

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Yuma Hayashi

Different Speeds of (Moon)Light

by Megan Mizanty

A small, pale orb moves westward.

On a white tapestry, the celestial projection is “held” by an ever-growing shadow behind the sheet, expanding in size until it reveals itself to the audience.

Dream of A., an original story by Yuki Ishiguro, artistic director of Yu.S.Artistry, reimagines the *Nutcracker* through Japanese folklore. A., or Akinosuke, travels through a time-morphing dreamland, where moments do not pass in equal measure. Instead, time is encumbered by our attachments to technology. This subject is ubiquitous: none of us are immune to looking up from our phones, wondering where the minutes have slipped away when we were scrolling.

Performed by an impeccably controlled Em Godfrey, A. explores the path away from worldly desires and attachments. Em deftly ascends from swift, smooth floorwork back to standing, often followed by a clean pirouette and sharp, isolated upper body movements. Ishiguro powerfully employs light-saber-like props in both hands, whipping and whirling in the darkness, barrel-turning in mid-air. The lights are so rapid they blur.

Akinosuke dances with many others on his path to enlightenment. Eight ensemble members move between unison phrases of frequent floorwork to inversions to spirals, as well as accents of duet and trio weight sharing. The sweeping, steady phrases felt familiar from technique class, where dancers are asked to “eat up space,” keep a steady tempo, and challenge themselves to balance, extend, and hold.

With a differing sound score and storyline, at times it was a stretch to connect the plot of the original *Nutcracker* with *Dream of A.*. It

was playful and fun to view the vignettes akin to Chocolate, Arabian, Dew Drop, Sugar Plum, and more. These short dances were respectfully re-imagined as Umbrella, Fan, and Ramen. In the “Ramen Dance,” Olivia Wood Ishiguro moves like billowing silk: luscious, unhurried, and clear, especially in the intricate floorwork sequences of bent knees sneaking under and over full extensions. The floor welcomed her ease.

Toward the end of the performance, I glance to my right: a group of young dancers have settled into the audience. Before *Dream of A.*, they opened the show with a lively, diverse array of short dances. Their faces beamed from the audience as they now looked onstage. Part of Yu.S.Artistry’s mission is a “commitment to Bucks County, offering opportunities for pre-professionals.” As I witnessed the pride and enthusiasm these young dancers displayed, it was clear how they are embracing this mission and its positive influence on young artists in the community.

A lasting image, indelible, is the moon. It rotates languidly on an invisible axis, then shoots beyond the tapestry, past our sightline, into the cosmos. In unison, the ensembles’ heads tilt upwards.

Where has the time gone?

[Dream of A.](#), Yu.S. Artistry, Sunday, November 3, 2024, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Delaware Valley University

Homepage Image Description: Yuki Ishiguro holds two glowing sticks in either hand. Wearing a loose-flowing silk top, he stands in power, pointing one stick to the ground, the other held above his head.

Article Page Image Description: Five dancers on a wooden stage wear bright, glowing glasses. They all strike a different pose - some lift their arms and stare forward, while others reach to the side and lunge. Behind them is medium-sized white tapestry depicting a cherry blossom tree and behind that: a floor-to-ceiling length black curtain.

By Megan Mizanty
November 11, 2024