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Modern Dance in Japan: The Dance Style of Fujii Koh

日本のモダンダンス — 藤井公のダンススタイル

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to focus on FUJII Koh, a choreographer who made one of Japan's original dances out of the Western modern dance. I would like to look into the chronicle and the traits of this dance.

Having studied under KOMORI Toshi, one of the pioneers of Japan's modern dance, FUJII Koh made a glittering achievement in creating and in fostering his pupils. He is among the top choreographers of the second generation of modern dance artists of Japan, and he continues to produce remarkable works of choreography. His achievements were acknowledged and he received a Purple Ribbon Medal in 1995. After that he continued to create dance works and he then retired in January, 2008.

His last work was “The dance which the gentle eyes play; A mosaic of human beings”.

In this study, I would like to summarize the dance style of FUJII by tracing his Chronicle until the time of receiving the Purple Ribbon Medal and looking at the process of formation of his dance style.

I . CHRONICLE

1. PHASE 1. VOCAL MUSIC TO DANCE

FUJII Koh was born at Toyono Village in Saitama in April, 1928. His father served as a village chief during the wartime. Calling himself a “Culturist Politician”, he contributed to the promotion of cultural activities. He presented an elementary school with a then-uncommon, piano, and had KOMORI Yuzuru teach the chorus songs to the young villagers. His son Koh also took private lessons from Yuzuru, which had a great influence on his life.

FUJII continued with his lesson in singing and sang a solo on the stage of the Komori Brothers' Joint Recital

at the Shibuya Public Hall. In the after meeting, KOMORI Toshi, the older brother of Yuzuru said to FUJII, “We need more male dancers...” In response to this casual invitation, FUJII took up dancing. He was 18 years old and was a student of Saitama Youth's School of Education. Besides going to school, he was busy studying the singing, dancing as well as the piano at the Komori Brothers' institute. Because there were more dance stages than vocal stages, and because male dancers were in more of a demand, he soon received the opportunity of appearing on stage. The more performances he experienced, the more deeply he was engaged in dancing. His first dance performance was in 1947. In the following year, he joined *KOMORI Toshi Itinerant Performance in Hokkaido*. FUJII's father approved his son of getting some artistic accomplishments by learning dance, but he disapproved of dance for living. On condition that FUJII would become a teacher, his father allowed him to continue dancing. FUJII became a science teacher at a junior high school in 1948. FUJII coached dancing during the school's club activity. With KOMORI Toshi as guest dancer, FUJII also danced in the school performances.

As he devoted himself in the cultivation of his students artistic sentiments, he was seized with tuberculosis and had to struggle with the disease for one and a half years (1950-1951).

KOMORI Toshi visited him in the hospital and told him of literature or music, which encouraged and inspired FUJII who had been overwhelmed by the fear that he would have to withdraw from dancing. In the bed, he indulged himself in reading novels by OE Kenzaburo, poetry by KITAZONO Katsue and NISHIWAKI Junzaburo. He also listened to modern music of B. Bartok and A. Jolivet. He later incorporated the title or

the context of such literature or music into his dance works. One example is “Memushiri Kouchi ‘Shooting of Kidling’” written by OE Kenzaburo. He created a dance from the story and received the Dance Pen Club Award. This was the first award that he received. After leaving the hospital, he recuperated at home and occasionally visited the Komori Institute. His desire to dance was so strong that he could not help dancing a little when he was there. But dancing was difficult for him, since had lost one lung, and he could not dance like he thought he could. However, He could not give up dancing. He eventually became a choreographer, for dance creation was popular among young dancers in those days.

KOMORI did not live long enough to see FUJII's complete recovery. In 1951, KOMORI Toshi passed away. KOMORI went to the United States in 1917 and he later went to Paris where he was actively went on the stage as “a Japanese dancer”, then came back to Japan in 1936. During his absence from Japan, his colleagues at the Imperial Theater of Tokyo including ISHII Baku, TAKATA Masao and Seiko were educating many pupils that later became the leaders of Japan's modern dance. KOMORI, to the contrary, had very few pupils which included FUJII Koh and FUJII Toshiko. FUJII Koh studied under KOMORI Toshi for 6 years until KOMORI's death. As he was ill and suspended his study for nearly 2 years, he studied under KOMORI for only a short period.

KOMORI was a true lover of music and had extensive knowledge of it. He gave FUJII the scores of C. A. Debussy and M. J. Ravel and encouraged him to study music. FUJII's pupils worked on the dances choreographed by KOMORI Toshi in order to elaborate on their dance techniques as well as to learn “the Beauty of Dancing”. FUJII is also a true lover of music who made most of the music in his choreography. The preciseness and the sensitivity in his application of music and the technique of integrating his own inspiration into the spirit of the music are highly valued by critics. We can see the influence of KOMORI in this sense.

But in the dance circle in those days, EGUCHI, who had studied the Neue Tanz in Germany, and others were actively presenting their own works. Their works were

the choreographers' own creation which were not just “dancing to the music”. Therefore, it appeared to FUJII that KOMORI Toshi's dance was unsatisfactory since it was still a dance attached to beautiful music. It might sound too extreme, but in the sense of dance creation, the only thing KOMORI Toshi taught FUJII was “to esteem the music”. However, much influence of KOMORI is found in the character of FUJII for he spent his impressionable youth with KOMORI.

Unlike those artists who had long experienced travel abroad, KOMORI was not gorgeous, agile nor ambitious. He was a person of warmth and calmness which are associated with his genuine affection for dance and music. FUJII says, “I always live my life with the hope to be a man of character like KOMORI Toshi.” The human love is running through all of his works as though it were a reflection of KOMORI Toshi.

After the loss of KOMORI, FUJII took over the Komori Institute and became the president. It was the departure of his journey to modern dance. He began to search blindly in the darkness by himself.

2. PHASE 2. UNIQUE CREATION ON HIS OWN

Soon after FUJII lost his teacher who would have taught him more, he had to take over the education of pupils at the Komori Institute while working on his creation. With only a few years of experience, he had not quite achieved to understand the essence of dancing. What was more, he did not belong to major school such as ISHII, TAKATA or EGUCHI's. FUJII had to explore his own path because of such isolation. FUJII reflects about the past and says,

I probed into things very deeply and took time to achieve my dance. That was the only way for my creation. As I look back, I feel that I was, in a sense, compelled by some force to create in a place where there had been no other creators. (FUJII, 1955)

I started walking on my original way. I made my own way toward my own world without following any tradition. A new attitude toward my own life was born then. (FUJII, 1967)

With the profound human love and the sense of music he acquired through KOMORI, FUJII made exerted efforts in his research and creation. He used the music of Debussy or Bartok, the favorites of both KOMORI and FUJII. On the other hand, KOMORI said in his first performance after his return from abroad, “The real image of the Japanese soul can be expressed solely with the melody created by Japanese composers. I would like to express the spirit of Japan today with the music written by contemporary Japanese composers.” (MURAMATSU, 1985) FUJII carried out KOMORI's unfulfilled wish to interchange with composers.

FUJII created one work after another through collaboration with such composers as MAMIYA Michio, TANAKA Toshimitsu, or KAWASAKI Shoetsu. And he presented his dances in the Komori Company's Performances or joint performances. In the early 1950's, he was already among the most promising new talents of Japan. Some commented on his early works as “too much thought, not enough expressed.” There is no denying that his dance was still immature, but his slogan “original way” received high evaluations. A critic reviewed one of FUJII's major works “*Katsugo 'Deep Devotion'*” (first staged in 1954) and praised “his efforts to delve into the subject and to describe its inner world by bringing out the best in his dancers.” (*Ongaku Shim-bun*, USHIYAMA Mitsuru, 17 Dec, 1954) Another critic said, “It had an unusual touch.” (*Tokyo Shimbun*, EGUCHI Hiroshi, 1954)

In “*Kawa 'The River'*” presented in 1957, he had the dancers crawl on the stage covered by a large cloth, and introduced a very peculiar composition called “No Step”. “*Mitsumeru 'Gazing'*” of 1958, although there was too much slide-walking and hand clapping, it was uniquely choreographed featuring 4 dancers. Thanks to the right choice of music, the four created tightness in the air and strong energy was felt as they dance with their eyes fixed on one another. The dancers were applauded and were said to be top rank new talents with many bright futures. The critic EGUCHI said that FUJII's world was entirely different from KOMORI's and that his consistency in sticking to his own world was quality, and at the same time, blemish because it would limit the scope

of expression and the amplitude of dance movement. Whatever blemish he might have had, FUJII's dance provided a vision of the new and singular world of dance.

In the late 1950's, including FUJII's energetic stages, there were a number of performances by each school or by each group of dancers who gathered under one principle. Energetic works with peculiar themes and expression came out incessantly. HIJIKATA Tatsumi, who later established “BUTOH”, made his stunning debut in *the New Talent Performance* in those days.

The excessive peculiarity-oriented trend gave rise to eccentricity and ostentation. Some choreographers attempted to apply ethnic dances but it was evident that it was their last resort. After all, it could be said that the true singularity springs from inner desire while the false singularity is just eccentricity. FUJII struggled to pursue the true singularity as was endorsed in the words of TSUDA.

Paul Bosch said “excellent arts today are a type of religion. They do not have believers or churches or decrees but just priests and martyrs.” Part of his ideas were true with the case of FUJII. A person who is engaged in a genuine artistic activity has no space in their mind for believers or churches. FUJII Koh can not stand adulterating wine with water or renounce his singularity. He is beautiful because he is building up his own world on himself as a foundation. His works, no matter good or bad, have no compromises. This is significant in today's dance world. For now FUJII Koh is laughed at, insulted, and underrated. Isn't it a thrill? It's making him more hell-bent. He's splendid! Banzai! FUJII Koh ordered the conventional value of beauty to halt. He is trying to fulfill his duty for the cause of the contemporary beauty that he had originally created. Whether each of his works is a success or not makes little difference to us. What we expect to see is a stunningly honest expression of life. Unlike many other dancers who are busy looking around at what others are doing, FUJII is sitting cross-legged, contemplating and shedding tears;

Yes, he is in search of the definition of the mankind. FUJII Koh is walking on a narrow path. His strides are marching, one-two-one-two... (*Program of the Komori Company Recital*, TSUDA, 11 May, 1958)

In 1958 when he had been receiving more and more recognition as TSUDA's comment indicates, FUJII married a late-KOMORI's pupil and FUJII's current pupil KIMURA Toshiko. Making use of her dance technique, Toshiko contributed to FUJII's creation and education. She had soon become an indispensable component in the formation of FUJII Koh's dance style. Ten years after his teacher's death, FUJII came to be called a dancer of great promise because of his unrelenting posture towards dancing and the singularity in his dance.

Despite such reputation, he repeatedly failed in the Creative Division of *the Dance Concours*. Against such background, in 1962, FUJII realized where he was going and finally grasped the outline of his own dance style. FUJII and other three persons established "The Tokyo Creative Dance Company". This marked FUJII's shift from making small works to large works in which he could best exhibit his ability. He now determined to put his ability to test by entering a large work for *the Arts Festival*.

3. PHASE 3. BIRTH OF THE TOKYO CREATIVE DANCE COMPANY

When the widow of KOMORI Toshi passed away in 1962, FUJII closed down the Komori Dance Institute which he had run for 10 years after KOMORI Toshi's death. He established his own dance institute.

And with the staff he worked with in the Dance Poem "*Tengoku no Ihojin 'An Alien in Heaven'*" he presented the previous year, he made "the Tokyo Creative Dance Company". The staff included the choreographer FUJII, a music composer named KAWASAKI Shoetsu who played music for KOMORI's performances, a poet and playwright KAMATA Tadayoshi who was a friend of KAWASAKI and an artist of the stage setting YOSHIDA Masatsugu. All four were from rather rural districts, such as Aomori or Saitama. And out of their

yearning for Tokyo, they named the group "The Tokyo Creative Dance Company". Each of them exchanged views from their own artistic standpoints and tried to incorporate their wisdom into one powerful style of art.

With their ingenuity and within the limited funds, they constructively argued and made their way towards their own style of dance. Because of this, the stage of the Tokyo Creative Dance Company was the fruit of collaboration between the staff and with the choreographer FUJII as the coordinator. They integrated dance, music, poem and stage setting into such works as "*Ringo no Ki 'The Apple Tree'*", "*Tsugaru Iedebushi 'The Chant of A Runaway'*" or "*Higan eno Taiwa 'A Dialog with the Equinox'*". The experience of this collaboration undoubtedly has influenced the dance style of FUJII to this day.

In the 5 years after the birth of the Tokyo Creative Dance Company, the partners of FUJII came to need more time in their own fields of work and they withdrew one after another. With new members MIKI Minoru (music), SAOTOME Yukio (stage setting) and ODAGIRI Kiyomitsu (poem and script), he went on with the creation. Up until presently, the members have changed now and then, but FUJII's attitude of creating through close communication with the staff has never changed.

In 1966, "*Memushiri Kouchi 'Shooting of Kidling'*", in which he first featured the two of his own pupils, received the Buyo Pen Club Award. Since he read the novel *Memushiri Kouchi* by OE Kenzaburo while in his sick bed, he had dreamed of making it into a dance. 2 years later, when he heard the string quartet of MAMIYA Michio, its eccentric musical sound hit upon him as the best match for *Memushiri Kouchi*. As he listened and listened to this music, he could incorporate his image into one very singular dance work. For the theme of expressing humanity in delinquent boys, he chose to feature his pupils YAGISHITA Norio and KATO Miyako. In producing this stage, he did not rush into presenting it, but waited for the dancers to grow old and mature enough to best perform the roles of the characters.

In the following year, under the theme of "regaining humanity in the society", he compared the estranged

people of the modern society to moles and, with guest dancers, he presented “*Mogura no Monogatari ‘The Story of Moles’*”. Unfortunately, the guest dancers were awkward with FUJII's choreography and the performance was a failure.

In the same year 1969, as part of his other dancing activity, he founded “the Saitama Prefecture Dance Association” for the purpose of promoting “the Dance Prefecture Saitama” campaign. In 1968, he won *the Art Festival's Prize for Excellence* with “*Medea*” featuring FUJII Toshiko, GOI Teruo and KATO Miyako. Since the mid 60's, FUJII's school have turned out many dancers of marked individualities, and also the scope of FUJII's creations was widened. YAGISHITA in 1969 and KATO in 1970 won First Prize in *All Japan BUYO Concours's* First Division. The technical level of the FUJII Company including its junior dancers has been raised remarkably and still today, they can perform a large work of group dance within the Company alone.

Confident with the competence of his company, FUJII went forth in exploring new techniques and expressions. Thus, “*Ienu Kawa ‘Unhealed River’*” was born. It is a work which was said by critics to be a “perfection” or “a well-balanced work in which FUJII's ideas are perfectly incorporated through the dancer's technique”. FUJII received *the Arts Festival's Prize for Excellence* and the Dance Critics' Association Award for this dance.

Air-raids, war damages, black markets and starvation were the ingredients of FUJII's consciousness and his subliminal self. Based on the terrifying image associated with his childhood experiences, “*Ienu Kawa ‘Unhealed River’*” was choreographed under the theme of “regaining humanity”. The story goes like this... A mother had her son killed by an Atomic Bomb. She scatters rice into the river in which he died on the anniversary of his death every year. And the mother's incurable wound overlaps with the wounds of the people in the post-war confusion and alienation. The work consists of a solo and a duet danced lyrically to the marimba improvised by ABE Keiko. Dozens of mannequins without arms hung down from the ceiling and are lifted up. And in the last scene, dancers slowly throw themselves from the platform which is compared to the

river bank onto the floor covered with a large white cloth which represents the river. The music, movement and stage sets of this performance have put forward an epochal technique in dance expression.

In 1970 when “*Ienu Kawa ‘Unhealed River’*” was presented, the trend of dancing was “usualness”. Dancers tried to break with the conventional abstraction or symbolism to incorporate usualness into their dance. Because of this, works of the same idea and expression were very common. But FUJII stuck to his own idea and composition of his modern dance and he appealed himself to the world with his choreography.

At the end of 1971, He was given by the Cultural Agency the opportunity to concentrate on the study of creation as a Researcher of the Arts. He stayed in the United States and Europe where he observed the lessons of Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Alwin Aliy. He spent most of his time attending modern dance performances, ballet performances and visiting art museums.

He was astonished to see each ballet company having a full house continuously for 2 to 3 months. He was also surprised at the tight link between the dancers and the audience. Their performances were excellent because their techniques were excellent. Speaking of dance itself, however, none of those performances seemed to FUJII as artistically excellent since all the ballet companies used similar techniques. He attributed it to the neglect of the choreographers. From these observations, he realized again that the principle of the modern dance was “to take the ground on humanity”. Having attended dance activities in small theaters, gymnasiums or art museums, he felt that a theater with a different atmosphere was necessary for the dance creation activities in Japan.

FUJII, who had advocated “Modern Dance of the Japanese” since before his research abroad, realized through his mission that it was important for the Japanese dancers to take advantage of racial peculiarities such as their physiques or movements. He also felt that a most effective systematic training method to improve the physically peculiar Japanese dancers should be devised instead of hiring foreign training methods such as the Graham Technique. And at the same time,

he stressed the importance of not only applying a foreign style of dance but also taking a new look at the activities advocated by the principled pioneers of Japan's modern dance such as ISHII Baku, ITO Michio or KOMORI Toshi.

In the meanwhile, FUJII's pupils were making steady progress not only in dancing but also in creation. YAGISHITA Norio received the First Prize, and KATO Miyako the Third Prize in the Creation Division of BUYO Concours.

Since he heard the music "Tennyō 'Almost Heaven'" in a Berlin concert, FUJII had wished to have KATO Miyako dance to this music at all costs. As was the case with "Memushiri Kouchi", FUJII is the kind of choreographer who designates dancers for the theme. In this sense, his works are not created by the choreographer FUJII alone, but through collaboration with the dancers. In the program of "Tennyō 'Almost Heaven'", his wife FUJII Toshiko wrote for its creating process.

FUJII is now gazing and contemplating in solitude. He is giving himself the rod, saying to himself, "That's why I have to make it. That's what life is for." Miyako is trying to see through the fetus of FUJII's dance in his movement and suffer throes to make myself rise above the average dancers. "Tennyō 'Almost Heaven'" is the testimony of our lives. (*Program of Tennyō*, FUJII Toshiko, 9 Nov, 1973)

KATO who stood by FUJII in his creation and danced his choreography reflects their collaboration and says:

When they asked me to write about the days studying at my "old nest", the FUJII Institute. I couldn't imagine it would be so difficult. It is quite understandable that my friend from those days YAGISHITA Norio declined their request by saying with regret, "I can't put it into words." For us who have been their followers for so many years, Mr. and Mrs. FUJII are still too close to us to yearn their school as the old nest, or the memories from those days are not as sweet as to feel nostalgic for. What I can say about them is that they really are

"great balls of fire" whose heat never declines. In the program of the performance last fall, they wrote us a message, "Live with vigor!" That's exactly how FUJII Koh and Toshiko live their lives. Their voices echo in my mind, "I must make it. That's what life is for." Sometimes they seem to be on the verge of losing their minds or they seem to value dance above their health. We don't try to calm them down, we put our solicitude aside and challenge them to a fight. They always allowed some room for our own creativity in expression and taught us, without words, how to walk in the wilderness on our own feet. Until the curtain was up, I always felt my heart beat fast, wondering if I had made it and if our collaboration would bear fruit. (*Program of FUJII Koh & Toshiko Modern Dance Performance*, KATO, 4 Nov, 1977)

During his journey abroad, he hit upon the idea of comparing the present times to a henhouse and choreographed "*Keisha 'Henhouse'*". He staged it in the *Tokyo Creative Dance Company's Regular Autumn Performance* in October, the same year.

The people today who try to fill the emptiness of their souls by pursuing sexual pleasure are symbolized by the henhouse. When the curtain draws up, you find dancers hung upside-down, then come down to the floor and bounce on the floor with their inner thighs. With the young dancers' rapid movement, FUJII Toshiko's leisure and well-calculated solo and the 2 duets' outstanding technique enforced by their staying power, the Company made their theme felt by the spectators. For this powerful work that incorporated the sad struggle of the people of today, FUJII received the *Arts Festival's Prize for Excellence* for the third time.

Despite the fame he attained, FUJII had his own inner struggle.

After I returned from abroad, I have been making efforts in my dance activities. In the so-called transition period of the dance world, I started to feel unconfident with each of my creations. It appears to me that it is time I gave up following the path I had followed and break myself apart. It

must be the only way for enhancing myself. Making my stage completely different from the previous stages takes great courage and it gives rise to more problems than I would otherwise have had. I have to wring my brain to solve such new problems, but I never regret having done something new. Recital is an opportunity to test myself, reflect on myself and to motivate me to further my efforts of creation. An excellent work must be born from whole-hearted concentration into dance creation. (FUJII Koh, 1973)

His prize-winning “*Keisha ‘Henhouse’*” was his last entry to *the Art Festival*. In order to find something different out of himself, he started to tackle with the creation from a fresh perspective.

4. PHASE 4. LYRICAL WORKS / NEW SPACE

After FUJII's return to Japan, while he was searching for a path for a new style of dance, his pupils were making remarkable progress. YAGISHITA Norio, one of the first generation pupils of FUJII, went to the States as a Fulbright student in 1973.

After his return, KATO played the leading role with FUJII in “*Yoru no Shiragiku Yume no Shiratsuyu ‘White Chrysanthemum of the Night, White Dew of the Dream’*”, then withdrew from the Company to be an independent dancer and received many prizes including the Art Selection's New Talent Award.

KATO Miyako received the Grand Prix at the Creation Division of *BUYO Concours* in 1975, and in 1977 she went to the United States and Europe as a Cultural Agency Researcher of the Arts. After starring in “*Sarukani Gassen ‘A Battle Between Monkeys and Crabs’*”, she also left the Company. During her mission abroad, she was strongly intrigued by Ann Halprin, and she enthusiastically held original performances in small theaters or factories.

GOI Teruo, after dancing in “*Soka ‘Going Up a River’*”, shifted to BUTOH and gave many solo recitals. The other first generation dancers of FUJII continue to display their individuality in FUJII's stages in small theaters. And the second generation dancers started to cut conspicuous figures.

The new points of view on which FUJII has based himself since “*Keisha ‘Henhouse’*” had 3 pillars. 1) Lyricism-orientation: He aimed for lyrical beauty of dance in his works. FUJII said, “I'd like to step aside from the general current of choreographing on everyday subject, and to incorporate more lyrical beauty in my work. I hope that my audience will take home with them the impression of our beautiful world of dancing.” 2) Creative activities in new space: He began his experiment in pursuit of dance beauty in a new space. 3) More stages for his pupils: In addition to *the FUJII Company's Regular Autumn Performance* that featured large works of group dances, FUJII and his wife started producing, choreographing and directing solo exhibitions or group performances of his pupils. It underscores his devotion to bringing out and elaborating on each student's individuality.

With “*Yoru no Shiragiku Yume no Shiratsuyu ‘White chrysanthemum of the Night-White Dew of the Dream’*” first staged in 1974, FUJII made a reorientation to lyrical choreography. He later choreographed “*Soka ‘Going Up a River’*”, “*Hanaori Toge ‘Hanaori Pass’*”, “*Irezumi ‘Tatoo’*” or “*Himaraya no Kitsune ‘The Foxes of the Himarayas’*”. In contrast with his previous works which powerfully delivered his message, these new works addressed the audience softly and steadily. Though being lyrical, they were not just romantic or fantastic.

From the performance of “*Soka ‘Going Up a River’*” onward, the hope of FUJII's second generation pupil HOMMA Yoshiki danced the leading roles in most of the works. The emergence of HOMMA coincided with FUJII's reorientation and she played an important role not only on the stage but also in facilitating FUJII's new creation.

FUJII Koh's first experiment in new space was conducted before his mission abroad in “*Anryokushoku no Me no Seinen ‘The boy with dark green eyes’*”, which was presented in *the Dance Space For Tomorrow Performance* held at the Sogetsu Hall in 1971. The effectiveness of space utilization and stage direction was praised, but it was pointed out that it fell short of approaching the fundamental relationship between the space and the body. He realized the importance of

obtaining novel dance space through his observation abroad.

And in 1974, he staged his choreography “*Genso · Wadatsumi no Iroko no Miya*” in the Japanese garden of the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Modern Art where there were marble garden stones and ponds. This work is based upon the “Wadatsumi no Iroko no Miya”, a masterpiece painting by AOKI Shigeru and the romance between AOKI and a woman called FUKUDA Tane. With all the lights of the museum building turned off, his visionary world was spread out on the rainy evening. One spectator, who was a dancer, said, “The encounter of the stately construction and the dancers' disciplined bodies brought forth one another's fascination from within. It was a more effective stage direction than I had expected. And I was impressed by the beauty of this new harmony.” (*Bijutsukan Tomonokai Newsletter 'Art Museum Devotees' Club Newsletter' SEKIGUCHI, 1974*)

After the success of this performance, his growing desire to express himself in the open, especially under the starry skies drove him to produce more outside performances. Under the sponsorship of the Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Modern Art again, he produced the program *An Evening of Modern Music and Modern Dance*. In this performance, his company danced his choreography based on the inspiration he received from a woodprint exhibited at the Museum, in accompaniment of the contemporary music. They later performed “*Shikakui Sora 'the Square Sky'*”, “*Tsutsuji no Musume 'The Maiden of an Azalea'*” and “*Tsui*” on the stages or in the lobbies of the Saitama Museum of Modern Art or Zojoji temple.

The life of the children in a reformatory was the subject of “*Shikakui Sora 'the Square Sky'*”. He pointed out the disregard for such children and argued that it was this modern society that shoved those children into the reformatory. They performed on the floor of the square hall with high ceilings and no stage. And the audience viewed the dance from the four sides of the dancers. HOMMA Yoshiki's solo-the quartet of the experienced dancers such as Oguro-the group of dancers-the group dancing among the audience: all of them integrated in layers and interacted with the music, the

costumes, and the lighting and achieved a truly breathtaking performance in the new curious space.

While continuing to explore new space, FUJII frequently held recitals. In order to offer his pupils the opportunities to exhibit their progress and to foster their individuality, FUJII Koh and Toshiko choreographed for the pupils and directed them.

Of course there were performance opportunities such as the *FUJII Company's Regular Autumn Performance*, the *Tokyo Shimbun Annual Modern Dance Exhibition*, the *BUYO Concours*, the *Contemporary Dance Association of Japan New Talents Performance*, its Mainstay Performance and previously mentioned irregular stages at art museums. But FUJII thought the best way to bring out the pupils' individualities and to eventually make them into successful dancers was to provide them with a choreography designed especially for them and exhibit their talents in smaller recitals.

Thus, FUJII had a couple of his pupils dance FUJII Koh and Toshiko's choreography in each recital. He was actively engaged in this program and appealed to the public with the pupils' promising talents. In “*Tsutsuji no Musume 'The Maiden of an Azalea'*” and “*Tsui*”, which were the new-space-oriented performances, FUJII also succeeded in achieving integrated effects of the space, the stage setting and the dancers. In those performances, the dancer OGURO Mikiko received appraisal for her peculiarly-Japanese sensitivity as well as for her powerful elegance. “*Himaraya no Kitsune 'The Foxes of the Himarayas'*” extracted fully the talents of HOMMA. This touching work of dance would be staged again and again, and in 1981, HOMMA received the Education Ministry's Arts Selection New Talent Award.

FUJII loved the poetry of AKIYA Yutaka. Every time he met with AKIYA, FUJII felt, “How wonderful people are! How wonderful life is!” and wanted to infuse AKIYA's poetry with the world of modern dance. Being certain that HOMMA was now capable of expressing the essence of this poetry and the dance, FUJII choreographed “*Himaraya no Kitsune 'The Foxes of the Himarayas'*”. The work depicts the mental image of women living in the severe surroundings of the Himarayas. Within some 30 minutes, HOMMA exhib-

ited her competency by accurately incorporating FUJII's choreography and moved the audience with her lyrical movement. She was commented as "a phenomenal female solo dancer of modern dance" or "a jewel of modern dance". HOMMA Yoshiki won first prize in *the All Japan BUYO Concours's* Modern Dance Division 1 in 1979. And FUJII Koh received the ISHII Baku Award for having fostered this female dancer.

In the following year 1980, the Contemporary Dance Association of Japan presented HOMMA Yoshiki with the Special Award for New Talent, and she went to Europe and the United States in the Cultural Agency's Research Mission of the Arts.

In 1980, FUJII's oldest daughter FUJII Naomi received *the New Talent Award in the Contemporary Dance Association's Spring Performance* in her first entry to this performance. She was the record youngest dancer to receive this prize. In 1982, she also received the New Talent Award in the Contemporary Dance Association's Autumn Performance Prize, so she was recognized also as a choreographer. And she received first prize in *the Saitama Dance Concours's* Modern Dance Division. In this Concours, Naomi's younger sister Kaori won second prize, and was also chosen as "the Top Ten Young Dancers of 1983" by the Ongaku Shimbun (Music Newspaper Company). While the young dancers were steadily making progress, HOMMA Yoshiki's put an end mark to her membership at the Tokyo Creative Dance Company with the solo of "Shirabyoshi" in *the Tokyo Creative Dance Company's Regular Performance*.

FUJII resigned from teaching junior high school in March, 1983. His long years of engaging in two professions have ended, and he started to concentrate all his attention and devotion to dance.

5. PHASE 5. PERFORMANCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE JAPAN

The resignation from junior high school left him with much spared time which he started to spend in the promotion of dancing with the Saitama Prefecture Dance Association.

Because He was no longer restricted with time, he could travel and hold performances in other parts of

Japan or in other countries as well. He staged some of his best choreography again in such performances.

In the spring of 1984, he was invited by the Contemporary Dance Association of Korea and presented a 90-minute program in *the Contemporary Dance Festival of Korea*. In the November performance, he staged "*Sabaku no Ranbo 'Rimbaud in the Desert'*". It was a solo dance FUJII choreographed for YAGISHITA Norio, again, 10 years after YAGISHITA's departure from the FUJII Company. FUJII thought that the life of the French poet, A. Rimbaud typified the youthful days and he received the inspiration of incorporating half of Rimbaud's lifetime into a solo dance of YAGISHITA Norio.

YAGISHITA Norio is the kind of dancer who could captivate the spectators by just standing there. FUJII's choreography made the most of such quality of YAGISHITA. He also got at the heart of the choreography with his rare sensitivity and he danced with his disciplined body. Their reunion truly satisfied the audience. In the program of the performance, YAGISHITA wrote,

10 years have passed since I ran away. I chased
my dream
and was faced with harsh realities
How many times have I repeated the same thing
"He sent you flowers", they said. Time is running up
In solitude I wished to show my gratitude
My heart is ablaze seeing him again
I cherish and cherish this moment of reunion

-His love was that of Father's-
(excerpt from *the program of the Tokyo Creative Dance Company*, YAGISHITA, 19 Nov, 1984)

In their December performance, they presented "*Requiem • Onnatachi no Higeiki 'Requiem • The tragedy of the women'*" based on the Japanese classic of "*Heike Monogatari 'The story of the Heike'*" featuring group and solo dances. He took into consideration the rugged and uneven dance of his third generation dancers and succeeded in achieving an integrated beauty of promiscuousness. FUJII's dances during the year such as "*Sabaku no Ranbo 'Rimbaud in the Desert'*" or "*Requiem • Onnatachi no Higeiki 'Requiem • The tragedy of*

the women” won great admiration and he received the EGUCHI Takaya Award and Dance Critics' Association Award of '84 in the following year.

In 1985, his third generation of dancers started to cut their conspicuous figures. FUJII's pupils entered 7 dances to *the Dance Association's New Talents Spring Performance*. One critic commented, “The majority of the entrants were from FUJII Koh•Toshiko Dance Institute. The audience was overwhelmed by the original movements composed by FUJII and by the dancers themselves. It is quite remarkable that Mr. and Mrs. FUJII continue to educate their pupils with such vigor.” In *the Autumn Performance*, he presented “*Seido Jidai 'The Days of Youth'*”. This work featured vivacious adolescent dancers to incorporate the pleasant and the unpleasant aspects of adolescence using diverse movements.

He had once taken social problems of the youth in “*Memushiri Kouchi*”, but he began to base his works on his love of young people. FUJII wrote in the program,

“Live with vigor!” I took long time to materialize my heartiest message in today's performance of “Soka ‘Going Up a River’” and “Matsuri no Ba ‘Festival Square’”. Here is my “Portrayal of the Youths of Today”.

During these 10 years, the most of FUJII's works convey his messages to the youth, such as in “*Seido Jidai 'The Days of Youth'*”.

Among other third generation dancers of the FUJII school, the most notable dancer and choreographer was FUJII Kaori. For her outstanding talent in dancing and in choreography, she won the New Talent Awards consecutively in *the Spring and the Fall Performance* in 1985, then received the Grand Prix at the Creation Division of BUYO Concours in 1986. Furthermore, in 1988, she was awarded with the Bejard • Ballet • Lausanne Prize in *the Lausanne International Choreography Concours*.

The FUJII Company also revived their masterpieces. In 1986 they staged “*Himaraya no Kitsune 'The Foxes of the Himarayas'*” in *the Art Festival Performance* held under the sponsorship of the Cultural Agency and in *the*

Exhibition of the Three Modern Dancers. In *the Performance Supported by the Cultural Agency*, they revived “*Sabaku no Ranbo 'Rimbaud in the Desert'*” and “*Requiem • Onnatachi no Higeki 'Requiem • The tragedy of the women'*”. For these two works and other creation activities, FUJII received the NIMURA Award in 1987.

In 1988, as a part of the Cultural Agency's US-Japan Stage Art Exchange Plan, FUJII's “*Himaraya no Kitsune 'The Foxes of the Himarayas'*” was chosen as one of the three dances to be staged in the United States. HOMMA performed at theaters and universities in New York and in Los Angeles.

Dancer MIKI Yoko, a member of the tour said in her report on “*Himaraya no Kitsune 'The Foxes of the Himarayas'*”, “HOMMA Yoshiki's solo had nothing to be desired. She danced every second of the 20 minutes without relaxing her perfect expression and her sense of timing. I was really moved to tears.” (*Geijutsu Buyo 'the Art of Dance'*, vol.206, 31 May, 1988) She also reported that all tickets had been sold out and that the excellence of the Japanese dancers' technique and Japanese subtle expression had received appraisal from those in the American dance circle.

“*Ruro no Tabi 'Wonderings'*” of 1987 was a feature of young people chasing their dreams. Accompanied by the vocal chorus of Chumann's “*Zigeunerleben*”, 24 dancers appear on the stage on bicycles and dance the pleasure and sorrow of life. It was symbolic of the history of the FUJII Company which had ardently created a modern dance. And it was also symbolic of FUJII Koh and Toshiko who took a journey in pursuit of new modern dance. In the revised version of “*Ruro no Tabi 'Wonderings'*” of 1994, FUJII appeared at the beginning and at the end of the work pushing a bicycle. In the last scene in front of the closed curtain, FUJII addressed the audience the warmth and the dream for tomorrow in his gesture by pushing the bicycle across the stage.

In *the Tokyo Creative Dance Company's 30th Anniversary Performance*, which was held in 1989, they staged “*Hokusai • Ima 'Hokusai • Now'*”. Based on the painting by Hokusai who was named a painting maniac, the story goes back and forth from the past to the pre-

sent. With a little sarcasm, the choreograph sublimated this comical biography into a story of human love. The work consisted of a group dance-FUJII Kaori's solo-group dance-FUJII Koh's solo, of which Kaori's dance was wonderful. And FUJII Koh seemed to be identifying himself with his role, Hokusai, walking from the back to the front of the stage making various expression. The people in the audience were drawn closer to the world of modern dance by the familiarity and the excellence of this work.

They revived "Hokusai·Ima 'Hokusai·Now'" in *the Modern Dance Performance Celebrating the Inauguration of the Tokyo Art Theater*. Because of the time restriction, the choreography was shortened, but the framework remained the same and it attracted the audience with its light hearted story, sarcasm, and their outstanding dancing.

In recognition of FUJII's achievement during the year including this revival of "Hokusai·Ima 'Hokusai·Now'", they presented him with the 22nd Dance Critics' Association Award in 1991. "Hokusai·Ima 'Hokusai·Now'" was also staged when invited to *the Festival of the Korea Contemporary Dance Association* in 1991 and in *the Saitama Prefecture Dance Association's Performance in China as well as at the Promotional Performance of the Excellent Stage Arts* of 1992, which was held under the sponsorship of the Cultural Agency.

In 1991, in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of All Japan Dance Federation, Japan's 5 leading choreographers of Japanese Dance, ballet, modern dance or child dance were selected including FUJII. They featured AZUMA Tokuhō, MORISHITA Yoko, HOMMA Yoshiki or HANAYAGI Sumi in their choreography "Taketori Monogatari 'The Bamboo Princess'". FUJII showed his expertise by applying his new idea of "Cross-culture".

In the Company's own performance, regarding the funeral as a person's last party and the conversation of the funeral participants as the song in praise of life, "The Last Party" was presented. In the last scene, they mourn the loss of an old man with inorganic movements of the group dance, and then, they suddenly stop their movement. There comes FUJII with a bow (which he wears every day) and walks across the stage singing

Santa Lucia repeatedly and then disappears. Then the group starts dancing again. The stage ends with the audience's question left unanswered: "Was that the dead, or someone else?" Speaking from the standpoint of inspiration and stage direction, "The Last Party" proved to be quite playful in a positive sense.

In the same year TAKANO Naomi (FUJII Naomi changed her surname) realized her long-cherished dream and received the Grand Prix at the Creation Division of *BUYO Concours*. Also, ADACHI Junko won first prize in the Saitama Dance Concur's Modern Dance Division.

In 1992, FUJII collaborated with those in other fields of art in *Meet the Sculpture and the Dance Performance, Dancers-and-Stage Setting Artists-in-a-Scrimmage Performance or Dance and Percussion*. They also held a performance in China.

In the spring of 1993, they performed in Korea and in Autumn, they staged "Sabaku no Miira 'The Mummy of the Desert'". Because of the length of the work, it was the only dance to be performed on that evening. The third generation dancers including those who seemed young enough for the fourth generation showed group dances in turns, then everything came to a halt. Left on the stage were a man and a woman just lying on the stage, for a long time, without a movement. This long silence was acceptable and even effective, probably because the dance that preceded it was substantial enough to have the audience fill the space in time with the echoing image of the previous dance. It is also notable that the staff engaged in the setting, costumes, lighting and music put forth great collaboration. This made the performance a success.

In the same year 1993, YAMANA Tamie, FUJII's third generation pupil was chosen as the Cultural Agency Researcher of the Arts. She also won the second prize in *the Saitama International Choreography Concours*. After the stage of "Sabaku no Miira 'The Mummy of the Desert'", YAMANA left for Paris. HOMMA Yoshiki danced "Chieko Ishu 'Keepsake Jewel of Chieko'" in her own recital as part of *the Art Festival*. Her recital was supervised by FUJII Koh, and she received the Art Festival Award of 1993.

As mentioned above, FUJII appeared on the stage

again in "Hokusai Ima 'Hokusai Now'" in 1990. His presence inspired enthusiasm from everyone for the work. After that, he appeared on the stage of "Last Party" and he appeared with TAKANO Naomi, FUJII Kaori and YAMANA Tamie in "Noguso Sensei" in 1994. In this work, He showed a new expressive world which was produced by dancer's young and fresh beauty of the dancers and FUJII's matured art.

II . THE OUTLINES OF FUJII KOH'S DANCE STYLE

1. THE FAITH IN CREATION AND THE DANCE STYLE

During the 10 years between KOMORI Toshi's death and the establishment of the Tokyo Creative Dance Company, he was struggling desperately for his own dance style with a sense of music and human love he inherited from KOMORI. In those days, he perceived the modern dance as a counterpart of the orderly beauty of classical ballet. At the same time, he thought that the essence of modern dance was to incorporate the image of the times and the everchanging current of the society with the "flame of life". The expression with the flame of life, for FUJII, was the way of enlightening himself and realizing his dreams of becoming a dancer who could move people's hearts. "The expression of the image of the times with the flame of life" has consistently been the principle of his dance philosophy since those years of struggle. As he formed his own dance style through the extensive experience of creation, his dance philosophy based itself on the essence of modern dance and became more substantial. He said, "I believe that genuine modern dance is not a derivative of the ballet. The modern dance is indispensable while creating the dance of today." (FUJII, 1967) He abolished the idea that modern dance is a derivative of the classical ballet and he attained this new philosophy to build his dance on.

FUJII thought that the modern dance was an incorporation of original inspirations that arises from the lifestyles, thoughts and emotions of each race in peculiar form of dance movement. The principle to express original inspiration with original movement, he said, was the only thing that is common among all the dances.

He thought that, whatever style of modern dance it may be, there should be the dancer's spirit, the beauty of the body, the beauty of the movement and the beauty of the mind. According to FUJII, the beauty of the mind makes the dance an excellent work of art, and at the same time, makes the dance full of individuality. Therefore, he advocated not only physical training, but also continued close observation of nature and the society as means to discovering new beauty and to attain sensitivity. He said that, to improve the quality of your creation, you have to "gaze" at yourself thoroughly. It is his belief that to "gaze" is to face life with seriousness, as he states, "No great art is born without the serious posture toward life."

As he drew closer and closer to the essence of the modern dance, the pursuit of his dance style took one direction and began to progress more and more steadily.

2. THE CREATING PROCESS AND THE DANCE STYLE

2.1. "CHARGE TODAY'S SOCIETY AND POSE PROBLEMS"

FUJII is a choreographer who deals with social problems. He examines the phenomena of the modern society, finds out the strain of the society and traces its origin, he then charges the society in his dance and expresses to the audience the problems. Besides social phenomena, he uses various subjects such as literature, poetry or music.

But the literature, the poetry or the music he selected as the theme of his works also have contained in themselves the essential figures of the human or the image of the times. FUJII infuses the people and the society of the times into the theme of the subject and stages the works in order to question modern day society. FUJII's works can be categorized into social, lyrical and light choreography. In whatever category each work may be, it has, at the root of it, a humane warmth passed on by KOMORI Toshi, the view of life and the strong sense of duty - "I must do it. That's what life is for"- derives from his boyhood experience of the air raids, war disasters, black markets or starvation, and above all, his deep human love.

2.2. COLLABORATION WITH THE STAFF

With the view to attaining one well-coordinated dance style by integrating the opinions of the experts in choreography, poetry, music and stage setting, FUJII created the Tokyo Creative Dance Company. This experience of collaboration was beneficial to his creation afterwards. Though the members have been changed occasionally, but they always communicated themselves and put forth good collaboration thanks to FUJII's principle of weighing the communication. The world of dance was unfolded with wonderful incorporation of body movements, sound, lighting, costumes and stage setting. And it added the versatility to FUJII's dance.

2.3. THE COLLABORATION WITH THE DANCERS

FUJII does not make a composition before meeting with the dancers. He improvises the movement and the dancer grasps his movement, then the dancer can exaggerate the movement or dance as they like. It is a total collaboration. He brings forth the individuality of the dancers and they share the joy and pain of creating. This also motivates the dancers to create on their own. We can see why FUJII is producing so many "Dancer-Creators".

2.4. FUJII'S CHOREOGRAPHY, FUJII'S PUPILS' DANCE

His earliest choreography was danced by the ex-KOMORI's pupils and guest dancers. As FUJII's own pupils became competent, he came to hold most of his performances with his pupils alone. This was out of FUJII's wish that he wanted to have all of his followers appear on the stage, and to give them aspiration. In addition, it was difficult for those who have not taken FUJII's lesson to take in his composition precisely and express in the way FUJII wanted. To stage his own choreography with the students of his own breeding, it was also one trait of FUJII's dance style.

2.5. REVIVALS

In the United States or in Europe, to perform the same work for days is commonplace and there are many revivals, too. In Japan, however, a performance is con-

tinued for 2 or 3 days at the longest and revivals are difficult to do. FUJII is an advocate of revivals. He says, "Once I have staged the work, I will know exactly what was wrong and I will be able to tackle such problems. With the dancers, we talk over the movement, space utilization or expression, and we revise the choreography for its revival. The process of the revision is an opportunity for the choreographer and the dancers to deepen their mutual confidence. And the mutual confidence leads to achieving the vitality on the stage and to enhancing the excellence of the dancers. In the case of the revival of unrevised versions, improvement depends upon the ingenuity of the dancers, which would heighten their inner quality. Revised or not, the precious life of the work adds its glitter as the revivals polish and refine it."

Though he is of the principle that modern dance changes with the times, he is enthusiastically holding revivals thinking that the dance lovers would love to see their old favorite dance again, for great works can fill the audience's hearts with fresh impressions even many years after the birth of the work.

3. THE WORKS AND THE DANCE STYLE

3.1. UNIQUE CHOREOGRAPHY

Most of FUJII's works are commented as "unique". This uniqueness of FUJII's choreography does not stem from his ostentation. It sprang from FUJII's honest character and his serious posture towards dance. In fact, this uniqueness is applied to his choreography for an elevated cause. Each movement, each group dance, each program and each stage are all different and unique. And you can expect something totally unexpected to happen in his performances.

3.2. THE BEAUTY OF THE SPACE

FUJII's pursuit of the beauty of dance space is not confined to the stage, in other words, "picture frame" as he calls it. If necessary, he would use the theater seats, lobbies and all other spaces in the theater. He also regards art museums or outside spaces suitable for dance and there he has unfolded the integrated beauty of the body, music, stage setting and lighting.

3.3. CHOREOGRAPHY FOR A SPECIFIC DANCER

Though the style of FUJII's dance have changed with the times, his theme to "charge today's society and to pose questions" was executed in the forms of dance works. It was his pupils that made this possible. That is, to keep up with his pupils' growth and to make the most of their individuality, FUJII had to explore new techniques, which FUJII naturally loved to do. What motivates him to create is the association of the theme with the specific dancer. Together with the dancer who he thinks can best incorporate his idea, FUJII turns out nearly perfect works in which the dancers and the theme are integrated. This style of work is recognized as one trait of FUJII's works.

SUMMARY

I focused on FUJII Koh who established one style of Japan's modern dance. He achieved his own dance style. With race-consciousness, he faced with himself and the Japanese society in order to attain a dance style peculiar to this Japanese choreographer. I introduced the dance style of FUJII by focusing on his principles of creating, the process of creation, and his choreography.

As aforesaid, in whatever category each work may be, it has, at the root of it, a humane warmth passed on by KOMORI Toshi, the view of life and the strong sense of duty "I must do it. That's what life is for" and above all, his deep human love.

These thoughts of FUJII were reflected not only by his works, but also his creative style; he sublimates his thought into a dance work through movements.

We can see that FUJII compiled the fruits of years of his creative activities into his last work "The dance which the gentle eyes play; A mosaic of human beings".

Tape-recorded Interviews

Shiba Interviewed FUJII Koh
 Urawa, 15 Jun, 1991
 Tokyo, 1 May, 1993
 Tokyo, 21 May, 1993
 Tokyo, 4 Jun, 1993
 Urawa, 15 Jul, 1993
 Urawa, 7 Aug, 1993
 Urawa, 11 Dec, 1993
 Urawa, 20 Mar, 1994

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