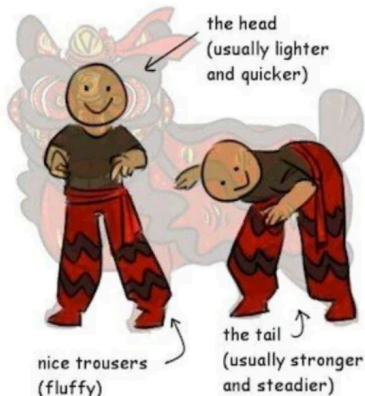
ANATOMY OF A LION

EXTERIOR



a lion without a ribbon is "untamed" or "asleep" and isn't used in performances!

INTERIOR



(Reddit)

Lion Dance origin stories

Warning: Fantasy violence, Violence

An origin story for this Plastic Bag Lion:

“Once upon a time, kids were teasing the lion. It was hungry, and they were tossing oranges around it, like a game of monkey in the middle. The lion got furious, it couldn't catch the fruit and its appetite was growing. The fury caused its head to split. Once then twice, until it had 4 heads and devoured the oranges and the kids. Now, kids must feed each of the lion's heads plentifully so it won't be tempted to eat them.”

-Young Lion Dance and textile arts enthusiast

Kevin G, founder of Heavenly Dragon Lion Dance Association, told me this origin story: In the heavens, the gods had a pet lion. The lion ate a peach from a sacred tree, which greatly angered the gods. They cut up the lion into pieces and threw it from the heavens, down to the earth, to punish it. Guanyin, the goddess of mercy, pitied the lion. She came to earth and put the lion back together with a red ribbon.

After Guanyin revived the lion, she sent it off to a village in Guangdong to help some people in need-

Another legend Kevin shared: Every year the Nian monster would come down from its lair in the mountains to destroy a village in Guangdong. It would kidnap the villagers' children, destroy the crops and wreak havoc. The villagers were hopeless and distraught. One year, a red lion descended from the heavens and scared off the Nian monster. It ran off into its lair and the villagers had a happy and prosperous year! They wanted to have more happy, healthy, safe, peaceful prosperous years to come, so they sought to put an end to the Nian monster when it would inevitably return the next year. They knew that the Nian was afraid of red, loud noises and fire. They dressed in a red costume, imitating the heavenly lion, and affixed a mirror to the costume to show the Nian its evil. When the Nian arrived to destroy, they banged pots and pans together and lit firecrackers. The villagers terminated the Nian for once and for all. Every year the villagers dressed as the lion and continued the tradition to celebrate their eternal prosperity and to ward off evil.

Where to see a Lion Dance

Multiple people recalled past and recent memories of seeing a lion dance at an Asian grocery store, such as 99 Ranch, Hong Kong Supermarket or MT Supermarket, during a Lunar New Year celebration.



What is Lunar New Year? Lunar New Year or Chinese New year is the beginning of a new year on the lunar calendar, the first new moon of the year. It is the a very important holiday in Asian regions including South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia and the Middle East.

All Lion Dance teams said their busiest season is Lunar New Year by far.

Some corporations have begun to invite Lion Dance teams to perform for their employees in May (AANHPI Heritage Month) and Lunar New Year and sometimes sports teams invite them to perform at halftime during these times of the year too.

One workshop participant saw a Lion Dance in Mexico City, Mexico.

Texas Dragon Lion Dance Team practices in the central part of The University of Texas campus and their practices are open to the public. People inquiring about lion dance are welcome to observe, learn about the tradition and join the team. View their practice and performance schedule at <https://www.tddt.org/>



Heavenly Dragon Lion Dance Association did Lion Dance for a gender reveal, and at the end the lion spat out a scroll with the baby's gender (AI generated 'Lion Dance Gender Reveal')

Where have you seen a Lion Dance?

Memories of Lion Dance

“Lion Dance brings back memories; people grow up with it. Everyone can experience something different when seeing a performance.”

“Charlie’s (3) fascination with the lion dance really took off when his PorPor “beat the drum” to distract him from naughty behavior. He remembered the scary, but amazing, lion dance he’d seen up close at Joslin Elementary in South Austin. Now he likes to watch Malaysian lion dances on youtube, dress his dog in a lion dance costume, and play with a toy drum to conjure the lion.” -Charlie T and Mom



Patsy grew up in the midwest US and did not see a Lion Dance nor Lunar New Year celebrations until moving to Austin, TX as an adult. She remembers feeling emotionally moved attending a Lunar New Year celebration and experiencing a lion dance for the first time in Austin.



Maya recalls that her family took her to many Asian cultural celebrations, and when she was around 2 years old she saw a Lion Dance for the first time. She was in awe, and upon experiencing that lion dance she greatly desired to perform lion dance. She persistently asked to join a team and finally was able to join one at around 8 years old. Maya has worked hard practicing her Lion Dance skills and she still has great passion for Lion Dance a decade later.



From Lion Dance team members:

How did you become part of your team?

Many Lion Dance team members originally found their teams through school programs, cultural associations, temples, university, family, friends and more. Many joined to spend time with their friends through a shared activity. Through practicing together, performing and celebrating over many hours, they have developed camaraderie and family like community.

Why is it important to have Lion Dances in Austin, in Texas, in the world?

From Summitt Dragon and Lion Dance Team

“It shows how diverse the Austin community is. It is something that everyone can celebrate and bring joy to people who may need to have fun and come together.”

“It is like having trusting family, it is ok to hang out with older people, it is a supportive community people who pick you up and give you rides, to hang out.”

“In the past when Asian parents were working, Lion Dance teams would allow the children to be social and not be alone at home. Asian parents could trust the team. Now the parents are really involved, Summit elementary had a family Vietnam group trip and where the kids could practice Vietnamese.”

“Being an Asian American it is hard to connect with your culture because there are so many cultures around. to have the tradition around Austin it helps us feel connected to our parents culture and have cultural identity; it can be passed on to generations.”

Linda who helps lead Summitt Dragon and Lion Dance team started doing Lion Dance through Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team while she was studying at UT.

Several members of Summitt remember how older members and members of Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team mentored them in their youth, helping them with homework, giving advice, providing transportation and feeding them. They were inspired to be a mentor to those younger to them and were inspired when they observed the younger members coming out of their shyness and becoming leaders themselves.

Members of all ages and teams find joy in bringing others joy, good luck and prosperty through Lion Dance, sharing their culture and continuing the tradition with passion for many generations to come.



Thank you to each and every person who attended a workshop to contribute to this project.

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Heavenly Dragon Lion Dance Association- **Dr. Kevin Gian**

Summitt Lion and Dragon Dance- **Linda C**

Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team- **Sifu Taran Champagne**

Asian American Resource Center- **Quinn In**

Stephen Chock, Ellen Chock, Jonathan Chock,

Luisa Fernanda Perez, Chloe C

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In Lion Dance Performances, the lion 'eats' lettuce and then spits it out into the audience. If a piece of lettuce falls on you, you will have extra good luck for the new year