

Butoh / - shades of Darkness

By *Jean-Louis Nourit Haasson Sebire*

Muteki-sha

Natsu Nakajima was born in 1943 on Sakhalin, north of Hokkaido. She studied classical and modern dance in Tōkyō from 1955, before encountering the work of Ōno and Hijikata. Although she was impressed by the teachings of Ōno, Hijikata was to become her intellectual and choreographic guide. In 1969, she founded a small company, Muteki-sha, whose performances were often directed by Hijikata. In 1982, she premiered in "Niwa" (The Garden) with Lili Maezawa, her protégé. Between 1983 and 1986 she toured Europe, the United States and Israel with this production. "Niwa" is a single life-long project expressing the continuity of the dancer's existence.

Hijikata's influence is manifest in her highly structured performances. These are a mosaic of the varied and contradictory fragments of her personality and express the development from dream to nightmare, from purity to darkness.

"Niwa is a forgotten garden, very tiny, very Japanese: it is the garden of my memory of childhood. I wanted to see my life from the perspective of a woman seated in a garden, watching it bloom and wither."

The impact of this work derives entirely from the way she uses her body on stage. A giantess is born of a dwarf, as

the adult is born of a child—the infinitely big of the infinitely small. The child's dream becomes the adult's nightmare. The energy shifts between the seasons of space and those of the body—an energy heavily charged with a nostalgia for times that have been and times to come. Imagination and memory stimulate the vital impulses of the flesh, and her dance is born of existence itself, beyond a specific form or imagery.

"I want to find a balance between the animal and the spiritual, between what is revealed and what is hidden. Also I want to move people, of course, to provoke and touch them with my dancing, but above all, to communicate a sense of humanity."

"We human beings belong to the world of nature as intelligent beings, but at the same time we have to live like animals. We must live with this reality which is part of contemporary society. Hijikata always said that in dance the body must move with life—not only show the spiritual side, but also the energy of death, of sex, of life consumed in joy or sorrow. I want to free the body of its inhibitions."

"Butoh should reject any notion of symbolism, message, or formalism, and only express its energy and freedom. It is not art that I aspire to, but love."

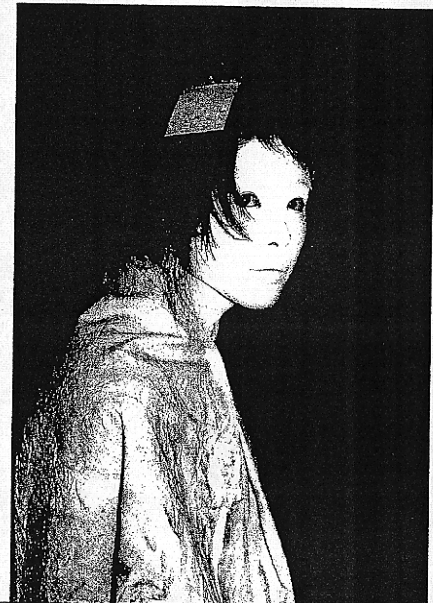




Natsu Nakajima and Lili Maazawa.



"Hijikata would tell us: 'Make the face of an old devil woman, with the right hand in the shape of a horn, and the left hand holding her long hair' Then comes the light of the sun, and the eyes become smaller; then comes the wind, and the eyelids quiver; then you must feel like a stone . . . and the body must react each time to those stimuli while keeping the same basic movement."





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1960's, - Butoh Blossomed
↳ 40 years of history