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Season

PERFORMING ARTS

2023

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Japan Society presents

Beyond Ballet, Beyond Hip-Hop

Friday, May 10, 7:30 pm

— Followed by an artist Q&A

Saturday, May 11, 7:30 pm

Beyond Ballet, Beyond Hip-Hop is supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan through the Japan Arts Council, Doug and Teresa Peterson, and The Harkness Foundation for Dance.



2023—2024 Performing Arts Season Support

The season is made possible by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are proud to culminate this season with two exciting and innovative contemporary dance pieces. As the program title *Beyond Ballet, Beyond Hip-Hop* implies, each piece defies the conventional perception of ballet dance and hip-hop dance.

Since its premiere by Anna Pavlova in 1905, Michel Fokine's choreography known as *The Dying Swan* has relished its status as one of the most frequently performed works of Western classic ballet. (In fact, Wikipedia states that Pavlova herself performed this piece about 4,000 times!). But, across these 120 years of performance and notoriety, who on earth has ever raised the question, "Why did the swan have to die?" That is the genius of Toshiki Okada, an internationally sought-after theater director and playwright, who has repeatedly returned to New York and Japan Society since his JS-produced U.S. debut tour in 2009. Through collaboration with Okada, Hana Sakai, one of Japan's leading prima ballerinas, altered this symbol of early 20th-century classic Western arts with flying colors. I won't reveal their smart and funny twist, tapping into a significant 21st-century social issue—but you will discover it yourselves shortly.

Interestingly, MWMW's founder/choreographer, Moto Takahashi, was also trained in classical ballet at a young age. However, ever since she launched her professional dance career, she has been recognized as an outstanding hip-hop-technique-oriented dancer—as she exhibited within our program in 2013 as a member of a hip-hop company. It is a pleasure to welcome her back 10 years later, now as a leader of her own company, consisting of female hip-hop dancers ranging in age from their 20s to 40s, and delivering an aura of femininity, softness, warmth and optimism—not typical for hip-hop dance.

I hope you enjoy this transmutation of Western and American dance forms growing out of the soil in Japan.



Yoko Shioya
Artistic Director

Two North American Premieres

Beyond Ballet, Beyond Hip-Hop

Encounter

Performed by MWMW

Choreography: Moto Takahashi

Dancers: Atsuyo Kanamori, Yuki Nakatani, Mamiko Oe, Rion Suzuki, Moto Takahashi

Music: Moto Takahashi, including arrangement of Masao Shimada's recorded piano performance

The Dying Swan / The Dying Swan and Its Cause of Death

The Dying Swan

Originally by Michel Fokine, adapted by Hana Sakai

Dancer: Hana Sakai

Cello: Udai Shika

Music: "The Swan," from *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns

The Dying Swan and Its Cause of Death

Direction / Choreography / Script: Toshiki Okada

Performance: Hana Sakai

Music arrangement / Cello: Udai Shika

Translation: Aya Ogawa

Co-produced by Dance Base Yokohama and Aichi Prefectural Art Theater; premiered in October 2021 at Aichi Prefectural Art Theater, as part of the "Genealogy of Dance" program.

Produced by Eri Karatsu

(Aichi Prefectural Art Theater / Dance Base Yokohama)

Stage Manager: Chikage Yuyama

Production Manager: Yoshinori Sekoguchi (Aichi Prefectural Art Theater)

Lighting Design: Masakazu Ito (RYU)

Sound Design: Norimasa Ushikawa

Administrator: Nozomi Tanaka (Dance Base Yokohama)

Program of *Beyond Ballet, Beyond Hip-Hop*

Sound and Video Engineer: Takaaki Ando

Lighting Design: Asami Morita

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Moto Takahashi (Choreographer, Dancer, Videographer) was born in Nagano Prefecture, and began studying classical ballet at a young age. In 2013, she started to focus on creating her own work. Takahashi has been invited to international festivals such as Rencontres Choregraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis (Paris), Festival Fabbrica Europa (Firenze) and Movements sue la vile #8 (Montpellier). In 2017, she established the dance company MWMW (pronounced moh-ee moh-ee). In 2021, she presented the group short work *PHANTOM MOCKUMENT* at the Yokohama Dance Collection 2021 (Competition I), winning both the Jury Prize and the Kinosaki International Arts Center Prize. In 2022, she had a residency in Italy with the Crossing the Sea-KIAC Exchange Program. Takahashi has also organized omnibus projects called *MWMW NEVER DIES* and is committed to supporting the development of young artists and expanding the dance community. In recent years, she has been actively working as a videographer. Takahashi previously performed at Japan Society in 2013 as a member of TOKYO ELECTROCK STAIRS.

Atsuyo Kanamori (Dancer) studied modern dance under Momoyo Onoda and classical ballet under Yoko Muto and Yumi Yashio from the age of six and studied contemporary dance upon entering college. She graduated from Japan Women's College of Physical Education, majoring in dance. She has performed in works by Akiyo Fukami, Teita Iwabuchi and Jun Takahashi, and joined MWMW in 2019. She has appeared in music videos and as a backup dancer for *Miyakoochi* by Yorushika, Misako Uno (AAA), Ikimono-gakari and others. In recent years, she has been running S+DanceSpace in Fuchu City, Tokyo, where she teaches dance to children.

Yuki Nakatani (Dancer) was born in Tokyo. She began studying hip-hop and jazz under Etsuko Kawakami at the age of eight. Since junior high, she has studied ballet and hip-hop techniques and diverse forms of expression under the tutelage of Moto Takahashi. Nakatani has performed in MWMW productions since 2017. After entering university, she trained in street dance with KENTARO! and has appeared in his works and videos. In addition, she has performed in works by W/union, a dance group of the same generation.

Mamiko Oe (Dancer) was born in Tokyo and began her ballet training at the age of six at Unique Ballet Theatre. In 2000, she moved to the U.S. and enrolled in the dance department of Dean College, where she studied modern dance

and classical ballet and graduated at the top of her class. After returning to Japan, Oe worked with Kim Itoh + Glorious Future in 2003 and joined the dance company BATIK (led by Ikuyo Kuroda) in 2005. She has had many performances in Japan and abroad and has performed with TOKYO ELECTROCK STAIRS and Dancenorth. In 2022, Oe completed the Ballet Safety Instructor Certification Professional Course.

Rion Suzuki (Dancer) began studying modern ballet at the age of three. After moving to Tokyo, she studied contemporary and modern dance at Miyako Kato Dance Space under Miyako Kato and Kota Kihara. Suzuki focused on improvisation during her university studies, and an improvisational approach persists through her current dance activities. In her delicate movements, Suzuki exudes a genderless physicality. Suzuki has won many national competitions in both solo and group dance. She was a finalist in the Yokohama Dance Collection 2023 Competition II. She was also a back-up dancer for Wednesday's Campanella Live and has performed in works by MWMW and Aya Terasoma. In addition to her dance performance work, Suzuki choreographs for music videos and teaches dance.

MWMW was founded by dancer and choreographer Moto Takahashi in 2017. The company's vision is to create an "alternative dance" that condenses the expressions and techniques that Takahashi has cultivated over the years, emphasizing characterization and relationships between characters, merging the real and imaginary worlds to create a new worldview. MWMW also focus on the production of video works, studying methods of expression and visual beauty and aesthetics that differ from live performance, creating a more diverse range of expression. The company also performs as the dance group MWNOS and won the Grand Prix at the Kanagawa Short Play Award 2022 with *ROBIN*.

Toshiki Okada (Director) is a playwright, novelist and director of chelfitsch, originally from Yokohama. Okada's play *Five Days in March* won the 49th Kishida Drama Award. His 2007 anthology *The End of the Special Time We Were Allowed* won the 2nd Kenzaburo Oe Award. He won the 72nd Yomiuri Literary Award for Plays and Scenarios for his collection of plays, *Unexplored Unfulfilled Ghost and Monster - "Zaha" and "Tsuruga."* Japan Society has presented or co-produced many of Okada's works, including *Five Days in March* in 2009, *Hot Pepper*, *Air Conditioner* and *the Farewell Speech* in 2012,

God Bless Baseball in 2016 and *Time's Journey Through a Room* in 2018 (presented offsite in collaboration with PlayCo).

Hana Sakai (Performer) studied classical ballet under Toshiaki Hatasa. After joining the Tachibana Ballet School and the Asami Maki Ballet Company, she moved to the New National Theatre Ballet as the lead dancer in 1997, when the company was founded. Since 2013, she has been working with Yasutake Shimaji on collaborative projects in a performance unit called Altneu. Sakai received the Minister of Education's Art Encouragement Prize and the Excellent Award of the Tachibana Akiko Award, among others. She was awarded the Medal with Purple Ribbon in 2017.

Udai Shika (Cellist) is a folkloric cellist who works in a variety of genres including rock, pop, jazz, classical and improvised music. Shika is one of the top string arrangers in Japan's commercial music scene. In 2019, he released the solo album *The Valley of the Sun*, including an interpretation of Bach's six unaccompanied Cello Suites. In 2023, Shika and Rie Takeuchi released their first album *Minimalism* as the group minimalengine.

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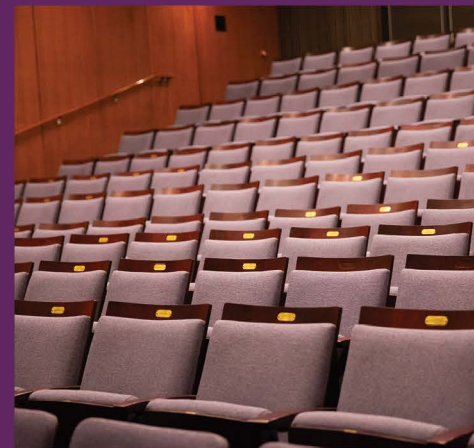
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