

WOMADelaide

- THE WORLD'S FESTIVAL -

TAO DANCE THEATER Program of works

4

Choreographer: Tao Ye | Music: Xiao He | Lighting Design: Ma Yue, Tao Ye | Costume Design: Tao Ye, Li Min
| Dancers: Jinying Yu, Li Huang, Da Ming, Huanshuo Guo
Duration: 26 minutes

Premiere: 2012, Gdansk Festival, Poland | Commissioning support from Gdansk Festival, Poland

4, the third piece of choreographer Tao Ye's "Numerical Series", builds upon *Weight x 3* and 2 in its characteristically meticulous reflection on the human body as a pure and symbolic creative element. Technically pioneering notwithstanding, 4 inherits the minimalistic outlook from its predecessors, and excavates still deeper layers of a new body-texture aesthetic. As the four dancers, standing in a diamond formation, whirl and slice simultaneously through a shared, external space and each of their own internal, private space, an orderly flow of transformations emerges from the dynamic picture. The four dancers never touch, but a powerful and seemingly magnetic sense of unity condenses itself around the mesmerising, intersubjectively coordinated movements. It is as if a demonstration of the conservation of energy and the ultimate process of becoming depleted is contained in the dancers' rhythmic and cyclical shifting of body weight in their uniform and circular movements.

6

Choreographer: Tao Ye | Music: Xiao He | Lighting Design: Ellen Ruge | Executive Lighting: Ma Yue |
Costume Design: Tao Ye, Li Min
Dancers: Xue Mao, Jing Hu, Qiaoqiao Zhang, Yunhui Jiang, Yulin Yan, Xichao Liu
Duration: 35 minutes

Premiere: 1 February 2014 "6: The Sami Chinese Project" as the opening performance of the 2014 European Cultural Capital at NorrlandsOperan in Umea, Sweden | Commissioned by: NorrlandsOperan
With support by: Umea2014, Swedish Arts Council, Swedish Arts Grants Committee Region Vasterbotten, and China Literature and Art Foundation

6 revolves around the spine to represent a return to the most primal active force "to move" as human beings. The manifold of space is slowly unwoven in the deliberate twisting and bending of the spine. A complete and holistic meaning is given to body movement as the dancers deliver each and every moving force from inside out – from the spine to the limbs and to most muscles. Upper bodies and shoulders circle, as if in trance, to monotonous electric strings or meditative monastic drones. Heads are bent to the ground or raised to the sky. Rigid steps and angular turns alternate with loose swaying movements. Elastic lightness becomes rigid minimalism and takes on threatening martial aspects. In this process, ordinary movements of the body are condensed to the most essential motions. Designed by the famed Swedish visual artist Ellen Ruge, the streaming and interlacing lighting for 6 creates a fantastically dynamic play of light and shadow.

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Rehearsal Director: Duan Ni | Company Manager: Wang Hao | Tour Manager: Jun Jun

Choreographer's thought

My artistic ambition is to forge a pathway. The essence of art, I believe, is to act against the fear that is brought about by the passing of life. Art compels one to re-consider oneself, to determine oneself, to teach oneself, and to enlighten oneself. Working towards these goals provides one with a primitive, active force, as well as the courage to consume oneself. As this process is reiterated cyclically, and experienced repeatedly, such repetition not only affords experience, but also dissolves the very distinction between beginning and end; negates the ultimate truth that serves as the faith of life; and reinstates one back against the fear that arises with the consumption of life. Through my practices, I have come to understand that "body" is the most meaningful interpretation of the concept "modern". As body, the bearer and the matrix of the origin of life, moves, it naturally creates and simultaneously answers and resolves problems such as reproduction and consumption, limitation and limitless.

To this end, I choose to concentrate my artistic efforts on the repetition- ritual of the natural sequence of body. Through repetition, the variations of movements are reduced and progresses towards a state that is pure and minimal in form. This is because the repetition movements produces inertia and weight, and diminishes the dancers' physical strength; and because the keeping of the same and coherent movements challenges the will of the dancers; it is also because the repetition of the same rhythm also challenges the viewers' concentration. Throughout this entire process, the weight that is conveyed and born by the movements accretes and aggravates.

This state, as it wrenches the body and drains out every drop of water, presents depletion itself. The same state, as it abandons all external distractions, also formulates a dedicated self. The weightiness and exhaustion, on the dancers' part and on the viewers' part, that result from being continuously in this state reflects the true limitations that is imposed on our bodies. On the other hand, the repeating, consistent and slender movements of the dancers transcends the timeless repetitiveness of the human body. Insofar as such perpetual, progressive, endless movements brings about a sense of weightiness, I challenge every viewer not to live the present moment without active self-awareness.

For each present moment is always in need of dedication and self-awareness for its completion. This announces the rational understanding for "process", and announces the search for truth of bodies. This search points towards our self-sufficient life-force, and the ultimate significance of growth. This search also embodies our taking-in-stride of our own limitations, and our desire for transcendence. In my opinion, art is not merely about inventing something new – as each fleeting moment passes away, "new" never ceases to become newer still, and "old" never really exists. Only "process" per se exists, is actual, and deserves artistic revelation. My work, "series of numbers" accumulates the logic of movement and presents the repetition-ritual of natural sequence through numbers – an aggravation of the way human penetrates nature's rational structure. I believe, through the kaleidoscope of our bodies, through hard work and faithful dedication, I can create the possibility for more rational understanding of our bodies, and realize the full potential of what our bodies can do, albeit all kinds of limitations. To this end, each of us at the Tao Dance Theatre will spend each and every moment to practice what we advocate! - Tao Ye

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Media Reviews:

1. "Abstract moves evoke a hallucinogenic universe." "an unqualified triumph." – The Advertiser (Australia)
2. "Both high concept and thrillingly simple, and proves Tao an outstanding new voice in international dance." – London Evening Standard
3. "mesmerising, molten, organic, tribal, fluid and freakish....Magical, surreal , bizarre, extraordinary, astonishing, confusing, illuminating....an absolute experience not to be missed." – The Clothesline (Australia)
4. "The two pieces on its program ... have theatrical force and authority." "The athletic control is remarkable," "powerful drive ... the physicality and momentum," "extraordinary and appealing."-The New York Times (USA)
5. "Tao Ye is emerging rapidly as a force to be reckoned with, as well as the most exciting name in modern dance."--Time Out Beijing
6. "This cutting-edge company has consistently been considered to be leading Chinese modern dance on the right path of development, in the right direction. They are building their own physicality and aesthetic, with the wisdom of a philosopher they elevate mere 'human' presence to the metaphysical level."--China Art Review
7. "It is not just a dance, it has become a work of contemporary art capable of multiple interpretations."--China News Weekly
8. "If you wonder how Adam and Eve must have danced, it was like this."-Beijing Youth Daily
9. "The possibility of the body is extended to its extreme, tight, rational and full of philosophical meaning. Minimalist, Oriental, philosophical, religious. Apparently exactly what it is, and apparently open to multitude interpretations."--First Financial Daily
10. "TAO Dance Theater's performances have the power of religious purification, it is natural, all-encompassing."--Beijing News
11. "The moment they begin to move, the entire space transforms. Their bodies surprise and amaze the audience, allowing their imaginations to fly and giving a whole new understanding of the potential of the body."--Vogue China
12. "The two pieces on its program ... have theatrical force and authority." "The athletic control is remarkable," "powerful drive ... the physicality and momentum," "extraordinary and appealing." "Mr. Tao has an ability to draw you inside his austere, meditative world; if you go willingly, you realize that the body is a sacred place."--The New York Times (USA)
13. "The dance moved like a force of nature," "while this was a challenging performance, it was proof of its Chinese choreographer's individual language."--Financial Times (USA)
14. "It is easy to see why the choreographer and co-founder Tao Ye has captured attention as a radical new presence on the country's burgeoning contemporary dance scene."--The Times (UK)
15. "Tao Ye's work is both high concept and thrillingly simple, and proves Tao an outstanding new voice in international dance."--London Evening Standard (UK)

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