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Asia Society and Chen Dance Center Collaboration *South of Gold Mountain* Pays Tribute to Experiences of Early Chinese Settlers

Houston, Texas, March 4, 2016 — Asia Society Texas Center is excited to announce its upcoming collaboration with **Chen Dance Center** (CDC), the nation's largest Asian American dance institution, on the regional premiere of CNOOC-NEXEN presents: *South of Gold Mountain* this May.

Through dance and music, *South of Gold Mountain* explores the stories of Chinese immigrants who, inspired by the Gold Rush, immigrated to the southern United States prior to World War II. Drawing from rich oral histories, treasured images, and documentation of these settlers, the production pays tribute to earlier generations who helped build America by working on railroads, levees, plantations, and as grocers, launderers, and later as restaurant owners.

With the support of Chinese American community heritage museums and family associations in the U.S., three years of extensive research and in-depth interviews were conducted with immigrants and their descendants to create this insightful production by **H.T. Chen & Dancers**. "When researching and developing *South of Gold Mountain*, H.T. found similarities between southern U.S. communities and village life in China where people helped each other endure hardships and were deeply connected despite rural isolation," says **Dian Dong**, CDC's Associate Director. "We want to honor our Chinese American history and legacy in southern Asian communities and share our celebration of their accomplishments."

"We are delighted to bring this production to Houston," said **Bonna Kol**, Executive Director of the Texas Center. "*South of Gold Mountain* highlights the struggles thousands of Chinese Americans faced and recognizes their hard work and resilience. It also acknowledges the generations of descendants and blended communities now thriving in Houston and across the U.S."

Houston's production of *South of Gold Mountain* will be performed by dancers Kelly Butterworth, Gary Champi, Lisa Chow, Renouard Gee, Ezra Goh, Sean Nederlof, Maki Shinagawa, Ari Someya, and Kayasha Williams- Bailey. The multi-generational

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cast will also include Houston's local talent in the roles of elders and children. The contemporary sound score blending traditional Chinese music with Deep South Blues is by James Lo.

Nationally, the program is sponsored by the Ford Foundation and New England Foundation for the Arts. Locally, the program is supported by CNOOC-NEXEN, Bank of America, the City through Houston Arts Alliance, the Hearst Foundations, and Mickey Rosenau & Dr. Ellen Gritz. Lead support is provided by the Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, The Clayton Fund, the Favrot Fund, and the Wortham Foundation. Support is also provided by Friends of Performing Arts & Culture, a premier group of individuals and organizations committed to bringing the best in public programming to Houston.

South of Gold Mountain will be presented Friday, May 27 and Saturday, May 28 at 7:30 pm at Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore Boulevard, Houston Texas. Tickets are \$15 for Asia Society and AARP Members; \$25 Nonmembers. Group pricing is available. For more information, please visit AsiaSociety.org/Texas or call 713.496.9901.

About H.T. Chen & Dancers

H.T. Chen & Dancers, formed in 1978, performs innovative pieces blending contemporary dance with traditional Asian aesthetics. Chen Dance Center opened in 1988 as the first professional performance space in New York City's Chinatown. The creative hub for its touring dance company, it offers a thriving, community driven performing arts school and an intimate, black box performance space. For more information, please visit: www.chendancecenter.org

About Asia Society Texas Center

With 12 locations throughout the world, Asia Society is the leading educational organization promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among the peoples, leaders, and institutions of Asia and the United States. Asia Society Texas Center executes the global mission with a local focus, enriching and engaging the vast diversity of Houston through innovative, relevant programs in arts and culture, business and policy, education, and community outreach.

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