

ARTS & CULTURE

TAKE Dance at Kaatsbaan

Exquisite Edge

by Maya Horowitz, May 30, 2012



TAKE Dance performing "Footsteps in the Snow."

Choreographer Takehiro Ueyama and his company TAKE (pronounced Tah-keh) Dance reside firmly on the cutting edge of modern dance. On Saturday, June 9, TAKE Dance brings its blend of expressiveness and whimsical exuberance to Kaatsbaan International Dance Center in Tivoli.

Born and raised in Tokyo, Ueyama was spotted breakdancing in the streets there by a teacher trained in dance at the Julliard School in New York City. Encouraged to attend local modern dance and ballet classes and later mentored by Martha Graham dancer, master teacher, and choreographer Kazuko Hirabayashi, it didn't take long for Ueyama to flourish. His natural gifts of speed and agility (cultivated by years of striving to be a professional baseball player, as well as break dancing), combined with his developing technique, led to being accepted into Julliard's dance program at age 24 (late for a dancer!), in 1991.

Upon graduation from Julliard, Ueyama considered joining several modern dance companies both here and abroad, but it was the invitation from the esteemed Paul Taylor Dance Company in New York City that he accepted.

In the company for eight years, Ueyama performed in many of Taylor's modern dance classics, such as *Esplanade* and *Company B*. Working with Taylor also gave Ueyama the opportunity to observe the choreographic process of one of America's great dance masters.

Though Ueyama had choreographic ideas of his own, companies of renowned choreographers are not forums in which members can present their own work. So when Ueyama began to choreograph in 2003, he pledged to himself that if he were ever to have a company, he would nurture the talent of any aspiring choreographers by presenting their work along with his, knowing he risked audiences preferring their choreography to his.

Founding TAKE Dance in 2004, Ueyama has been good to his word. Of the three works being presented at Kaatsbaan, *The Distance of the Moon* contains choreography by both Ueyama (to music by Phillip Glass) and company member Kile Hotchkiss. Also being presented are excerpts from the evening-long work *Salaryman*, which was previewed at Kaatsbaan last year.

Strikingly lit and danced to Japanese traditional as well as original music, *Salaryman* shows glimpses into the inner and outer lives of Japanese businessmen/women as they trudge through their daily existence. The work is deep, probing, and illustrative of both the pathos and humor of their predicaments. Though Ueyama couldn't have known what was to come in Japan while he worked on the piece prior to March 2011, *Salaryman* nonetheless contains sections with striking images of people with and under water, the synchronicity of which was deeply felt by the Kaatsbaan audience last spring.

Although he proudly acknowledges Taylor's influence, Ueyama's movement is original and uniquely his own. Using classic composers from Bach and Mozart to Barber, and modern music by Laurie Anderson, Frank Sinatra, Lisa Gerrard, Steve Reich, Pat Metheny, and Terry Riley, his vocabulary has movements so large his dancers can cover the breadth of the stage with only a couple of leaps, and so tiny, the gestures of the feet or hands are reminiscent of traditional Japanese dance.

Ueyama's dancers' incredible speed and ebullience are impressive. Clearly, they love their work. His bold, subtle, witty and engaging choreography is exquisite to behold. Watching it unfold is akin to discovering painting after painting in a gallery, or being drawn into a private, intimate conversation.

The program concludes with the moving *Footsteps in the Snow*, danced to music by Arvo Pärt. "While not immortal, we hope to leave our imprint behind," says Ueyama.

TAKE Dance will perform on Saturday, June 9, at 7:30pm at Kaatsbaan International Dance Center in Tivoli. Tickets are \$25/\$10 (students).

(845) 757-5106; Kaatsbaan.org