

A pregnant woman is captured in a dynamic dance pose. She is wearing a black leotard and a long, flowing white skirt. Her arms are extended upwards, and her head is tilted back, looking towards the top right. Her long dark hair is blowing in the wind, creating a sense of movement. The background is a plain, light grey wall.

# DANCING THROUGH PREGNANCY

**A PROFESSIONAL MODERN  
DANCER HAS A HEALTHY  
BIRTH, CLOSE TO HOME.**

Ever since she was a little girl growing up in China, Xin Ying has had a deep passion for dance. “It makes me feel confident and empowered,” says Ying, who moved to the United States in 2010 after working as the director of the Dance Department at China’s Sichuan University of Culture and Arts. In 2011, she joined the Martha Graham Dance Company in Manhattan, and she’s been a principal dancer there since 2016.

When Ying and her husband, Jess Livinghouse, found out they were expecting their first child in the spring of 2019, she turned to experts at Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) for her prenatal care and for labor and delivery. “I didn’t want to go to the city for appointments or worry about getting stuck in the tunnel when it was time to have the baby,” says Ying, a Jersey City resident. “My husband and I loved that Jersey City Medical Center was a top-notch hospital just a 10-minute drive away.”

### ONSTAGE AND ENERGIZED

After Ying became pregnant, she began seeing OB-GYN Zaheda Muhammad, MD, of Liberty Women OB-GYN in Jersey City, who is affiliated with JCMC and whose office is right across the street from the main hospital. “She made me feel really safe and she was very reassuring,” Ying recalls. “She wasn’t like many other doctors who say, ‘You cannot do this, you cannot do that.’ She told me because I had been dancing my whole life, I could still exercise, perform and be the person I am.”

With her doctor’s approval, Ying danced for Martha Graham until she was five-and-a-half months pregnant. Her biggest challenge was all-day morning sickness throughout much of her pregnancy. “Dr. Muhammad told me to eat high-protein, low-carb meals, which really helped,” says Ying. “She also closely monitored my weight at each visit to make sure I was gaining a healthy amount.”

In her final performance before taking maternity leave, Ying danced the lead role in “Chronicle” at the New York City Center’s Fall for Dance Festival. “I felt really good and energized that day, and we



Opposite page, dancer Xin Ying performed until she was five-and-a-half months pregnant. At left, baby Frankie.

received a full-house standing ovation,” she recalls.

### A SUPPORT SYSTEM

On February 12, Ying gave birth to a healthy 7-pound, 12-ounce baby girl named Frances, nicknamed “Frankie,” at JCMC. Ying was induced because her cervix would not open on its own, but the labor otherwise went smoothly. She says her stay in the new Lord Abbett Maternity Wing was a highlight of the experience. “Our room looked like a Four Seasons hotel and my husband and baby stayed with me the whole time,” says Ying.

Ying also appreciates the breastfeeding tips she received from the hospital’s lactation consultants. “The nurses taught me how to make sure the baby can latch on and the correct position to hold her,” she recalls.

Ying’s pregnancy and experience as a new mom are the focus of a documentary film by Teng Chen, an independent filmmaker based in New York. “Ying’s story is fascinating because many consider getting pregnant the end of a career for a dancer, but Ying wants to show people that doesn’t have to be true,” says Chen, who shot some scenes at JCMC. Although Chen is still filming, she plans to pitch the documentary to production companies when shooting is complete.

Today, Ying is enjoying new motherhood and teaching virtual classes from home for Martha Graham until the studio reopens. Frankie is a healthy, happy baby. “She has a bright personality and is very active like me—she loves to jump and kick,” says Ying.

When the documentary eventually airs, Ying says she hopes women take away some important messages. “As a woman you want to do it all, and I think that

## HOW SHOULD YOU CHOOSE WHERE TO HAVE YOUR BABY?

Do your due diligence before delivery:

**Ask what services are offered for high-risk pregnancies or unexpected complications.** “Expecting moms should look into what type of Neonatal Intensive Care Unit [NICU] or special care nursery is associated with the hospital,” says Leah Dungee-Maignan, MSN, RNC-NIC, CBN, Director of Nursing for Maternal Child Services at JCMC. “The JCMC is a regional perinatal center, meaning we can take the sickest patients.” The hospital’s NICU is the only Level 3 NICU in Hudson County, with 24/7 coverage by board-certified neonatologists.

### Consider what kind of labor and delivery experience you will have.

“Take a tour of the facility before you decide,” Dungee-Maignan advises. The new 17,500-square-foot Lord Abbett Maternity Wing at JCMC features 20 spacious private suites, each equipped with a private bathroom, a smart TV and a sofa that converts to a sleeping space. Expectant moms can take a virtual tour of the maternity wing on the JCMC website.

### Find out what services are offered before and after birth.

Look for a complete range of services to complement personalized care. JCMC offerings include midwife services, pain management/ anesthesia options, breastfeeding education and instruction, support for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders and virtual childbirth classes.

takes a whole support system—of course your partner and family, but also good doctors and nurses and a good hospital,” she says. “You’re not in this alone, and the people around you can help you get through it.”

For more information about giving birth at Jersey City Medical Center, visit [www.rwjbh.org/maternity](http://www.rwjbh.org/maternity).

