

## **Review: Ueyama's world premiere finds spirituality in nonsense**

*Sunday, August 12, 2012*

By Wendy Liberatore  
Gazette Reporter

CHATHAM -- While some theaters are cutting back on dance, PS/21 is boldly charging ahead - presenting more dance this year than it has in seven summers. The tent, as it is known, doesn't always attract a large crowd in inclement weather, but its commitment to the art is admirable, foregoing profit for substance.

Artists obviously agree that PS/21 is special and that is why choreographer Takehiro Ueyama reserved the world premiere of his "Ba Ban Ba Ban Ban Ban" for the outdoor venue. Presented this past weekend by his TAKE Dance, his new work is a nonsensical one that doesn't slip easily into Ueyama's known fare of the stunningly beautiful and dramatically pointed. Rather, "Ba Ban Ba Ban Ban Ban" feels like a spiritual journey that tumbles into comedy and madness. Assembled for a septet, the dance begins with solos. To Handel's "Suite for Keyboard," the dancers arrive one-by-one in a spotlight. Their movement is thoughtful and easy as they appear briefly and then disappear in the shadows, making way for the next dancer. After the introduction, the work shifts to the women who gently pat the air as their hips sway. Their serenity is interrupted by the dynamic John Eirich, who stumbles forward, laughing aloud as he bends and holds his belly in hysterics. Brynt Beitman and Jake Warren grab him by his underarms and drag him around the stage as if trying to snap him out of his silliness. This is where the dance takes its turn - growing more lively, with dancers accentuating their movement with a saucy flick of their heads and hips. Marie Zvosec and Beitman then tangle in a rough floor and body-slammng love-making while Gina Ianni, Eirich and Warren look on, feigning shock and horror. The tempo accelerates toward the end with the ensemble rushing forward and crashing their bodies at the rim of the stage. Ueyama turns the dance back to sobriety as the lights dim and the dancers offer a silent hug to the audience. "Ba Ban Ba Ban Ban Ban" is curious and not fully formed. It also sports some unflattering costumes - bicycle pants with T-shirts. It will be interesting to see how Ueyama refines the dance to sharpen its look.

other dances Ueyama's "Salaryman," which was shown in an abridged version, is a masterful portrait of the Japanese corporate worker. It begins with "The Game," a pounding battle between four men, Beitman, Eirich, Warren and Kile Hotchkiss, who fight for top position. They step on, trip, push, punch and pull each other down as a drum hammers away. The exhausting opener simmers down with "Rain," with the gorgeous Nana Tsuda Misko and Eirich in an otherworldly, isolated pas de deux. "Densha (Train)" adds touches of humor as the salarymen and women ride the commuter rails. There is also unfulfilled romantic desire in "Missing" with Jill Echo seeking and not finding love. But it's the finale, with Ueyama himself, that stuns. After being tortured with water poured over his head, he flays about as the ensemble shuns, but watches him with wide eye. In the end, he hangs himself.

The program was completed with the sublime "The Distance of the Moon," with choreography by Ueyama and Kile Hotchkiss. The duets by Ueyama transport the dancers and audiences over the moon.

Reach Gazette reviewer Wendy Liberatore at [wendy@dailygazette.com](mailto:wendy@dailygazette.com).