

Meet Echo

-A school matinee at age 2 leads to a life of dance

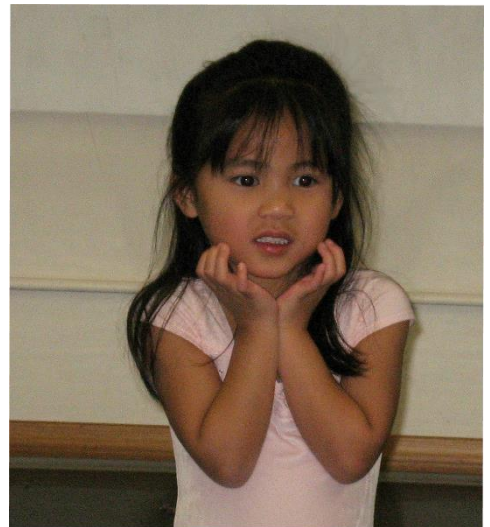


Echo in the lead role of the dance that inspired her at age 2. PC: Jijun He

"Girls my age were dressed up like daffodils. I wanted to be a daffodil so bad!" Echo wasn't even 3 when her parents took her and her daycare class to their first CAAM Chinese Dance Theater school matinee. The kids loved it! According to Echo, "There were great big lions, and the drums were really loud, and the lights flickered. My mom thought my friends would be scared, but they weren't. They thought it was cool!" Her mom remembers that day as well: "When the lions came out, the kids jumped out of their seats and grabbed the chairs in front of them. Their eyes were huge, their mouths open. Two kids were so overwhelmed by emotion they started hugging each other and jumping up and down. It was so great to be part of that."

Echo was so excited by the performance—and so eager to be a daffodil—that she began taking dance lessons at CAAM CDT. "She nagged us almost every week," says her mother. "Finally, just before she turned four, her father and I said, 'Well . . . maybe she is old enough.' We called the studio, and they told us to bring her right down."

Somewhere along the line, an hour of dance on the weekend turned into nightly sessions, and Echo started taking on larger roles in CAAM CDT's annual Lunar New Year productions, including the school matinees. The 2018 production was particularly special, as CAAM CDT decided to re-stage the "daffodil dance" as part of their 25th anniversary special. There was one small surprise, however: "The 'daffodil girls' were actually rice sprouts!" laughed her mom. Daffodils or rice sprouts, Echo was selected to dance a lead role. When asked how it felt to come full circle, to step into the role of a dance that had meant so much to her—and to maybe even inspire a new batch of kids to dance—Echo replied, "Good; like I'm paying it forward."



Echo, age 3, at her first dance class at CAAM CDT