GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HÖGSKOLAN FÖR SCEN OCH MUSIK

In search of Shirabyōshi

by

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Examensarbete inom konstnärligt masterprogram i teater,
inriktning fördjupat skådespeleri

Vårterminen 2014

Degree Project, 60 higher education credits

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre with specialization in acting

Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg

Spring Semester 2014

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Title: *In search of Shirabyōshi*

Title in English: *In search of Shirabyōshi*

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Cover photo: *Laila Östlund* from the performance 20xLamentation

ABSTRACT

Key words: Transnational theatre, Shirabyōshi, Kabuki, Japanese dance, Japanese theatre, Nō theatre, Nihon Buyo, Asian theatre, Intercultural theatre, Artistic research

This text is a winding wandering between Swedish and Japanese performance cultures. I have examined the performing arts by living, examining, learning, travelling, meeting, creating, and recounting examples and events from my experiences. I have compared my own experiences with historical sources and the knowledge of traditional and contemporary performers. With movement as my most important perspective, I have built up the text as a travelogue with an essayistic approach. Ancient texts, and the practical studies of traditional pieces from the Japanese dance and theatre repertoire have supported the composing of two very different performances related to the ancient cross-gender performers *Shirabyōshi.* I have tried to understand and compare their situation with my own from historical, artistic, political and religious point of views. It has been a form of hermeneutical process where I have uncovered new understanding while things were made visible.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Nishikawa Senrei sensei for her lifetime passion dedicated to the art of dance, and for patiently teaching me an ancient artform that was brand new to me. I am extending my gratitude to my supervisors: Cecilia Lagerström, who encouraged me to write a detective story rather than a scientific text, Klas Grinell, for his valuable comments on text structure, and finally Kent Sjöström, who helped me to get a Brechtian attitude to my work. I also thank Lena Dahlen, who calmly and poetically guided me through issues of writing. I thankfully acknowledge Jonah Salz, who introduced me to the traditional Japanese performing arts and Takae Hoshino, who always has offered great assistance in Kyoto. I am thanking Palle Dahlstedt for helping me find the right texts and libraries, and for always making the best music and espresso. I owe further thanks to Anna Elgemark, who gave me such great and clear help with the English language, and I also want to thank Pia Muchin for identifying physical performance metodologies. I am thankful to Kristin Johansson-Lassbo for always helping out in creating new kimono details and wonderful costumes. I am also remembering Heidi S Durning, who inspired me to explore what artistic fusion work could be, and Peter Golightly and Mori Takewaka for helping out with translation and bikes. I bow to Kumiko Nonaka, who always gave me such valuable information and wonderful music. I also thank Folke Johansson, who followed me all the way to Kyoto to immortalize Senrei sensei and the cherry blossoms. I owe further thanks to Emiko Ota and Midori Tsuda for being so helpful with the studying of the piece Kuro kami. I want to thank my collaborators with the performances played at 3:e Våningen (3rd Floor): the fine light and smoke designer Åsa Holtz, the great performers and colleagues Janni Groenwold Tschanz, Frej von Fräähsen and Elisabeth Belgrano, the patient and talented editor Rasmus Ohlander, the ingenious photographers Laila Östlund and Anders Bryngel, the always supportive artistic directors Gun Lund, Lars Persson, and Olof Persson, the always good-spirited Finn Pettersson, Cecilia Flodén Alm, and Dan Sundqvist, the most helpful Thomas Magnusson, the supportive Gunilla Röör, and Sara Svärdsén, the skilful Anette Pooja and Karin Nordling. I extend my gratitude to Herbert Jonsson who taught me the basics of academic writing, and to Makiko Sakurai, the contemporary underground Shirabyōshi, who patiently answered my questions. I bow deeply to Toste and Egil, Jan and Kerstin, to my reflection group: to Joanna Etherton-Friberg, Inger Dehlholm, Luisa Denward, Gerd Karlsson, Monique Wernham. This essay would not have seen light unless the continuous support from The Academy of music and drama, and from my wonderful classmates. Finally, I want to thank Västra Götalandregionen, the

Scholarship Foundation for Studies of Japanese Society, the Adlerbert fund and Gothenburg City for grants and awards that financed the performances, the field trip to Kyoto, and these studies.

Suriashi

I walk on a very narrow path, given that I have two legs that want to share the space below me. Walking in this manner is Japanese, but it has lost its nationality and time after years of practice. It arouses me. It lulls me. I know where my hands are. Composed on top of my thighs. I know where my fingers are. They are an equally important part of the composition. The fingers are held together, even the thumb. It wakes me up. It makes me sleepy. I know where my shoulders are. More active in the feminine construction. Less active in the male construction. Feminine - more of trapezius. More of latissimus dorsi. Male - more of deltoid. More of pectoralis. Different days, different tasks. Entity. Unity. Agreement. Integrality. Oneness. Equality. Or Separation. Divergency. Dissimilarity. Alteration. Diversion. Deviation. We can never be unified. I do not always know in advance how this walk will be. It does me good. Not necessarily enlightened. Not necessarily saved. Not necessarily redeemed. I walk. Or my body walks. It is anesthetizing. It is thrilling. I know where my elbows are. It might make my position clear. It establishes institution. I know where my knees are. The body dissolves. It makes rules. It disappears. It draws up, and executes. I know where my feet are. It makes a will. It constitutes. It adds up to. It fabricates a certain body and a certain mind. It constructs a form. There is something and there is nothing. Something to build strength. To build stillness. Something to build focus. It is nothing. Not a career. Titleless, yes, but there is a name: Suriashi.

Points of departure

> The paradox of her situation was that in Japan she was a foreigner trying to keep a traditional art alive, while in America she was trying to convey the 'beautiful spirit of Asia' in a land of industrialisation. In America, particularly when at gallery shows or for newspaper photographers, she adopted a 'Japanese' identity, wearing a kimono, but was of course an Anglo-American woman of social standing. In this sense she served as part of a tableau of the Oriental, on display in galleries along with her pictures. [1]

A travelogue

This text is a winding wandering between Swedish and Japanese performance cultures. Inspired by Cecilia Lagerström´s thesis, I have examined performance cultures by living, examining, learning, travelling, meeting, creating, and recounting examples and events from my experiences.[2] I have compared my own experiences with historical sources and the knowledge of peers and contemporary performers. With movement as my most important perspective, I have built up the text as a travelogue with an essayistic approach, where I have wandered through different situations and memories. They have also helped slow down the pages packed with facts, and to counteract exoticism. Ancient texts, and the practical studies of traditional pieces from the Japanese dance and theatre repertoire, have supported the composing of two very different performances related to the ancient Japanese cross-gender performers *Shirabyōshi.* The process with the capturing, reconstructing and deconstructing of the Shirabyōshi, as a mirror of performers today, has been the core of my last year´s investigations. I have tried to understand their situation, and to compare it with my own from historical, artistic, political and religious point of views. I have listened and stomped to Japanese court music, written new scripts, created new texts and movements, and relished woodblock prints. Other than that, I have studied contemporary depictions such as films, plays and historic Japanese TV-dramas. Last, but not least, I have studied the Japanese language. My work is an attempt of a non-hierarchical treatment of different dance practices, to bid defiance

1 Katrina Gulliver: Modern Women in China and Japan: Gender, Feminism and Global Modernity Between the Wars, I.B.Tauris\&Co Ltd, 2012, p 116: on the American artist Lilian May Miller, born in Tokyo (1895-1943) who in her lifetime was colonizing Japanese culture, and also was colonised *by* it. Her craft was Japanese woodblock prints, in Japan a craft performed by men.

2 Lagerström, C. Former för liv och teater, Gidlunds Förlag, 2003

to the ethno-centrism of dance in Sweden, and to welcome more views and artistic methods from other parts of the world: in this case Japan. It has been a form of hermeneutical process where I have uncovered new understanding while things were made visible.

The contemporary use of this heritage resulted in the performance *Dust falling, Rain falling* that I created in 2012. Included in my research plan was the making of a new performance, in which I would compare a hundred and twenty years old Japanese dance piece with an eighty-three years old Western dance piece. I thought that such a performance would consist of many investigative questions that would fit into a programme dedicated to artistic research. This performance, with the name *20xLamentation* had its premiere May 15th, 2013. The documentation of these different performances can be found on Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive.[3]

Reflective practitioners

The Master programme at the Academy of music and drama at the Gothenburg University is not a usual Master programme. For example, one cannot apply for this programme right after a Bachelor ´s programme. One has to have several years of experience as a performer in order to have something to reflect on. The staff at the Academy of music and drama want to build a field dedicated to the artistic practitioner's knowledge. The students were encouraged to reflect on work and practice, which in my case lead to looking into my own performer training to see what my artistic methods and creative tools consisted of. I have then compared my education in Western dance with my education in Japanese dance, and reflected on the master-apprentice model used both in Sweden and in Japan.

Artistic research is not the same as conventional academic research, but rather something different. We discussed the fact that many artistic doctoral students stop creating art. Instead, the artistic phD student receives a desk where s/he reads and writes. S/he lacks a studio or stage, and people to collaborate with. As a substitute, the student might for example study male French philosophy for four years, and try to describe her/his own practice through these more conventional academic methods. Philosophy indeed reminds us of art. But Art is more similar to Art. Art looks like art. Artistic research is more meandering rather than linear, more similar to a computer game than a scientific paper.[4] Instead, the teachers at Academy of music and drama have encouraged us to search for our own new, experimental methods.

3 https://gupea.ub.gu.se, search for Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt

4 Seminar with playwright and director Jörgen Dahlqvist, Teatr Weimar, at Academy of Music and Drama, Jan 2013

Practitioners and theorists

However, there was so much that I needed to find out that neither my teachers, supervisors, or fellow students could help me with. I decided to try to combine conventional academic research with my own practice and investigations, in order to be able to reflect on Japanese theatre and dance. The university library was a real treasure, and I finally could find texts that helped me draw a picture on ancient Japanese female performers, and also to demythologize my training in Japan. These texts came from neighbouring fields, such as Japan studies, and Asian theatre studies. I found symposiums and conferences where I met researchers dedicated to Asian theatre forms, but I also discovered that the voice of the practitioner was lacking.

I hope for further collaboration and exchange between practitioners and theorists, and I think that the emerging artistic Master programmes might provide a meeting point where theorists and practitioners could develope a mutual respect and understanding. When my academic Asian theatre peers told me that they practised the traditional dances to "escape the library", I contrarily escaped the body and the floor to find something else in the library. What is at risk in thinking about and describing the performing arts as something to escape to?

The constant reformulating of artistic research in Sweden reflected the confusion of being inside an unconventional, emerging field, and at the same time being at an Academy belonging to the university. I rode on known tracks, where there were clear stations to board and disembark. Now and then I had to change tracks, and fell between them. These so called tacit knowledge-gaps on the side of the dominating and well-known tracks had no start, and no end. It was difficult to decide when to get on or off.

In addition to this: during these Master studies, my Japanese master Nishikawa Senrei sensei in Kyoto passed away. So, while I myself was striving to become a Master, I lost the only master I had left. This affected my work on this essay and the creation of the new performance. I felt a responsibility to describe what a wonderful artist my master was, and to present her view on traditional Japanese dance. I have received permission to publish parts of Senrei sensei's performance as an appendix to this text, and I am happy to be able to share it. I am also very grateful that I managed to interview her for my documentary film, which was released after she passed away.[5]

5 To hear my interview with Senrei sensei, and to see her class, please see my and Folke Johansson's documentary *the Dance of the Sun.,* Njutafilms 2013

New networks

I have found new areas, new performative possibilities, and new ways of presenting creative trials. In these arenas people spoke English. This is why this essay was written in English, as an attempt to find a new professional language, and to prepare myself for these further discussions. It is the first time I write in English. My supervisor Klas Grinell reminded me that because English has become the common academic language, most of us who read it also have English as their second language. I have tried to keep it as simple as possible. My proof readers have confessed that they have found it difficult to read a text with a lot of Japanese names and concepts. I have therefore tried to use English words if possible.

The new networks that I found were the Association for Asian Performance (AAP), another was the Asian Art and Performance Consortium (AAPC) at University of the Arts in Helsinki (FIN), where I have made two artistic presentations, and also had my first academic shock. Yet another was Women in Asian Theatre, organized by Arya Madhavan at University of Lincoln (GB), where I made a presentation on crutches, and had my second academic shock. Last but not least was Nordic Summer University (NSU) in Norway, Lithuania, and soon Iceland, where I have made two presentations, one of which was collaborative, and where I was treated from my academic shocks.

No final product

Encouraged by my peers at NSU, I once again looked into the field of artistic research. The artist Alexandra Kathleen Litaker presented her collaborative performance "Your blue Mountain", in which she shared her texts with us in an interesting way. She provided us with tools to criticize the physical construction of the academic: a person standing alone up front, rattling concepts in gladiatorial conferences with a perfect disposition and clever formulations. This had been the consumer-culture self-image we have cultivated, a self-image that would be a sort of a final product: the artist as an academic.

But there was no final product. To try the alternative that Litaker presented, I decided to look my fellow students in the eyes and thank them for being with me these two years. I had them lie down on the floor from where they read portions of *this very text* aloud. The academic parts. The personal parts. The historic parts. Listening to my text through other voices, and also giving them the physical experience of presenting it to the group, was more of a sharing than distribution. I told my peers that I had realized I had forced myself into a hierarchy that I could not stand up for: my defintion of art and artistic research had always been *something else,* e.g. to collaborate in projects, to be aware of power play and hierarchies, to problematize established positions in society -

something that resists authority. Critique and sustainability are the two words I want to bear in mind on my research path.

A varied palette of American/European performance techniques

I am a performer, film-maker and writer. I have been trained as a dancer, mostly in Sweden since 1983, from a varied palette of American/European performance techniques. I encountered the Japanese performance techniques in 2000. I have also studied acting and acting methods which made it easier to understand the field of acting, in which my master studies were held.

The methods taught at vocational artistic schools could often be vague and unformulated. I had not planned to include my experiences as a young dance student in Gotenburg, but since the Master programme asked us to reflect on our performer training, I decided to involve some of my thoughts. The dance education in my hometown suffers a lot. Noone has yet written anything on the dance education in Gothenburg. Why is there no dance in the university? This affects and harms the dance history of Gothenburg, and it is quite remarkable in an international context. However, the Master programme at the Academy of music and drama opened up for more artistic expressions. Six of my twelve fellow students were, or had been dancers or choreographers: Ragnheiður Bjarnasson, Frej von Fräähsen, Marika Hedemyr , Héctor García-Jorquera, Pontus Lidberg and Anette Pooja.

The Ballet Academy in Gothenburg

At the Ballet Academy in Gothenburg, where I was a student 1988-1991, different ballet techniques were taught. In order to understand one´s artistic training, the Academy of music and drama provided us with the necessary questions to negotiate our performer training. One way was to reflect the root system, the kind of time-bound exhalation that one was a part of. European thought in splinters, European thought in exile, scattered around the world. European thought banished, displaced, and in shame, closed-up. Radical thinkers fled the war, but so did the Nazi proclaimers. Where did they go, and when did they return? What was left? My performer training at the Ballet Academy might have consisted of these silenced thoughts from a wounded Europe.[6] A fragrance, an after war-fear of formulating, a fear of clarifying remained. A fear of politics, fear of opinions and ideas, and a fear of all that art could be or could become, lingered.

6 My classmate Erika Blix has written about the methods taught at The Academy of music and drama that are partly of the same origin.

One of my main teachers, the headmaster, survived the concentration camp.[7] She taught as if death would never happen, without empathy, without compassion. She whipped up a room of perfect bodies, lit her cigarette and screamed. This was one way of solving one's existense. Other teachers told us we were to be broken down and re-built, to become blank papers, empty vessels, and then filled with new, correct knowledge. These thoughts were held firmly: they were principal. We were marked by a certain methodology, visible in our bodies and movements. Ethical questions would be a key here - if my ballet maestros had had a chance to ask themselves these questions, they might have formulated something about what they thought art could be and what kind of artists they wished to train and help develop.[8]

I enjoyed the challenge, the live piano music and the experience of grace and elegance. But I was afraid of my teachers. My strong feet gave me the mandate to practice big jumps with the male students, before an injury in the achilles tendon stopped this. The foot finally needed surgery. Students were praised for arched ballet feet, and technical skills, but mocked for excess weight and inability to learn steps quickly. Years later in New York City we were considered a bit too technical and encouraged to loosen up, and to calm down. We were asked who and what had frightened us.

Physical, practical, but never political

On the schedule, there were also modern dance techniques, techniques from the 1940s and 1950s. These techniques derived from AfroAmerican choreographers: Lester Horton (1906-1953), Katherine Dunham (1909-2006), and Alvin Ailey (1931-1989). Their art was political, but we were only taught the technique. The Ballet Academy set pride in teaching "original jazz dance", to which I can agree was done, as I think jazz dance today has been kidnapped by the entertainment industry. The repertoire of Alvin Ailey´s *Revelations* (1960) was a joy to learn. There was also a modern dance class at the barre, where the torso commented gravity, alignment and the midline of the body, while performing ballet exercises with the feet. This, I learned much later, had to do with the introduction of Newton´s laws of gravity into performer´s training. I used this contemporary barre a lot as a young dancer and dance teacher, especially when I myself taught at the Ballet Academy

7 I have chosen not to mention her name.

8 Basic ethical questions, what philosophers started asking in ancient Greece: "Who am I? What kind of person would I like to be? How can I be just? How can I make right choices? What is the most important value in my life? In what kind of city would I like to live? What would be the best moral laws for our city? What am I doing in this world, in this century? What is my purpose in life? What makes me happy? What is good for me? (and not for the community/family I live in?) What is the best life to live? What is the best relationship I can have with the natural environment which surrounds us?" presented by Corinna Casi at Nordic Summer University, Feb 2014

(1988-1991) and at the Daily Training for professional dancers in Gothenburg (1993-1996). It seems it had its origins in New York City in the 1980s, and before that, from ideas around the 1940s.

The methods and systems at the Ballet Academy, a vocational school, were strictly physical and practical. Little time, if any at all, was spent to analyse, theorise or criticise. For example, the Graham-technique, created by the choreographer Martha Graham (1894-1991), was taught as a pure movement class, and it was never mentioned how political her art was, nor how she had included Cubism, and Freud´s psychoanalysis into the artistic body. The artistic ideas, and the art itself even, seemed to have been expelled from the school. We were told to count each step as money. For each step that we lost, and each time we failed to excel, we should understand how much money we lost: thus we were trained as capitalist performers. Art was defined as something for the failed."If you cannot learn this, you can always do other things, like playing with sand. Or water!" a teacher told us, while we struggled with her brisk and agile movement patterns. This was her comment on the Gothenburg-based experimental group Rubicon, consisting of three choreographers.[9] According to the headmaster, contemporary choreography was not dance. If she had met with Japanese dance, it would not be considered dance either. Quoting Pia Muchin, I think that the art, and the artists at the Ballet Academy had gone into some kind of exile.[10]

The Ballet Academy taught systems to control and train the body rather than to provide the students with creative tools. It helped students to structure the body, and it gave them self-discipline, musicality, and form. However, the physical training also caused severe sports injuries, and many young students underwent their first surgery already while at school. When my left achilles tendon was too injuried, I exchanged the daily pointe classes (which I had loved) for acting classes.

The slow change of the master/apprentice model at the Gothenburg Ballet Academy

Guest teacher Paul Langland, an Arts professor at New York University's Experimental Theatre Wing, came to the Ballet Academy in 1991 to teach *contact improvisation*[11] and composition intensively. He has been a practitioner of contact improvisation since the 1970s, and an original member of the Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble. Paul Langland provided me with new and different creative and compositional tools. His methods were about movement in space, somatic research and how to relate to gravity with the help of others, rather than muscular strength and bodily constructions. The students who were injured, like myself, and the students not considered to

9 Eva Ingemarsson, Gun Lund and Gunilla Witt

10 Pia Muchin is an associate professor of physical performance at the Academy of Music and Drama, Gothenburg University

11 dance technique in which points of physical contact provide the starting point for exploration through movement improvisation, developed by the dancer and choreographer Steve Paxton in the 1970s

become ballet soloists, made an excellent performance with him, based on structured improvisation. There was a script, a composition to follow. The somatic research was also present on stage. We examined eachother´s bone structures, through touch and sound, and it was made in a very humouristic way. Performing with Paul Langland was not a punishment, not something for the failed. Art returned temporarily from its exile. It was challenging in a different sense, performing in silence, being responsible for space and time together with the others. I somehow could reach out for something that was lacking in my education. Paul Langland was dancing and talking with his students as if we were all equal. Thus he challenged the very idea of master/apprentice hierarchy at the school. Worth to think about was also that most of the masters, whose methods ruled the Ballet Academy, were dead. It was impossible for my masters to enquire their masters, which was not the case for Paul Langland. But, who was considered a master? Is h/she a tremendously specific person, a person who cannot be criticised? Does the apprentice really have to surrender and submit herself to the master, or is it enough with a desire to listen and to learn?

During our course with Muchin in Nov 2012, I decided to write to Paul Langland, who immediately wrote back to me. He explained that my writing vividly reminded him of the big shift in performer training that happened with postmodernism in America. The training became more about the discovery and joy of the student. The teachers, many of whom did not fit into the traditional dance world: Anna Halprin, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, etc., created a new and warm atmosphere in their classes and performances. New somatic trainings such as contact improvisation and release techniques changed the relationship to the body. All these changes were happening just when Paul Langland began his dance studies, and he was able to benefit from the work of several pioneers. I saw his students perform in New York in 2001, and it was fun, physical, surrealistic, and intriguing. How come the Ballet Academy in Gothenburg had been so closed to the rest of the world? Was Sweden a very remote place?

Ephemeral cultural heritage

I think it had to do with the fact that the art of professional dance indeed was very young in Sweden. In 1920, Stora Teatern (the Grand Theatre) employed their first permanent dancers. They were initially only dancing in operas and operettas. Not until the end of the 1960s and 1970s could the audience in Gothenburg meet independent ballet works: Conny Borg's and Elsa Marianne von Rosen full-length ballets and Ulf Gadd's dance theatre. These ballets helped create the first dance audience in Gothenburg. This meant that our grandparents in this part of Sweden could not buy tickets to an independent dance event, and therefore could not think of, or relate to dance, unless they traveled to Copenhagen or London or Paris. Or St. Petersburg, New York or Tokyo. Citizens of

Gothenburg had not for a very long time been able to imagine that dance could be a profession. I will not write a history of dance in Gothenburg, but I wanted to compare the situation of professional dance in Gothenburg with professional dance in Kyoto. Professional dance in Kyoto had existed at least since the 7th century.

I realised after graduating from the Ballet Academy that most techniques that I had been taught were not used anymore in professional contemporary performances. I did love the Graham-technique, but it was nowhere to be found. The Graham-technique was out of date since long, and was even critisized for being dangerous and silly. It is important to point out that Martha Graham created her system to be able to pursue her art, and to be able to educate the dancers she needed in her artistic work. Thus, her methods were not general: they were strictly individual. She herself had studied with Ruth St Denis, Ted Shawn, and Doris Humphrey. She developed a new bodily structure inspired by Freud, ballet, yoga, Cubism, and Japanese theatre and dance. Martha Graham´s dances were created in a certain context, they were political, and supposed to acknowledge the struggle of working class women.[12] It would have been very valuable, for example, to learn about the meaning of the clenched fists, the contractions, and the floor work in the Martha Graham technique. Nonetheless, her peers complained that her dancers were too beautiful: they looked more middle class than working class, and they wore too beautiful costumes. Martha Graham was a member of the American Communist party, which was politically correct among artists at that time. But society changed, and expressionism and modernism were replaced by minimalism and abstract art. However, Martha Graham´s ephemeral cultural heritage, never really left my body. That is why she turned up again in *20xLamentation,* a performance that I created in the first year of this master's programme.

Revolutionary parallel feet

Dancers outside the Ballet Academy worked with parallel feet. To me that was revolutionary, as I had been told since I was fourteen years old that the turnout of the feet was the most essential in the art of dance. This was why women needed to start their professional training before they were ten years old. This was why young girls were thrown out of ballet schools. They needed to start while their pelvis still is shapable. For many years I danced with a feeling of failure and cheating, because my pelvis was not as turned out as it should be.

The professional dance community in Gothenburg was curious and experimental. New York City had the Kitchen and Judson Church. Gothenburg had Atalante and Rubicon. I was proud to have performed in Rubicon's legendary projects *Dancers of the city,* dressed in sharply yellow

12 Franko, M. Dancing Modernism / Performing Politics *Indiana University Press,* 1995

rainwear. I later borrowed this yellow rainwear when I made my feminist-kitchen-sink-magic-realism film *the Dancer-a Fairy-Tale,* in which the dancers were employed as *Dancers of the State.*

There were not many possibilities for female independent artists in Gothenburg to become a part of history. Me and my peers were replaceable, and in constant danger of being erased. No one has yet written about Rubicon and Atalante, still their contribution was very important for the development of the contemporary art scene in Gothenburg. Luckily the researcher and dancer Astrid von Rosen has started a research project called *Dance As Critical Heritage,* that will change that:

> During the 1980s the art scene in Gothenburg exploded into a multifaceted, non-institutional, cross-boundaried experiment. This development was not initiated by the established art institutions of the day, but driven by so called "free" operators. When they emerged dressed sharply in yellow rainwear, the dance group Rubicon became one of the leading proponents of the social and cultural experiment. Through their performances, the city transformed into a variable space of images, artistic events, and a stage for the unexpected. Audiences were challenged to connect with their city, art and themselves in a totally new, and sometimes confronting way.
> In a scholarly context, the history of Rubicon – consisting of three female choreographers – is invisible, in spite their strong influence on the art scene. The work of Rubicon is difficult to grasp and thus risks being written out of history. So, how can we make the "ephemeral" cultural heritage of the city accessible and active today? How can practitioners, artists and researchers collaborate in an exploration of the relationship between city space, art and archive?[13]

In Gothenburg at the Daily Training for dancers, I continued to learn contact improvisation, composition and improvisation with guest teachers from Paris, Norway, New York City, Denmark, London, and Amsterdam. At that time, I was a young woman with feet pointed, hips turned out, and my hair tied in a top knot bun, in the middle of a deskilling and unschooling process, and in search for something else than dead masters. This might sound like a disaster, but I think performer training is also about learning certain methods and then reject them. The rejection itself transformed into new thoughts, new work and new methods. Strict rules were followed by resistance and change. I was also taking part of Gothenburg´s underground scene, consisting of punk, experimental and electro-acoustic music. My brother played in the coolest bands, and I was the only ballerina

13 Dance as Critical Heritage. Archives, Access, Action Symposium "lunch to lunch", 28–29 October 2013. Venues: Ågrenska villan, and outdoor spaces of Gothenburg.

screaming among the Syndicalist demonstrators, and pogoing, moshing and slam dancing with male punk fans[14].

When she dances, he says, she is like a female Immortal

I have been looking for proof, something that would declare the performing arts important, something that really makes a difference for people. When I got interested in the since long extinguished Shirabyōshi performers, it gave me material to reflect on the issues around the concepts of contemporary, popular, modern, favoured, male, female, iconic, underground, and prominent.

In Japan, there is a long tradition of highly educated female performers. But, as a practitioner of contemporary dance and theatre, I could see a gap in the female performance history of Japan, the same gap that I saw in Sweden. The well-studied Nō theatre and Kabuki theatre were dominated and performed by men, while less was written on Shirabyōshi and Japanese dance – dance forms dominated and performed by women. Shirabyōshi was the name of the ancient female performers: dancers, singers and composers, who were popular in the late Heian (781-1192), Kamakura (1185-1333) and the early Muromachi (1333-1573) eras in Japan. The term Shirabyōshi 白 拍子 described both the art itself and the artists who performed it[15]. It was the name of a new and powerful art form emerging among professionally trained women eight hundred years ago. These women were educated, independent streetperformers who appeared dressed in a long white shirt called *suikan*, long red trousers called *nagabakama*, a dagger and a tall black or golden *eboshi* hat, garments usually worn by men.

The Shirabyōshi were the modern dancers and singers of their time, who proudly composed their own music and dances. Some of them interacted with the upperclass, some performed in shrines and temples, some on the streets. It was at first difficult to get a verifiable and clear image of who they were, but finally after finding academic articles and texts, I was able to draw a picture of the Shirabyōshi .

The Shirabyōshi were no fad, no short-lived fashion. They were popular for two centuries. The utilitarian aspect of the arts had changed within its religious beliefs, and cultural politics. In Asia, performers certainly have had a spiritual significance, which helped people in all social classes.

14 Pogoing is a dance to punk music when the dancer jumps up and down in place. Moshing is a dance where its participators push eachother, form a wall, and kick their legs together. In Gothenburg this was very friendly, and never dangerous.

15 Oyler, E. Gio: Women and Performance in the "Heike monogatari"*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies,* **2004***, Vol. 64, No. 2*, pp. 341-36

However, their performances had some difficult religious aspects: the pressure of having to perform until it rained. There seemed to have been a real need for dance and music for the audience to reach certain states of minds, certain spaces of the soul, which was something else than pure entertainment. An example is the court lady Nijo's description of a night filled with music:

> The night was spent in song and dance, for the Buddha, who joins us in this corrupt world out of his deep compassion, uses songs and stories to guide us to paradise."[16]

Another example is Fujiwara no Akihira´s description of a performance:

> When she dances, he says, she is like a female Immortal.... Her performances attract men and women of all classes, who come from near and far, crowding around her as if at a marketplace. Her admirers have donated so much rice, Akihira notes, that there is nowhere to store it. [17]

I have longed for these stories about the power of art. These stories were paired with the disappointing ambivalence to find out that these artists, the Shirabyōshi and the Miko, were as replaceable as performers are today. Contemporary artists were still worshipped, governed by mythologies, and the dream of paradise. The audience would like artists to represent just that. As a performer, I wanted to be able to walk in and out of these myths. I am often expected to arise completely made-up, ready-dressed, like a female Immortal, with a built-in stereo system in the sleeves. Performers simply had a need to "Deliver us from love", as one of the titles of Suzanne Brögger´s books is named. If the audience and the curators mythologise me, it is more difficult to seek payment or a room to warm up in.

The motivating ideas behind my curiosity were the many similarities between my situation as independent performer and the Shirabyōshi, both dependent on the whims of the power; be it Emperors or funding institutions. Where did the Shirabyōshi come from? What do they remind us of? How did they gain popularity? How and why did they disappear? Why did they dress up as male aristocrats? How can they inspire contemporary performers today?

16 Meeks, L.The Disappearing Medium: Reassessing the Place of Miko in the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan *History of Religions,* 2011, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 208-260

17 Ibid

My own compositional methods

When creating my own pieces, and /or guiding others, few of the methods I learned at the Ballet Academy have been used, because they were, as I earlier have explained, out-of-date since the 1960s. My artistic training instead came from studying abroad, from literature, music, theory, philosophy, films and the Daily Training for dancers in Gothenburg.

When I guide dancers, actors, or students in creative processes, I have found two different methods most useful - *pointillism* and *suriashi*. I will describe them here.

Pointillism

In 1997, I studied at American Dance Festival, a summer workshop at Duke University in North Carolina. I took daily classes of Pilates, Yoga, dance compostion and dance film. One of my teachers was the dancer and choreographer Molissa Fenley (b 1954). She was also an associate professor at the legendary Mill´s College, where Laurie Anderson, Steve Reich, Trisha Brown, among others, once studied. Fenley taught me how to organize space in different points and lines when composing movement, in order to escape the modernist thought on the lonely genius, and divine inspiration. In November 2012, I wrote to Molissa Fenley to ask her about this method. She answered:

> The idea of many points in space is actually borrowed from the painting methods of Jackson Pollock. His mature work dealt with the idea of the entire canvas being of equal value, there is not one area that is more important than another. (In painting often the center, or the idea of perspective is used). Cunningham utilized this idea very early on with "Summerspace" where the dancers' costumes merged with the Rauschenberg pointillist backdrop. The entire stage area was covered then, both horizontally and vertically, the dancers costumes (also made by Rauschenberg and of the same style as the backdrop) extended the pointillist space forward into the stage floor and upwards into the volume of the proscenium. This idea of overall space is one of the methods that makes a work feel very contemporary.[18] [19]

18 Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), American artist who created new techniques for painting, inspired by native American art. This pointillism differs a lot from the earlier French pointillism. Merce Cunningham (1919-2009), American choreographer and dancer, and a former student and dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company. The piece *Summerspace* was created in 1958. Cunningham lived and worked with the composer John Cage (1912-1992). Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), an American artist who created the costumes and design for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

19 This citation by Molissa Fenley is from a personal communication, 18th Nov 2012

Would this abstract expressionist, improvisational, choreographic pointillism be considered political? I would say so. Composers like Stockhausen and Boulez applied individual sounds-dots over melodic motifs or chords, which resulted in the destruction of the melodic line, which then became a musical pointillism. It challenged, not only the rules of visual arts, it also challenged sound art, the teachings of the realist painting, the ability and knowledge of the painter, and how people were positioned on stage. The dominance of lines and structures disappeared when the stage was shared equally by more people. It took away some of the predictabilities of a space, with the soloist in the middle, and the others grouped around him/her to support his/her act. It also took away the demand for "meaning" and the conventional logic of a script. I have used it many times in workshops and compositional works with text and movement as it really helped people to structure space, and to get down on the floor. An empty space, with all its possibilities, could be frightening. Since I will later write about performers who were contemporary eight hundred years ago, I also asked myself for how long pointillism on stage would feel contemporary? Are we tired of abstract lines, andalso longing for exclamation marks? Could they be combined? I think so.

Suriashi

Suriashi, my most used creative method since 2000*,* was the basic walk in Japanese traditional theatre and dance, and in the martial arts such as iaido and kendo. This essay was opened with a phenomenological view on suriashi, and there will be more writings on this walking method. I will explain how it came my way. Suriashi means sliding foot in Japanese. In traditional theatre and dance, suriashi is performed parallel on bent legs, which in French and English dance language would be called a parallel first position. This could be practised in the beginning of the class, after the greeting ritual, or within the choreography itself. This basic suriashi is also used when actors and dancers entered the Nō theatre stage on the *hashigakari.* The hashigakari was the bridge leading to the stage, where most entrances and exits were pursued in a traditional play. I will describe the hashigakari later in the essay.

Suriashi was already old fashioned training, much older than any of the methods that I had met with at the Ballet Academy. It was so old that it probably never would disappear. How come I could use such an old-fashioned training in contemporary contexts? I think it had do with how one presented it. If I screamed at the actors that they needed to practice suriashi every day in order to portray god/desses as authentic as possible, it might be difficult to take that seriously. But if I clearly

described the physical structure with the added information of its history, it would be more interesting to follow, and easier to hold on to.

I have taught suriashi to children and adults in Sweden, Australia and Egypt. In museums, gardens, classrooms, and in dusty schoolyards. I have also made a performance with young students in their final year at a vocational dance school.[20] The performance started with ten minutes of suriashi, performed in silence and then moving on to *Gagaku* (Japanese court music). The young dancers were really challenged by this walk, especially when performed in silence. They performed in their teens, a sensitive age, but suriashi gave them integrity and presence on stage. I have also tried suriashi with an actor who auditioned to the actor´s programme at the Academy of Music and Drama. While he said his poem, I guided him with suriashi, and he had a completely new expression. His poem came out clear and sincere. With suriashi he was able to make a connection between the text and his body.

Jonah Salz, my friend and researcher in Kyoto, has explained the medieval technology of suriashi as practised in traditional Japanese No theatre. It showed the confusion of traditional and contemporary methodology in a humouristic way:

> He [Jonah] noted that Noh masters often give multiple, or even conflicting, reasons for the existence of aspects of Noh performance. For instance, the gliding *suriyashi* (sic!) walk might variously be explained by: the need to ensure the kimono remains closed; to maintain a horizontal line to ensure the power of the mask is retained; to help the actor feel the boards to ensure he knows where he is on the stage; to create energy in performance through tension; the simple fact that ghosts have no feet![21]

20 Performance at Atalante in spring 2009 with the vocational dance programme Yrkesdans at Angeredsgymnasiet, Gothenburg, Sweden

21 Thorpe, A. Jonah Salz: Tech-Noh-Logies: Historic and contemporary perspectives on Japanese classical masked dance-theatre expressions, Asian Performing Arts Forum, Centre for Creative Collaboration, 2011

Close encounter with Senrei sensei

In July 2000, I attended an intense three-week workshop, Traditional Theatre Training, at Kyoto Art Center. I was in Kyoto for other reasons: I performed my solo and showed my film at independent studios.[22] I was searching for Butō, but I did not find any workshops in Kyoto.[23] Instead, I found traditional training. I met my *sensei*, Senrei Nishikawa, in her studio in Kyoto. Sensei is an honourable Japanese word for teacher/master. Students called her Senrei sensei. Nishikawa was the name of the Nihon Buyo school, in which Senrei sensei was educated. I was taken to Senrei sensei by Jonah Salz, researcher and director of NoHo and Traditional Theatre Training, together with two other students: a performer from Brazil, and an American doctoral student of Japanese language.[24] When the sliding doors of the studio, the *keikoba,* opened for us, there were eight elegant women dressed in kimono kneeling and bowing to us. They welcomed us into the dancestudio where a strip of red felt cloth showed us where to be seated. There she was, my sensei to be, bowing and explaining to us the traditions of Nihon Buyo, Japanese dance.

We kneeled on the red cloth, and sipped jade green *matcha* together.[25] We were a bit nervous, and all of us turned the tea bowl in our hands the way it is done in a Tea Ceremony. Later in this essay I describe what a Tea Ceremony consists of. The kneeling was called *seiza,* a polite sitting style used in performer training, martial arts, the Tea Ceremony and Zen meditation. When the red cloth was there, the room was ritually changed and we were not allowed to walk on the floor. Maybe the fact that we were wearing (dirty) socks, and not the clean *tabi,* the white split toe socks that you wear during practice, prohibited us from treading the floor. On a different day without the red cloth, that same room was *keikoba*, the studio where the teaching and learning takes place. Just before we left, Senrei sensei gave me a gift, an orange fan case, and explained she only gives gifts to women. She told Jonah Salz that no translation would be needed, she would teach me body-to-body.

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22 Kyoto Connection, lead by Kyoto Journal´s editing manager Ken Rodgers, and Kyo Ryu Kan, led by performer and choreographer Peter Golightly

23 Butō is the contemporary Japanese dance that originated after the second world war. Hijikata Tatsumi (1928-1986) is considered the originator.

24 NoHo is a theatre company, founded in 1979 by Jonah Salz to fuse the style and spirit of Japanese Nō-Kyōgen and Western tales, such as Beckett and Shakespeare.

25 matcha is the green powdered Tea Ceremony tea that is prepared in a special way, and that could be tasted outside the context of a Tea Ceremony as well

a young Senrei sensei

Takasago

This was a start of a long relationship with Nihon Buyo. In three intense weeks I studied a dance of Nō origin; *Takasago.*[26] I was fighting and enjoying myself at the same time. There was a strictness to the practise I knew only too well from my professional dance studies. Comparing my training background in Sweden at the Ballet Academy with the Nishikawa School in Kyoto, there were many things in common, e.g. the master-apprentice tradition. When taking class with a master, one takes it for granted that the apprentice will grasp what the technique is all about and how to make it useful. With as little words and very little problematisation the method was taught, copied and repeated. The apprentice learned without asking questions, without questoning, but by listening and mimicing. S/he made him/herself available for new knowledge by listening. The method was invisibly connected with the context. The apprentice should grasp the context physically, even though the context might never be presented precisely. The transformation was rather mysterious and included no questioning or reflective discussion. I had become so used to these methods. I always entered rehearsal or class with a quiet and empty body. This, I think, have had the effect that I asked less questions than a traditionally text-based trained actor during the rehearsal process. I trusted that the corporeality itself would provide me with answers. I had to ask myself why I was again drawn to this strictness? What could Nihon Buyo teach me? What made it so special?

First, the most important was to give up the heavily displayed turn out-position, and instead declare and acknowledge the parallel position. Second, to give up any expectations of liberated movements. The liberation lay in the strict frame, in which the mind set free, not necessarily the

26 Takasago is performed in many shrines at New Year's, by professional Nō actors. This version was Jiuta-mai, a cultural discipline within Nihon Buyo, for women from high ranked families. It is meant to be performed in small places for a small high ranked audience.

body. The pelvis was as controlled as in classical ballet, but the mind had space, like in meditation. Third, there was also the active choice to move slowly as a counter balance to the surrounding hurried society. The precision, the accuracy, the particularity of gestures sharpened the senses. I learned through visual imitation, just as I had learned movements before. The difference was that there were only the two of us, me and Senrei sensei. I watched her, and she watched me. The space between us could change from day to day. Some lessons she was really close, and constantly correcting and manipulating my body into impossible postures. In other lessons she would just sit and have me repeat the same part twenty times, without saying a word. There was a building of trust and communication. The teaching and learning processes were highly valued. Comparing with other performance studies, one could say this was not a capitalist approach to learning. The estimated time it took to learn a full piece (with the length of 7-20 min) was usually six months. It was the opposite of learning as much as possible in as short time as possible.

> The pedagogical practises of many Japanese traditional arts, coming from a society where the disciplined irrationality of Zen Buddhism formed the dominant religion, incorporate a reverance for what is inexpressible through words. Learning through practice is vital. Transmission processes place value on the experiential and the heightening of awareness. Through repetition and practise it is belived that one may experience a different level of understanding. In this manner the body itself is seen to locate the deeper meaning of the practise, the transmission process, one´s relationship to the practise, and the form itself. Because of this basic pragmatic approach to life as process and practise, it is easy to comprehend why such a straightforward approach to life and practise could pervade Japanese sensibility. [27]

After three weeks of very intense practice we were ready for the recital. Senrei Sensei had us all seated in seiza the day before performance. She spent a long time explaining in Japanese, and only some was translated to me. She explained that dance was the basis for everything, that she thought it was the most universal language, because it was a part of all cultures. She told us about the importance to dance with an open and pure heart, and that we should remember we were performing for something much larger than ourselves.[28] Then she turned to me, bowed deeply and said thank

27 Hahn, T. Sensational Knowledge. Embodying Culture through Japanese dance, Wesleyan, 2007, p 43

28 She related to the mythologies, god/desses and ancestors - they were the most important audiences

you. I confusedly bowed back. Why was she thanking me? She had said that she could see that I was a performer, and that I danced from my heart. This was something that had moved her heart, and for this she wished to thank me. Within the strict hierarchies of dance I was surprised. None of my teachers had ever thanked me before. Eleven years later, she explained to me that I had helped her gain new interest and motivation for Nihon Buyo by, while being a contemporary performer from the west, showing deep and sincere interest to this art form.

Hina Matsuri dolls

First meeting with Shirabyōshi

The first time I encountered the word *Shirabyōshi* was in Kyoto in July 2000, in a lecture with Senrei sensei. On video I saw performers in giants' costumes, performing the Nō play Dōjōji and the Kabuki play Musume Dōjōji. It seemed impossible to move in the costumes. The trousers were so long that the male actor had to walk inside the fabric. A white robe, almost like a priest's surplice, was tied at the waist and then hung over the oversized trousers. Above this a golden tall hat and a sword. What was the meaning of this ritual costume? The actor looked like a priest, or like a courtier from the Heian period (781-1192), the way I had seen them as tiny dolls on display, during Hina Matsuri.[29] They moved very slowly and seemed clumsy and heavy-handed. Their slow dancing reminded me of a rice planting ceremony at Fushimi Inari Shrine that I had recently watched.

29 Hina Matsuri, the Dolls´ or the Girls´ Day, March 3rd , has been celebrated since the Heian period, to bring health and happiness to the daughters in the family. Small dolls of the Emperor, the Empress, musicians, dancers and guards are put on display.

Shirabyōshi was something I did not add to my memory. Besides, the plot of the play Dōjōji was very misogynist, with the evil female protagonist (played by a male actor) transforming into a snake. I forgot all about Shirabyōshi as I pursued my studies of Nihon Buyo.

However, eleven years later, as I started to investigate the different gender constructions of traditional Japanese dances, the Shirabyōshi came back to me. I then remembered Senrei sensei´s contemporary performance, her own 1994 version of the traditional play Dōjōji, and how she had compared her innovation with tradition, by showing and comparing clips from both the Nō play and the Kabuki play. It was one of the most wonderful performances I have experienced.[30] The character that she had innovated was the Shirabyōshi Kiyohime, but without the oversized trousers.

Senrei sensei performs the legend of Giō
in the Zen temple Tenryu-ji in Arashiyama around 1984.[31]

30 Nishikawa Senrei Sensei gave a speech about her artistic work during her first time teaching Nihon Buyo at Traditional Theatre Training. (TTT) This was also my first TTT, at Kyoto Art Center in July 2000. TTT is founded by dr Jonah Salz, Kyoto.

31 I did not know about this performance until April 2014. I learned from my investigations that Senrei sensei had created more performances on Shirabyōshi. This photo shows her performance on the legend of Giō, created ten years before her contemporary version of Dōjōji. This same legend was included in my own performance *Dust*

Dōjōji by Senrei Nishikawa

My sensei, Senrei Nishikawa, was quite unique in the Nihon Buyo world. Her master was Koisaburo Nishikawa (1909-1983). He was thirty-six years older than her. Senrei sensei was guided through solo lessons by a very experienced performer and teacher. Her training differed a lot from mine as my teachers always had been very young. In Japan, the artistic training was much more individual than in the individualistic countries I have had most of my training. Senrei sensei governed her own studio with the degree of a shihan, master, from Nishikawa School. Her studio was first called Tokuya-cho after the street address, and later Senreinokai (the Association of Senrei).

Senrei sensei taught the tradition with perfection, but even within tradition there must always be innovation. She was also a choreographer of original work. She made her own performances, contemporary works on Zen practice, on Camille Claudel and Jean-Jacques Rosseau. She explained she was, like many Western artists, inspired by "subterranean streams between the East and the West". ”Camille Claudel was influenced by prints of Hokusai, and her sculptures in turn inspired my danced portrait of her.”she explained.[32]

I watched the VHS from her contemporary version of the Nō play Dōjōji, and I thought it was as great as before, but after my time of practice, and my reading of historical documents, I was able to gain a deeper understanding. The documentation of the performance can be found on Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive.[33] Before I write more about Senrei sensei´s version, I will explain something from the original Dōjōji, the Nō play Dōjōji, by quoting the scholar Susan B Klein's article:

> Dōjōji, on of the most popular plays in the Japanese Nō theatre repertoire, presents us with a dramatically compelling vision of stark conflict, the masculine forces of noble and pure spirituality battling the demonic feminine, a monstrous embodiment of profane and bestial sexuality. In the play the priests of Dōjōji temple attempt to exorcise a woman transformed by lustful passion into a fire-breathing serpent who seeks revenge on the temple bell which she associates with her betrayal by the man she loved. As such it provides a fascinating case study of the representation of the embodied demonic feminine in medieval Japan.[34]

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falling, Rain falling.

32 Salz, J. Nishikawa Senrei Nihon Buyo, Kyoto Journal vol 70, 2008

33 https://gupea.ub.gu.se, with the courtesy of Senreinokai

34 Klein, S.B. Woman as Serpent- the demonic feminine in the Nō play Dōjōji, Religious reflections on the human

A Shirabyōshi in a bad mood.

The original Nō play portrayed Shirabyōshi as oldfashioned performers, and women as dangerous and illogic: bound to witchery and sorcery. (Shinto) On stage the actors portraying Buddhist priests wiped their rosaries as incantations to control the demoness. The female spirit was exorcised, but so was also the female performer, the out-of-date Shirabyōshi. Where the original play solidified the idea about Shirabyōshi as an irrational all-female artform related to Shinto and oldfashioned ideas, and promoted the new all-male Nō theatre as more connected to the modern ideas of Zen Buddhism, Senrei sensei´s contribution actually made Nō look outdated and antiquated. But, I must confess I am in love with Nō theatre, in spite of this.

I read my notebook from the lecture that Senrei sensei gave in 2000. In the lecture she explained how she had accumulated and restructured some typical movements from the Nō play, and how her interpretation was much closer to Nō than Kabuki. Her innovation lay both in movement and expression, and I was able to notice it: How she for example broke suspension, and how musicians contributed with different atmospheres and gestures. Both Nō and contemporary music was used: four musicians were present on stage, a Nō singer, a Nagauta singer, a drummer on

body, 1995

hip drum, and a koto player.[35] Koto is not an instument one usually heard in Kabuki or Nō. A lonely branch of cherry blossom hung from the ceiling. Senrei sensei created something more abstract out of the famous temple bell scene, where the Shirabyōshi Kiyohime jumps inside the big bell and burns it with her passion and jealousy, Instead of jumping, Senrei sensei knelt down on the floor. The stage became dark, except for a ring of light symbolizing the bell around her. The audience understood she was inside the bell. In Nō and Kabuki theatre, we never see the actor in this scene, we only see the giant temple bell. Inside the bell, the actor changes into nagabakama (the oversized trousers), a kimono with snake pattern, a wig, and a horned mask (However in Kabuki there is no mask). In Senrei sensei´s version we experienced the situation from the Shirabyōshi Kiyohime´s point of view. She had changed the protagonist from object to subject. Instead of relying on a koken or kuroko: the black-clad professional stagehands, she made all the costume changes for the transformation into the snake demoness herself.[36] She turned the kimono inside out, and removed the golden hat, the *eboshi,* by hitting it off with her fan. Her demoness seemed strong and determined, rather than frantic and out of her mind. She tottered and faltered, and finally escaped through the river, which made the whole stage turn blue. This also made us stay closer to her, and to her subjective experience, as if we were swimming, or even mourning together with her. There were no Buddhist priests present to chase her away, instead she herself decided to leave. I think her interpretation was an important reflection on how medieval Nō plays could be processed in new ways, rather than being reproduced. Her version of Dōjōji was neither a reconstruction nor a deconstruction.

35 The koto is the national instrument of Japan, a traditional string instrument. Nagauta is the music that accompanies Kabuki.

36 Koken = after-watcher (back watcher) a professional stagehand/helper in Nō and Kyogen, Kurogo (or kuroko) = a professional stagehand, dressed in black, for Kabuki and Bunraku, as explained by dr Jonah Salz in a personal communication, August 25th 2013

The heroine Shizuka Gozen, by Hokusai.[37]

Shizuka Gōzen, and Okuni, female crossdressers of 12th and 17th century

Senrei sensei heard about my wish to study more on Shirabyōshi. In July 2011, she taught me *Shizu no Odamaki*[38] about the legendary Shirabyōshi dancer Shizuka Gōzen. Shizuka Gōzen was a real historical figure and has become a popular character in Kabuki- and Nō theatre plays. She is also wellknown in historical TV-dramas, manga and computer games.[39] She has been depicted, together with her beloved Yoshitsune Minamoto, on many woodblock prints by artists such as Hokusai and Hiroshige.[40] Shizuka Gōzen was forced to dance in captivity in the middle of war, in 1186. The person who forced her to dance was the half-brother of Yoshitsune: Yoritomo no Minamoto, Japan's first Shogun. Yoritomo will return many times in this essay, he has become the antagonist of this

37 made in 1825

38 Shizu no Odamaki = the flaxen spool, symbolizes winding back time and remembering and lamenting over again

39 Okamoto, Y. & Shibano, T. (2005), 'Genji: Dawn of the Samurai', Sony Computer Entertainment, PlayStation 2 game.

40 Utagawa Toyokuni: The Kabuki actor Segawa Ronosuke as Shizuka Gozen 1803, Utagawa Hiroshige: Shizuka Gozen and Tadanobu in Yoshitsune Senbonsakura Michiyuki, from the series A Collection of Plays Old and New 1849-50, Hokusai Katsushika: Shizuka Gozen, 1825

text. Yoritomo had ordered the killing of Yoshitsune and was hoping that Shizuka could reveal where he was hiding. Having heard she was a fantastic dancer known to the whole land, he also thought that her dance might entertain his retainers in these harsh times of war, and to please the gods. She was ordered to perform at Hachiman-gu Shrine. Yoritomo had built this shrine dedicated to Hachiman, the god of war. Shizuka made an elegant artistic rebellion in her solo dance, incurring the displeasure of Yoritomo. It was an early example of how art can go against power. Instead of offering her dance to the Gods and to the great Buddha that she had been ordered to do, she started to chant:

> Treading on the white snow of the peak of Mt Yoshino
> He went away. How I miss him.
> Shizu oh Shizu, like the Shizu spool, if only I
> could repeat the past and bring it back[41]

One could imagine Yoritomo's anger when Shizuka performed to praise her love for the traitorous Yoshitsune in front of the god of war. It meant bad luck. However his wife, Masako Hojo, calmed him down and said that Shizuka's dance had been wonderful, and that Yoritomo must thank and compliment her. Yoritomo contained his anger and offered Shizuka a robe, the usual salary for performers. In April each year, there is still a festival celebrated with dances to commemorate Shizuka´s bravery at Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gu Shrine. This was the same shrine where the original dance took place, in Kamakura.[42] In Japanese history, Shizuka Gozen is celebrated as a heroine. Senrei sensei told me that the dance she was going to teach me was an important and compelling dance, and that she and I would benefit from the experience.

Okuni, the founder of Kabuki

Where Sweden has lacked grandiose female dance icons in history, Japan had many. Let me present Okuni, the dancer who founded Kabuki in the 17th century. She came to Kyoto, and started to perform on the riverbeds of Kamo. Her most popular dances were when she performed Buddhist dances, dressed like a man.[43] Her quirky and queer performances were called *kabuku* by the audience, something new, wild and far out. However, around 1629, the famous Tokugawa shogunate

41 Sato, H. Legends of the Samurai, Penguin Books, 2012, p 156

42 Kamakura was the capital of Japan 1185-1333.

43 Nenbutsu Odori, a dance created to spread Buddhist teachings. See an example of it in the author's documentary film the Dance of the Sun, which includes some scene from Mibudera in Kyoto

banning of women from stage took place.[44] The main reasons for the banning were to maintain control over society and morals, as some performers had started to sell sex to their audience. There was also a mingle of men and women on stage, and Samurai class and commoners mixed in the audiences, which exceeded the edicts of the Tokugawa shogunate.[45] Even though Kabuki was founded by the crossdress female performer Okuni, Kabuki has been performed by adult men ever since Shogun banned women from stage. Women still did not perform on the Kabuki stage.[46]

Pilgrimage

I decided to make a small pilgrimage, in search for the Shirabyōshi. Pilgrimage was very popular in the Heian period, the period when the Shirabyōshi were popular. The devotional journeys that aristocrats took off on was beneficial for touring priests, performers and shrine maidens. They met and exchanged artistic and religious ideas. Out of curiosity and to pay respect to my ancient colleagues, I wanted to learn by being in a certain context and integrate knowledge on a variety of levels, through identification, engagement and connection.[47]

The little temple Giō-ji in Arashiyama, a sub-temple of the bigger Shingon Buddhism temple Daikaku-ji, is believed to have been established by the Shirabyōshi Giō. I got there in the middle of July when it was at its warmest and most humid. The cicadas sang actively and loudly. The temple did not have any visitors but me. I rested in *seiza*, the kneeling position that was the common sitting style for women in the Heian time, to try to imagine how Giō might have spend her days here. My dance lessons always started in seiza. I unfailingly greeted Senrei sensei and the other students from the seiza position. Thus, it had become fully incorporated in my practise, in which I tried to melt in, and showed that I, the foreigner, wanted to belong. Seiza was almost a national body posture.

I sat alone on the tatami floor in the summer heat and watched the statues of the Shirabyōshi Giō, her sister Gijo - also a Shirabyōshi, their mother, a third Shirabyōshi Hotoke, and the military clan leader and prime minister Kiyomori Taira/Heike. The statues were placed together in a row. Kiyomori Taira supported the both sisters Giō and Gijo. According to *the Tale of Heike,* he also built a good house to their mother, and even gave the mother a monthly income of five hundred bushels of rice and a large amount of money. The family was enrolled in fortune thanks to their performing skills. They were lifted to great wealth. However, the sixteen-year-old Shirabyōshi Hotoke, with the

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44 the Tokugawa shogunate was the last feudal Japanese military government which existed between 1603 and 1868

45 Edelson, L. Danjurō's Girls - Women on the Kabuki Stage, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, p 4

46 However, there was a group called Nagoya Musume Kabuki, a girl´s performing group in Nagoya. For more on Kabuki, please see Katherine Mezur´s *Beautiful boys/Outlaw bodies: Devising Kabuki female likeness* or *A Kabuki Reader* edited by Samuel L.Leiter.

47 Lagerström, C. Former för liv och teater, Gidlunds Förlag, 2003, p 201

reputation of being the capital´s best dancer, came to perform at the palace, and Giō was thrown out of the palace after Kiyomori had seen Hotoke´s performance. Giō then took tonsure and moved to this little monastery, where I now was.[48] When Hotoke heard about Giō's nunnery, she too left the court, took tonsure and moved here to show support for Giō. Kiyomori Taira, on the other hand, did not move here after taking tonsure, but there was a statue of him reminding us of his relatonship to these Shirabyōshi. A common interpretation was that Kiyomori Taira was the son of the retired Emperor Shirakawa, the 72nd Emperor, who ruled between 1073 -1087, and a young, unnamed Shirabyōshi.[49] His mother died when he was a small child. In the the first episode of the historical TV-Drama Kiyomori no Taira, she was killed by six imperial arrows.

Transformations of the Giō legend

Inspired by Senrei sensei, and the pride and cross gender act of Shirabyōshi, I wanted to find out more. In Kyoto in April 2011, I noticed that Kumiko Nonaka, a *Nōkan*[50] musician, was dressed in a traditional costume with a tall black hat, which reminded very much of the Shirabyōshi costume. As I asked her about it, she confirmed that she was wearing the *suikan*, the *hakama* and the tall *eboshi* hat, typical for Shirabyōshi. She explained that she had a great interest in these ancient performers and their artistic vigour. She composed new music inspired by them. ”Because nobody knows exactly how their music sounded, it gives me freedom,” she told me. Kumiko san could teach and support a certain system of a certain Nō theatre school, but she had found more freedom performing independent concerts with her own music, creating her own structure for her own art.[51] This was often the case for contemporary female performers, and was also the case of the ancient Shirabyōshi.

48 to take tonsure means to shave one´s head and become a nun or a monk

49 Korkill, E. ”the Heian Period ‘Godfather’ brought to life on NHK”, Japan Times (Culture), 2011-12-30

50 Nōkan is a bamboo flute, played in the Nōtheatre

51 Kumiko san explained the system further in our personal conversations: Any professional performer, both women and men, could join the Nō theatre association if he or she was recommended by two members of the association. Then one must also be qualified in dance and song, the three different drums, and the Nōkan. There are two kinds of associations. One was the basic association. The other was the upper society which allowed only the very experienced performers (including actors of Nō, Kyogen and musicians) with the most brilliant technique to join. Her Nōkan teacher belonged to this upper society. Who got to perform was a different story. I have never seen women on a Nō stage, except for the recitals with Traditional Theatre Training, and with Senrei sensei´s students. Only once have I seen women on a Kabuki stage. That was in Feb 2013 in Shochiku-sa in Osaka. It was in a great play - *Goemon* - mixing flamenco with Kabuki in a very postmodern setting with Christian cross made of steel. The women performed Nihon Buyo in bright kimonos, and were very cute, but unfortunately did not get to perform anything else than that.

One year later *(*2012), I invited Kumiko Nonaka to Gothenburg, to compose and play in the performance *Dust Falling, Rain Falling,* my own Shirabyōshi interpretation. The title alluded to the name of the *Imayō* song collection, Ryojin hisho - the secret book on the dust on rafters. *Imayō* were new songs written and performed *in the new style,* performed by Shirabyōshi and other female performers. Performers were believed to be able to move even dead objects with their art.

> Those who hear them wet their hat strings and cannot keep themselves at rest...
> (These singers) are indeed exceptional under the heavens. Who can possibly not feel compassion towards them?[52]

It was explained poetically that after a performance even the dust of the rafters danced, and would not settle until after three days. Dust was also what remained after death. Dust was a reminiscence of time fleeting, dust fell on forgotten objects. Dust meant dry. The rain in the title of my performance related to the legend of the Shirabyōshi Shizuka Gozen, who once succeeded to bring rain with her performance. Performers were believed not only to have the skills to move dead objects, but also to change the weather, skills that the political powers were in need of. A performer, together with monks and priests, could call upon divine winds, typhoons that might push back attacks from enemies.[53] The performers in the past were believed to possess supernatural powers. It was just like today, when performers are summoned upon to make people more productive and happy.

Jo-ha-kyu and ma

On the stage *Tredje Våningen*, a stage founded by two of the originators of Atalante and Rubicon: Gun Lund and Lars Persson, Kumiko played Nōkan, together with Palle Dahlstedt who played live electronics. The musical and philosophical concepts of *jo-ha-kyu* and *ma* were vividly discussed. The traditional Japanese music might seem unclear to Western-trained musicians and dancers. Jo-ha-kyu originated as the three movements of courtly Gagaku (Slow start, pause, faster continuosly, rapid ending) where it was not possible to count exactly how many beats there were or how many steps to take. By listening and experiencing how to tackle the rhythmic principals, the music finally got into one's own body. For example, one could learn the music by heart, or walk beside it, and follow it where it went. It reminded me of creating choreography for electro-acoustic

52 ancient Japanese writings about female performers, quoted by Terry Kawashima, Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan, Harvard University Press, 2001, p 298

53 the original meaning of *kamikaze - divine wind,* were the typhoons that pushed back Kublai Khan´s army in 1274 and 1281. However after 2nd world war, the meaning has become something else

music. Electro-acoustic music could not always be measured in countable rhythms, but could be experienced as a whole, processed in its entirety. One could divide the piece into different parts and relate to music as a dramaturgy, within which one was free to change shapes inside the acts. One could also learn how to sing the piece with the whole body, accentuate the beats and parts of the music, or have a battle with it.

MA

Ma is the ultimate less-is-more-concept of Japanese aesthetics. In daily life you often use it as a preposition, when you e.g. decide to meet in the café *in between* the bookshop and the dance studio. *Ma* meant *in between.* The written sign above, pictures a gate through which you can see the sun: the sun in between the gate. In the arts, and in performance *ma* meant the natural, transparent negative space between all things. If you remove all the bustle and chaos, *ma* is like a basket within which things can emerge and have value and content. *Ma* is emptiness while waiting for the possible. I discussed this concept with the Swedish scholar Kristina Fridh, who is researching Japanese space, and she gave me her book.[54]

Ma has a religious origin. *Ma* was originally a way to distinguish the place where the god/desses could descend. To call for the god/desses, a space was fenced with four poles and a holy rope around. This was a practical way to declare a spot divine.[55] *Ma* occured in the expectant stillness of the moment when such a change took place: just before the divine spirits entered the space. In order to make space for the god/desses, one needed the empty *ma.* In that sense *ma* was both time and space. An architect used *ma* to mean space, and a musician used *ma* to mean time.[56]

54 Fridh, K. Japanska Rum, Chalmers University 2001

55 Ibid, p 35

56 Ibid, p 25 Fridh quotes the actor Kunio Komparu

My art has always been more of a Pakistani rickshaw than a temple, wild and noisy, and I was not drawn to the heavily marketed Japanese austerity and refinement, but I thought the concept of *ma* was interesting, and something that I both needed and wanted to learn, without abandoning my Pakistani rickshaw.

It was possible to learn the structure of traditional Japanese music. *Gagaku* was written for court dances. Some of the gagaku pieces of music consisted of rhythms, and fairly smooth strokes. Those rhythms were composed to help the dancers keep pace. As I have written previously, I have made a choreography to this particular music. The dancers who performed it were finally, with my help, able to figure out how many counts the music gave and managed to put their feet on top of it.[57] Traditional Japanese music is as complex as contemporary electro-acoustic music. When performing to electro-acoustic music, the ordinary audience member might ask why I choose such ”difficult” music, and I get the same comments about Japanese music. Because I was already an artist who performed contemporary arts before I met with the traditional Japanese arts, I had something to compare with, something to both resist and accept. I adore Nō music, because it is so strange, and I think that the music of Kabuki theatre often sounds like punk music. The singers are wild, they use their voices in very interesting ways. E.g. the shoulder drummer at the Nō theatre is always very noisy. Guide books write about the difficulty to explain Japanese traditonal arts, making it seem more difficult than it really is. Yes, it is difficult, like any art music in any part of the world. You just have to spend a lot of time listening and rehearsing.

With the help of song, dance and stamping it seemed that Shirabyōshi told short stories. They could be celebratory, religious, shamanistic, romantic or even political narratives. There was a certain unorthodox musical rhythm, performed by voice and small hand drums. Musicologists believed the rhythm was simple and very similar to Buddhist chanting[58]. Because the hand drum was the original and most important instrument, rhythm rather than melody seems to have been the basics of the dance. Later on, cymbals and a flute might have been added. A large folding fan was used in the dances performed at court. The fan was also handled in shrines and temples, to help enhance certain movements. In a book by the scholar Benito Ortolani I found some information about the performance structure of Shirabyōshi. It seemed the songs were short, while the dances were long.[59] Ortolani described further that there were mostly two performers at the same time; one

57 Performance at Atalante in spring 2009 with the vocational dance programme Yrkesdans at Angeredsgymnasiet, Gothenburg, Sweden

58 Shōmyō

59 Ortolani, B. (1995), *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, Princeton University Press

who sang and danced, while the other played the small hand drum. The performance started with an introductory song, and was followed by other songs and dances. It lasted for one hour and was divided into two parts. The second part was faster and included stamping.[60] The performances by the Shirabyōshi were not just short acts. Instead they were previously rehearsed full-length programmes, meant to be looked at with full attention. This information shows that Shirabyōshi took up a certain position as well-established performers.

A narrative in four ways

My script for *Dust falling, Rain falling* told the narrative about Shirabyōshi in four different ways: through the subjective monologue, with buyo and contemporary dance, through music, and finally with the help of kamishibai (paper theatre), a little wooden box in which one puts storycards to help enhance the story.[61] The performance processed the faiths of the Shirabyōshi heroines Shizuka Gozen and Giō. Together with Kumiko I kneeled into seiza, just like I did in the little temple Giō-ji in Arashiyama. I held the fan in my lap and tried to speak through history, however in my local Gothenburg accent, an attempt to be both close and remote, alive and dead, dark and light, at the same time:

> *I am a dancer. I grew old. I became old-fashioned. I entered the monastery. My beloved met a younger dancer. Then she grew old and entered the monastery. Then, my beloved got old and, finally we all died in the same monastery, forgiven by Buddha. Hundreds of years passed, and they forgot all about us. The songs that we sang every day ceased, and got silent. The dances we danced, the modern dances, were forgotten. I could remain in the shadows and dance my modern dance. But no one really knows. It has been eight hundred years. I feel old. The skeleton, the skin, the legs, the eyes. However, on the inside I am a child. Four hundred years ago, they remembered me, and they made new dances and songs about me, about my wars, about my love, about my dreams.*
> I unfolded the fan, and acknowledged one Shirabyōshi for each slat:
> *About Giō, about Goji, about Hotoke, about Iso no Zenji, about Shima-no-Senzai about Waka-no-mae, of Otomae, of Shizuka Gozen. Shizuka. Shizuka. She had no easy life. She was a dancer, just like me. She was young, and in love, just like you. And there was a war. She had to walk, hide, run. She was imprisoned,*

60 Yung-Hee, K. Songs to make the dust dance: the Ryojin hisho of twelfth-century Japan, University of California Press, 1994, p 77

61 Street theatre for children, performed mostly by men in the 20th century. In order to survive, the story-teller also sold candy.

her child was killed, for it was the child of the person who had lost the war. And they forced her to dance, in captivity. They killed her child and forced her to dance and she did not know if her beloved was alive or dead.

When my character spoke about growing old, I related to both historical and contemporary issues. To "grow old" could be her personal view, or the view from the employer, in this case the prime minister Kiyomori Taira/Heike, or the surrounding society, the context. Old could be her physical or mental condition, the next step after hungry and naive. Old could be eight hundred years old in history, or out-of-date in contemporary time, a living anachronism. How could I trust that the audience would have the same imagination and associations around such a general adjective? These Shirabyōshi were only in their teens when they took tonsure. They were still young, but mature and life-experienced enough to realize that the Palace was not a safe place for performers. Me and the light designer Åsa Holtz talked a lot about how to create a dual time on stage, to create a temple like Giō-ji in Arashiyama, but also a contemporary stage in Gothenburg, where anything could happen. In the darkness, pictures of historical musicians and dancers appeared. Kumiko´s black hat for male aristocrats in Heian time. My golden hat for male aristocrats visible through time, beyond dust and rain. Her bamboo flute audible through the mist. Palle´s red synthesizer discernible behind the haze. The stage filled with eight hundred years of trembling dust.

The white kabuki makeup literally squeezed my face, and caught up the faintest light. At the front of the stage, the audience came close. The spotlight revealed the white paint that flaked off. The white paint dissolved and created deep furrows in my face. The skin became like dry parchment, covered with white dust. The body might be a tired skeleton, covered in an ancient costume, resurrected from the grave. We will all die. What comes after that, we can only guess. Time will change. What people will consider important or not will change. Art will change.

Traditional texts

I found documents on dance in ancient Japanese chronicles, such as Kōjiki, the creation story of Japan.[62] In the Tale of Genji, published around 1021, and in the Tale of Heike, published at the end of the 14th century, performance activities were often mentioned and could help me understand the different contexts around performances in ancient times.[63] A dissertation by Roberta Strippoli

62 Kojiki, Record of Ancient Matters, is the oldest preserved book on Japan´s older history and myths, dating from the early 8th century and composed by Ō no Yasumaro at the request of Empress Gemmei. It was finished in 712.

63 The Tale of Genji by Murasaki Shikibu, published around 1021, Heike Monogatari (the Tale of Heike), by unknown, translated by McCullough, H. C.*Stanford University Press,* 1988

showed, to my satisfaction, that in the last two decades, Shirabyōshi had attracted the attention of many Japanese scholars of history and the social sciences.[64] Before that, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Shirabyōshi were only studied to be linked with Nō theatre. Recently, the Shirabyōshi have created an interest of their own.

The Shirabyōshi might have upset many members of the Imperial family, because of the shocking contemporary quality in their performance and its unpolished background. Was that enough explanation for their decline? How could we understand this shocking contemporary quality today? The introduction of new music - the shock of new performers, with many fans and admirers but also many critics - is something we experience repeatedly through history. Was I, with my performance *Dust falling, rain falling* trying to stop time?

I think the popularity of the Shirabyōshi, and their association with a certain time in Japanese history was crucial for their disappearance. The prime minister and professional Biwa player Fujiwara no Moronaga declared, already in the 12th Century, that their music and dance showed a nation close to ruin.[65]

> The dancers pirouetted with their heads erect, looking towards the sky: a painful sight, they are disgusting dancers, both in their dances and music.

The political change with the introduction of Buddhism and Confucian ideas, the promotion of masculinity and warrior-mentality in the nation-building, the rise of the Samurai class, created new laws under which women suffered, and increasingly lost their human rights. The propaganda was successful. When the first Shogun (of Minamoto/Genji origin) Minamoto no Yoritomo, the antagonist of this essay, was proclaimed in 1192, a new era began. This new modern era would finally demand new dance and new theatre. A new kind of performing arts suitable for the change of religious beliefs and social structure. Art that would support the ruling powers, who then proclaimed that men were superior to women, and that men therefore should be the new performers of poetry, music, dance, war and religion. What kind of performing arts form do our contemporary political leaders need to support their ideas?

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64 Strippoli, R. Dancing through time: Transformations of the Gio legend in premodern Japanese literature and theater, Stanford University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2006

65 Ortolani.B, The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism, Princeton University Press, 1995, p 76

The Suzu and the fairy-tale

I will go back to my performance *Dust falling, Rain fallin* again. In scene number seven, my protagonist Shizuka picked up a Suzu, the beautiful musical instrument used by Miko and priests in shrines when calling for god/desses. This Suzu was a gift from the Shinto priest Naruhito Terauchi.[66] Shizuka held the bell high above eye-level, rang it and danced with it. She called for divine help after having escaped her enemies (Yoritomo). At the same time, she showed possible offenders that she was occupied with sacred dancing. Shizuka turned into a bent old man /woman, who spinned and rang the bell high above eye-level to call for the god/desses. She disappeared farther and further back, into the shadows, until she was out of sight. Palle and Kumiko san continued to play music. Intensity increased, and then got to an abrupt end. *Jo-ha-kyu.*This was how I tried to imagine the life of Shizuka and the skills she had to use when she was threatened. It was also related to an Imayō that was sung in the end of the performance, which I will describe further on.

The choice to tell the story of Giō and Shizuka also as a fairy-tale for children was an attempt to show how young these Shirabyōshi actually were in their time. They were street performers, not always subdued and sophisticated Court artists, but colourful, energetic, and bold. *Kamishibai* is a story board theatre, a performing arts form performed on the streets. It originated in Buddhist temples in the 12th Century. It is like an unplugged slide show taking place inside a cabinet. It was really popular between the 1920s and 1960s when unemployed men were able to make a living by telling stories and selling candy to children in parks. Kumiko san and I brought forward the fairy-tale cabinet while singing a Japanese children´s song. Palle hit the wooden clappers.

I like to experiment with discontinuity in my scripts, and I often make changes that deliberately breaks the magic of one scene, and created cuts in the rhythmic flow. (Deliver us from love) The audience became like sweet little moles, they rubbed their eyes and wondered why I had to wake them up from their pleasant dream. I discerned their concerns from stage, and it created discomfort and hesitation in me as well, but I moved on. The fairy-tale really stood out from the previous scenes, and it also made myself feel like the mole that had emerged from the comfortable, mysterious darkness into the uncomfortable, revealing daylight. However, we were not in a temple. We were on a stage in Gothenburg. The whole fairy-tale consisted of twelve story-cards, and told the legend of Giō as theatre for children. I will show a clip of three different storycards from the fairy-tale here:

66 I met the priest Naruhito Terauchi's when I brought wishes from my Tanabata festival in Sweden for him to bless. His Shinto shrine is one thousand years old, and is called Nunose Jinja. Naruhito Terauchi was also a sculptor and often opened his shrine to contemporary artists. Kumiko san and Heidi san often performed there.

(change card) The capital! In the capital she meets people who are just like her: dancers, musicians, who have left their homes. They sit all day by the river and write new poetry, new music, and compose new dance. Their art is being heard of, tomorrow they will perform for the Emperor. (change card) One of the dancers was employed at the palace. The Emperor fell in love, and he provided her with her own house. But at the same time, someone else was thrown out. This dancer became homeless.(change card)

Ami and Kumiko san with the fairy-tale

I had many interesting comments on this fairy-tale. Authors perfectly understood the experiment with different ways and materials telling the same story. Actors said they finally were able to understand dance. Musicians appreciated the story-telling quality of the music. Dancers, however, thought I had used the story only because I did not trust the abstract narrative. They believed I was over-explaining my art; they were blind for the experiment. And, a dramaturge advised me to begin already in the foyer with this fairy-tale, to help the audience understand the complex narrative. These different viewpoints from different places in the world, all very intriguing, showed how contradictory a performance could be interpreted.

The Tale of Heike

The narratives of Giō and Shizuka were all part of the Tale of Heike, an epic story about the two clans, the Genji/Minamoto and Heike/Taira, who fought for supremacy over Japan in the late 1100s.[67] These tales, originally sung by blind monks, seem to have been an endless source for plays in Nō theatre, Kabuki and contemporary theatre, films, manga and TV. Minamoto could also be

67 McCullough, H. C.The Tale of the Heike *Stanford University Press,* 1988

pronounced as Genji. Heike could also be pronounced as Taira. In the first male dance I studied with Senrei sensei in 2001, I was impersonating the warrior Tadanobu in a short narrative dance from the Kabuki play *Yoshitsune and the thousand cherry trees*.[68] This male dance had also helped me in the reconstruction of possible Shirabyōshi dances. Tadanobu, while he travelled with my protagonist, the Shirabyōshi dancer Shizuka Gōzen, recounted the fatal battle of Dan-no-ura on the 24th of March 1185. This was the battle in which the Heike/Taira clan was conquered by the Genji/Minamoto clan. Kiyomori Taira was already dead by then, but his wife Tokiko Taira was alive. When she understood Heike had lost the war, she took the only six year old Emperor in her arms and jumped in the water. She and the other noble Heike women drowned themselves in the middle of the battlefield.

> The vain, the haughty glow for an instant, then like a vision, like a dream in April, at twilight, they pass, they fade. Shorn of power, in the end, the strong, the victorious are cut down. They vanish like dust that is blown away.[69]

The dance about Tadanobu included a short line that I struggled to learn. The line was an effective way to describe the terrible approaching drama with as few words as possible. This was the line that Senrei sensei taught me in 2001:

Umi ni hōzen	At sea
Heike no aka hata	The red flag of the Heike
Kuga ni	At land
Shira hata	White flag

Through the choreography, in which the dance fan became a sword and a bow, and the body was directed both in attack and protection, I was able to understand the tension between Genji and Heike. I found the male construction in Japanese dance easier than the difficult feminine construction. I studied the feminine construction later in 2004, something that almost made me give up the Japanese dance for good.[70]

In the line, the red flag of the Heike and the white flag of the Genji were mentioned. These flags laid the foundation for Japan's current flag. The Shirabyōshi socialized with both Heike and Genji. Shizuka Gōzen performed for and was employed by the Heike, but after she fell in love with

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68 one of the three most popular and famous in the Kabuki repertoire. Originally written in 1747 for puppet theatre, adapted to Kabuki the year after. Yoshitsune was the lover of Shizuka.

69 McCullough, H. C.The Tale of the Heike *Stanford University Press,* 1988

70 I studied the wellknown piece Fuji Musume, the Wisteria Maiden

Yoshitsune she instead followed the Genji. Both Shizuka´s and Yoshitsune´s mothers were Shirabyōshi performers. In the Tale of Heike, the military clan leader Kiyomori Taira/Heike was described as a person deeply involved with Shirabyōshi, especially with the performers Giō and Hotoke, as I have described before[71]. The names of these Shirabyōshi tell us what was on the agenda during the Heian period – Buddhism. Giō meant *the king of the place where Buddha spoke to the people*. Hotoke meant *Buddha*.[72] These wellknown Shirabyōshi carried sacred Buddhist names. However, in her dissertation, Roberta Strippoli argued that we could not know for sure that Giō and Hotoke really existed. She thought that they should be considered fictional until the opposite had been proved.[73] Could they have been the symbols for many Shirabyōshi? Fictional or not, the temple Giō-ji itself might be a testament to how much we wanted to end the time restrictions, and preserve and feed the stories we want to believe.

On the same day when I visited the little temple Giō-ji in Arashiyama, I also visited the mother temple of Giō-ji, the more well-known Daikaku-ji. This temple was once the villa of Emperor Saga[74]. I sat in *seiza* in the garden and looked out at the dance stage built of stone. This is where Shirabyōshi might have perfomed, I imagined. This was where season positioned poems were written, new dances and songs were composed. This was where Emperor Saga copied the Heart Sutra[75] by hand, which was believed stopped a plague epidemic. Today people came here to copy the Heart Sutra and to feel the atmosphere of the Heian period. The reason I mention the Heart Sutra was because it is related to performer training, and I will come back to this poular sutra later.

I sat in seiza, until my legs went numb, while I looked out at the Osawa pond, imagining the full moon and the small dragon boats with Shirabyōshi performing for their small audiences. Emperor Saga had 39 children by at least 30 women.[76] He forbid people to eat meat, except for fish and birds. This continued to be the eating habit in Japan until the introduction of European food in the 19th century. The temple sold many souvenirs with the image of Shirabyōshi: bookmarks, cell phone straps, postcards. A suggestion she really had existed. On the cell phone strap I could read the kanji for Shirabyōshi: 白 拍子. However, I was mistaken. The Shirabyōshi never performed for Emperor Saga. Shirabyōshi did not appear until two hundred years after his death. Nonetheless, they did perform on these very grounds, after the Villa had been established as a Buddhist temple.

71 McCullough, H. C.The Tale of the Heike *Stanford University Press,* 1988

72 As explained by Makiko Sakurai in a private conversation Dec 2013-Feb 2014

73 Strippoli, R. Dancing through time: Transformations of the Gio legend in premodern Japanese literature and theater, Stanford University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2006, p 6

74 The 52nd Emperor, who ruled 809-823

75 The Heart Sutra is the most popular of all Buddhist verses

76 Wikipedia

A contemporary Shirabyōshi in Tokyo

To get a view of the contemporary influence of Shirabyōshi in Japan, I contacted Makiko Sakurai, a Tokyo based contemporary vocalist, composer and performer with an M.A. in composition, who also practised Shirabyōshi. I managed to see some clips of her recitals. There was something very sincere and earnest in her performance. Her voice was profound. She danced with her feet turned out, like in male dances. Sakurai got interested in Shirabyōshi after having seen a character in the anime Princess Mononoke, by Miyazaki[77]. I was unexpected to hear that she had found her inspiration from this very popular film, also much loved in Sweden. I had watched all of Miyazaki´s films but had missed the fact that there had been a Shirabyōshi in it. Sakurai had also studied Japanese and Javanese court dances from various teachers, along with Buddhist chanting and finally the dragon flute played in Gagaku. Sakurai was not a monk or a nun, but performed Buddhist chanting purely as a musician and performer. She was well prepared to pursue the paths of Shirabyōshi before stumbling into them. I will later present her views on why she beleived that the Shirabyōshi disappeared from the stage in the 15th century.

Makiko Sakurai, the contemporary Shirabyōshi

Shirabyōshi and the cross-dressing costume

Nagabakama was the term used to describe the hakama, the special trousers that noble women wore at the Court. In The Tale of Genji, there was even a Japanese verb - *kinuzure* - describing the sound that was heard when these long silk trousers brushed the wooden floor of the palace. Why did Shirabyōshi dress up as male aristocrats? What was the meaning of the oversized trousers?

77 Hayao Miyazaki, Japanese director and animator (1941-) of e.g.My Neighbour Totoro, Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away.

The musician Kumiko Nonaka further explained the Shirabyōshi costume. In the Heian era, the higher a person's social rank was, the longer h/she wore the hakama trousers. They showed that they did not need to do manual work, but instead could live a peaceful and protected life at court. The tall hat was very important to show respectability and to show class membership. The nobles must not take their hat off among people. Howver, the Shirabyōshi did not always dress up as men. Kumiko san explained that they wore the Court costume for the daily life in the Court: long hakama trousers with a long outer kimono like the other courtladies. Out of the Court and the nobles' houses, they wore simple kimono like commoners. For performances, they changed costumes into *suikan*, *nagabakama* and the *eboshi* hat, and a sword. It then seems that the cross-gender costume was a performance costume, not used in daily life. The cross-dressing, Kumiko explains, could have been created to protect the individual. It was common to change clothes on children: boy to girl, girl to boy, as a superstitious and religious protection against demons. There could also be another reason, due to the increase of Buddhist believes in Japan. This is further explained later, in the chapter on sacred female culture .

A red theatre sword with ornaments and tassles

Kyoto, July 2011: I am in a taxi with sensei. She is going to take me to a restaurant where they serve healthy food where she will tell the cook about my food intolerances. She was worried about my weakness and exhaustion. In the taxi, she gets a phone call. I flinched at the fact that she owned a mobile phone, a wine red one, with a band with cherry blossoms. A former student was calling because she wanted to donate her Shirabyōshi costume to Senrei sensei. Senrei sensei immediately made the decision: this costume is for Ami san! "Ami san lucky!" Senrei sensei smiled at me. She explained that her former student, Fumiko Nagai, had wanted to donate it before, but that Senrei sensei had no use for it then. This was a lucky time for both of us, she explained. She was wearing a blue grey kimono, and a white wovened, patterned obi with a lime green obi sash. Always amazing. At the small, rustic restaurant Biotei on Sanjo Dori (3rd Street), we enjoyed the food together.

A couple of days later Takae san brought me a big cardboard box to the appartment. As I opened it, I saw a Shirabyōshi costume for the first time of my life. The red *nagabakama* made of heavy beautiful silk. The light *suikan*, a golden *eboshi* made out of cardboard. Two white kimono-shaped underrobes, one with red collar, the other with blue. Both were made out of white fabric with interlocked Swastika patterns. A beautiful Nihon Buyo dance fan with a hand painted contemporary pattern. The bamboo bones of the fan were applied with black lacquer. A red theatre sword with ornaments and tassles, the sword guard in the shape of a crane, in a red scabbard, wrapped in purple cloth with more tassels. I dared not try it on.

Eight hundred years old

Gothenburg, February 2012: I am alone in the dark studio on a Saturday morning. There is no oxygen, no daylight. I am exhausted and I hate myself for being exhausted. I lack energy and I hate myself for lacking energy. I pulled up the nagabakama, with the long trailing legs: I tied them in an unorthodox way. The heavy beautiful cloth fell around me and I started to tred in them, while walking. Nobody taught me how to dance or walk in them. I must find the method myself in daily conversations with them. Walk, dance, stop, kneel, rise, walk, run. Run forwards. Run backwards. Fall to the ground, to physically portray the dramatic lives of Shirabyōshi during war. I think I must throw up. I am dizzy. I must lie down. I lay down. I hated myself for lying down. I must drink water. I drank water. All of it. I have pain. I take an Aspirin. I sit down. I brought out my script and looked at the Imayō. I repeated the movement pattern in my head. I said the words out loud. I must know the words by heart, in classical Japanese. I was eight hundred years old. It must be acceptable to be tired at my age. The nagabakama practise walks were different than the suriashi, the sliding steps.[78] Suriashi were impossible to do in the nagabakama. For each step, the feet pulled the fabric down until I fell. Instead the trousers must be kicked forward, by lifting the toes inside the fabric. This was more how suriashi was done in Nō theatre. Nō actors lifted their toes. Kabuki actors did not. Nō actors walked on less bent legs. Kabuki actors walked on bent legs. In the middle of the practise I watched a DVD of the previously mentioned Nō play Dōjōji.[79] I wanted to see if I treated the trousers the same way as a professional Nō actor. To my surprise, the actor on the DVD did the same kicks toward the rear before holding, which I also did to push the fabric backwards. The trousers possessed their own logic, and I had found the same conclusions as this actor even though noone had trained me. But I also invented new movements that was not done in the Nō theatre, e.g. I spinned until I got caught in the fabric.

I could not get rid of myself nor the body in these heavy trousers, they were exhausting. The performance would happen a certain date, and next week I would be the director of three more people. I must go through self-hate and resistance. I must walk through my script, even if it does not make sense. I must take the work by the hand and walk with it through any kinds of changes in weather. A few days I allowed myself to rehearse without the long, heavy trousers. These days were a welcome break. The supervisor and lecturer Kent Sjöström writes that the actor is doomed to concreteness, relationship and intention, now matter how lyrical or non-realistic the performance

78 Suriashi means sliding foot in Japanese. In traditional theatre and dance, suriashi is performed parallel on bent legs. This could be practised in the beginning of the class, after the greeting ritual, or within the choreography itself. The suriashi is also used when actors and dancers entered the Nō theatre stage

79 'Dōjōji, Nō theatre play', performed by Umewaka, R. at Nagoya Nōgakudo Marty Gross films, DVD, 2012

strived to be has been noted by. From the actor's perspective, a body could never be lyrical, abstract or non-realistic, he notes.[80] He was right indeed.

The famous Nō theatre playwright Zeami who founded Nō theatre with his father Kan'ami wrote the following on how male actors should portray Shirabyōshi. This was after the Shirabyōshi already were about to loose their popularity:

> As for the look of a dancer or shirabyōshi or, again, a "madwoman," she should hold a fan or a branch of leaves or flowers ever so gently. She is to wear her robe and trousers very long, even stepping on them, and her bearing should be gentle. Moreover, her face won't lok good if she directs her gaze upward, but if she looks down, that will detract from her appearance from the back. If she holds her head up straight, it is unfeminine. In any case, she should wear something with long sleeves and should not show her hands. Her sash should be loosely tied.[81]

I continued to try to gently step on and in the trousers. This genderbending Heian period costume created interest among the contemporary audience and contemporary performers in Sweden. The question I got was whether these nagabakama created restriction or freedom? At the Heian time, they showed the privilege of not having to work in ricefields, and not having to use the body for physical labour. To the contemporary acrobatic dancer in Sweden the trousers created restriction, even oppression of movement. My colleagues saw an opressed feminine, trapped by a society of restrictions. We tend to interpret symbols and signs only by means of our contemporary time. However, to me they created just the right amount of constraints that forced me to work with only the most necessary energy. It was my own active choice to perform and move very slowly, and carefully with my feet. An experiment to try to perform while ill.

Ancient female performers of Japan: Miko, Asobi, Kugutsu, Shirabyōshi, and Kusemai

Female performers in the Heian (781-1192) and Kamakura (1185-1333) periods were often involved in shamanistic rituals and called upon to bring forward beneficial weather, luck and fortune. Contemporary with the Shirabyōshi were the shrine maidens, the Miko, that still worked part-time at Shinto shrines. Accordning to the creation mythologies: Miko were the original dancers of Japan. Their knowledge had survived harsh times, but their positions as leaders of shrines had changed.

80 Sjöström, K. The Actor in action- strategies for Body and Mind, Carlssons Bokförlag, 2007, p. 157

81 Hare, T. B. Zeami's Performance Notes, Colombia University Press, 2008, p. 32

Miko of all types danced and sang to call the god/desses. During the obsession by spirits it was believed that they received the divine messages. Their position was to mediate between this world and that of the god/desses and bodhisattvas. Miko received the patronage of elite sponsors.[82] Profane dancers were also involved in performances dedicated to the god/desses. There was a legend about Shizuka Gōzen, that I have earlier mentioned, being the hundredth dancer to be summoned, finally succeeding to bring rain down with her performance.

The Asobi were even more obscure in history than the Shirabyōshi, but their position as professional artists paved the way for their future colleagues. The performers I imagined in the Villa of Emperor Saga were Asobi, and not Shirabyōshi. Asobi performed their songs and dances on the small boats on the Osawa pond of the Shingon temple Daikaku-ji. I now carried the bookmark from the temple with pictures of an Asobi performing on such a boat with me. The most famous Asobi was Otomae, who after retirement became the teacher of Emperor Go-Shirakawa. You can read more about her in the chapter about Imayō, and the chapter about Shirabyōshi and Emperors. The Asobi, skilled singers and Kugutsu, skilled singers and puppeteers, were replaced with Shirabyōshi and Kusemai.[83] This label confusion was common when searching for information about ancient female performers in Japan. In some texts they were described as courtesans, highly paid prostitutes, the Emperor's concubines. In other texts they were described as very skilled performers with a certain position in society, exempted from manual labor and tax.

Details in contemporary research showed that there seemed to be an agenda to change the discourse of the description of female performers.[84] With these more detailed studies of ancient texts from the actual time, we could understand the differences of the performers. Some performers were involved with prostitution to survive, while some did not have to do that to survive.[85] Kumiko san explained that the selling of sex by the shrine maidens Miko was not seen as sinful, but rather a religious, sacramental, and purifying act.

82 Meeks, L.The Disappearing Medium: Reassessing the Place of Miko in the Religious Landscape of Premodern Japan *History of Religions,* 2011, Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 208-260 The Fujiwara clan supported miko at Kasuga Shrine in Nara, and the Taira/Heike clan supported the Miko at Itsukushima, in Hiroshima.

83 Strippoli, R. Dancing through time: Transformations of the Gio legend in premodern Japanese literature and theater, Stanford University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2006, p 13

84 e.g. Terry Kawashima and Roberta Strippoli

85 Please see Goodwin for a more detailed discussion of prostitution around the Heian and Kamakura time.J.R. Goodwin, Shadows of Transgression: Heian and Kamakura constructions of prostitution, Monumenta Nipponica 2000, Vol 55. Quoted from an abstract by Ewa Machotka for a presentation that will be held at the AAS 2014 Annual Conference in Philadelphia, is also valuable:"Recent debate on prostitution challenges the perception of women's participation in commodified erotics as oppression and through the concept of "erotic labor" shifts the focus from the objectifying gaze of the politics of morality into a discourse on work and economy (Chapkins, 1997)."

In what ways did the Shirabyōshi distinguish themselves from the other female performers? Shirabyōshi danced in a specific way and dressed in a cross-gender costume, which was not the case with the other performers. What all these performers had in common was the practise and performance of *Imayō,* new songs written and performed *in the new style.*[86] This is why I have studied and also included information on Imayō in this text, as they can help demystify the Shirabyōshi.

Imayō

In 1911, parts of the long lost Ryōjin hishō*, The Secret Book of Dust on the Rafters,* was found by a historian in an antiquarian bookshop in Tokyo.[87] Only fragments remained but still it was the largest collection of Imayō songs. This song collection of five hundred sixty-six Imayō was assembled and compiled personally in 1179 by Emperor Go-Shirakawa, through his teacher, the Asobi Otomae. In the process of writing my script, I was curious and intrigued to read about these songs. I decided to include at least one Imayō in the performance. The other Imayō songs were not used other as an inspiration. I read them to the light designer Åsa Holtz, and to the musicians Kumiko san and Palle. I decided to call the first scene *Night at the temple, the land of shadows.* The scene was the opening of the universe that I wanted to present, where the performer, the light, the music, and the musicians were equal partners on stage. I wished to create an equal balance between the different components, which I formerly have called Pointillism.

Thanks to the Imayō songs I could create a starting point also with Kumiko in our regular e-mail conversations, months before she came to Sweden. She read them and imagined the music she wanted to play in the performance. One year ago, Åsa and I had already decided on how to use the space inspired by Gun Lund's performance *Neither* and thought that her way to use the space would be the best for our work. At the stage 3:e Våningen (3rd Floor), you could either put the audience on the long side or the short side. We decided to put them on the short side, to have the possibility to use depth and space as metaphors of time. Besides Imayō, we also read the 1933 essay *In praise of shadows* by Junichiro Tanizaki.[88] This was interesting as Tanizaki compared the old Japanese approach and taste with the modern Western culture. He presented a modern 1930s view on an ancient aesthetic concepts that appreciated shadows over brightness. Åsa and I wanted to work with

86 Kawashima, K. Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan, Harvard University Press, 2001, p 28-29

87 Yung-Hee,K. Songs to make the dust dance: the Ryojin hisho of twelfth-century Japan, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994, p xv

88 Tanizaki, J. In praise of Shadows, 1933, transl into English 1977, Leete'S Island Books 1977

darkness and shadows. While talking about the dust of beams trembling three days after a performance ended, Åsa stopped me and said: ”I need smoke.”

> Smoke covered the stage like morning mist, or dust. The light slowly changed in a pre-programmed pattern. Kumiko san was visible in a pillar of light, under her private light bulb: Palle sat under his private light bulb. Music. Ma. Music. 間 Silence. Music. The sound of rustling silk trousers sliding over the floor. Someone with a high top hat and awfully long trousers moved slowly across the stage. Sometimes you see her hand. Sometimes she disappeared completely. Suddenly she appeared as a person, and one can discern a sword, a white robe, and red trousers. A Pierrot in a giant´s costume? Or something we have never seen before?

Finally, we all met in Sweden to rehearse and compose. My ideas caught on a two-dimensional paper, read by us all, would now unfold on the floor. Åsa looked happy and content. She knew what she must do. She would use the lights in a most consequent way.

Performers tended to rehearse more than they performed, something the audience might not always be interested in. Still, my idea for the Imayō that I had picked out for the performance was to introduce it as a rehearsal scene. I wanted to create something colloquial and human around the concept of "imperial performance". I declaimed the words of the Imayō (RH 324), and Kumiko san helped me to pronounce classical Japanese. Kumiko san and Palle thought that I should both sing and recite the Imayō. The song gave resonance inside my head: there was a vibrato that I had not used before. I could understand the Emperor Go-Shirakawas' obession with singing and reciting. I pushed the voice in a rhythmic way while contracting the abdominals. It sounded quite different from how I previously had used the voice. I think all years of listening and performing to Japanese songs and music now could be heard in my own voice. However, when finally performing it to an audience I was way out of my comfort zone, especially when singing it in Swedish.

The new wrong rhythm

The Shirabyōshi proudly performed their Imayō songs in a style that challenged the tradition of poetry composition. The traditional rhythm of poems organized the syllables in a 5-7 pattern, and the most common was 5-7-5-7-7. I took the challenge of rhythms literally and misunderstood this experiment. I had read the pattern of the Imayō song RH 324 like this:12-12-10-12-7-12. At first, Kumiko san and Palle loved to rehearse it. ”This is like Zen meditation!” Kumiko san said, happy for the task. I beat the fan and counted the rhythm. Kumiko san thought it looked all right, but after

rehearsing it for a while, and having to play the flute at the same time, she said:"This is quite complicated. Usually we count even rhythms. 8-8-8." To count in 8s was also the most common in ballet, contemporary and jazz dance, which was very easy to follow. We discussed the contemporaneity of the songs, and Kumiko san showed how the Imayō also could be organized as a 5-7 pattern (12=5+7). It was not as subversive as I had hoped for. However, we decided to keep and follow this new, "wrong" rhythm that I had created.

The Imayō that I had picked out was a song that I found very humouristic, worth its reflection. It had to do with performer training, and performing skills. In our time, performers are forced to endure hard training by their teachers, as not to disappoint the ticket paying audience. A bad performance affects the performer and the director. In the 12th century, the hard training was endured in order to not anger the gods. A bad performance would affect the whole society.

Ryōjin hishō 324	In English	På svenska
すず は さや ふる と うた みこ 12 め より かみ に ぞ す ず は ふる 12 ゆらゆら と ふりあ げ て 10 め より しも にて す ず ふれ ば 12 けたい なり と て 7 ゆゆし かみはらだ ち たまう 12	How dare you ring the bells thus, Priestess Tōta? Bells ought to be rung above eyelevel. "jingle jingle" raised up high. If you ring the bells below eye level, "How bizarre!" The gods will cry and become angry. Oh my, how fearful indeed![89]	Hur vågar du skaka bjällrorna så illa Tempeldansare, håll den ovan ögonen Kling! Klang! Håll den högt, prästinnan Tota Om du skakar bjällrorna under ögonhöjd ska gudarna bli arga de ska klaga och ropa, o så förfärligt! *Author´s translation*

Shirabyōshi reconstructed in Kabuki dance

There are no existing contemporary schools that teach the performance methods of Shirabyōshi. One could study the dances of Kagura, Nō or Kabuki to get some understanding of how Shirabyōshi might have danced. The study of the Kabuki dance *Shizu no Odamaki* in 2011 with Senrei sensei, which I have previously mentioned, was one way.[90] It was the Kabuki version, a reconstruction of Shirabyōshi. I want to share how this piece was studied.

This time, my sixth study journey to Kyoto, Senrei sensei had kindly arranged so that I could borrow her brother´s appartment, near the Mibu Dera temple for six weeks. Two apartments from mine they burned incense day in and day out. During the day, the door was ajar with a support wedged in the opening. In the evening, the door was closed but you felt the smell of incense when you walked by. Japanese incense smells good, especially the sandalwood type. I imagined that someone just had died there and now the soul was guided further with the help of incense. Or - more macabre - that you wanted to get rid of the smell from the dead. Or, it might be the housewife's own

89 Nakahara, G.E. The songs of Ryōjin hishō, ProQuest dissertations and thesis,1999, p 296-297

90 An intense summer workshop in Nihon Buyō, Kyōgen or Nō Theatre, at Kyoto Art Center, directed by Jonah Salz

every day ritual; she burned incense as soon as she was done with today's vacuuming. My other neighbour vacuum cleaned frequently, and bulldozed around with the sliding doors, but burned no incense. At nights I dreamt that I wiped away dust with rapid movements, holding a feather duster in my hand. I had never dreamt this before. Maybe it was an effect of all the TV commercials I watched while having tofu for breakfast where housewives had special polish bottles and wore aprons. They got vitamin pills from their salarymen in suits. The pills made the wives so keen that they ran over their husbands with the vacuum cleaner. The commercial showed the construction of the woman. What does a woman do? She cleanses the house in frenzy every day.

I came to the lesson as usual, well-prepared and dressed in a light summer kimono. After the greeting ceremonies in seiza and the practice of suriashi, the sliding steps, I noticed how Senrei sensei discussed with her disciples while looking at me. Emiko san then approached me and untied my obi and the silk strings. She rearranged everything. After all these years, I was still a beginner. However, this time there was a different reason for the rearrangement of the kimono. ”For this piece it is important to wear the kimono in this way. Please, never use the ordinary way. You need this for concentration and focus. We have very little time!” Emiko san explained.

For lessons, I now had to wear the kimono more male-like and tie the obi in a cross- gender way. This meant half a bow, with the right part of the bow hanging loose. Senrei sensei taught me how to wear the obi lower, like a man, with towels tucked inside the obi to the front and to the back. She taught me how to wear my practice kimono, the collar well pulled-up in the back of the neck. Female dance students and women in kimono shops would grab me to pull it down, as women should not wear the kimono the way I did. I had to explain many times that it had to do with the piece I was studying. It was interesting to understand the different symbols the kimono could manifest and fascinating to discover how it provoked people, just by changing the obi knot.

Ami as Shizuka Gozen

Traditional Theatre Training

A lesson of Japanese traditional dance leaves nothing to chance. To approach and to get to know a character, such as Shizuka Gōzen, involved no internal psychological drama, but instead the exact repetition of a movement until it was incorporated to the fullest. It was a massive and wordy lesson. Jonah Salz was there briefly to help out with translation. However, Senrei sensei did not allow him to talk to me. She explained, as usual, that she would teach me body-to-body. We spent thirty minutes on just three movements. Finally, I was stuck to the floor and dared not to move. To look slowly from left to right became an impossible task. I was supposed to look diagonally to the right with a straight head, without ogling, without pulling ahead and without tilting the head. Head tilt-ups were for little girls, Senrei sensei told me. The movements of the dance itself were composed and taught both in the female and male way. The female bodily construction of Nihon Buyo and Kabuki meant that you had to keep your shoulders pulled back tightly in order to create a smaller presence. However, to show the gender ambiguity of a Shirabyōshi performance, arms and elbows were more lifted, like in male dances. Also, to show that the character Shizuka Gōzen was a courtier, Senrei sensei taught me to dance on less bent legs.

This year the students were, besides from myself, a young male foreigner, and Japanese women. The level was high. As students, we were given different tasks from the staff at Kyoto Art Center. My responsibility was to bring water to the teachers. Bottled water, and porcelain cups on a tray.

However, the teachers never touched them for the whole three weeks. The tray was brought back and fourth every day. Somebody else's responsibility was to retrieve the tape recorders. Someone was key officer, another was responsible for the tapes. When one was chosen for the specific mission, one bowed and apologized for claiming the responsibility for this mission. A choreography of politeness, performed in a circle. I loved it.

Senrei sensei taught only me. She stayed for an hour, then she went back to her mountain studio in a taxi. She revealed that she was very weak, and that after she had taught me, she returned to her mountain house and did nothing more than lying down. However, she said that illness was a gift from the god/desses. Thanks to illness, she was able to sense the skin of her inner organs, she told me.

NoHo Theatre Troupe

Three weeks before the recital, I watched the 30th anniversary with the NoHo Theatre Troupe, directed by Jonah Salz. Senrei sensei was in the audience dressed in a bright summer kimono together with Kayorei sensei.[91] The performance fused Beckett with Nō and Kyogen Theatre, and was performed by the Shigeyama Kyogen family.[92] There was also an improvisation in which the son of the great Nō actor Akira Matsui, Shunsuke Matsui, performed a strong Nō dance improvisation.[93] Shunichiro Hisada sensei, designated Intangible Cultural Asset, played the shoulder drum to electronic music by Palle Dahlstedt. Kumiko san and Heidi san performed too, as well as a contemporary Japanese actor, Futakuchi Daigaku.

I have chosen to retell some situations and seemingly mundane events to convey something of the environment and the many layers found in these learning situations. It could provide with a more nuanced picture alongside with the more stringent pictures that I sometimes draw of the history of these ancient theater forms: At the bar after the performance with NoHo Theatre Troup, we had beer together on tatami floor, not in seiza but in cross-legged positions. Even traditional Nō actors rest from hierarchies and heavy physical structures. The contemporary actor Futakuchi Daigaku apologized to the Nō actor Akira Matsui and said he did not know *jo-ha-kyu*. Maruishi, the great Kyogen actor, pointed at me and said:"You have a lot to learn from her. She performed eight months pregnant. She is strong!"

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91 Kayorei sensei was the main disciple of Senrei sensei, and a great teacher. She was always by Senrei sensei´s side and also lived in the same house.

92 Kyogen is originally performed in between the acts of a Nō play. It is always humouristic and satircal. Akira Shigeyama is one of my favourite actors.

93 Akira Matsui was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset by the Japanese government in 1998

The summer in Kyoto was very hot and humid. I praised all drinking machines found in every corner. I also carried a black parasol around, and created my own little pleasant shady world under it. The neighbourhood where Senrei sensei´s brother´s appartment was located, was quiet bustling, with shops and traffic and yet with a strong at homely atmosphere. I passed many small grannies folded over low shopping carts that they seemed to use as walkers. They walked with their backs at ninety degrees, and refused to give up. On the evenings, a man used to jog along the train track while keeping pace by slamming the hyoshigi, those wooden clappers used in Sumo and traditional theater. I heard him many times during night. Maybe he was the guard of the neighbourhood? A young couple usually practised baseball on the little street on the other side of the train track. I never saw them break any window-panes. I watched all this from the balcony, from where I could have wi-fi if I held the computer in a certain uncomfortable angle. The balcony faced the train track for the sweet little purple train that went to Arashiyama. A roadblock went down and started to jingle loudly as soon as the train arrived. The first night I woke up every time, but then I finally got used to it. Since I had taken that train many times to the temples in Arashiyama, I knew that there was a foot spa at the terminus. One could bathe one's feet in a small, steaming hot spring beside the platform. It was needed after a day of temple walks.

Wild religious dancing

One night at the neighbouring Mibu Temple I witnessed wild Buddhist dancing. Buddha's teaching had been taught with the help of dance since the 10th century. All lanterns of the temple were lit and the templeground was crowded with people of all ages. Only men performed on bent legs dressed in short cotton *yukata*s.[94] They were stomping and drumming as if calling for god/desses. There was a slow start, an increasing pace, a climax, an ending. The practice of Jo-ha-kyo. I enjoyed a wild and circus-like fight between a dragon and a spider. The atmosphere was both festive and intimate. How I loved these kind of festivals.[95]

Few know that Japan is a dancing society. Instead of always going to Manhattan for dance and theatre classes, I would encourage people to go to Kyoto or Tokyo to study Nō and Kabuki, or engage in dancing on the streets. There are many energetic festivals celebrating deities, seasons, children, rain, ancestors or rice-planting. One of the most important mythologies, written in the creation story Kojiki, was dedicated to performative activities. The Goddess Ame no Uzume made herself responsible for her performance by placing herself on a tub. Her dance was of greatest concern. The Sun Goddess had hiddened away and the world was dark and cold. The world must be

94 A yukata is a simple kimono made of cotton that one wears at summer festivals, and when practising Japanese dance

95 see a clip from this Buddhist dance party in the author's film "the Dance of the Sun", Njutafilms, 2013

saved. Ame no Uzume separated herself from the audience and the audience was meant to watch her. She performed a wild dance that made the other god/desses burst into laughter. This finally made the Sun Goddess peak out from the rock cave. The light returned with her. This was the birth of theatre and dance in Japan. All traditional Japanese theatre forms are strongly related to this mythology. The stage of the Nō theatre is elevated to remind us of that original stage: an upside down tub. Theatre and dance were crucial for staying alive, to bring the light out.

Kyoto is very flat and perfect for bicycling. My friend Peter Golightly[96] helped me buy a second hand bike. The attendant of the apartment-building behind the shutter on the ground floor, leased a bicycle parking to me. I signed a paper and paid a small sum and then got a sticker on the bike so that it would not be whisked away. July he offered for free, he said. He was very nice and we bowed like roly poly dolls to eachother every time we met. When I did not take a taxi, I biked to my daily classes in *yukata* and sandals, and not many people did this in Kyoto. It was possible because I had a special petticoat for male dances as it is then closed and bike safe. People were impressed that I managed to get dressed by myself in these traditonal Japanese clothes. I was constantly photographed.

On my bike I often passed the street where Horikawa Palace used to stand, in which my protagonist Shizuka Gozen stayed with Yoshitsune and his retainers 850 years ago. The brother Yoritomo had sent out someone to kill Yoshitsune, but he was overpowered by the monk Benkei, the brave Shizuka, Yoshitsune and the retainers. True or not, there are many plays and wood cut prints about that certain night attack at Horikawa Palace. The cities of Kyoto and Nara are museums of the performing arts.

Oe Nō Theatre in Kyoto

I performed the piece about the Shirabyōshi Shizuka at Oe Nō Theatre in Kyoto, 12th of August 2011. When I arrived in a taxi, Emiko san, Ryoko san and a third student waited in the strong and sharp sunshine outside the Nō theatre. They were perfectly dressed in bright silk kimonos, their hair in impeccable buns. It must have been extremely warm in the sun. They did not smile nor talk; they were in the state of performance preparation. Senrei sensei arrived after thirty minutes. Her students in silk kimonos did not abandon their posts. They all wanted to be there to greet Senrei sensei when she finally arrived from her mountain house in a taxi. Senrei sensei waved with her hand in their direction as if to ask them to take it easy. I was moved by their concern and attention. Yet, this put pressure on Senrei sensei to act like a Master, and today she was a performer.

96 director of the Kyo Ryu Kan studio, and ex-performer with the Kyoto based artistic collective the Dumb Types

In the women´s dressing room at the Nō theatre there was a screen, behind which Senrei sensei was dressed by a professional male dresser. In contrast, we were dressed by a professional female dresser. She wrapped us in all sorts of cords, towels, and ropes; to make us flawless. The experience was similar to a tightly laced corset. There was a big difference in how my kimono was laced, compared with my fellow student Midori san's. She was dressed in the more usual female way, with the obi tighed higher over the kimono. I really liked the male way to wear the kimono. Midori san was going to perform *Kuro kami,* a feminine piece that I will describe in details later in this essay. I was dressed last, to allow me time to rest. I hid on the balcony to which only the cameramen had access and from where I could watch my peers practise. Usually I spent several hours for warming-up. Now I had to rest in order to be able to perform. I tried not to worry; this was probably how Shizuka had felt before her performance in Kamakura.

This was the last time Senrei sensei taught at TTT, Traditional Theatre Training. I had been her student the first time she taught this course, and I was her student the last time she taught this course. She bid us farewell with a dance. She never performed while she was teaching, or supervising. This time was different. It was a fateful and sorrowful moment. If only I could understand what was happening to her, this wonderful performer and artist, my master. I watched her from the balcony of the Nō theater. She was androgynous in her black kimono, wig and white Kabuki makeup. She moved as if in a dream, a common description of the Nō theater. The best performers put their audience to sleep.

Senrei sensei

Walking on the hashigakari

I apprehensively waited behind the entrance curtain. Two bamboo pillars were attached to the entrance curtain and two professional stagehands held on to them. The colours of the curtain at the Nō theatre represent wood, fire, earth, metal, and water - green, yellow, red, white, and violet from right to left. The stage hands stood up and we bowed to eachother. When the bamboo pillars were raised, the entrance curtain ascended and the fabric fluttered above my head. I walked slowly out on the *hashigakari*, the narrow bridge at stage left of the Nō theatre that the principal actors use to enter the stage. The hashigakari represents the connection between the stage and the spiritual world, between the human and the god/desses. Here the dancer/actor was transformed from god/dess to human.

Though it was my fourth time, it was still overwhelming to walk on the hashigakari. Oe Nō Theatre is twohundred years old and many actors and dancers have walked there before me, in the same bodily structure, with straight backs, bent legs and feet that confirmed the ground. The challenge almost made me levitate. I prayed that my toenails would reach out through my white tabi in order to keep me on the soil. The slow entrance on the hashigakari was accompanied with Gagaku music and then after I had stopped, kneeled and said my line, changed into Kabuki music (Nagauta). *Kore wa Shizuka to mōsu. Shirabyōshi ni tesoro. Satemo kono tabi Kamakuradono goshō monite. Warawa ni hito sashi Mai soraetono. Onkoto ni tesoro. My name is Shizuka. I am a Shirabyōshi. On this journey the lord of Kamakura has asked me to dance. This I will do.*

I stood up and performed the steps, the spins, the postures and the pauses with as little facial expression as possible, the way Senrei sensei had taught me. In a series of circles, I was supposed to look for the face of Yoshitsune in the fan. Instead I decided to look for the face of my child that had been killed, even though I knew Shizuka originally had sung for Yoshitsune. In my interpretation I thought that Shizuka would have been much more affected by loosing her child, than loosing her lover. Yoritomo had ordered the death of the newborn boy to prevent him from growing up to become the enemy of the state. The boy had to die because his father, Yoshitsune, had lost the war. The dance gave life to something that I often lacked in dance performances: the portrayal of dancers as humans of flesh and bone and the ability to show critique on stage, rather than decoration and beauty. When I watched the performance on video some months later, I was surprised. I must admit that the strict training made me a better performer, even though I believe in more variation of performer training.

I perform the dance about Shizuka Gozen Oe Nō Theatre in Kyoto, 12th of August

By studying *Shizu no Odamaki* I could get a physical sense of the characteristics of how a Shirabyōshi performer would have moved. This Kabuki version was a reconstruction and probably included free interpretation of how the past should be portrayed. I danced Nihon Buyo with an accent. It had something to do with how I turned my shoulders a little too much or that I held my gaze a little too high.[97] Or too low. The question was whether I should keep my accent or work it off. According to Kumiko san, my accent would always be there since I was not Japanese. However, I do not think it had anything to do with nationality. I have seen several Japanese persons beginning to study Nihon Buyo. They might or might not have the accent of Martha Graham, but they do have an accent.

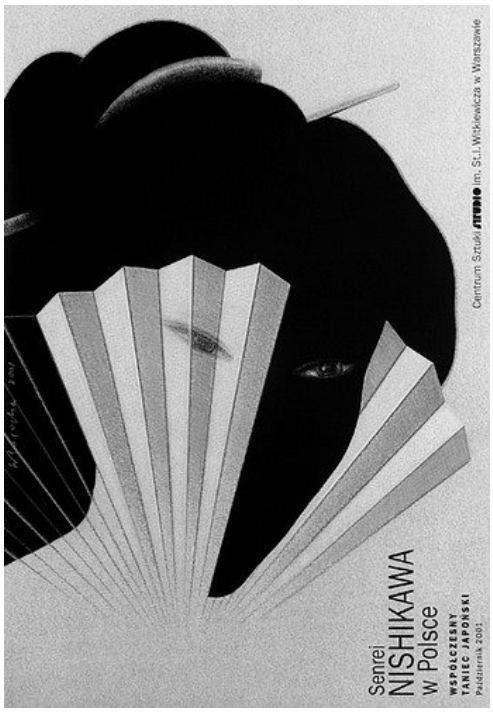
Shizuka's lament

Shizu no Odamaki was integrated in *Dust falling, rain falling* in Sweden. It had to change a bit, because of the costume. I must for example lift my toes inside the trousers and kick the fabric forwards, in order not to fall. I could not do the same suriashi on less bent legs without lifting toes or heels. I also experimented with the internal psychological drama that was sometimes used in European theatre. Senrei sensei taught me not to express anything with my face. No raised eyebrows, no sad statement. All must be kept on the inside. Instead emotions were to be expressed

97 This is definately caused by the training in Martha Graham´s dramatic dance techniques

through the *kata*, established movement rules for narration. The kata was the form that you had to follow precisely. In Japanese traditional theatre and dance, you did not cry on stage by showing a sad face and tears. Instead you cried by raising the palm of your hand, fingers kept together, slowly towards your face.

This blank face was already familiar to me, since this was also the common tradition in Western contemporary dance. The mothers of modern dance: Ruth St Denis, Martha Graham and Mary Wigman e.g., studied and admired Japanese theatre, however their faces were more of 'silent-movie-expressive'. The blank face might have appeared in postmodern dance and abstract modern dance. Many contemporary Western choreographers disliked the expressive face as this took away the focus from the body. I decided to let myself become affected or shaken by *Shizu no Odamaki*, not because I did not trust the kata, but as an experiment to play with inner and outer form. The crying on demand on stage was more physical than emotional. In a way Japanese theatre and dance were radical: considering form more important than content, and unflattered and unaffected by the audience.



Poster from Poland

New kata for Shizuka

I created a new kata for Shizuka. I lay down on the floor and danced *Takasago*, the first slow fan dance that Senrei sensei had taught me, but on my back. It was meant to be the MA for me in the performance, a necessary resting scene. Because of my training background and habit to use energy

and power on stage, I surely thought that the audience would react to the fact I was lying down, and doing so little. Instead, the audience perceived the position as an artistic choice. Again, I found myself outside my comfort zone.

I started by putting the folded fan next to my mouth. Then I opened my mouth while slowly opening the Kabuki dance fan. The fan transformed into the lament that I imagined the nobles of the 12th century court were not allowed to express, other than through sophisticated melancholic poetry. After having performed Takasago on my back, I put the fan on my nose. When I first placed the fan on my nose in the studio, I found it bizarre, and really intriguing. It also reminded me of the poster for Senrei sensei's tour to Poland in 2001, with a woman´s face behind a fan looking out from it. I slowly rised from lying down to sitting, and let the fan waver back and forth on my nose, while I calmly looked out through the laquered slats of the fan.

Hereafter I performed the typical mirror-looking katas, from Kabuki dances about caged beauties and courtesans, followed by movements that suggested the Tea Ceremony, the whipping with the bamboo whisk, the serving process. These movements became increasingly desperate and destructive. I then peeked out through the slats, and above the paper on the fan. Calmly the face was unveiled from the fan.[98]

I (the protagonist Shizuka) slowly took the fan in my arms as if it was my child. This intimate kata cannot be seen in the Kabuki repertoire. The fan/child was cradled and I leaned my cheek towards the fan. Reluctantly I held out the child /fan to the imagined Yoritomo, to the lords and warriors of Kamakura. I looked away when they took the child. The killing was symbolized with a powerful closing of the fan. Shizuka watched the closed fan, and reflected on the war that caused the death of her child. She tucked the fan away inside the nagabakama, and pulled up the heavy silk until her feet were visible, and moved forward on stage.

In the 12th century, performers did not wear tabi. Their feet were bare. In my performance the bare feet symbolized how Shizuka wanted to remove all the layers of fabric, commitments, roles, rules, positions that she had had to play in her life belonging to and being subservient a particular clan, and as a messenger of a sacred art form. She stood up and took her own few tentative steps. Finally she felt the ground under her bare feet, and was reminded of something she had since long forgotten. Her feet delved into the soil, the sensation was enjoyable, pleasurable. She dropped the fabric and Åsa made a black-out. The next day Shizuka was liberated, thanks to Yoritomo´s wife,

98 This unveiling-of-the-fan/peeking-out-of-the-cave-kata was inspired by the choreographer and performer Heidi Durning. She performed a fusion dance for my documentary film, staging both Ame no Uzume, and the Sun Goddess Amaterasu.

Masako Hojo, and moved to the capital. She had to survive as an independent performer in Kyoto. Life went on.

This is the first time that I have described details of choreography more thorougly. I have always taken notes, and drawn sketches to memorize, but I never wrote down my ideas on how or what the movements would symbolize. I think this could be more elaborated in the future, to reach an even more physical sensation of what was going on on stage. The way the fan digged into the bone of my nose, and how I had to balance it in order not to drop it. The neck pain from bending backwards. When slowly rising from the floor, I used the techniques of Martha Graham. The Graham Contraction was something that Martha Graham had created while she observed the physical manifestation of grief in the body. The Contraction was fundamental to her technique.[99] We had often joked about it. It was such a significant physical construction. Martha Graham definitely owned it. But, would she still own it in 2214? It would have been interesting to have a discussion with a Kabuki choreographer, and a contemporary Western choreographer on ways of composing new *kata* within tradition. This text is the start of something. But I still was not sure whether I wanted to describe movements, or my relation to the practice, to my composing, my relation to the audience, my relation to text. Maybe I need to meet a new audience for this, a reading audience, to discuss it with them. My investigation continues.

Ami with fan Photo: Anders Bryngel

99 I have no books to quote on Martha Graham's Contraction. I have learned Contraction from teachers like Anna Grip, Tina Andersson, and Christel Wallin.

Shirabyōshi and Emperors

Our last scene of *Dust falling, Rain falling,* was dedicated to a fictive Emperor. I will therefore write something about the history of female performers and Emperors. Some of the Shirabyōshi enjoyed artistic patronage and became the teachers and performers of the Imperial court. Especially the Emperors Toba, Go-Shirakawa and Go-Toba play significant but problematic roles in marketing and promoting the art performed by the Shirabyōshi.[100]

This was a time of cloistered rule, and many Emperors, especially Go-Shirakawa, continued to rule from behind the scenes long after they had left the throne. This meant they were still in control of power, but had more time for the arts and poetry as they were not busy with daily political meetings. The Emperors and the political leaders needed the Shirabyōshi performers to display their cultural capital; their refined and somewhat daring taste for contemporary art. They wanted to distinguish themselves from the other courtiers and show they were brave and modern. The performers needed patrons to continue to work with and develop their art. This mutual symbiosis created social mobility, where people from different civil ranks met inside the Imperial palace, to exchange ideas about new music and new dance.

Go-Shirakawa invited the female performer and composer of Imayo songs, Otomae, to the palace as his teacher. Otomae taught him daily for ten years, until she passed away. Kumiko san described the special situation with the Emperor inviting such a low-ranked person to the palace. However, according to Yung Hee´s book, Otomae was a strict teacher and did not separate her students in high or low. If they did not practise well enough, she refused to teach them. At first she was very reluctant to teach the Emperor as she had already retired.[101] This showed that she was not dependent of his support. It was the Emperor who begged her to teach him. However, after the *Imayō* songs were written down and collected in *the Ryojin hisho - the secret book on the dust on rafters,* and Otomae had passed away, Go-Shirakawa promoted himself the most. His teacher Otomae had no other disciples than him, and so he declared he was the one ending the previously matriarchal heritage, and lineage. Around 1179, he declaredt two male officers as his only disciples. He decided that everything that deviated from them should be considered unauthentic. I had not been able to find out such important information, had it not been for these studies. This was a clear statement, a historical evidence on how the political powers issued a legal decision that made it more complicated for the professional female performers to continue their art form.

100Toba was the 74th Emperor who ruled 1107 -1123, Go-Shirakawa was the 77th Emperor, who ruled 1155-1158, and Go-Toba was the 82nd Emperor, who ruled 1183-1198

101Yung-Hee, K. Songs to make the dust dance: the Ryojin hisho of twelfth-century Japan, University of California Press, 1994, p 15

The Emperor had both condemned and praised the Shirabyōshi and the Asobi. He praised their art of Imayō, but at the same time declared them being of lower value. He also pointed out the difference in his practice, compared with theirs: He sang for Buddha. They, on the other hand, sang for the humans in the profane world. This, according to himself, made him superior and the performers inferior.[102] One could draw a parallel to how critics in the history of performing arts have denoted art created by women. Men created real art, women keep a hobby. Bach composed for God. Men write real literature, women write diaries. Men make real paintings, women make sketches.

The last scene of Dust falling, Rain falling
Photo: Anders Bryngel

For the last scene of *Dust falling, Rain falling,* the scene where we were summoned by the Emperor to bring down rain, Åsa had the idea of reversing the light. I decided that we would reverse the whole scene, with the Emperor upstage. We would turn to the Emperor while performing. He would be our "real" audience, and thus we would perform with our backs to the audience at the 3rd Floor. Åsa would put a strong frontal light dazzle at the back of the stage to symbolize the edge, and the imagination of an imperial audience on the other side. The audience at the 3rd Floor became witness to what was going on behind the scenes, with all the pre-performance rituals. Åsa put seven small kitsch cherry blossom tree-lamps upside down on the ceiling. The technician Finn swept the floor, Kumiko san cleaned her flute, Palle checked his wires, Kumiko san insisted on helping me put on the I golden hat. We performed the same choreography to the same song that we had already

102 Ibid

rehearsed in the previous scene. Palle played on a pre-programmed mouth organ from China.[103] Many audience members described how they experienced the slightly creepy feeling of being in front of the imperial powers, and they were worried we would not be successful. In the end one could hear the brittle sound of the rain, while the lights slowly faded.

Palle Dahlstedt plays the Chinese mouth organ
Photo: Anders Bryngel

Culture shocks and the conflict of *ma*

Because I work in between two cultures, and try to understand both at the same time, I want to share some examples of conflicts and culture shocks that I have met with. I did not plan to write about cultural conflicts, but as they appeared I needed to think about them. In the future I hope to be able to describe and analyze cultural conflicts more effectively, e.g. with the help of contemporary post-colonial studies, and gender studies.

The inclusion of all social classes in the audience

I was impressed how Kumiko san adjusted to Sweden. I understood she felt the same confusion that I had done in Japan, and she met everything with curiosity. Neighbours who welcomed her with flowers that were seen as unlucky in Japan. Communal laundry room etiquette. Different philosophies around food, performance, economy, art. For example, we had different views on the ticket fares, and different views on the inclusion of all social classes in the audience. In Japan, Kumiko san made sure that she always charged a higher price for her independent concerts, in order

103 this mouth organ is called *shō* in Japanese. The *shō* was adopted from China, and an important instrument in *Gagaku* court music.

to get an audience that would understand her music. For her to hear that I had prepared a special peformance at half the price to make it possible for college students and retired people to come and watch must have been a bit odd, but she could understand it. As a result there was a tendency in Sweden that artists always lost money, and that the Arts was valued lower. However, if we would raise the price, the audience would not come. To return to the idea that the Arts would only be possible to be watched by the upper classes would be a complicated issue.

Pointillism as a democratic, and creative tool

When three people with different backgrounds come together to work, the performer training you have had is made apparent. While working in Alexandria, Egypt with a group of young female dancers, their leader told me to be very strict and hierarchal, otherwise the dancers would not take me seriously. This was when pointillism came in handy. The pointillism method made the performers responsible for their own space, and the hierarchy inside the group disappeared temporarily. A director in Japan advised me when working with Japanese performers not to ask questons, but to forcefully instruct how and where things would be, so as to not loose their respect. I think there is a risk to hide these issues behind nationality. I have worked with traditionally trained dancers (from Holland, Finland, Sweden) who also have challenged my leadership in the same way. I prefer collaboration, but since I am usually the initiator, originator and also employer, my position is complicated. This is something I need to reflect more on, and want to develop further.

For *Dust falling, Rain falling* I finally had to accept that the collaborative aspect would happen more in the music, between Palle and Kumiko san. They were both musicians, and it was just enough for both of them to integrate the way they did, following my script and choreography. Kumiko san and I had different views on social classes. For example, I found it difficult to talk about the Shirabyōshi performers as low-ranked people. I instead wanted to discuss how to show their class ambiguity. I was worried the performance would be read as another document of weak women, and I did not think the audience could read any male constructions in the performance, other than the sword monologue. The male Shirabyōshi costume was interpreted as female by the Swedish audience. One could label our conflicts cultural - be it Swedish or Japanese. In the end I find them quite universal.

Friendly arguments about jo-ha-kyu and ma

We had friendly arguments about *jo-ha-kyu* and *ma*, and Kumiko san explained that Western musicians who had lived and played for fifteen years in Japan still did not get it. "They just play *on the beat*, and count 1-2-3/1-2-3 instead of just one-one-one-one-one," Kumiko san explained. "With

ma, there are no other beats that exist at the very moment. No beat before and no beat after to mind about," she said. I think one could understand it intellectually, but it would take many years of practise to embody it. Kumiko san tried to point out how she experienced my Japanese dance. She explained that I could dance well and get the atmosphere, but that it did not look Japanese. My movements looked contemporary, even when I danced a traditional dance (maybe this was the ever present accent of Martha Graham). Why? Because there was no *ma*, which was the true basis of tradition. She told me not to worry about it, and I tried not to worry about it. Ma was meant to be an experimental place, a sense of space, but it became a nationalistic conflict. Ma and jo-ha-kyu could be used in oppressive ways. I did not think this was the intention when it started hundreds of years ago as a way of calling the god/desses, and later organizing space time. Besides, in the case of jo-ha-kyu, it was not even Japanese. It came from China. Our discussions abou *ma* finally felt a bit humouristic, and I longed to make jokes about it on stage.

Conversations with the audience

Gun Lund, Lars Persson, and the 3rd floor have created a chat room in the foyer where the audience can meet and talk with the performers. This was a non-hierarchical way to get feedback, and it also counteracted the emptiness one experiences after a performance. The audience were able to follow almost everything, even though none of them knew anything about Japanese dance and theatre. One lady told me she had seen Japanese Kabuki in New York City in the 1950s, and that *Dust falling, Rain falling* had brought her right back to that experience. I was content to hear how people had related the Emperor to our contemporary political leaders, and how my dancing peers could associate the aging Shirabyōshi with aging contemporary dancers. We did have beautiful reviews from three different papers, but they could never replace a meaningful exchange with the audience. Many of my peers expressed *respect* for my work.[104] I tried to hold on to their words. I was still very exhausted after the project, and not at all sure about continuing my work on stage. It was

104 Eva Persson, process manager,16/11 2012: "I felt respect for how you do what you do, and the way you persistently make further research into this traditional art form, which is unknown/unfamiliar to me, but to which I, through your art, am able to gain isight, and that you also make something else out of this. The way you use the "traditional" and create your own expression out of it. I could look at the piece as an artistic piece, but you also gave me the opportunity to spot / gain knowledge about a tradition that I do not have much knowledge about. In this way, this opened a "bigger world" for me. "Generous" is a word that comes to me. It feels generous when I as an audience member can take part of this. Christina Molander, lecturer, producer, 16/11 2012:"That you put much love in the piece which was felt clearly. That there was a seriousness, and a sincere interest for the Dancer through time, and the possibility to move that thought into our time. This was something that reached out to us in the audience in an amazing way."

excessively demanding, and required too much focus, and I was never satisfied. I longed for, and was very prepared to start my Master's studies a couple of months later.

I had prepared a questionnaire to selected audience members, to find out more about the reception. Most of them were music students from the Academy of music and drama, who filled in the questionnaire after the dress rehearsal. Others answered during the performance period. They replied these questions anonymously. Their reactions showed that they had agreed on our experiment with: on one hand the representation of an Imperial palace, and on the other hand a contemporary stage in Gothenburg. This questionnaire and their answers can be read in the Appendix.

The Master student

After all, I did make a second performance related to Shirabyōshi**.** This time I had a different point of departure: a piece that had been created for men to impersonate women, *Kuro kami.* Just like the previously mentioned *Shizu no Odamaki,* which was a piece created for men to impersonate women who impersonated men: the Shirabyōshi, Kuro kami was also a cross gender-piece. However this was something that I had learned from the books and articles that I found as the privileged student with access to a great University Library.[105]

My big challenge was to study the feminine construction of *Kuro kami* that I at first did not have any interest in. However, I thought I would be able to handle it if I put this dance, Kuro kami, in a different setting and context. By including Japanese dance in contemporary work was also an attempt of a non-hierarchical treatment of all dance practices, to bid defiance to the ethno-centrism of dance and theatre in Sweden. But I did not think I wanted to call it dance. After all, I was in an acting programme at the Academy of Music and Drama at Gothenburg University. I met with new people, new ideas, and new resources.

Theatre and Dance - a field of tension

In Japanese theatre, the traditional performers of Nō and Kabuki are considered both dancers and actors. They were also singers, especially in Nō theatre. The previously mentioned famed Kita school Nō actor Akira Matsui is a great dancer.[106] I have seen him perform improvisational dance in the Nō tradition to electro-acoustic music.[107] Nō and Kabuki actors were trained in dance and

105 Mezur, K. *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female Likeness.*, Palgrave Macmillan New York, 2005

106Akira Matsui was designated an Important Intangible Cultural Asset by the Japanese government in 1998

107 in the performance Eastern Mirror, directed by Jonah Salz. Music by Palle Dahlstedt, performed at Oe Nō theatre in Kyoto, Dec 2001

therefore not afraid of performing acts without words. There seemed to be a less need to part body from mind or text from movement in Japanese theatre. The tension between the East and the West could be seen as gender-coded. The Dance in the West is a woman. The history of Western dance is represented by a strong matriarchal lineage. The Theatre in the West is a man. The history of Western theatre is represented by a strong patriarchal lineage. In the West, dance was defined *from* theatre, as something different. The Dance in the East is mostly a man, but he could appear in the feminine construction. The history of Japanese traditional theatre and dance is represented by a strong patriarchal lineage. A strong matriarchal lineage in the Japanese performing arts existed within the Shirabyōshi culture (and also Miko, Asobi, Kugutsu, Kusemai), and in the contemporary Geisha culture. Thus, the Dance in the East could also be a woman. In the East, dance exists *within* theatre. And theatre exists *within* dance.

Pia Muchin described what she considered the big difference between the dancer and actor, from her experience with teaching the YAT-method to actors at the Gothenburg University:

> When the body itself becomes the carrier of meaning, the identification can sometimes resemble the dancer, but at the same time the technique of the character work differs, and is more of an actor´s, than a dancer´s work. The actor picks impulses from the inner motives that drive the body through the room. The dancer might have a different dialect or language, contrasting from the actor's. The actor´s physical technique may in some cases be close to the dancer's, and then creates a field of tension between the two art forms of dance and theater.[108]

I work in this field of tension.

Learning Japanese dance through video and text

I started to study the new feminine Kabuki piece on my own, *Kuro kami*, by watching different video recordings of it. Then, before I would perform it in Sweden, I was going to Kyoto to study it with Senrei sensei. I read about the piece, and listened to the song many times. I tried to sing it.

黒紙の	Kuro kami no	It is the pillow we
むすぼれたる	musubaretaru	shared that night
おもいをば	omoi wo ba	when I let down my

108 Mark, E. and Muchin, P. Teorier ur kroppsliga praktiker (Theories of bodily practices), Carlssons Bokförlag, 2010, p 62-63

とけてねたよの	tokete neta yo no	jet-black hair
まくらこそ	makura koso	That is the cause of my
ひとりぬろよの	hitori nuro yo no	lament.
あだまくら	ada makura	When I sleep alone
		with a single robe to
そではかたしく	sode wa katashiku	cover me
つまじゃと言うて	tsuma jia to iute	You told me I was
		yours.
ぐちな女ごの	guchi na ona go no	Not knowing the heart
心としらで	kokoro to shirade	of a plain woman
しんとふけたる	shin to fuketaru	the voice of a temple
かねの声	kane no koe	bell sounds into a quiet
ゆべのゆめの	yube no yume no	night, awakening from
けささめて	kesa samete	an empty dream
ゆじゃしなつかし	yujashi natsukashi	in the morning
やるせなや	yarusenaya	How lovely sweet is
つもるとしらで	tsumoru to shirade	my helpless longing
つもる白雪	tsumoru shira yuki	Before I know it
		the silver snow has
		piled up [109]

Video recordings of the pieces were not allowed in *keikoba*, the studio. The studio was always kept free from cameras. However, Senrei sensei made an exception for me, and we then decided a special time for the recording in which she would also sit down and explain movement details to the camera. Adding on to this, Kyoto Art Center documented the recitals, and students could buy these copies.

I had the recordings of three different persons performing Kuro kami. Because I had never studied Kuro kami with Senrei sensei, I had no recordings of our class together. I instead watched the recital videos from 2000, and 2011. The performers had different cultural backgrounds, different training, and they differed in age and gender. All of them struggled with the movements in this dance, and I needed all three recordings for learning. When a student overdid a movement, it helped

109translation by Tsuge, Genichi, quoted by Hahn, T. Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance, Wesleyan University Press, 2007

me notice the details. When a beginner exaggerated the posture, it was also a reminder of the difficult construction. A construction might look natural when performed by a professional, but was of course all but natural. Mistakes were good teachers.

Researcher and musicologist Tomie Hahn has describes nihon buyo through four important Japanese concepts: simplicity, irregularity, suggestion and impermanence.[110] These are concepts we never discussed in a dance class, not in Sweden, not in Japan.

simplicity

The concept of *wabi sabi* is a whole outlook on life. In this view existence is transient, and we should accept that time is constantly passing. Therefore artistic pieces, handicraft and performances engage in the plain, undecorated, quiet and simple. This simplicity lies in the shape of a kimono, a fan, a Japanese garden, architecture, a Japanese tea bowl, flower arrangements.[111]

irregularity

a *bonzai* tree is never planted in the center, and there is no such thing as uniform tableware. Everybody gets their unique cup. Hahn describes that the prevention of regularity and symmetry was thought to be grounded in nature, as well as the habit for humans to discover and acknowledge things that are unexpected or uneven. In the Japanese dance, the body was seldom placed in a symmetrical posture. An irregular pattern with syllables of 5-7-5-7 can be seen in Japanese poetry, and in the Imayō songs. Irregularity also involved the concepts of *ma* and *jo-ha-kyu*, that I have previously described[112]

suggestion

An explicit appearance of a subject is not considered as interesting or engaging as that which has some mystery and subtlety about it. The kimono wraps up the body, and only feet, neck and hands are visible. The face is covered with white paint, and the head with a wig. The communication, the plot is never direct, instead there are several nuances, and suggestions.

> The art of implication, indirectly imparting the mood and alluding to a deeper meaning, is part of the commitment of *nihon buyo* dancers.[113]

110Hahn, T. Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance, Wesleyan University Press, 2007, p 51

111Ibid, p 52

112Ibid pp 52-54

113Ibid p 55

impermanence

Many of the dance pieces celebrates the cycle of life, the changing of seasons, deriving from Buddhist belief in the karmic wheel of life and death, and of rebirth. Here and now are precious, we do not know where we will be tomorrow.

> Time-based arts are naturally linked to their ephemeral existence in the present, bow to the lived experience of the moment, and revere a connection with the past in embodied memory.[114]

Hahn delightfully describes the essence of Japanese arts that could explain why I was so attracted to it. But that attraction also gave me questions, and I found myself performing pieces that I felt uneasy about. These concepts were not enough for me in order to justify the learning of this certain dance: Kuro kami. It was not enough for me to perform the Japanese esthetical values and concepts of beauty. Maybe this was where nationality came in after all, even though I was reluctant to point it out. When I gave my lecture performance about *Dust falling, Rain falling,* in Helsinki, the scholar Matthew Isaac Cohen asked me what was Swedish in my performance.[115] I answered that I thought it was how I let the Shirabyōshi speak up for herself, in order to put (all) stories about the carnal, male-alluring female stereotype to an end.

Studying the problem - different stereotypes

So, I did not want to study Kuro kami, but I would force myself to do it as an experiment. Performing the idea that women suffer in a certain quiet and elegant way, and are left behind, was something I could not do. Kuro kami meant Black Hair. It told the story of the sad and sexually frustrated Tatsuhime. In the dance, she takes out her hairpins in an elegant way, and counts the straws of a tatami mat, pointing out that *it is three days since we slept together,* while the singer sings *the pillow.*[116] She shows with her sleeves how they had slept next to eachother, while the singer sings: *When I sleep alone with a single robe to cover me.* Tatsuhime performs chastity, virtue, and goodness. She is alone, and her body trembles with desire for Yoritomo. However, there was salvation: *the voice of a temple bell sounds into a quite night, awakening from an empty dream.* If she managed to escape her carnal desires, she could reach a higher state. One morning Tatsuhime wakes up to see the garden is covered with snow, and her black hair has become white: the concept

114Ibid, p 55

115 Peer-reviewed presentation, Shifting Dialogues Symposium on Asian Performance, Theatre Academy, Helsinki, May 18-19 2012

116 In Tatsuhime´s lifetime there were no tatami mats in the houses, but the choreography was composed in modern times when Japanese houses did have tatami, and many performances were performed on tatami floor

of impermanence as the calming, and consolation of a passionate woman. In the meantime, her ex-lover Yoritomo was having a ball, and developed a violent, but fantastic career.

Tatsuhime's lover had been Yoritomo no Minamoto, a Minamoto/ Genji warrior. Yoritomo, the antagonist of this essay, was the same person who later forced the Shirabyōshi Shizuka Gozen to dance in captivity, and who ordered the killing of Shizuka´s and Yoshitsune´s new born child. Later, he also ordered the killing of his halfbrother Yoshitsune. In order to get promoted, Yoritomo had to sleep his way to power. Tatsuhime agreed that he would instead marry Masako Hojo from a powerful warrior family. This marriage changed Japan´s history. After Yoritomo married Masako, he finally became Japan´s first Shogun[117]. Japan entered military dictatorship. If Yoritomo had stayed with Tatsuhime, the political situation might have developed differently.

Studying Kuro kami started as a problem, and the refusal of learning sterotyped movements. I had difficulties with the polarization of elegant and quiet women at home, and wild and noisy men at war, both glorified in a suffocating way. How come I found it problematic to reproduce this image of femininity? How come I did not feel the same with the stereotyped samurai? I have no real answer yet to that question, but it might have to do with who has the desirable, privileged position in society, and who was considered a hero or not. The persona of the Samurai created power and energy. On the other hand, the persona of the woman left lonely, created compassion and pity. Because wellbeing is the God/dess of contemporary times, the weak creature (the woman in pain) is mocked. Whereas the upper-class women on a pedestal have had the position of the weak, and in need of protection, many women of today struggle to get the so called masculine power, independence and force.

Sacred female culture

I decided to look back at the gender constructions of the Heian and Kamakura time, to get some understanding why female performers started to dress up like men in the past. Was it the same struggle to get the so called masculine power? I had never compared texts like this before, with just one question in mind, and I found it rewarding. It was difficult to know where to stop, because I did not have methods to look at texts in a strategic way. I constantly found new texts, and I wanted to read more. The Gothenburg University Library bought many of the books that I ordered. I contacted (female) professors in search of texts that first were impossible to find, and they kindly sent me their PDF-files. I had looked for Roberta Strippoli's dissertation for one year, and suddenly it appeared at the library in Gothenburg.

117 in 1192

The politics of cross-gender

Kumiko san had already pointed out that the cross-gender act was not a lifestyle, it was a performance act. Makiko Sakurai, the contemporary underground Shirabyōshi, explained that there had been a strong sacred female culture in Japan.[118] The shrine maidens (Miko) had prominent roles in the society. The Emperors and the Court wanted to exhibit and support qualities beleived possessed by the shrine maidens (Miko): the ability to use, and to communicate with the force of nature and its god/dessess. The military clans also wanted to exhibit this same force of nature, and the power of praying: often performed as ritual dances. One of the purposes for the Shirabyōshi and their supporters was to show that they were the incarnation of Buddha. People who strived for political power needed such proof, Sakurai explained. It seemed these performances might have been the sophisticated versions of transformation acts, and trickery in street theatre, which has existed both in Kabuki, and in Western theatre.

Ever since Emperor Kanmu wanted only men to manage the government with China as a role model, a new warrior society emerged.[119] During the Heian period and further on, male rulers were favoured. The Shirabyōshi looked like men when they put on the male clothes. Was it their way to get the so called masculine power? The Shirabyōshi were supported by both the Emperors and the military clans. The fact that they dressed up like men, and used Buddhist names probably helped their art to survive for two hundred years. Sakurai believes it was a smart move to fit the new demands of a new society. Eventually, the Samurai exchanged the female shrine maiden to the male *Chigo Kōshō*[120]. Dance and theatre were hereafter increasingly ruled and performed by men. This change in society was reflected in this Imayō:

> **Ryōjin hishō 556**
> In the Eastlands
> are there no women
> There are only male mediums
> so the gods take possession of men[121]

Many of the Imayō songs of the Ryōjin hishō expressed women's desire for salvation. The following Imayō must have given hope to many women when it was sung and performed on the streets, and it might also have inspired the cross-dressing of Shirabyōshi:

118 Private conversations with Makiko Sakurai, Dec 2013-Feb 2014

119 Emperor Kanmu, the 50 th Emperor, who ruled between 781-806

120 page or acolyte (young boys in religious, or court service)

121 Nakahara, G.E. The songs of Ryōjin hishō, ProQuest dissertations and thesis,1999, p 394

Ryōjin hishō 119

Women have the Five Obstacles
and have difficulty entering the Pure Land of Muku Paradise
but just as the lotus flower blooms in muddy water
the Dragon King's daughter become the Buddha[122]

Muku Paradise referred to the paradise where the Dragon King´s daughter attained Buddhahood first after transforming into a man. This referred to the Daiba Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which I will describe later. Here is one more Imayō on the same subject:

Ryōjin hishō 117
In general, if a woman has heard
the recitation of this chapter even once
by midnight, when she climbs on the lotus flower
she would surely have forever discarded her female form[123]

Tsurezuregusa

In the work *Tsurezuregusa* , *Essays in Idleness,* written around 1330, by the Zen priest Yoshida Kenko, there is a description of the Shirabyōshi performer *Iso no Zenji*, who is thought to be one of the originators of the Japanese drama and also is suggested being the first Shirabyōshi.[124] My protagonist, Shizuka Gozen was her daughter.

On the origin of certain dances

Section 225. O no Hisasuke tells me that the lay priest Michinori once chose the most pleasing of the various (known) dances and taught a woman called Iso no Zenji to perform them. Girt with a sword, she wore a white garment with a man's cap, and hence they came to be known as men's dances. Zenji had a daughter named Shizuka who followed her mother´s profession; and these two were the first original female dancers. They sang of the signs and wonders of Buddhist and Shinto Gods. In later times Minamoto no Mitsuyuki composed many more. And some are the revered composition of the ex-Emperor Go-Toba, which His Majesty was graciosly pleased to teach to Kamegiku.[125]

122 Ibid p 214

123 Ibid, p 214

124 Yoshida Kenko: Tsurezuregusa, Essays in Idleness, translated by William Ninnis Porter, London H.Milford 1914
125 Ibid, p 168

This document contradicts other accounts, but further archives are as unverifiable. It is written here, that *Fujiwara no Michinori* taught the male movement of dance to *Iso no Zenji*. Fujiwara no Michinori was an aristocratic Confucian scholar, who later became a Buddhist monk. He was very close to Emperor Go-Shirakawa. It is also written that Emperor Go-Toba was the teacher of his beloved, the Shirabyōshi *Kamegiku.* The author Yoshida Kenko at least wanted to contribute with the idea that the new Imayō-, and the new dance tradition started *inside* the court and had a religious meaning, while others, including myself, believe it was composed by Shirabyōshi themselves and came from the streets, from folk art and songs and then mixed with the Court dance and music.

The Tale of Heike

In The Tale of Heike, the medieval description of the rise and fall of the military clan Taira/Heike, that I have described in the beginning of this text, we can also find accounts of the Shirabyōshi.[126]

> "[i]n the beginning … dressed in men's suikan overshirts and high caps and wore daggers with silver-decorated hilts and scabbards.… In more recent times, they have worn only the overshirts.…The name shirabyōshi [white rhythm] comes from the color of the overshirts".[127]

> "Now, the first Shirabyōshi dances in our country were performed during the reign of Emperor Toba by two women called Shima-no-senzai and Waka-no-mai. In the beginning, the dancers dressed in men's suikan overshirts and high caps and wore daggers with silver-decorated hilts and scabbards: their performances were thus called "male dancing". In more recent times, they have worn only the overshirts, dispensing with the cap and the dagger. [128]

The Daiba Chapter of the Lotus Sutra

Many earlier Buddhist sutras read there will never be a time for women to become buddha*s*. Women were considered to be sinners, and wereeven refused to visit some temples because of their "impurity". Introduced at this time was the Daiba chapter, also known as Devadatta, the 12th chapter

126 McCullough, H. C.The Tale of the Heike *Stanford University Press,* 1988

127 Ibid, p 30

128 Kuroda Akira and Matsuo Ashie, Genpei josuiki (Tokyo: Miyai shoten, 1991) Vol. 3: 144-155, cited in Strippoli, R. Dancing through time: Transformations of the Gio legend in premodern Japanese literature and theater, Stanford University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2006, p 43

of the Lotus Sutra. In this chapter there is a slight hope women could reach the same paradise as men.

> Chapter 12, The Daiba Chapter from the Lotus Sutra
> At that time Shariputra said to the dragon girl, "You suppose that in this short time you have been able to attain the unsurpassed way. But this is difficult to believe. Why? Because a woman's body is soiled and defiled, not a vessel for the Law. How could you attain the unsurpassed bodhi? ... Moreover, a woman is subject to the five obstacles. First, she cannot become a Brahma heavenly king. Second, she cannot become the king Shakra. Third, she cannot become a devil king. Fourth, she cannot become a wheel-turning sage king. Fifth, she cannot become a Buddha. How then could a woman like you be able to attain Buddhahood so quickly?"
> At that time the dragon girl had a precious jewel worth as much as the thousand-million-fold world which she presented to the Buddha. The Buddha immediately excepted it. The dragon girl said to Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated to the venerable one, Shariputra, "I presented the precious jewel and the World-Honored One accepted it - was that not quickly done?"
> They replied, "Very quickly!"
> The girls said, "employ your supernatural powers and watch me attain Buddhahood. It shall be even quicker than that!"
> At that time the members of the assembly all saw the dragon girl in the space of an instant change into a man and carry out all the practices of a bodhisattva, immediately proceeding to the Spotless World of the south, taking a seat on a jeweled lotus, and attaining impartial and correct enlightenment...[129]

Although women were unable to attain the five ranks of Buddhahood and not enter the highest spiritual state, there was this one exception.The Daiba chapter told a story about the daughter of the Dragon King and how it actually was possible for her to enter if she refrained from her sexuality, and changed her body into that of a man's.[130] When different Imayō-songs were composed around this chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and performed in public, they helped to spread this positive message further. In this light, the cross-dressing became an ironic act, an act of resistance. After having found these texts, I think I gained a clearer idea about the cross-dressing. The cross-dressing looked like a

129 The Lotus Sutra, translated by Burton Watson, Colombia University Press, 1993

130Yung-Hee, K. Songs to make the dust dance: the Ryojin hisho of twelfth-century Japan, University of California Press, 1994

modern act performed to become a part of, and to please the elite audience members, but might as well be a typical act of the truth-teller: the Joker. I think that there are more than just one reason of the cross-dressing, e.g. related to sexuality. I have tried to find texts on love between women around this time, but I have only found descriptions of male-male love, common i the Tale of Genji and in poems by Buddhist monks and priests. It seems that texts on female-female love did not appear until the late 1800s, with authors like Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), and Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951).

Taiga Drama

In the two recent Japanese TV-dramas - Taira no Kiyomori and Yoshitsune – the Emperors were not portrayed in very nice ways. Shirabyōshi, however, stood in good steads. Both screenplays were based on novels written by female authors, Tomiko Miyao and Yuki Fujiumoto. I have seen older films where Shirabyōshi are portrayed as posh and hypocritical. In the TV-dramas they are romantically portrayed as self-sacrificing and kind-hearted. While gardening, the mother of Kiyomori Taira, the future leader of the Heike clan, sings the most popular Imayō.

> Ryōjin hishō 359
> In order to play, I think we are born
> In order to jest, I think we are born
> For when I hear the voices of children playing
> even my own body is stirred[131]

She has a discussion with a Samurai, who thought the song was too easygoing. She argues that life also means to be happy and to live with the eagerness of a child. This very Imayō, since it is and was so popular, has been analyzed a lot. Older scholars have meant that this Imayō was about the carnal sins committed by a prostitute Asobi, who now regretted her sinful life, and dreamt about Buddhist salvation.[132] The TV-drama took a different stand and suggested this Imayō was an appreciation of life itself. When the Shirabyōshi, and mother of Kiyomori Taira/Heike is killed by imperial arrows, we took her party. These contemporary historian TV-dramas are examples of how Japanese educative history is combined with Western acting methods. Many of the actors are famous J-Pop stars, young and famous pop stars who act in old-fashioned drama to popularize history. The settings and locations of the dramas are beautiful, however I find the Western.style

131 Ibid, pp 327-328

132 Nakahara, G.E. The songs of Ryōjin hishō, ProQuest dissertations and thesis,1999, p328

television theme music overly dramatic, and romantic. The producers have chosen to ignore Nō and Gagaku music, other than in the specific dance- and music scenes. I think this is a real pity.

Terry Kawashima problematizes the use of the word *margin* when describing female performers.[133] Instead one could say that Shirabyōshi had an exclusive position. Insecure and unstable, but exclusive. Compared to other women at that time they had more freedom and were more mobile. I would like to think of them as an intellectual underground movement. Makiko Sakurai wrote to me that she performed in the underground music scene together with contemporary musicians. She often performs with musicians playing music instruments from other parts of the world; Arabic darabuka, Celtic harp, violin, but also with musicians trained in Nō. Since Imayō, the modern songs, differed somewhat from Court poetry Waka, I wonder if these songs were not expressing early postmodern aesthetics. They rebelled against the uniform and conform, and they contained many different viewpoints as well as many diverse subjects: the mixing of high and low, religious and profane, human and god/desses, rich and poor. Nonetheless, even though they were popular songs, they never received the status of recognized State art, something that Kagura and Waka did, and later both the Nō and the Kabuki theatre.[134]The recognition and appointment of State art was the profane way to reach immortality. The male colleagues of the Shirabyōshi owned the rights to tread both the profane, and the sacred ways. The female Shirabyōshi might tread the sacred way, if she managed to chang into a man.

What would be the contemporary Daiba Chapter? What must contemporary women do in order to get the same salary as men, the same positions? She must perform the masculine. The male construction seems to be the least provocative in our culture. Maybe the feminine construction has become so repelled and absurd, that only men remain the only accepted performers of it.

The reflective practitioner

I brought the theoretical seminars of the reflective practitioner that we had with Cecilia Lagerström and Kent Sjöström into practice. The following text is an excerpt of a process diary that I kept for five months in 2012.

133 Kawashima, T. Writing Margins: The Textual Construction of Gender in Heian and Kamakura Japan, Harvard University Press, 2001

134 Ibid, pp 156

The Malmgren studio, and the Veresstudio, Academy of music and drama, Gothenburg University, 2012

I practised in the mornings in brand new spaces: the black theatre boxes at Academy of music and drama. Because actors in Sweden wear shoes in the studios I could not wear the white tabi. I exercised in very low lights, while watching the clip from when Senrei sensei performed at TTT in Aug 2011. I had the video image of her projected on the wall with the sound out in the speakers. Could I invite some of her presence? Could she help me create the *keikoba,* the studio practice, these mornings in Gothenburg?

I performed the greeting ritual, the formal bows and lines in seiza, and walked in suriashi towards her. *Okeiko onegaiitashimasu. Please teach me.* She moved slowly in her black kimono, golden obi, white paint and a wig. The square with her image on the wall stood out in the dark room. I walked in and out of shadows and wondered what fears and joys remained in that black theatre box. It was often spooky and I avoided the darkest corners of the room. The studios of the Academy bore the names of masters, and made me reflect on the master-apprenticeship relation. The Malmgren studio: Yat (Gert) Malmgren was the dead master of the school whose teachings, the YAT technique, still was the foundation. The Veres studio: Frantisek Veres was the apprentice of Yat, and the master of Pia Muchin. Pia Muchin was one of the directors of this Master´s programme. On the wall: My master, Nishikawa Senrei sensei. In the room: Ami, the apprentice.

These morning practises that I did before our seminars started were all very rewarding. I was back in the body again, and it was good to escape the usual dance studio with its big, clean floor and mirrors that demanded cover of space and big movements from me. The darkness was essential to reach the stillness and silence. Bodies were seldom quiet. Sometimes the body was in pain, and gave us anathomic lessons. It pointed out all the small joints we seldom thought of on painfree days. I experienced and acknowledged the wrists, the ankles, the toe joints, the hip joints. I asked carefully if this body was able to move. Sometimes the body was all stiff and dry. I did not demand anything from it, just that I fulfilled the rehearsal, which I did with rigid limbs and muscles. Sometimes suriashi was really boring, and I had very little energy, but I could live with that. When my body would not open, whatever that meant, I decided to walk a couple of more lengths of suriashi to stay with being fully bored. After those boring lengths of walking suriashi I decided to try them like a court dancer, like Shizuka Gozen, with less bent hips and less effort in shoulders. I walked straight, with no arch in the back and with less tension. I used only the muscles of hips and buttocks, and kept thighs and calves relaxed. After a while images came to my mind, and suriashi got a bit enjoyable after all. I remembered this fatigue from how I dealt with it over a year ago. I was very angry and afraid about this fatigue. To me it was not fatigue, it was failure. Now I knew where it

came from, I did not fully accept it, but I watched it carefully. This court suriashi was perfect on a day of fatigue.

On days when I lacked sleep from too much reading, I could still have energy and focus in my thoughts. I could be curious and ready for new challenges, but as I proceeded with suriashi I discovered I was very slow and a bit sloppy. The sharpness of the physical construction was not there, the lack of sleep revealed itself through the body. I experienced the legs very variously on the different mornings. Sometimes they gave me a more clear feedback. I could easily focus on the surface of my feet against the surface of the floor. The pressure from the feet against the floor could be very, very light. If I put more weight to the floor, I could clearly distinguish right from left and experience the very transition between left and right. I often asked my students to experience this. Some days the perception of the body could be very athmospheric and drafty. I then walked for a long time in order to get some weight into the floor and counterbalance this shallowness. With the introduction of Newton in performer training, the thought about gravity had been new for professional movers. Some of my suriashi were inspired by Newton. Midori san, the lady in Kyoto who also studied with Senrei sensei, flattered me. She wrote that my suriashi were always perfect. Whatever perfect meant.

I experimented with the gender constructions of suriashi: I walked with the back more flat as in the male style, and the hips less tucked back. I tried to be more and less muscular, push or not push, with a feeling of ease, or pressure. I tried to add a slight backbend, an exaggeration of the feminine construction. I was inspired by Senrei sensei´s white neck on the video projection. She was dancing very elegantly on the screen. While in suriashi, I looked to the side and bent slightly in the shoulders, and the upperback, like she did. This was extremely elegantly arrogant. I tried it several times. I added tiny movements of the shoulders, like a courtesan, like an *onnagata*, a male that interprets a woman. I added bigger movements to make it more jazz than kabuki. I added dancing with the sleeves of the silk underkimono that I sometimes used for practise. I walked the swaying suriashi. There it was, the construction of la femme. I thought I would never enjoy that. It felt just great, this character of la femme.

There were days when the slight temperature came back, together with a lot of pain in the neck and shoulder. I put on the strongest liniment I had. I walked with a very conscious spine, and it felt a bit like hell on earth. I thought of Strindberg. Yes this body was a scene from A Dream play.[135] Finally the practise of suriashi and Kuro kami helped, like strong coffee and aspirin for the limbs. The sharp burning from the liniment was easier to endure than the joint pain. Senrei sensei had said

135 August Strindberg (1849-1912), Swedish playwright. A Dream Play, in Swedish: Ett Drömspel, written in 1901. Strindberg called this play "the child of my greatest pain".

that illness was a gift from god. I thought illness was luminous, it made you experience the world and people antithetically. The monotheistic worship of wellness was hard to debate for me. Illness made me lonely and transparent. In this transparency where ego was erased, I was grateful for anything. A stone. The air. Rain. Sun. When loosing an important part of one´s body, the physical energy, this loss, this dissolution of the self made one connect differently. The illness woke me up at five in the morning. Like an obscure deep sound, reminding me to work as much as possible, while I still could. When one has pain it is easy to start imagining death, it hunts you, it chases you.

I tried to practise suriashi in a very awake way, to really sense what I was doing. There was nothing holy about that. I thought some students, including myself, wished to go to a different planet when practising suriashi. Maybe as a master, one should prevent students from going there. After all, suriashi was a practice, not a drug or therapy. I thought about the teachers I have met. Many of them very awake, out there in the studios, projecting physical energy allover the space. Some taught quietly, somehow from their inner spine. Senrei sensei taught with a lot of attention and physical energy. I was the same. Is this why we both became ill? How could I perform and teach movement from my spine and still have awake students? Do I want awake students? Maybe students should be half asleep.

Digital Kuro kami

To learn the choreography of Kuro kami I started by copying and watching Midori san perform. I tried to decipher the complicated fan work, counted steps and stared at her feet. I had recordings of a young male beginner and watched his Kuro kami as well. He exaggerated each movement slightly, his posture was sometimes awkward and he often made the steps a bit too big. He was still beautiful. The hard buyo training made him perform with integrity and clarity. Midori san was a more advanced student who had trained nihon buyo for a long time, but with a different school. She explained that her old school had been more oriented towards Kabuki. She described her struggle, and how she had imprinted a showy expression on her body since childhood and now had a difficult time changing her expression (accent!). She wanted to work on the more dignified and pure style that Senrei sensei taught. It took many years before she was accepted as a student by Senrei sensei.

I got used to translate the video image. If the student faced left on the image, I faced right. I repeated *right pillar, left pillar* to remind me to relate to the Nō stage, where the space is more square than the rectangular Western stages. I could imagine the voice of Senrei sensei. I finally managed to decipher some of the very difficult fan shifts. The positions of the feet became more clear. I tried to trust that the repetitive practice would help me learn and explore this piece. By watching Midori san, it helped me to look for the very core of each movement. I sometimes had

perfect support from the back in this feminine construction. The bodily posture was just there, with a feeling of ease and comfortably tensed muscles. I was having a danceparty with myself and the people on the screen, from which I tried to be independent.

After a couple of weeks, I attempted to be less comfortable, to push my brain and myself to get totally self-reliant. It was much too pleasant to follow, I had to become more active. I counted steps and gestures. I analyzed the positions. Were all transitions really made with inward pointed feet? Yes they were, and I could not do them if I had the weight on the wrong foot, or if I started to turn out. The posture was my safety. Three steps, then change the position of the fan. After that, seven steps maybe, this was *jo-ha-kyu*.[136] Yes, and there was *ma* in between the phrases. How was the start really done, where did I put my weight? Where should I look? I made the steps a bit bigger than Midori san did. I thought I could correct that later. Or, it might become a new habit that Senrei sensei would have to correct me for in Japan. It took a long time to decode a dancepiece. I also watched an older recording of a German male professional dancer studying Kuro kami. I recognized we had the same accents, the same way of solving the new movements. I also discovered how the piece had changed a bit over the years. The musical phrasing was different and Senrei sensei had removed some decorative movements, to make it more stringent.

I was so pleased that I was actually dancing, and that the movements finally appeared and arrived in my body. I was thankful to myself that I gave me this time and focus. I thought Kuro kami became more and more interesting the more I practised it. It was a dance for a diva. My reluctance had been changed into appreciation. When the singer sang *It is the pillow we shared that night* I stuck my hand inside the neckline of the kimono to take out the special paper that one needed for the Tea Ceremony. She, Tatsuhime, served tea to her beloved Yoritomo and his wife Masako Hojo. Tatsuhime ignored her own personal drama, and kept her elegance and dignity. Masako came from the powerful family Hojo. Her family helped to give the power back to the Genji/Minamoto family. Masako survived Yoritomo and became the first female Shogun. However, Tatsuhime remained home. She kept the kata, she kept her posture, her calm. It could have caused claustrophobia, but it was as if water flowed through the hands, quite a healing sensation to be honest. Kuro kami was about a lamenting woman. She sacrifized herself. Men's sacrifice in war was acknowledged. What about Tatsuhime? At least she had a dance and a poem composed for her.

Authenticity vs. kitsch

I sometimes practised in jeans. The resistance of the fabric might supply some strength, I thought. When I later would practise Kuro kami in *yukata* and tabi, as appropriate, the dance might be easier

136 Slow start, pause, faster continuosly, rapid ending

to accomplish. I thought about what we discussed in class with my fellow students. *Authenticity.* If it is OK to be fake. Does one need to be aware of the fake? Were the early trials by Ruth St Denis seen as fake?[137] Is it better to fake than to ignore? When I perfomed my first performance that had Japanese dance in it; *When I became Japanese*, (2002) for children, a Japanese visual artist saw it. He said:"This has no kitsch. It was all very real." Did the use of video projections and the honest use of contemporary dance and buyo create a foundation that was not kitsch? I love kitsch and often like to work in that area when performing short things for manifestos and festivals. I looked up kitsch on Wikipedia:

> ***Kitsch*** *(from German) is an inferior, tasteless copy of an extant style of art or a worthless imitation of art of recognized value. The concept is associated with the deliberate use of elements that may be thought of as cultural icons while making cheap mass-produced objects that are unoriginal. Kitsch also refers to the types of art that are aesthetically deficient (whether or not being sentimental, glamorous, or creative) and that make creative gestures which merely imitate the superficial appearances of art through repeated conventions and formulae. Excessive sentimentality often is associated with the term. The contemporary definition of kitsch is considered derogatory, denoting works executed to pander to popular demand alone and purely for commercial purposes rather than works created as self-expression by an artist. The term is generally reserved for unsubstantial and gaudy works that are calculated to have popular appeal and are considered pretentious and shallow rather than genuine artistic efforts.*

The Japanese visual artist probably saw my honest wish to present something that had changed my own view, something that I valued a lot. I think kitsch in the arts is/was used in a more anarchist way, not necessarily denoting the works of others. However, I did a kitsch performance of *Kuro kami* to sleezy Japanese Xmas pop music at the traditional Christmas concert at Academy of Music

137 In 1908, in London, Ruth St Denis (1879-1968), one of the first more serious American interpreters of Asian dance culture, and an innovator of American modern dance, performed her own piece "A Shirabyōshi". She choreographed it after having read a short story by Lafcadio Hearn. Martha Graham was one of her students. (Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet - being a History of Her Cycle of Oriental Dances, by Ted Shawn,1904, facsimile reprint Yokai Publishing 2012)

and Drama that I deeply regretted.[138] I think it could have been interpreted as something to make fun of Japanese culture, which what not the intention. I, together with my classmate the dancer Frej von Fräähsen, performed in Madame Butterfly-wigs and white Kabuki paint in high heels and golden disco dresses with golden obis. Over this we wore wedding kimonos. Two divas. Dragqueens. I had not planned to make fun of, and denote Japanese culture, but I wanted to challenge the traditional Christmas celebration at the university.

Experiments

In order to prepare for experimental work I also studied some of the pieces I knew: Takasago, Shizu no Odamaki, Tadanobu. When I had more time in the black boxes I experimented with the form and posture, and even the lights in the space. In seiza, I started to explore the empty space in front of my knees, I explored the very bowing. The bending of elbows, the touch of the surface of the floor. Within these frames I started to explore the most tiny movements. It was like a meditation. But because I was so used to make productions for an audience I always imagined them there. I was industrialized, trained to deliver performances on time. I started to plan where to place them and how to relate, or not to relate to them. After I explored the bowing, and called out the greeting phrases very loudly, I picked the cloth of my skirt and pulled it up, along the thighs. This could be interpreted as an erotic invitaion for some in the audience. I was aware of that, even though my movements were very sharp and straight. When a woman pulled up a garment and her limbs became visible, our life-experiences might make us think and believe this was a message, an invitation. What if a man did the same action? This movement would be too naive to use with an audience present. In this silence, however, I could be as naive and private as I wish. Conclusion: To create new work in the buyo tradition/technique I needed to have the traditional training near, in my body, and to prepare myself as if in a traditional context. The relation to the theatrical space of the Japanese Nō theatre gave me the restrictions I needed and thus gave me artistic freedom within a certain frame.

I looked at suriashi and seiza. I put my hands inside the kimonosleeves, pulled the cloth and then released it. It gave a nice sense of tension, drama and music. I bent the upperbody in different directions, while still in seiza. I held the fan, and waited for it. I tried to invite *ma* in my practise. I tried to create space in between each movement, and make each movement as a statement of its own. It was very difficult, since I was trained to already move to the next spot in my head. I had to learn, and practise to stay with each moment. I was constantly composing. I put the closed fan on the floor and spinned it around, to see where it would end up pointing. I decided to walk to where

138 Traditional Christmas concert at Academy of Music and Drama 3-4/12 2013

the fan pointed. There was nothing there so I asked the fan *Is this where you wanted me to go? You see, there is nothing here. Unless you wanted to give me the task of seeing something in nothing – but I don´t really understand. What is there for me, here? I do not understand this game. You have to be more clear.* I walked back to the folded fan on the floor. *Do you hear me?* I sat next to the fan and said *OK, I will give you one more chance, that´s it.* I spinned the fan again, and this time the fan pointed to the imagines audience. *Yes, now I understand. This is where you wanted me to go. Yes, yes, I can feel this. I like it here, it is more interesting and more* I showed some movements *more like this rather than this*. I showed different movements. *It can also be like this but more often like this.* I showed more movements. *I like this.*

I went back to the fan and spinned it once again. It pointed at the wall. I walked and danced towards the wall. I tried to see if something was there. I examined the wall, and found ten screws in the wall. *Maybe there used to be a picture here, a big picture. Something really heavy and expensive. Something that really made the audience feel, wow how beautiful and how expensive! It made them feel a bit like...* I showed some movements and made singing sounds. I repeated this new phrase again. Could I do this on stage? I would love to do this on stage. I liked the game with the spinning fan. This time it pointed to the same wall, and I scolded the fan for that.
No, I don´t understand, there is nothing here for me to get. Let´s drop this game. I picked up the fan. *This is a fan, a Japanese dancefan, it is used only for dance. Everything else is forbidden. Disrespectful.*

When the dance with my sensei on the wall was finished there was an applause and I decided to comment it. *This is my sensei and she is great and she performs in this beautiful old Nōtheatre in Kyoto, and everybody loves her, so they applause very loudly.* I went back to the fan again. *It is very hard to open this fan. Really, really hard. You are supposed to open one bone first, then two and three and that goes forward forward with your thumb, the rest goes to the oher direction, back back back.* I pulled the bones of the fan, and let my left arm stretch out fully. *There is this metal button. It is there of technical reasons. Actually you need something there to hold the bones of the fan together. It is called kaname and it is really nice to hold on to. Do you want to touch it?* I showed the imagined audience the dancefan and invited them to touch the metal button. I continued to explore the fan and different characters that came up. Whenever I was not satisfied with how I held the fan I commented it, and scolded myself.
Typical you, can never get it right. See my little finger? It is not supposed to stand out like that. O no, not again. Please for God´s sake concentrate! I whispered ma. Ma. Ma. I found a character with jaws protruding and a collapsed upper body. I screamed *Derrida! Derrida!* An old man of the lower classes. Then time was out. I had to run to a lecture. I continued to develop monologues on the fan,

the space, and the *ma*. The theoretical seminars always gave me something new to process. *Derrida! Derrida!*

A master passed away

In October 2012, I got worrying news from Kyoto. Senrei sensei was even more thin and weak now. She had met her students in Tokuya-cho, in September 25th. Because of the new situation, with the master ill, and the disciple who had stopped to teach, the students now practised for themselves, and with Emiko san. Senrei sensei only came to the studio in Kyoto four times a year, to see the students dance to decide whether they could move on to a new choreography, or if they had to study more. Senrei sensei had left Kyoto, and she now lived in her mountain studio in Sansoo. I was afraid that she was dying. She might enter Enlightenment, but I selfishly would need her to be my sensei for many more years. I had thought she would live forever. I was afraid to watch my sensei on the wall. She was thin already then. I wished someone could be frank with me. I wished that I had a sixth sense who would tell me I must go to Japan now. Before it was too late.

In one of my morning practices with Senrei sensei on the wall, I stopped my suriashi and watched her. She looked very sad. She was very thin. Was she dying? I stood up on the chair to see if I could have the projection of her on me. She was just above me. If I raised my arm I could reach her. I stood on the chair with my arms raised for two minutes. As she knelt in seiza in the end of her performance she was on my back. I tried to imagine her support in my spine.

I did not hear anything more about Senrei sensei. Jonah Salz had called her several times and the message was always that Senrei sensei could not talk on the phone at the moment. When I practised suriashi I often talked aloud. I asked Senrei sensei about her tours to Europe, how she had felt obliged to explain her art, because it was different from European art. I asked her about female performers in Japan. What had been her possible choice? Could I be that personal? Senrei sensei, you have to live. I must meet you and ask all these questions. Besides, you must come to Sweden finally, to dance. I had planned it for all these years, but the director for the Gothenburg Dance and Theatre festival had gotten so busy since she became a grandmother. We had laughed about this in Kyoto. (They invited Japanese male artists from Tokyo instead, in spite of all the tapes I gave them, but this I never told you). I burned sandalwood incense. It would be fine. Senrei sensei, we will meet in February. I continued to walk in total darkness to silence my mind.

In the end of October I finally got a message from the producer and light designer Takae san. Senrei sensei´s health was oscillating and it was not possible to plan anything in advance. She might not be able to teach me at all. Senrei sensei was worrying that she would ruin my travel to Japan by being ill. I wrote back that I understood, and I did not want her to worry, and that I would practise

by myself at Tokuyacho. How could I explain that I was worried and that I had so many questions? I wrote that Senrei sensei was important to me, which was something that exceeded the wish for having lessons. I got a message back thanking me for understanding, and saying that I had taken away a lot of pressure. Senrei sensei had made a plan for my studies of Kuro kami. I would first come to Sansoo, the mountain studio, to meet with her. Then I would take classes with Emiko san in Tokuya-cho, Kyoto. After I had learned the whole piece I would go once more to Sansoo to show what I had learned and to get some advice. It sounded like a feasible plan to look forward to.

Then I heard nothing. It was the beginning of December and I knew nothing. Dec 5th I made a presentation at the Academy of Music and Drama, in which I performed suriashi to dub step house. On screen there was a video of a geisha doll in a black kimono and wig, that I had filmed in that same studio. I pulled the doll with the help of sewing cotton. I also performed parts of *Kuro kami* to *Daughters of Pride* with *Anti-Cimex*[139] and talked about how I was searching for a clash of tradition and music. As I continued talking, Senrei sensei performed on the screen behind me. My presentation ended we me and sensei bowing to eachother on the screen and me bowing to the screen saying Thankyou for teaching me, *Okeiko arigato gozaimashita* and she answered back from the screen *Otsukaresamadeshita* You must be very tired. These lines were not personal, they were ritual phrases. They were phrases you repeat in the end of a lesson. *Otsukaresamadeshita* is something you can say to your colleagues as well, when leaving work. You must be very tired - you did great work.

The announcement of Senrei sensei's death

On Dec 6th, Senrei sensei passed away. It was not announced until Dec 16th, as she had wished. On this date, I received the announcement of Senrei sensei's death from Takae san:

> I am very sorry to announce you Senrei sensei's death. (Please forgive me I can not write this in a refined way and will give you a shock) Ailing Nishikawa Senrei passed away on Dec 6th. Thank you for your cordial friendship when she is alive. During the last days she was very eager to create the new piece "Rousseau". Until the last moment she was doing a musical rehearsal and making poster. She went on 6th December and I announce this to the public today, according to her will. There will be no public funeral but there will be an opportunity to say good-bye to her. Tokuya-cho will be open Tuesday Dec 18th ~ Thursday Dec 20th, 10a.m ~ 17p.m with her photo and remains. Also, she hoped

139 from the album ABSOLUT Country of Sweden, released in 1990 on CDR Rcords, where my brother played the bass

for no offering of incense, no flowers. Thank you in advance for understanding this.

Boom. A master had passed away. It was a real shock. Something very definite, that could not come back. It was a violent sensation. I found it hard to breathe and did not know what to do, or where to go. What about this illness? What had taken her? I had thought that she would live forever. She had such a young and powerful spirit. In one of the orbituaries that I found on the web I learnt that Senrei sensei suffered of pancreas cancer, and that she had passed away on Kyoto Hospital. I had had images of her suffering alone in her mountain house, so I was relieved to know that she must have had some care and medicin in the very end. I burned sandalwood incense and tried to understand. Senrei sensei, thankyou for teaching me. You must be very tired. You did great work.

The dōjō and the Alien Girl

I went to Kyoto in February 2013, two months after Senrei sensei, a master whom I nolonger could ask questions to, had passed away. My schedule was full of meetings and projects, and I also prepared for the premiere of *20xLamentation*.[140]

I stayed with Peter Golightly and Mori Takewaka, my Kyoto brothers. I met Peter Golightly when I performed at his studio Kyo Ryu Kan in 2000, and in 2001. He came to Japan from Detroit when he was seventeen years old, and decided to stay. At first he also studied the traditional theatre and dance. Peter had been a member of the Kyoto based artistic collective the Dumb Types and toured with them for many years. I took his classes of the Horton/Dunham technique that I knew from my own education, and we also made improvisations together. For example, in 2001 we made the Nō version of a wellknown folk song in Swedish. An experiment that Senrei sensei came to watch, and laughed at. Peter now stayed with his partner Mori Takewaka, and they friendly invited me to stay with them.

Their house was at Kasuga street, just next to a small sub-temple of the Kasuga Grand Shrine in Nara, a temple with strong connections to the performing arts. Every morning I woke up to a perfect *jo-ha-kyu* rhythm.[141] I always walked through that shrine, otherwise I was completely lost. The streets were so narrow, and so many. On the temple ground I carefully watched the empty space with a roof over it and a holy rope around it, the *ma*, where god/desses could land. I was in need of such an empty space.

140 with the help of a Swedish grant from the Scholarship Foundation for Studies of Japanese Society

141 Slow start, pause, faster continuosly, rapid ending

Miko training

I had tried to reserve a place for myself in a weekend course of Miko training at Kasuga Grand Shrine in Nara. This was a shrine with a long history of performer training, where the Shirabyōshi had trained and performed, and where the Nō theatre originated. However, I did not know about the situation for music and dance in contemporary times. One priest said yes, the other said no, and finally I decided to stop trying. Instead I contacted a Shinto priestess in Nara to teach me *Kagura*, the religious dances that could suggest som fragrance of Shirabyōshi. Kagura are the theatrical dances performed in Shinto shrines to entertain the god/desses. In Shinto religion, dance and music had, and still have, a strong position in the communication between human beings and the spiritual world. Many lessons of Japanese traditional theatre and dance are expensive. It dates back to a time when this knowledge was not available to each and everyone. The knowledge was a secret, and it was important to keep the lineage of experts. This was related to the requirement of authenticity. However, the high price for the ”authentic” Kagura lesson I was offered did not match the level of the teaching.

Kagura with the Geisha Yumiko Hakone

Instead I took a class with a profane sensei, Yumiko Hakone, dancer and musician licensed by the Fujima School, one of the more famous schools for Kabuki dance. She was a highly educated and dedicated dancer and musician, who now was employed as a Geisha.[142] Yumiko Hakone often taught dance to shrine maidens/Miko. We met through my friend and colleague Heidi S Durning. Yumiko san and Heidi san were sister diciples of the Fujima school, and their collaborations with tradition and innovation were always interesting. For a long time, Yumiko san balanced her life as a mother, housewife and artist until she divorced. By making a living as a Geisha, Yumiko san was now able to afford daily subsidized lessons in music and dance, and thus maintain a performance practice.

The movements of Kagura that Yumiko san taught me were very solemn and celebratory. She reminded me of the importance of the posture. The spine must be kept straight but still soft, so that the divine energy may be channelled and bring luck to god/desses and ancestors. The Kagura dance featured a play with the long sleeves that I associated with Shirabyōshi. The fan was involved in specific movements, coded as purifying and remedial. In Western dance and theatre, while rehearsing or performing, many of us still use these same words - ”to keep the channels open” to be as true, scaled down and pure as possible, and even to ”purify” the audience. It seems we may still use a religious language in our artistic practice, but we do not relate it to god/desses in the same obvious way as in Japanese dance or theatre.

142 Geisha means artist in Japanese. Geishas take daily classes of dance and music.

The Association of Senrei - Senreinokai

On the 12th of February 2013 I reached Tokuya-cho on Mori san's orange bike, all the way from Sa-iin, through the small Kasuga Shrine. I passed Shijo Omiya, where I stayed in 2011 in Senrei sensei ´s brother's appartment. Just before Horikawa Street I turned right. I biked on streets that became smaller and smaller. When the streets became alleys lined with brown, low wooden houses, I knew I was close. Then I saw it, the black neat house, as if painted with tar. The beautiful wooden house that Senrei sensei had designed herself. I stopped for a minute in front of the entrance, the genkan. The house had aged since I last saw it. The corners of the house had faded in colour. Impermanence. Time had left traces on the black wood. *Wabi sabi.* [143]She was not there anymore. There were several entrances to her house. I had to pick the right one, the door that would lead me to *keikoba*, the dance studio. No matter how much I hoped for it, I could not take the far left door. I could not walk on the little garden path that lead to the visitor's room, where Senrei sensei had given us the interview almost two years ago. I could not take the right door to her home, where I had had watermelon, *matcha*, even coffee and all sorts of confectionary.[144] *Wagashi* and *higashi* made out of plants, rice, potatoes and red azuki beans, all wrapped up in artistic ways. Never *yogashi*, the Western fusion sweets, which confirmed my theory that Senrei sensei always followed Japanese traditions. (However, on this journey I learned that she had loved coffee. I could have brough her delicious coffee from Sweden. Instead I had always brought her the finest *sencha* from the best tea shop in Kyoto.[145]) The different wagashi were wrapped up in different kind of leaves to celebrate a certain season. Mizu yōkan, the summer confectionary, I finally learned to appreciate. Yōkan is a cubic yellied dessert, where, out of religious reasons, animal gelatin is not used. Buddhism.

Since May 2012, *keikoba,* the studio had changed its name to *dōjō*, as it had become a place for self practise. The name was Senrei's Dance Training Dōjō. *Dōjō* suggested a studio for martial arts, rather than dance. Senrei sensei might have wanted the exercise to be close to Zen practise in a much wider meaning than just perfecting steps. Now knowing Senrei sensei was ill for two years, and that she knew she was going to die soon, it was a forethoughtful way for her to present a possible future for her students. The dōjō survived thanks to the students who paid a monthly rental fee that allowed them to come there for self-practice twice a week. Students could also ask for

143*wabi sabi* is a Japanese concept centered on the acceptance of transcience and imperfection: imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete

144 *matcha* is the green powdered Tea Ceremony-tea that is prepared in a special way, and that could be tasted outside the context of a Tea Ceremony as well

145 *sencha* is a very common green tea in Japan, where the whole tea leaves are used in hot water, opposed to the powdered leaves used in *matcha*

private lessons with Emiko san and Chikage sensei. I took the last step towards the entrance door. Before the next inhalation, I suffocated any signs of emotional movement. I would not hear her cheering, encouraging voice, but I could clearly hear her inside my head. I slid the door open, the bell rang, but other than that there was just silence. I carefully removed my shoes and put them on the shelf. There were bamboo sandals to put on when walking from the shelf back to the steep stairs, which I climbed in socks. In the middle of the stairs, sliding doors to my right lead to Senrei Sensei's home. I breathed calmly. There was a faint smell from offering incense. Sandal wood incense. I heard low voices from inside, but I could not visit in there. Nobody had invited me, and there was nobody to receive me. Once I had delicious, thick *matcha* and the seasonal confectionary *wagashi,* wrapped in conifer leaves in the room just behind those paper doors.

The dōjō

I arrived in the studio on the second floor. It was very cold and I could not sense Senrei sensei anywhere. She was gone. I watched a photo of her while I unpacked the wrapping cloth with the *yukata*, tabi, and the small silk and cotton strings. I finally had a yukata with sleeves long enough for my giant´s arms, sewn out of Japanese fabric by the Swedish costume maker Kristin Johansson-Lassbo. Kuro kami needed long sleeves since the hands constantly moved inside and outside of them. I had always struggled with kimono/yukata sleeves that were too short.

Because of the cold season, and the poorly insulated houses in Japan, I had bought an extra flannel petticoat, and cotton tabi to wear under the formal tabi. It was freezing. Emiko san and Midori san arrived and greeted me friendly but somewhat restrained. I knew this from before. Years might have passed, but we greet eachother as if we saw eachother yesterday. After all, we were in a dōjō.

I was given instructions on where to find the tape recorder. At Kabuki schools, CD:s were not in use, instead cassettes were copied to the students. Midori san changed into yukata and showed me the new self-training, dōjō-style. Behind a paper door, we took out one of the small cassette players. Next to them were the tapes with the recorded self-training, that must not leave the studio. Midori and I placed ourselves in the cold corridor, facing eachother. When the tape started to roll, I heard Senrei sensei´s voice. I found it very strange and strenuous. We were guided by her, in breathing and stretching exercises. We listened to her voice, while deep breathing. It was difficult not to be emotionally moved. I stretched harder, and concentrated heavily on the spine. I imagined it rockhard, and solid. Then we began with the suriashi. The unquestionable voice of Senrei sensei lead us through slow walking with counting. Right foot forward in front of the left foot, breath out,

count to four. Left foot meet the right foot, breath in, and count to four. Left foot forward in front of the right foot, breath out, count to four. Repeated for many times.

Midori san and I did not look at eachother. We just passed shoulder to shoulder through the corridor, and turned back again. I had forgotten how tough it could be. My monster body, trying to get smaller. Trying to fit in. How I loved suriashi. It finally provided some groundedness and heat. After a while, Senrei sensei started to count faster, while beating what I supposed would be her fan. Her voice sounded weak and exhausted, but the counting was firm. Ich'-ni-san- tome - go-rok'-shich'-hach'! She counted faster and faster, and Midori san and I almost ran in the icy corridor, without loosing the posture, without lifting our heels. Then the selftraining ended with some slow suriashi. The practice of *Jo-ha-kyu.*

From Quicktime to realtime

I had more time before my lesson started, so I practised what I knew from the video, and stayed really close to the warm breeze from the air condition. Other students had arrived, and they were involved in their own practice. We were asked to watch and help correcting eachother. A young lady I had never met before had me seated in seiza in front of her, and I watched her practice. Her suriashi were too shallow. She asked me to dance for her as well, but I apologized and explained I was just starting a new piece. Then Emiko san welcomed me in the big studio.

Emiko san had met Senrei sensei in a café thirteen years ago, where Emiko san used to work. Senrei sensei loved coffee, and encouraged Emiko san to begin to study dance. Now Emiko san had become the female leader of the dōjō. Emiko san still had no plan to take a license as a teacher in order to become a sensei. She was content with her administrative work at the university. There had been a successor, the young Kayorei sensei, who had had her teaching license from Nishikawa school. She was a great teacher. However, because of Senrei sensei´s illness, Kayorei sensei had broken down, and could not teach anymore. I hoped that she would recover. Takae san remained the manager and producer of the The Association of Senrei's Dōjō.

The video studies I had pursued were proved useful. I was not as lost in the feminine construction that I usually am. We could start working on details right away. I found the small framing of the feet and the transitions from left to right very difficult. In order not to fall, the thighs had to be awake and involved. The hips had to stay very strong and stable. Because the transitions were all part of a choreography, we did not spend any time repeating the same step ten times in order to make the body understand the logic. This was something I had to practise by myself. I discovered the importance of having the weight on the heels in the small transitions. In ballet, jazz,

SENREI MEETS JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

千麗舞台 わたしの夕

或る日のルソー

「孤独な散歩者の夢想」より

撮影・市毛實

構成／西川千麗

振付・舞踊／小川珠絵

作曲・演奏／上田益（ピアノ）
橘政愛（打楽器）
河崎純（コントラバス）
服部将典

2013年4月12日［金］午後7時開演［6時30分開場］ 京都府民ホールアルティ

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○衣裳調製／小林衣裳店　○マント製作／蛾田順子　○ヘアメイク／丸善　○舞台製作／京都舞台
○照明／ホシノ貴江　○舞台監督／大谷みどり　○音響／柏谷和弘
○チケット／三〇〇〇円（自由席）五〇〇〇円（特別指定席）　○チケット取扱／千麗の會・アルティ（自由席のみ）
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and even tap dance, the position was always: "On your toes! On your toes!" It was complicated to deprogramme the body.

Seiza

After class we sat together in Seiza. Emiko san and Midori san were very sweet, and did not mean to harm me. I performed the foreign underdog. Besides, I could no longer feel my legs, the feet were gone since long. I tried to stand up, but it was not possible. I fell and had to hold on to a chest of drawers. They turned their backs to me. They looked away and down. It was rude and polite at the same time, according to different schools and cultures. A cultural clash. I understood they did not want to embarrass me, and that I must take care of my weaknesses myself. This is also a Swedish practice. It took quiet some time until the numbness disappeared, and I was able to stand again. When the blood returned, it was as if legs and feet were pricked by thousands of needles. The cold and the sitting had blocked the blood flow to the feet and legs. There was nothing strange about that. Nothing about lack of strength, motivation, or volition, just authentic anatomy.

The female seiza

Seiza is almost a national body posture. It is the most polite sitting style in Japan, used in dance, theatre, martial arts, tea ceremony, and Zen meditation. In Japanese dance, one can gender-codify seiza. The female seiza, please try it: Squeeze the legs tightly together, pull your shoulders downwards and backwards until it hurts. Keep your elbows tightly pressed against the waist. Knees and feet together, inner thighs active. Palms rest on top of the thighs, fingers are held together, fingers pointing inwards. Explore the arch in your chest, the muscular squeeze behind your shoulders, and in your spine, while tilting the pelvis backwards. Experience the activation of the muscles around the spine. Explore the energy generated by muscle activity, be ready to rise and serve. It is all but quiet. It is all about action. Now bow like a woman, in the feminine construction. The palms follow the thighs towards the knees. When they leave the knees, slide the fingers tips down to the floor, until both arms are fully stretched. Lower your upper body, keep the navel towards the spine, do not drop your neck, do not lift your hips. The arms bend, and the hands touch the floor, they form an upside down V, or a HA in Japanese. Elbows are to be kept close to the waist, while bending, and bowing. Rise slowly.

The male seiza

The male seiza, please try it: In the male construction one can have the knees slightly wider apart. Make space for a pretended fist between your knees. There is no arching, the spine is straight. Pelvis upright. Shoulders are held flat, let go of the trapezius muscle. You might want to explore the activation of shoulders, by pushing them a bit forward, but not upward. Explore the energy of attack without moving. Be ready to pull your sword, and attack your enemies. It is all but quiet, it is all about action. Now bow like a man, in the male construction. It is the same as the feminine construction but stick your elbows out, this will activates the triceps. Use only the right hand while bowing, because you must not to let go of the sword on your left hand side. A possible cross-gender construction would be to bow like a Shirabyōshi. I cannot confirm the authenticity of this construction, as I have only seen it on film. She then bowed with the fists on the outside of her knees. She kept both fists on the ground while bowing. I have also seen male warriors bow in this construction. On film.

Shunkoin Zen Temple and Reverend Takafumi Kawakami

One morning I biked north together with Peter Golightly to the Shunkoin Zen Temple. We took a friendly Zen class and had matcha together with the Zen Buddhist priest Takafumi Kawakami. He was dressed in samue and speckled blue design tabi.[146] He told us about his view on Zen practice. "There is no practice. There is nothing to teach," he said. However, we did practise some sitting meditation, and the counting of breaths. As a priest, he did not think it was enough to sit down and meditate every day, to cultivate only himself. His role as a priest was to help people, therefore he was a human rights activist and a LGBT-rights supporter. He married same-sex couples in his temple. He was a Zen priest in a changing society, but still looking back at important things we might have forgotten. He explained how contemporary human positions of standing up and hurrying make us misinterpret the sliding door panels of temples and traditional Japanese houses. The panels had been painted hundreds of years ago to be viewed from a sitting position. Peter san and I explored the temple´s wonderful paintings from the Seiza position, encouraged by Reverend Kawakami. When in Seiza, it was like being inside the paintings. This was an interesting comment on how to structure one´s audiences. To be seated, standing, walking? Where do we want them? How do we want our work to be seen?

I asked the Reverend Takafumi Kawakami about the history of s*eiza*. He answered it had originally been a common sitting style for females. If you look at paintings from the Heian period, a

146 Samue, working clothes for monks, consisting of a loose-fitting cotton kimono-style top and trouser sets, worn by Zen monks, but is now also traditional leisure wear for anybody.

lot of women are in seiza. I asked about seiza and Tea Ceremony, and he answered that seiza became more common among males, when the Tea Ceremony grew popular, around 14th century. I later decided to ask my friend Mindy Landeck who was writing her phD thesis on the Japanese Tea Ceremony, at the University of Kansas. She wrote me back that she did not find much in scholarly sources, but that an internet search in Japanese yields several sites claimed that seiza was a later development, and definitely intertwined in key ways with Tea Ceremony (even though there was evidence that male guests at early Tea gatherings did not sit in seiza even when the hosts did). The earliest mention of the term "seiza" listed in the Japanese language dictionary dated only back to 1717. So Mindy san thought that seiza appeared much later than the Heian period.[147]

Women might have been seated in the kneeling position, because it was the most suitable position for their clothes. Men sat in the cross-legged position. The kneeling position had not yet received its name. In Yoga practise it is called *diamond pose*. Once there is a name, something happens with its structure. I needed to reflect on seiza. It had become so associated with a certain training that we had stopped question it. If one links seiza to cultures and to bodies, one might start to believe seiza was something for a certain body type, and that only Japanese people were suitable to sit in Seiza. Richard Emmert told me about a Nō actor who naturally spent many hours in seiza, and found it very painful.[148] The actor had finally solved this by attaching a small, foldable chair inside his hakama trousers to take away the pressure of legs and knees when sitting for many hours singing.

Any physical construction we take for granted has had its history, and meaning. Seiza is considered good training. The pain you feel is also considered good. To critisize this belief I have found medical studies that say seiza is even dangerous for some of us. For diabetic patients with a long history of seiza habit, there is a very high risk for the development of foot ulcer.[149] I do not think that seiza is a posture that will save the world, or give us eternal lifes. It is not something we have to endure. It is a sitting position, a structured posture, among others. I hope for teachers, students, and artists to use it for what it is. Seiza strengthens the back, but it does block the blood flow to the feet and legs.

147 Private conversation with Mindy Landeck Sep 24th 2013

148 Emmert is a practitioner and teacher of Nō theatre, and professor of Asian performing arts at Musashino University in Tokyo

149 Japanese Journal of Clinical Physiology Seiza (Sitting Down Kneeling with the Buttocks on Top of the Ankles) is a risk Factor for Foot Ulcer in Patients with Diabetic Neuropathy 35; No.4, pp.215-219 (2005)

Reveries of a Solitary Walker

Some days I was alone in the dōjō, some days somebody was practising suriashi with me in the icy corridor, somebody that I had not met before. Often a lady in a wonderful kimono. Everyone knew that I was there, and they were supposed to help me with my practice. I saw a note on the bulletin board about it. This was very thoughtful and careful, but created tension. I was the Alien girl who had to be thought good manners. I was a bit too proud to be addressed as a beginner, because I had studied physical etiquette since 1983. Somebody firmly gripped my heels when I practised suriashi alone in the icy corridor to Senrei sensei's voice. My heels were pressed down, the person reminded me how they should not leave the floor when suriashing. This person got down on her knees to help me push my heels down. I did not see who it was, since I was focusing my eyes in a horizontal gaze. Not until I came back the other way did I see it was Ryoko san. She watched my suriashi carefully and then threw herself on the floor again to push my heels. *"Arigatoo, Ryoko san,"* I said. She looked surprised that I knew her name. Little did she know how many times I had watched her in my documentary film. Folke and I had filmed all of Senrei sensei´s students in 2011, and Ryoko san had been one of them. She had danced beautifully in a light kimono with two white dance fans.

Bridget san, a Buto dancer, came to the Senreinokai dōjō for her class one evening. She studied *Matsu no Midori,* a celebratory male dance. I had watched this piece many times over the years and would really like to learn it. Bridget san was one of the close disciples nowadays. A young student asked us for help. The three of us knelt in seiza in a very cold room at a little brown table, perfect for the seiza position. We folded folder after folder, the folder for Senrei sensei´s last performance. I liked to do it, even though my legs hurt and my fingers whitened from cold. I liked that I was in my master´s studio folding folders for a performance that she might be directing from the other side. Senrei sensei had called a contemporary dancer in Kyoto, Tamae Ogawa, to tell her that she would perform in this performance. Tamae Ogawa replied that she did not know how to as she was not a traditional buyo dancer. Senrei sensei had replied:"I am always right. Trust me."

I told Bridget san about my idea to sing the Heart Sutra for Senrei sensei in my performance *20xLamentation*. She startled, and told me that Senrei sensei had sung the Heart Sutra in a way that had amazed many in the dōjō. An old student had passed away, and Senrei sensei gathered everybody to a memorial ceremony, in which she sang the Heart Sutra for the deceased. Bridget san told me that she herself had tried to sing the Heart Sutra every day, because she thought it was such a great practice.[150] I reminded her of that now, while talking with soft voices, in that ice-cold room, folding folders in seiza for our sensei´s last performance. The music for this performance was ready on Dec 5th, the day before she went. She had approved it. Senrei sensei had had a great impression

150 Zeami, the Nō playwright, said that the practice of the Heart Sutra offered the best training for Nō actors

when she first read Rousseau's book "Reveries of a Solitary Walker". The performance would be played just once, *ichi-go-ichi-e*, on the 12th of April.[151] This is what Senrei sensei herself wrote:

> Since a little before Dec. 2010 when I lost my health, ideas of the performance started to rise in me, and I will start to work on music first from June 2012. I want this work to be completed because I want to know what it is that is rising in me. Furthermore, it would be too regrettable if I gave it up, especially since I do not want to waste energy of those who are already working with me to realize it. (2011/10/28)
> Having read the work from cover to cover without any break, I am convinced that the reveries he writes about are the kind that will come to us just before we die, when we look back on the events of our life as though it were a revolving lantern. What a man he was!
> When I was composing 'ARUBEKIYOUWA/ As It Should Be', I once realized: All I need to do is to dance the dream that Priest Myōe dreamt; the dream in which he sees his entire life's events happening in it, and the performance came together. When I was at the bedside of my dying aunt, I thought, looking at how she was, she was surely having those dreams. I assume that during these dreams, the things most strongly impressed in one's mind will come flowing forth from the depths like a stream, in no order. How extraordinary Rousseau was, that he started to write of the revolving lantern two years before his actual death...[152]

In the footsteps of Senrei sensei

On a Saturday, Feb 28th 2013, I finally got to visit Sansoo, the mountain studio that Senrei sensei loved so much, and where she spent her last days before she went to hospital for palliative care. Emiko san met me at the Shijo Omiya station and we took a bus north. I was early, and warmed my hands in the pharmacy near the bus stop. I finally bought a couple of surgical masks, the symbols of utter politeness, to be worn when you have a cold, in order to not bother other people. I wanted to use it in the ceremony of illness that I was planning for my performance, 20xLamentation, to be premiered in three months. Emiko san came, and we went on the bus together.

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151 Ichi-go-ichi-e means one time, one meeting. It is a Japanese concept of a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and is often used in the tea ceremony. Value the moment, bow to here and now. This is it.

152 published on her webpage: http://www.senrei-nishikawa.com/

Surgical mask for hay fever and colds

In the mountain studio I changed into *yukata* in Senrei sensei's bedroom. I could sense her presence. The class took place in the little hall next to her bed. There were beautiful black and white photographs of her on the walls. It was like a museum. I practised suriashi all by myself, starting from her bed, then across the hall, and then I turned next to the steep wooden stairs, to walk back again. I was in less stress, and could therefore have an image of her being there. Emiko pointed at a little white urn in a form fitted beautiful silk fabric, sewn in an interesting pattern. "There she is," Emiko san said. "She made the fabric herself." But Takae san explained that Senrei sensei´s brother just had decided to move her ashes to the family temple. So, she was not in that little urn anymore. I could not help wondering if that was her choice or not, but I did not ask. I performed Kuro kami three times, and Emiko opened the window from the hall so that I could look down at the big studio and stage, where many of Senrei sensei's artistic pieces had taken shape. It was a fantastic studio that could house many people. The organizer in me thought about exchange projects and artist-in-residencies. How beautiful that would have been, and I think Senrei sensei would have appreciated it.

The journal of the dreams by the priest and monk Myōe

After okeiko we had tea in the small kitchen downstairs. Takae san asked me to tell her about my presentation at the Academy of music and drama on Dec 5th 2012. I did, and stubborn tears wet my face. Takae san and Emiko san looked away as if not to embarass me. We walked a bit on the path from the house leading into the mountain forest. On the other side of the road there was a café called Café Mount West, where Senrei sensei often had coffee in the mornings. In her blog she adviced people who are not in a hurry, people who want to spend their time leisurely, to visit this

café.[153] While going back to Kyoto, Emiko san and Takae san asked whether I wanted to visit Kōzan-ji, Senrei sensei's favourite temple. This temple was founded as a training monastery by the priest and monk Myōe (1173-1232), the one who had kept a journal on his dreams for 40 years. Emiko san and I walked the steep stairs together through an incredibly beautiful forest. Senrei sensei mentioned these walks in my documentary, in my interview with her.[154] In the temple, Emiko san and I looked at the wooden tablet with the rules of the monastery, that I found very human and interesting. We sat down and had *matcha*[155] together while contemplating the atmosphere of this temple. The temple rules was an appropriate, and interesting 13th century document on the life in a monastery. It made me reflect on appropriate artistic training. I have included these rules for monks in the appendix.

The journal of the dreams and these temple rules written by the priest and monk Myōe were the source of inspiration for Senrei sensei´s 2003 composition Arubekiyōwa/ As Appropriate, in which many of my contemporary dancing Kyoto friends took part. It was rehearsed in that beautiful mountain studio, and it toured to Germany, Italy and Switzerland. April 11th was Senrei sensei's birthday. On April 13th, 2014, a musical concert of her 2003 composition Arubekiyōwa/ As Appropriate was held at the mountain studio in Sansoo.

Iwakura Space and Heidi san

Heidi S Durning is an interesting dancer and choreographer, educated both at the Fujima school and at University of Michigan's dance department. I moved to her after I had stayed with Peter san and Mori san. Heidi san and I have performed together in Kyoto. We also have performed in my international project in Lapland, to which I invited her, and the Australian choreographer and video-artist Dianne Reid. My room at Heidi san's house had a kerosene radiator that I put on one hour at night, and in the morning. I did not have to freeze anymore, but it had indeed been an interesting practice. According to Hijikata, freezing is Buto.[156] It was hard for my friends to understand that we might walk around in T-shirts inside our Swedish homes at wintertime. It was hard for me to understand how people managed to stay well in room temperatures at 8 °C/46.4 °F in Kyoto. I was Swedish, I should be the one able to endure cold temperatures.

153 http://senrei.exblog.jp/, published May 1st, 2010

154 the Dance of the Sun, Njutafilms 2013

155 matcha is the green powdered Tea Ceremony-tea that is prepared in a special way, and that could be tasted outside the context of a Tea Ceremony as well

156 Hijikata was considered the originator of the contemporary Japanese dance Buto

Women and Nō

Heidi san now studied both with a wellknown male Kabuki actor/choreographer, and a wellknown male Nō actor. She and the latter made contemporary performances together when they were younger. However, one day after they had performed, he told her:"I have made up my mind. I will never again perform with a woman, because women are lower." My friends in Kyoto explain he should be excused, because he was born into a powerful Nō family, famous already when he was born, and unaware of the surrounding world. Nonetheless, I do not think he should be excused. I would argue for the importance of a statement: that all Nō schools spoke openly about their opinion on having or not having female performers on the Nō stage. There were vague comments, such as that the costumes are too heavy for the female body, and that women´s voices are too weak for theatre. If a real statement was made on how female performers are viewed, like in the earlier mentioned Daiba Chapter, there could be a reaction to it, and then finally actions.

I was hypnotized when I first heard two women singing Nō in a drum class. It was really wonderful, and they were traditional Nō drum players, not even singers. I arranged for a meeting with them two years later, and filmed them: Yasuko Hisada sensei and Naoko Takahashi sensei, two great performers. I will try to invite them to Sweden in the future. If theatres and academies outside of Japan have this in mind when inviting Nō theatre groups abroad, and start to invite performers of both sexes, this will indeed help traditional Japanese female performers to stay professional.

Heidi san and her fusion buyo dance

Heidi san and I prepared a duo for a performance in her studio, Iwakura Space, that she had been running since 1999. It might be the start of a future collaboration around the Kabuki founder, and cross-gender performer Okuni. During Heidi san's studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbour, she danced the Kabuki dance. *Fuji Musume,*[157] several times with the Nagauta ensemble, led by the famed ethnomusicologist William P Malm.[158] For her MFA graduation concert, she created fusion pieces in which she tried to incorporate the modern dance she was learning with her Nihon Buyo background. After graduating from the University of Michigan, she went back (from Kyoto) a couple of times as an alumni performer in residence. She then performed and gave workshops in both traditional Japanese dance and fusion dance. Heidi san told me how one of her American modern dance teachers at University of Michigan would ask her to "stop doing that samurai stuff!", but finally had understood that the knowledge of Kabuki dance also could be used as an artistic expression. Heidi san is probably the first to teach traditional Japanese dance and

157 This piece is well-represented in the author´s film *The Dance of the Sun.*

158 William P Malm, b 1928, is the author of Traditional Japanese Music and Instruments, Kodansha, 2001

fusion dance to professional choreographers in Sweden. This happened in August 2009, in Vilhelmina, arranged by myself, Danscentrum Norr and Dansalliansen.

The Dance of the Sun

In Heidi san´s Iwakura Space, I showed the film that I had made together with the cinematographer Folke Johansson, which brought many of Kyoto´s independent performers together. There were, beside myself and Heidi san: Bruno, Mio Durning, Peter Golightly, Kumiko Nonaka, Ryoko Oishi, Jonah Salz, Bridget Scott, Keiko Yamaguchi, and Rosa Yuki. In the audience there were also Western and Japanese people, involved in art, design and/or academia. Keiko san was also in my film, and neither she or I knew about that.[159] My film takes off, and relates to the mythology of the Sun Goddess, the legend of Ame no Uzume's dancing before other God/desses with the most important audience hiding in a rock cave: the Sun-Goddess Amaterasu. This is the first Japanese written example of a dance performance. I was quite envious about this mythology, and I wish it had been Swedish. In the film I ask Senrei sensei, and the participating dancers how they relate to this myth today.

I was quite nervous about the screening. It was the first public showing, and I worried about a lot of things. However, it was received very well and the participators were happy to be a part of it. Keiko san, who had brought a Portuguese choreographer, thanked me for having made Japan's dance history so clear. "Your film answered all the questions she has, which I was not really sure of!" I was sad to think of Senrei sensei. I believe she would have appreciated the film. The other people in the audience praised the work. Some students who confessed they had been afraid of Senrei sensei, thanked me for this warm portrait of her. Later, also the manager Takae san saw the film together with the person who sat with Senrei sensei in her last days. They both expressed respect, and felt a strong sense of hope. I was relieved. After the screening, many of us performed. I performed a fusion of the first and the last piece that Senrei sensei had taught me - *Takasago* and *Shizu no Odamaki*- and Kumiko Nonaka played the Nō kan flute. It was great to perform with Kumiko san again.

The ashes of Senrei sensei

I understood that the ashes of Senrei sensei had been moved to a temple. I asked Takae san whether I could visit the grave. I was told yes, and that they would make an exception. The correct order would be to have the oldest member and master of the school to visit first, but because I was leaving

159 She had perfomed one night when we were filming at Urban Guild, the contemporary space for improvisation, dance and music in Kyoto, in spring 2011. I acknowledged her in the titles, but we had never met personally.

soon, I would be allowed to visit before the others. I could not decide the time myself, but I knew the temple was not too far from where I stayed. I got a message from Emiko san on when and where to go. Ryoko san met me near the rice fields. We took a bus to Iwakura station, then a little train that stopped right outside Seika University. This was the place of the family temple of Senrei sensei. Kyoujyaku-ji, part of the bigger Higashi Hongan-ji. I looked around in order to remember the surroundings.

I never had any childhood meories of temples being boring or terrible. To me they were just different and wonderful. The smell of tatami mats and incense, the scrolls, the old wood, the chirping of cicadas in the summer humidity, the change of seasons and colours visible in the temple gardens. I had visited so many temples with my small children. They liked them too. However I did sense something dull in this graveyard. I could not see Senrei senseis name. Names were written on sticks placed next to the gravestone. Her artistic name was not there. Now she had become a daughter, a sister. What was her family name? What lay behind all this? I was angry about the invisibility. But I had no idea what kind of grave she should have had instead. She had worked so hard for everything she had achieved. She was so unusual. Meanwhile, I did not now know if she wished to be remembered. Buddhist religion could mean that if she held on too much to the profane world, her soul should not be set free. Incense was burnt at temples and homes to help the soul set free. But then, it was still important to pray for the souls of the deceased. If one looks at the Heart Sutra, sung at funerals, and e.g. at memorial services for the tsunami victims, it is emphasizing the acceptance of impermanence:

> ...Nothing is born, nothing dies, nothing is pure, nothing is stained,
> nothing increases and nothing decreases
> in emptiness, there is no body, no feeling, no thought, no will, no consciousness
> No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind.
> No seeing, no hearing, no smelling, no tasting, no touching, no imagining.
> no ignorance, no ignorance
> There is no old age and death, and no end to old age and death
> No suffering, no cause of suffering, no end to suffering, no path to follow....[160]

Ryoko san and I washed the grey granite gravestone together. She prayed with her hands together. I prayed with my hands together. I remembered the invitation to the memorial ceremony at Tokuya-cho before Chrismas. There was a clear request: People were asked not to bring incense and

160 The Heart Sutra is the most popular of all Buddhist verses

flowers. This was Senrei sensei's wish. People of course brought flowers and incense. But this time, Ryoko san and I did not bring any incense nor flowers. We were good students obeying Senrei sensei´s wish for simplicity and sincerity, even in death.

The creation of twenty jeremiads

I came back to Sweden and started to rehearse the performance 20xLamentation, together with the light designer Åsa Holtz, and the dancer Janni Groenwold Tschanz, and I will now describe some of the ideas and thoughts that were inside and behind the twenty different jeremiads appearing in the performance *20xLamentation,* premiered in May 15th 2013. The documentation of the performance can be found in the Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive.[161]

I was about to create a brand new performance. This performance, which I originally created for 3:rd Floor, the same stage as for *Dust falling, Rain falling,* was an experiment with telling a very personal story through two cultures, and through twenty ways of processing the world. The idea was to use two different traditional pieces of dance, both of them had qualities that I both loved an hated; Martha Graham´s *Lamentation* from 1930, and *Kuro kami*, which was composed around the 19th century. In this performance a more multicultural and deconstructed Shirabyōshi took shape. I investigated the cross-gender act more thoroughly: and thus found material for further investigations and future work. I very much enjoyed Judith Butler's Gender Trouble. I wanted to point out difficulties, and to avoid the the consumerist expectations on intellectual activities.[162]

Ceremonies of costume, illness and beauty

I also looked at ceremonies of illness and beauty: the Pillow Book vs. the Bible, universal poetry, personal poetry, different representations of dicotomies, such as high and low lamentations, beautiful/ugly, reconstruction/deconstruction, Christian music/Nō music, the Heart Sutra/the Bible. I played with illness within culture, gender and class. Instead of the white *suikan* and the red *nagabakama,* the costume typical for the Shirabyōshi, I wore men's black trousers and a men's black shirt, Instead of the golden hat, I tied my hair in a knot and pulled a black sock over the head. For the performance photo, shot in a studio by the great Laila Östlund, I wore a typical Kabuki make up that I did not wear in the very performance.[163] Instead, I painted the eyes raven black, and glued red

161 https://gupea.ub.gu.se, search for Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt

162 Butler, J. Genustrubbel, Feminism och identitetens subversion, transl into Swedish, Daidalos 2007, p 32

163 this stage make up is called *kumadori.* The foundation is white, with red and black stripes, and portrays the male hero, the common stereotype for Kabuki in the West. I had great help from my class mate Pooja who is a practitioner of Odissi and also a professional wig and make up artist.

fake eyelashes onto my eye-lids. I became a 1930s mime dragqueen. An ill dragqueen on chemo. On my feet I wore black jikatabi[164], soft shoes common for carpenters, men of the so called lower classes, and prisoners. My black figure resembled that of the traditional stagehand in Bunraku and Kabuki. Above this I tied a red obi, the large belt usually tied over the kimono. Kimono (nowadays) are worn by middle class, and upper class women in Japan. My costume was a play with gender and class, just like the original Shirabyōshi costume. I unveiled the movements and the posture hidden under layers of kimono, and now performed the feminine (*Kuro kami),* dressed like a drag queenking, a manwoman. I wanted to bring out the ambiguity, by being trans-gender, trans-class, trans-tradition and trans-national. A postmodern Shirabyōshi, and an Eastern-Western gender hybrid. I had decided to call my performace method *postdramatic Japanese body-theatre.* Then I would be free to create a non-Swedish, non-theatre, and a non-dance performance.

The challenges

Janni Groenwold Tschanz would perform the Japanese woman, or the image we have of her. I dressed her in a flawless black kimono, white tabi, and an obi that almost had exactly the same pattern as the vintage geisha doll, which I also put on stage in my Seiza/Tea Ceremony space. I had bought a vintage wig originally created for Madame Butterfly at the Gothenburg Opera: An Eastern-Western wig hybrid. The costume designer Kristin Johansson-Lassbo made a modernised obi from a pattern that I had brought from Kyoto.[165] Heidi san had encouraged me to use it and gave me lessons on how to put it on. Otherwise I would have had to pay a dresser for each performance. By teaching Kuro kami to a colleague, this art form was passed on, and somebody else could get the opportunity to explore and to respond to the physical structure of Japanese dance. The challenge was that Janni had not asked for this herself. It was I who had asked her, and she might not find it as interesting as I did. Janni would also perform the Lamenting Woman in our hommage to Martha Graham in Act 2.

I hoped and wished for the audience to have a lot of *ma* for themselves to reflect on our characters and what we represented. With my cross-gender character next to Janni's image of the traditional Japanese woman, I was hoping for activity of their minds. From the outside it looked like we were *featuring* the feminine. Especially in Janni´s case where the kimono hid most of the extreme and tensed posture. Contradictory but true: our bodies told us that we were *exaggerating* the feminine. This I think would be visible for the more sensitive audience member. What did I then want from the audience? I was hoping for the viewer to have a curiosity of this traditional artform

164 Flat black shoes with a split toe, also used in some martial arts

165 this obi was called tsuke-obi. Kristin cut away most of the fabric from a regular nagoya-obi, then attached it like the common taiko-drum style knot. One still needed the little pillow, the silk fabric and the ropes to tie it together.

and to reflect on it. To discover the extreme bending of limbs, to process the Kabuki and Nō music, the movements, the expression, and then to continue asking Why? Why? Why? - and not always address that question to me, but to the world. Question me, but trust me. Trust that I did have a well elaborated plan when I created this performance.

How could I critisize orientalism, when many of my audience-members asked for orientalism?
The answer lay in my performance: by placing modernism next to postmodernism, the universal next to the personal, dance next to theatre, Kabuki next to Martha Graham. One critic walked right into the trap, even though my plan was never to rig a trap. The critic praised the beauty of Janni as the Japanese woman, and of course this was right as Janni really is a beautiful performer. However, when the critic revealed his/her beauty ideal, s/he became an easy target for my unknown trap. The retrograde reaction was a proof of how hard it was to change certain discourses around performance work from different cultures. I was searching for an open space for reflection on concepts like self-orientalism, fine arts, and nationalism, inside the jeremiads. These were concepts hard to avoid when working with Japanese traditional arts in Sweden. My fifteen-year-old son said when we had lunch together in a Sushi restaurant, pointing at two very typical paintings on the wall:"Look at those stereotypes, they are the same ones that you work with in your performance." On the wall there was a painting of a Japanese woman, or a Geisha, or a male Kabuki actor portraying a Japanese woman. S/he was wearing a wig, kimono, and posing with a dance fan. Just like Janni in my performance. Next to her was a Samurai, a Kabuki actor wearing red, black and white stage make up, posing with swords. Me. My son was right. I nodded and replied that I really appreciated that he had seen something that the professional critic had missed.

I was disappointed, but also a bit prepared that the critic would not appreciate this openness. S/he had written before that Japanese dance was too serious, and that the austere form did not suite a Swedish audience. S/he had watched 20xLamentation with a consumerist view, and was even critical of the experiment to combine performance with lecture. There were certain rules that adviced you not to combine these universes, in order to be appropriate on stage, and to serve the propaganda of the status quo.[166] I broke these rules. I did not give the audience the Japanese beauty and mystery. I did not separate intellect and emotions. I did not stay with modernism, with my masters (however I did praise and acknowledge them). I did not stay with refinement and grace.

166 Serra, R. and Schoolman C.R, 'Popular entertainment is basically propaganda for the status quo', a video art piece that critqued media and TV, 1973

The structure of space, bodies and ma

For this performance we decided to put the audience on the long side, in order to have the possibility to use the space as a site for the broadening and expanding of the expression. We created three different stations: My *home* where I could kneel in seiza and have Tea, *Janni´s spot* where she could dance Kuro kami seven times in a row, and also the *lecture spot* where I gave a lecture on illness, and sang the Heart Sutra. My home was a reflection of the prejudiced interior of a Japanese room to the Samurai man or woman, where I put some equipment of the Tea Ceremony: the small black cast iron teapot on a coaster made of blue fabric, the tea ceremony bowl[167], the green matcha tea powder in a humble caddy, the bamboo tea scoop, and the tea whisker of bamboo that I had bought in Toji temple market in 2000. It had a crack caused by dry Swedish air. Now how much more *wabi sabi*[168] could that be?

However if we had tried to present a perfect atmosphere of Tea Ceremony, the process would have been completed. We were interested in putting out things that could be interpreted in many ways, and to trigger something in the viewer to build his/her own imagination. Therefore we put one of the kitsch Sakura tree lamps from our previous performance *Dust falling, Rain falling*, and the vintage geisha doll in black kimono on the floor. Next to the doll that looked just like Janni, was a styrofoam head. We also had a quite ugly cardboard box for tea, with Japanese text on it. But our reflection group thought it was too ugly and indistinct. We then replaced it by a black wooden box. Janni's space was a diagonal of light for her suriashi entrance, and a ring of light for her stage. Åsa hung my text documents on ropes from the ceiling. It looked like parts of a Zen monk's costume. The text swayed back and forth from the ropes. We hung my glasses and a green Tibetan rosary there as well. Åsa wanted to continue to work with darkness and smoke. Together we created a recognizable emblem: Postmodern traditional Japanese art in dusk and mists.

Postdramatic Japanese body-theatre

It was valuable to bring my questions into the performance work. Was it possible to tell a very personal story through two cultures, and through twenty ways of processing the world? There was a possibility of failure that I liked to have in mind. I was ready to fail and fall flat. The rehearsal was as fun, uncomfortable, and exhausting as usual, but with my questions and investigations in mind I did not worry so much about whether I would bore or entertain my audience. I trusted that they would find the questions as interesting as I did:

167 Bizen style -Japan's oldest pottery making technique, introduced in the Heian period.

168 *wabi sabi* is a Japanese concept centered on the acceptance of transcience and imperfection: imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete

> Crises are what commonly move the process forward, take it on to new levels, and generate new knowledge and insight[169]

This position in the artistic work somehow helped to take away the capitalistic pressure of performing: the idea to always gain something, to make money, attract a very large crowd, or be entertaining. My reflection group consisting of dancers, choreographers, directors and performance artists, gave me valuable comments, but also some uncomfortable questions. Some appreciated *Kuro kami,* while others thought this traditional dance was extremely slow and boring. However, the training at the masters programme had provided me with an altered view. Because we constantly presented our work to each other, and to our supervisors, we had gotten used to be critisized and questioned, which helped us clarify where we were standing and where we had to go. I noticed that I had become less polite, and less eager to fulfill the wishes of others, and that I could sort out what was relevant for the work. I received great support from Åsa who said she trusted anything I did. Compared to many directors she had worked with, she thought I was very clear and very distinct in my work. She also understood the complicated situation of being the director, the producer, the playwright, and the performer. I divided the days, and told my collaborators which role I was playing that specific day.

Sharing Kuro kami and Martha Graham

Janni and I rehearsed Kuro kami for many hours. To save time we rehearsed at the Academy, at her yoga studio, at 3rd Floor, and in a Cathedral in the small space next to the organ. Kuro kami could be rehearsed everywhere. It needed much less space than most Western dance pieces. Janni asked for a more traditional leadership from me, and her relevant movement questions really helped me to define the gestures and positions, which were brand new linguistics to her. We both made a new journey through the movements of Kuro kami. There were many body-based questions to solve: the difficulty of the turned in feet, the leaning backwards, the knees together, and continue to breathe.

The bodily constructions of these movements were embedded in our limbs. Martha Graham´s 1930s *Lamentation* was definitely based on a turned out construction, and a strong desire to exist between heaven and earth: stretching upwards, falling downwards: Freud and Christianity in a nutshell. The movements discussed pain and lament in an elegant way. The narrative *Book of*

169 Lagerström, L. In Search of a Poetics, Nordic Theatre Studies: The Artist as Researcher., Volume 20, Pages 9-15 2008

Lamentation from the Bible, on which Martha Graham´s solo was based, describes the destruction of Jerusalem. Jersusalem is portrayed like a mourning widow.[170] The movements were perfect for Janni who is a very fine and strong modernist dancer. The costume, created by Kristina Johansson-Lassbo after watching the photographies of Martha Graham, was a tube made out of a stretch fabric. The *Lamentation*-tube was pushed and elongated, as if the performer was examining its limits, and trying to reach across boundaries without breaking them: The agitation between pressure and liberation. Or the Graham Contraction and Release.

The choreography of *Kuro kami* was instead negotiating the acceptance of pain and lament, and the escape of agitation. The pain was kept, equally elegant, inside one's own skin, the kimono, as not to bother or disturb other people. The kimono was not stretched. The performer dwelled inside the kimono, and inside the prescribed posture. The shape was confirmed and validated, rather than pushed. In Kuro kami there was also the desire to exist outside the concept of heaven and earth (no jumping or falling), which associated more with the Buddhist beliefs of impermanence: The acceptance of time constantly passing, the escape of the body, and the final dissolution. Were there any similarities? Both costumes: the tube and the kimono, showed very little of the body. Only the face, hands and feet were visible. Both solos moved very little in space. The artistic expressions were different, but both were narratives of human beings trying to find dignity in spite of despair and sorrow. In the performance 20xLamentation I created a space for the processing of two different kinds of embodied physical heritage: the Martha Graham technique, and the Kabuki feminine dance technique.

The further characters that I created, except for Janni's Tatsuhime in Kuro kami, and the widow of Jerusalem in Martha Graham's Lamentation (Buddhism vs. Christianity/Judaism), were the ill persons. There were the women at the Rheumatology clinic, but there also turned up warriors. The antagonist Yoritomo appeared. A Tea Ceremony master entered the stage. There was the cross-gender singer. The audience met with the lecturer. The beggar crawled on his knees, as did the sutra chanting monk. There were people from different social classes, who suffered according to different schools and traditions, involved in different kinds of ceremonies.

Jeremiad #1 Doomsday

I found the first piece of music to the first scene thanks to my teenager son. Doomsday by Nero, from the computer game first-person role-playing shooter Borderlands 2, a computer game played

170 Our references have changed since 1930. People who did not know dance history did not interpret Janni as the widow of Jerusalem, but as a Muslim woman. Though the choreography remains the same, Martha Graham´s piece representes something different today.

mostly by young men[171]. I downloaded it from Youtube. The movements surprised me in a good way when they appeared in me. There was intensity, power, spirit. There was punk, Kabuki, street. The music was a bit subversive, commercial and very popular. Now, how much more Shirabyōshi could it be? Only the most daring Emperor would hire her. The physical task was extreme isolations of different body parts, the attack of the neck, the staccato of hands, and even the boiling of limbs. It might be a reaction on *ma,* jo-ha-kyu, an exploration of terror. When you become the carrier of a respected and traditional methodology, you could easily find your hands tied behind your back. Doomsday meant a contemporary use of *ma*, there were stops and breaks, maybe just about enough for divine or demonic energy to enter the spine. It was a monologue of a rebelling body. A body rebelling against the roles that I am assigned on and off the stage. The resistance and the battle of authority, and the enemy.

I loved every bit of this dance. It was really in my comfort zone, authentic, and real. When I finally got some energy back, I made sure to use it. People said they did not recognize me at first, they thought I was somebody else. My son said he had not seen me move like this for years. I of course did not accumulate all that energy myself, it was done through the effective choreography, and the music from a young and noisy stage. How would I categorize this resistance dance? Was it street dance? Olof Persson, one of the directors of 3:rd Floor said that my dance made him think of the backstreets of Tokyo. Also there was a bit of Martha Graham fast forwarded, and demonic locking. The concept of streetdance was something from the fringe of society, or at least some distance away from power. The practitioners of streetdance have created their own stages: streets, squares, and events, i.e. new ways to share their art to their supporters and audiences. Nowadays streetdance was accepted and invited to be performed at institutional theatres. One could definitely see a pattern here.

Because of the violence in the movements I created for Doomsday, I was interpreted as Man. Originally I did not think or plan to portray The Man. *The man* in the movements was of course finally my own interpretation, but I originally had planned to portray transgression: the unstable gender, the ill and outcast person, the Eastern-Western hybrid, the processig of the Chinese gong fu films and the Japanese warrior dramas I love to watch.[172]

171 Nero is a British dubstep electronic house trio

172The inspirational male sources were: Akira Kurosawa (1910-1998), Japanese film director, Stephen Chow (1962-), Chinese film director and actor of and in the film Shao Lin Soccer, Takeshi Kitano (1947-), Japanese film-director and actor of, and in the film Zatoichi, Jet Li (1963-), Chinese actor, Hayao Miyazaki (1941-), Japanese director and animator of e.g.My Neighbour Totoro, Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away.

The essential part of my embodied practice were of course the training in male Kabuki dances, Iaido, Shao Lin Gong Fu, but also: The reflections of the Samurai, the forces and the terror that rush through you as a person at war. One's personal war, or the civil wars in Japan in the 12th Century. I might be Ami, or I might be the antagonist Yoritomo, the bad guy of the Kabuki plays and TV-dramas. When the body resisted and battled authority forcefully, it is often considered male business. However the daughters in traditional Samurai families also had access to this training. In Sweden there are now many prominent female practitioners of Asian martial arts.[173]

Jeremiad #2 Tea ceremony

Sometimes I believe I must drink more *matcha* to become a better performer, or sit in silence for many days to become a better person.[174] I also think that I must study the Tea Ceremony to become both a better performer, and a better person. However, the most important in a Tea Ceremony is to create a sense of harmony, and to appreciate and value the very moment one shares together, the concept of *Ichi-go-ichi-e*.[175] I have visited many harmonious Tea Ceremonies in Kyoto. I have also visited the opposite, where the many rules instead created connoisseurs and fools, high and low, cultivated and uncultivated. By learning how to structure your body in a certain position in a certain space among certain objects one can expose one's social class.

The image of Japan is often sold and marketed by using the Tea Ceremony and Zen. For me the second scene was a critical experiment to put national romanticism on stage as a patrotic manifestation and self-orientalism, in which I could show the structure of the Japanese woman or the Japanese man in seiza. If the first scene put the stage on fire, the next scene was its extreme counterpart. It showed the silence after explosion. It was a scene in between the scenes, the *ma* of the performance, the Tea Ceremony. It was a Duchampian artifice to put something, a readymade Tea Ceremony on stage and call it dance, or performance. I could discuss with uninitiated people, who dreamt of experiencing a real, and genuine Japanese Tea Ceremony, how brutal and excluding it could be. When an outsider plays with an important pillar in the production of a cultural image in this way, it might be perceived as a threat, an attack.

But I did not have such strong reactions from the audience at 3rd Floor. I was aware that the Tea Ceremony scene could create the same tension of connoisseur/fool, high/low, those who knew Tea

173 Raili Salminen/Iaido, Sara Widgren and Janni Larsson/Jiu-jitsu, Sophia Nordenö/Submission wrestling (contemporary hybrid martial arts), Elina Nilsson /Thai Boxing, Michiko Komaki/Kendo.

174 matcha is the green powdered Tea Ceremony-tea that is prepared in a special way, and that could be tasted outside the context of a Tea Ceremony as well

175 Ichi-go-ichi-e means one time, one meeting. It is a Japanese concept of a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and is often used in the Tea Ceremony. Value the moment, bow to here and now. This is it.

Ceremony and those who did not. In Sweden, the Tea Ceremony was not something with which one could expose one's social class. The audience either loved it or found it deadly dull. A professor of Literature wondered why I had sitten that still for that long, while only waving my hand. (A dancer should move around, exhibit strength, flexibility, vigour.) The few quivering minutes that I got to lecture him about Seiza and Tea temporarily turned the hierarchy upside down.

Lack of events = ma?

The Japanese dance and theatre is often accused of the lack of events. However, stillness from a physical practitioner's point of view is all but still. If you have tried the Seiza, you know what I mean. It might not be possible for everybody to read this stillness. There is a risk that this whole art form, the Japanese dance, is declared being of no importance and therefore should be ignored. I tored my hair, how could I make people interested in Japanese dance?

I 2001, I met the Swedish ambassador in Tokyo. His view was that Japanese dance was impossible beacus there was no movement. In 1921, Ernest B Satow wrote the book *A Diplomat in Japan*, read by everybody at that time:

> The dance performed by geisha is very uninteresting. Their music so difficult to appreciate that it probably isn´t worth the trouble. No foreigner, unless he is the enthusiast, would ever make the trouble with trying to learn this art form.[176]

The above text is out-of-date, and scholars do not use these kind of texts anymore, Satow fitted the category of naive diplomats convinced that the British culture he represented was the highest standing. He regretted that when older. To simplify, we could call this cultural incomprehensibility. We could blame it on culture. However, Nō and Kabuki were seen as equally cultural unintelligible in Japan as in Sweden.

> Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalised language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of the intelligibility.[177]

Though naive and out-of-date, words like Satow's were repeated over and over again. My life has been full of Satows. So, without ambassadors that would support cultural unintelligible art, I had to

176 Satow, E. A Diplomat in Japan: The Inner History of the Critical Years in the Evolution of Japan When the Ports Were Opened and the Monarchy Restored, *Cornell University Library,* **1921**

177 Butler, J. Genustrubbel, Feminism och identitetens subversion, transl into Swedish, Daidalos 2007, p 32

become this ambassador myself. I wanted to give my own opinion on stillness, without mythologize it, without claiming it was curative or outstanding.[178]

An artistic piece did not end with a conclusion. It could cause a movement in your body that you would always remember, even though it was never written down. It generated several possibilities and interpretations. It also left a lot of space for imagination, and independent thoughts to the audience member. *Ma.* You see what you are able to see. You judge what you are able to judge. Was it a body waving its hand among unknown objects? You might be body illiterate and not able to relate to the physical form. Was it a body aware of time and space among known objects? You might be a Tea Ceremony master and get upset to see somebody destroying this untouchable art form. That woman on stage, was she a warrior? Was she Yoritomo, trying to forget what he had done to his half-brother Yoshitsune. What he had done to Yoshitsune´s beloved Shizuka. What he had done to his own beloved Tatsuhime. What he had done to himself. In order to restore self-control, Yoritomo might have performed a purifying ceremony. The Tea Ceremony at this time was a status symbol among the warrior class, not available for all social classes.

Jeremiad #6 Illness Ceremony

In rites and ceremonies, the wellbeing and suffering walked hand in hand. A ceremony created a sense of control, but could be extensive and exhausting to implement. People living with chronic diseases had to endure daily ceremonies to control illness. These ceremonies were necessary, but not always pleasant. I counterbalanced the Tea Ceremony with an Illness Ceremony in Jeremiad #6. I kept the physical structure, but instead of whipping matcha powder and pouring hot water, I bowed to the illness equipment, sprayed cortisone in my nose, bowed, pricked my arm and took a blood sugar test, took an effervescent tablet, put the Japanese surgical mask over my nose, wrapped the leg in a red bandage. I was prepared for negative reactions on these private ceremonies that we usually perform when alone. The blood sugar test, e.g. was considered a bit too authentic, after all it was a performance. (Stage) performances should not be too real, which might be one of the assertions when one compares visual art performances with stage art performances. Which one was more authentic? I know that any diabetic who sat in the audience would feel great relief to finally have their private Illness Ceremony made visible. The problems with many illnesses and jeremiads were that they were kept secret and private.[179] It created loneliness, shame and more pain. In this Illness

178Japanese culture in Sweden often also has to represent peace, SPA, and healthy body treatments.

179 On the premiere my sons were in the audience, and one of them has diabetes type 1. The blood glucose meter was his extra meter. It was calibrated for his insuline pump. My blood sugar value beeped and came up on his screen. He had to tell the insuline pump not to save my value. After the performance he proudly announced:"I know your blood sugar value. 6,5!"

ceremony I became the one who took on the shame, and made myself the laughing stock. I have professional training in making a fool out of myself. In the discussions I had with the audience members at the 3rd Floor, my questions and ideas were met with mostly affirmative reactions. The private ceremonies were received in a rather grateful way by many people.[180] Because published critique from newspapers are what remains from most dance performances, I think that my master essay could help my future peers with reflections on how performances might have been created in the beginning of the 21st century. To add on to this, the Swedish writer and director Petra Revenue wrote the following:

> "The performance touched me tremendously, and I will ponder why here. I am no connoisseur of dance, but like most cultural workers I see quite a number of performances a year, a mix of traditional, modern and experimental theatre, visual arts and dance. I have also done some traveling eastwards and have newly conquered preconceptions about the forms Ami uses as references. I often experience dance as a detached art form that is difficult to relate to. Classical ballet gives me the same experience as when I see young gymnasts push their bodies to the max, without really knowing what kind of poetry they seek to tell. Will they fall? Harm themselves? Is it ok to be that skinny?
> I imagine that this lack of focus could be explained by the fact that dance sometimes involves mastering and pushing the body so much that the story becomes secondary, and therefore the work never feels relevant. It does not really matter whether it is Eastern, where the dance seems to bear generations of collective suffering and heavy stories, or the more individualized interpretations of the Western "ballerina". Perhaps my image of the dance world also is shaped by knowing that a lot of dancers who speak of their own bodies as if it is a stranger one hates, wants to subjugate, or have an ambivalent relationship with..."
> ".....What Ami is doing something unusual. She uses dance to talk about her own relationship to his art form. The theme she presents is suffering. She talks about her own journey from the West to the East with her own body. There is no doubt that Ami masters the Japanese dance to the fullest. If one cannot see that one should leave the country, and get out and travel. In these meta-times when every art form constantly question their own forms and history conditions - it is

180 Viktor Sandberg wrote, May 16th 2013: The performance was a proof that fight sports and dance is about the same thing. Above all, I got to cry a lot by someone else's interpretation of grief, which might as well be my grief. The crying was stern and invisible, but stronger and more healing than any other crying I have experienced. The performance was 20x Lamentation at the dance space 3rd floor. Simply bloody good!

liberating to see someone doing this also in the dance field, someone who tells her own story, and explores her personal fiction and her own relationship to dance. There is a clear thread: it is as much about a dancer growing up, and find one's own expression, as it is a journey from the East to the West. Ami's dance partner (Janni) illustrates the love of the Master and to the old ritualized dance. Ami herself represents the contrasts by throwing herself between the different expressions. She is everything from a Samurai to a beggar, which makes it possible to identify with her character. She plays with her own personal influences and mixes media such as film, text, and even prayers in a playful way."

"....For me it is without hesitation Ami´s strongest performance. Not only because she carries out her story in such a controversial way, but because she, for the first time, takes her personal fiction, her own heroine story, seriously."[181]

Further Jeremiads: The Crying Boy/Takarazuka/Expressionism[182]

Artists have always composed and organized suffering. A *lamentation* is a special music composition, which has been considered the most high ranked piece. A lamentation made you receive the grief in the world in a noble-minded way, without collapsing. Bach composed for God. Lamentations should be addressed to God as aestheticized prayers for higher purposes. Low ranked musical compositions were the music that the so called low ranked people listened to. I compare this with how the Emperor had pointed out the difference in his own practice, compared with the Shirabyōshi: He sang for Buddha. They, on the other hand, sang for humans in the profane world.

Life is better represented by schlager than a missa solemnis. This was a sentence that I had carried with me for twenty years, I almost thought that it was I who had written it. In one of the jeremiads, Janni entered on her perfect suriashi diagonal, supported by grand diva kitsch *enka* music.[183] Enka fits the cathegory of low ranked lamentation music: it is not composed for god/desses, but for people. This music was probably also a reflection on how Westerners were perceived in Japan: as melodramatic. When Janni entered the stage, I remained silent in seiza. After a while I slowly lifted my right arm to the front, palm facing downward, fingers kept together. With the hand in front of me, I slowly folded the arm at the elbow and brought the fore arm towards my face, now with the palm facing toward the eyes. This was the kata for crying with a Nō mask. Then I accumulated phychological inner drama, and burst into 1930s silent-movie-going-mad-tears,

181 Petra Revenue wrote this in July 22nd 2013

182 The Crying Boy, the kitsch mass-produced print of a child in tears, by Bruno Amadio (1913-1981)

183 Enka are the popular Japanese melancholic, and melodramatic 1960s pop ballads, a mix between the East and the West

raising both hands in a most desperate way towards the face. I burst into an external expression that is forbidden in Japanese traditional theatre, maybe because Japanese traditional theatre is also composed for the god/desses.

With a microphone in my hand and started to sing to Janni in Japanese.[184] The singer of the song had a broken voice and was accompanied with pan pipes. The text, and the pan pipes were key to why I selected the song about a woman who let her black hair down and danced to try to ease her pain: It was the sexually frustrated lamentation of a contemporary Tatsuhime. Again I was hoping for many images in my audience members minds: the universal lamentation, the expressionistic mime scene, Karaoke, the manwoman singing her ode to la femme, the Geisha, and, if somebody knew about them: *Takarazuka*.

The very popular *Takarazuka* is an all female revue in Japan, where dancers/actors could study to portray both women and men on stage.[185] It started in 1913, as a reaction to elitist male Nō and Kabuki. Many of the Takarazuka plays flirt with melodramatic Western musicals. The female performers portraying men on stage are called *Otokoyaku*, and they are the real stars of the revue with many, mostly female, fans. According to Takarazuka technique: the standing with legs apart while pushing the pelvis forward, was considered a male construction.[186] However, as a Western dancer I interpreted it as jazz dance. If male is the universal gender, how do we look at this *otokoyaku*, this dragking? I think that she should become as acknowledged as the dragqueen. In Sweden, dragqueens are very popular, but dragkings are very rare. Why is that so?

I need to talk about suffering based on something else than Foucault

I was asked why I did not refer to the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) in my performance. I explained that while I find Foucault very interesting, and that I did read his texts in the 1990s, I now wanted to talk about suffering based on something else than Foucault.[187]

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184 *Sometimes a woman will kick a rock. Sometimes she will curse god, and dance. The wind makes her black hair fly. Her burnt skin is her sadness. The boat song of Nazare that reaches to the sky. You who ran with your wet body. My heart has been waiting ten years for your return,* translated by my Kyoto brothers Peter Golightly and Mori Takewaka in 2013

185 Buckton, M.Takarazuka-Japans newest traditional theater turns 100, Japan Times 2013/04/14/

186 as explained by the actress and Japanese scholar Zehra Fazal at Kyoto Art Center, July 2011

187 My reply *I need to talk about suffering based on something else than Foucault* created interest among my classmates, and when we performed eachother's artistic dilemmas as a part of a seminar, the actress Tove Wiréen made an absolutely wonderful performance in which she repeated this phrase over and over. She painted half her face white, she dressed herself in a paper kimono, she kneeled in seiza on pebbles, constantly repeating *I need to talk about suffering based on something else than Foucault.*

Janni kept performing Kuro kami over and over again in her own universe. She never acknowledged the audience. She stayed alone. I lay down on the floor and talked about the different constructions of suffering. My thesis was that the *s*uffering had lost its shape in our contemporary deritualized society. The lamentation, and its following acts of compassion, had become but a phone call from the insurance agency, or a phone call from the lab, a piece of paper with numbers of one's blood. I compared this with how suffering was organized and ritualized in the times of Shirabyōshi. In Japan, in the 11th century, there was no insurance agency. There were monks, priests, and exorcists. I created the Chorus of Lamentation, based on three characters next to each other on screen. One read the 11th century Pillow Book, the other Murasaki's Diary, the third remained silent.[188] All characters were played by me, and the text was said in the Japanese Kabuki feminine construction, with the tension of shoulders pulled down and back.[189] These ancients texts showed different ways of relating to illness. When ill at court in the 11th century´s Japan, you were not left alone. Monks came and sang the Heart sutra for you, priests were called in to ward off evil spirits. The author of the Pillow Book also confessed how hard it was to sing a sutra in a nice way. The description of obesession by evil spirits was a poetic way to depict illness.

These Buddhist/Shintoists jeremiads were later mirrored by Christian jeremiads when the Chorus of Lamentation instead recited parts from the Bible. In this recitation I let go of the shoulders and instead spoke in the male construction. The Crying Boy appeared once again. While the video was screened at stage right, Janni and I prepared ourselves for our hommage to Martha Graham. The texts from Book of Lamentation described the destruction of Jerusalem, which was seen as a punishment by God. Jersualem was portrayed as a desolate weeping widow overcome with miseries, hence the intepretation created by Martha Graham in 1930.

Lecturing and begging

The performance also included a lecture, in which I discribed how a disease was discovered and categorized, truly the miracles of contemporary times. Nevertheless, the discovery, the cathegorization, and finally the cure, if there was one, divided people into two groups: the well and the ill. There was also a big difference in owning a disease, name it and to build one's career on it, than having to suffer from it and to live with it, and yes, with all that that implied.

The Pillow Book and Murasaki's Diary were diaries from the 11th century. To mirror them I

188 Shikibu M, Murasaki's Diary, written in the beginning of 11th century, Ellerströms Förlag 2008, and Sei Shonagon, the Pillow Book, written in the early 11th century, Ellerströms Förlag 2012

189The actress and professor Gunilla Röör, and the cinematographer Sara Svärdsén provided me with great support in the video creation of the Chorus of Lamentation.

also included my own illness diary from 2010, a desperate monologue addressed to a doctor, a cry for help. Something that might have to be cut away as not to bother the audience. I decided to include it to stay true to my question. It was way out of my comfort zone. The whining, the creaking, the crawling on the floor was difficult and revealing. This was how far you could get from a power point presentation at a research conference.

There was a begging scene in which I was interpreted as one of the Romani beggars who had arrived to Swedish streets only a few years ago. But I also related it to begging Buddhist monks, and to people who get their social security period, or incapacity benefits expired. After all, we could all become beggars, and end up in the streets. The invited singer and researcher Elisabeth Belgrano, who herself had written her phD thesis on Lamentation, sang for me in the role of a professional mourner. She sang *Laissez durer la nuit*, by the 17th century composer Sébastien Le Camus. Mourner, I think, is a much underestimated profession that we would need to recreate.

In the end of the performance I showed parts of the video with Senrei sensei performing at Oe Nō Theatre in 2011: the video that had accompanied my morning practices at the Academy of music and drama. At last, Senrei sensei performed on a stage in Gothenburg, and I watched her seated in the seiza position, the position of the apprentice. The whole performance ended with me singing the Heart Sutra for her. I listened to recordings with virile young Zen monks singing perfectly and briskly with beautiful voices. I picked out one version that was much slower, and in which one monk seemed very old and who could not really follow. He lost both the rythm and the words.[190] I thought these Zen monks would be the choir I would like to sing with when I bid farewell of my sensei.

Thankyou for teaching me.

190 I have the permission to use this recording of Japanese monks from Reverend Jikai Dehn

The Otokoyaku and The Onnagata

I was invited to Helsinki University for the Arts to show parts of the performance *20xLamentation.*[191] Janni could not join me to Finland. I then started to work with my classmate Frej von Fräähsen. He and the light designer Åsa Holtz followed me to the symposium. Frej and I started from the beginning, with the practice of seiza and suriashi in the feminine construction. Because I had torn my left achilles tendon, I could not show the posture in action. I had to verbalize the physical construction of suriashi, while I walked next to Frej slowly on crutches. We had a very rewarding and developing conversation during suriashi. I realized that suriashi itself, added with a philosophical conversation, was very performative.

I had known from the beginning that women study both female and male Kabuki pieces, and that men study both female and male Kabuki pieces, but I had never thought about the fact that the female pieces had been created to hide the male, and to so to say kill the body. The work with Kuro kami now moved one more step further, as I deepened the investigation of the gender construction of this dance together with Frej. The trouble of gender that Judith Butler so brilliantly has described was not new, and Kuro kami as an Onnagata-piece could help support the argument that gender is a construction.[192]

I have previously described my reluctance to study Kuro kami, and how it was finally solved through daily practice. When I agreed on the construction I finally got very interested in Kuro kami. I had to let go of the questions like: why was Tatsuhime constantly looking down? Why does she not demand more of the world? When I looked at it as a gender construction, this was where the fun started. The piece was choreographed for men to look tiny. That is why the hands were hidden inside the kimono sleeves, and also why the hands once shown were held in certain ways. This was how old time Onnagata fantasized women. The choreography provided us with a detailed method to hide maleness. The construction was not at all easier for me because I was a woman. Frej and I had a vivid and fun conversation on how we looked at the different movements.

Kuro kami is quite painful to do. The dance is the extended version of the feminine seiza. Frej and I agreed on that the female construction was much harder and more painful than the male construction. The frame was indeed very small, and therefore challenging the balance. We sticked to the posture, and related to the kata, the choreography, and we tried to do the kata as precise as

191Shifting Dialogues II Symposium at Helsinki University of the Arts, Oct 2013

192 Butler, J. Genustrubbel, Feminism och identitetens subversion, transl into Swedish, Daidalos 2007

possible. Neither of us tried to perform as either man or woman. The bodily posture was so beautiful, that few would be able read the effort and pain in its structure, not the previously mentioned Swedish ambassador, nor Ernest B Satow. I had to be the ambassador, and we both realized that Kuro kami was the physical proof of Butler's gender trouble.

Was this then a gender parody, the art of drag, presenting critique with burlesque humour? No. Kuro kami was something else, that we still did not have in Sweden. The dance lacked parody and humour. Maybe the fact that this gender play was serious, actually was more provoking than drag. If the art of Drag disturbs our preconceptions of what is natural or not, revealing and parodying the artificial gender construction: Kuro kami was rather an appreciation of the art of gender play. Frej was the Onnagata, a man in a prescribed bodily posture, belived feminine. I was the Otokoyaku, a woman portraying a man, but in Kuro Kami I am in the same prescribed bodily posture like Frej. So I was a woman portraying a woman. I still find the framing, the concept of Woman, problematic. Some scholars at the symposium in Helsinki meant that the image of the submissive Asian woman has been created by Western scholars. However, I think that Kuro kami, created by Japanese male choreographers, does portray a submissive woman/dragqueen. Could it be seen as an act of resistance: to refuse to project physical energetic expressions on stage, and defend the right to look down in grief, no matter what gender you are?

Frej as an Onnagata

My investigation of gender play in Japanese dance was not about magic or makebelieve. I did not want to construct the perfect Onnagata or the perfect Otokoyaku to trick the audience, but rather show the unstable gender constructions. I think Kuro kami could also be a good frame to examine what has been called the *feminine* and feminine energy, instead of focusing too much on what we now call masculine energy. Some of my Asian feminist peers have declared yin and yang as being more forgiving opposites, but I think they have been used in the same problematic, dualistic way. Yet, I am not a gender theoretician and have not enough information on yin and yang to be able to give a reliable comment. I do hope that my physical investigations of gender play might inspire new thoughts on this issue.

The problem with the Kuro kami portrayal was of course the suggesting that there were only two different types of genders. There are many more classifications of gender than just two. But instead of avoiding gender play, and to go gender neutral that we have done for a couple of years in Sweden, I think the elaborated ways in which one studies different codified gestures to represent gender in Asian theatre forms could be a way to explore this question further. It is something that I want to continue to investigate in the future.

Frej and me in Helsinki October 2013

I also gave classes of Kuro kami to professional dancers and amateurs as a further investigation and conversation on how Japanese Kabuki dance is perceived in Sweden. I have kept their notes for future investigations.

Ichi-go ichi-e

The suriashi, the sliding steps that I have previously described, have now been a part of my method and daily practice since many years. I decided to make a performance in the foyer of the Academy of music and drama, with seven walkers performing *suriashi*, and four soloists performing *Kuro kami*. The performance had the title Performance - パフォーマンス (pronounced *Pafoumansu*) and was documented, and thus can be seen on GUPEA.

Two women, Ragnheidur Bjarnasson and Janni Groenwold Tschanz, and two men, Frej von Fräähsen and Aloun Marchal, performed the aesthetisized female Tatsuhime in Kuro kami. They related to the choreography differently according to their performer backgrounds. I gave them individual tasks on how to work with the material. I dressed the walkers and the soloists in fragments of the kimono: *obi, obi-ita, obijime, obi age, koshihimo*, parts that must never be shown.[193] They are only there for support, and to give the kimono the perfect shape. The actress Tove Wiréen was instructed to hit the *hyoshigi*, the wooden clappers used in Sumo, Shinto and Kabuki to emphasize time. The actress Cecilia Milocco wore the mask of Ame no Uzume/Okame, the popular goddess who saved Japan by turning a tub upside down and dance on it. She sat in the stairs and watched the others carefully. In Japanese traditional theatre and dance she is important. Without her performance there would be no sun, no fun, no art, no dance.

Electro-acoustic music and Izanami

I invited the musician and composer Per-Anders Nilsson to play live electro-acoustic music that I think works very well with traditional Japanese theatre and dance. It has the same play with suspension, it has *ma* and it has no romantic easy-to-remember melody. The suriashi walkers were Karolin Ankarcrona, Joachim Berntsson, Robert Bolin, Catja Larsson, Robert Lyons**,** Susanne Suwi, and Kimona Wrede. They were dancers, actors, professors, choreographers, students. We rehearsed only once.

I created a doll character, a stranger, for myself, with white Kabuki stage make up, Pippi Longstocking braids, a neon green postmodern kimono, and *geta*[194] for men. I was behind the camera, but I entered the space in the end. I then used the servant's suriashi: walking fast with very small steps, to show my lower status, and that I was ready to serve. I was then both the creator and

193 Obi is the belt tied over the kimono. The other parts are cardboards, collars, cords and ropes to hold the obi and the kimono together.

194 Geta is a sandal with an elevated wooden base to keep the foot well above the ground. It is held onto the foot with the help of a fabric thong.

the killer, the goddess Izanami.[195] When I bowed to the performers it was their cue to leave the space. The bowing was my secret comment on my position in the Japanese dance tradition. In Japan, I am the apprentice who gratefully bows to my masters. In Sweden I am the apprentice who gratefully bows to my actors, and even though I am in a master's programme I will never become a master in its old, traditional meaning.

For a performance, one can have a scenario in mind, but then one becomes afflicted by things not foreseen, especially in this *ichi-go-ichi-e* performance, with its very short preparations.[196] I could not foresee the way my co-actors would capture and interpret the space, their interaction with the site, and with eachother. In the very performing moment I found them very beautiful. They seemed to enjoy the slow movements in space so much, and I was very reluctant to ruin that atmosphere. However it was in my script, and we had made an agreement. My bowing, which originally was meant to show my respect and gratefullness, made the actors/dancers leave. It ended their suriashi, their presence on stage. I could see how they got a bit tensed as I approached them. They prepared themselves to stop the suriashi, respond to my bowing, and leave. The space got more and more depopulated. Tove and P-A also met with my bowing stranger doll, and left the space, thus end of sound, end of rhythm. Finally, I took Ame no Uzume by the hand and lead her away. The end. Applause.

Who would be interested?

At the gathering afterwards, the performers told me that they had not had the experience that I had killed them. Instead, they were eager to do the performance again, and we made a plan to make slow walking actions in stressful places in the future. I think that we gave something important to eachother, by sharing that space together at that certain time. I also think that people who walked by got a new experience of how this foyer could change with people walking slowly. My own training in sharing improvisational actions with Paul Langland, Maria Mebius Schröder, Frances Becker, Daniel Leppkoff, and Dianne Reid has given me tools to process the *here and now,* together with the walkers and the soloists. I had no idea that this, the *ichi-go-ichi-e,* also was a Japanese concept, maybe it is universal. Descriptive ethics, rather than normative ethics was the language I learned to use in those shared improvisational actions. This dates back to classes with performers who have

195 In Japanese mythology Izanami is the goddess of creation and death.

196 Ichi-go-ichi-e means one time, one meeting. It is a Japanese concept of a once-in-a-lifetime chance, and is often used in the Tea Ceremony. Value the moment, bow to here and now. This is it.

trained with John Cage and Anna Halprin.[197] The performance in the foyer was thus created with the help of both Japanese and EuroAmerican performance compositional tools.

The soloists were four dancers with different backgrounds, and different views on dance. I had prepared five questions for them, which they answered me after the performance and rehearsals. I really liked the collaborative aspect of these questions, and how I was able to share them with my peers. I liked to hear their views and reactions on this new movement language. A critical question came up: Who would be interested in these questions and answers?

Though always present, I had never articulated these questions before. When I saw them written on these pages, together with the answers, I think they helped us reflect on performer training, physical constructions, and nationalistic bodies. I like the way it was shared by practitioners, and how theory could build from within the movements themselves. I know these questions are important, because I have to answer them often, from non-dancers, from Swedish and Japanese people, from academics, from bureaucrats. I read the questions to the walkers as well, and invited them to reflect as well. The choreographer and dancer Joachim Berntsson, who gave me my first employment when I auditioned for Peter Pan in 1987, told me that the questions had followed him since the very first day he stood at the barre. Ever since his childhood experience with a turned-out first position, he had wondered why all those physical decisions had been made over his head, and his body. He had "deskilled" himself from the turn out-technique with the help of Alexander-technique.[198] It took many years.

After my inspirational slow walks with Frej, me on crutches, him in split-toe tabi, I also thought I was finally able to share what I have been very lonely with - my infatuation with suriashi. In Japan, suriashi might be considered practical, pragmatic, and good training. When I presented my work with suriashi in worldwide contexts, and with children as well, at Kyoto Art Center in July 2011, Japanese elementary school teachers said that it had never come to their mind that suriashi would work for children. Someone, the outsider, had to discover its specificity and originality, and talk aloud about it.

Physical arguments

My two years at the master's programme gave me the space and time to value and acknowledge suriashi even more. Frej von Fräähsen could not join me to Lithuania, so I invited the Finnish

197 Ross, J: *Anna Halprin, Experience as dance* University of California Press, 2007. Anna Halprin (born 1920) has a studio in San Francisco where John Cage, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Meredith Monk, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Morris studied and worked. I took classes with Halprin in 1997, and 1999.

198 named after the Australian actor Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955), how to stop using unneeded physical and mental tension on stage or during everyday activities

actress and educator Disa Kamula to create a collaborative, philosophical walk with me, in which we had a conversation on physical arguments. We presented our walk at NSU Winter Symposium in Vilnius, Feb 2014. A comparison of embodied knowledge of traditional *suriashi* and *suzuki walks,*[199] and a reflection on what was considered correct walking according to different schools. The talking and walking thus related to the peripatetic tradition of Aristotle. Our dialogue can be read in the appendix, *Appendix 7*. The invisible performer training suriashi has now grown into a visible philosophy, presented both physically and verbally to an audience. I continue to look for contexts where suriashi can take place, e.g. networks for walking artists. In July 2014, I will walk together with Disa Kamula and Frej von Fräähsen in Sauðárkrókur, Iceland.[200]

I will now end this essay with yet a phenomenological description of suriashi:

For the last ten years, I have celebrated o hanami, cherry blossom viewing, with young pupils from allover Gothenburg. It has been a beautiful but invisible intervention in a hidden part of the Botanical Gardens: strollers who suddenly hear the music of the Nō play Shakkyō, and then discover seven year-olds focusing on walking slowly through the woods. This day, the park bathes in sunshine, and the Botanical gardens break visitor records with 10,000 people gathering to celebrate o hanami. It is my task to make everybody dance: the visitors, scientific curators, superintendents, and the Japanese Ambassador. We all dance around a tiny, newly planted Sakura tree, and I am surprised how the slow and simple movements that we do together can create such a quiet and unifying atmosphere. Then I bring the audience with me, in suriashi. I know where my feet are, but the sandals make the steps wobbly. I dissolve into the form, and trust that all these people will do the same. The asphalt is fierce, the legs become hard. Bones to rock, to fossil. I bend the knees more, squeeze the shoulders even harder and walk even slower to the sound of hundreds of Instagram clicks.[201]

199 the Japanese theatre director Tadashi Suzuki created "grammar of the feet", but they are based on ancient performer training.

200 NSU Summersymposium *Crossing context – Interventions through artistic research* 2014

201 April 26th, The inauguration of *Japan 14*, a year dedicated to Japanese nature and culture in the Gothenburg Botanical gardens.

Photo: Laila Östlund

Epilogue

I have wandered between geographic places, performance spaces, among people, and in and out of texts and films. I have investigated and formulated what my performing and creative methods and tools consist of, and I have verbalized some of my thoughts on female performers in history. The opportunity to stay with the same question for a longer time has opened new spaces and possibilities that I did not know of before. While creating performances, and writing this text, it was difficult but important to remember to hold on to the investigation, and to the question. I think that in the future I could trust and elaborate these questions even more. The master's programme moved me to a different place, and I hope to explore that place further. I hope to both continue with the performing arts, and to pursue doctoral studies somewhere in the world where I can move on with my investigations of Japanese theatre and dance, and especially the cross-gender techniques that are elaborated since centuries in Asian theater. The emerging field of artistic research is very intriguing, and I think that this is where I will continue, where art and academia meet to support, and disturb eachother. It it is a field in which sparks fly, and where new ideas constantly find their way,

The academic studies also made me more aware of references, and the importance of documentation. Therefore, I made sure that my two performances dedicated to my investigations were edited and translated into English. They are now published in a database belonging to a national university. They will be visible for anyone who might be interested in transnational and intercultural performance experiments. It is good to know that Shizuka Gozen and her peers found their way in there. I am also content that parts of the great performance *Dōjōji* by Senrei sensei that I saw on video in Kyoto fourteen years ago, also could live on in an electronic form. Twenty years after it premiered, and eighteen months after Senrei sensei passed away, it is available to viewers allover the world. *Dōjōji* by Senrei sensei was clearly the performance that showed me to the path I now walk, and rediscovering it made me realize just how pioneering Senrei sensei's work actually was. You never know exactly which experiences will make you move into new directions. My master studies were definitely a row of winding stepping stones leading to challenges yet unknown. I am eager to know what lies in front, or in between, the *ma.* Thankyou for reading this essay. *Otsukaresamadeshita.* You must be very tired.

Post-epilogue - My manifesto

My manifesto is a combination of Yvonne Rainer´s NO manifesto from 1965 and the ideas from the originator of Buto, Hjikata Tatsumi. He never wrote his manifesto, so I picked out his ideas from an interview made in 1968 with the title "Plucking off the Darkness of the Flesh", published in The Drama Review in 2000:

My manifesto (2013)

Yes to spectacle

No to virtuosity.

Yes to transformations.

No to magic and make-belive.

Yes to the glamour.

No to the transcendency of the star image.

No to the heroic.

Yes to the anti-heroic.

Yes to trash imagery.

Yes to involvement of performer and spectator.

Yes to style.

Yes to camp.

No to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer.

Yes to eccentricity.

Yes to moving or being moved

No to indecent light

Yes to the kinds of movements from joints being displaced

Yes to walking disjointedy with one leg striving to reach for the other

Appendix

Appendix 1

Video clip of *Dōjōji by Senrei sensei*, performed in Kyoto in 1994,
published at GUPEA, https://gupea.ub.gu.se

Appendix 2

Video documentation of the performance *Dust falling, Rain falling*, performed in Gothenburg 2012,
published at GUPEA, https://gupea.ub.gu.se
Script and choreography: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt
Livemusic: Palle Dahlstedt & Kumiko Nonaka
Light design: Åsa Holtz
Stage manager: Finn Pettersson
Trad. choreography: Nishikawa Senrei
Story cards: Kumiko Nonaka & Jan Skånberg
Props: Gerd Karlsson
Hair: Karin Nordling
Costume: Fumiko Nagai
Suzu (bell): Nunose Jinja
Production: Studio BuJi & 3:e våningen
Photo- and videodocumentation: Anders Bryngel
Edited by Anders Bryngel and Rasmus Ohlander
Poster: Lisa Sandström
Created with the support from Västra Götalandsregionens Frispel, 3:e våningen and Danscentrum Väst.
Thankyou: Gun Lund and Lars Persson, Nishikawa Senrei, Takae Hoshino, Fumiko Nagai, Cecilia Flodén, David Sundqvist, Olof Persson, Jan och Kerstin Skånberg, Hidariuma, Toste och Egil, Kristin Johansson Lassbo, Jonah Salz, Heidi S Durning, Inger Dehlholm, Terauchi Narihito, Kyoto Art Center, Tara Mc Gowan, Margaret Eisenstadt, Angereds Teater, Peter Golightly.

Appendix 3

Audience communication with students, and audience members after Dust falling, Rain falling, 2012

1. Where would you place the performance on a scale between traditional and experimental?

Audience member A: It hovers between traditional and experimental. It is never one hundred per cent one way or the other. Lovely! I would not put it on a scale. It moves on its own.

B: I find it difficult to answer. The theatre part was very traditional, I think. The music felt more experimental.

C: I saw a clear permeation of the traditional narration of a story, but the elements expressed work freely, and live outside of historical frames. For me it was balanced equally.

D: Very theatrical yet not traditional. Some sections (with the picture box) felt traditional but not westernized.

E: Do not know. Have poor track!

F: Experimental in its mixture of different styles (acoustic, electronic, Japan-Sweden) and stylistic levels (theatrical speech, storytelling, colloquial speech etc) Traditional: there is a rather strict distinction between the dancer´s vs. musicians roles. The episodical aspects of form are perhaps more traditional in dance than in contemporary art music.[202]

G: Hard to say, since I'm not familiar with this dance form. My feeling is that the form is new, but that the various elements are traditional in themselves. The dance pattern, the flute game, the scene with the calligraphy. (the kamishibai, author´s comment)[203]

H: I imagine that it is a traditional story told with experimental methods.

I: As a whole, decidedly experimental. The flute represents the traditional. Palle is the largest experiment!

J: In our opinion probably traditionally Japanese, but with Swedish eyes experimental.

K: In the tradition but with a contemporary Japanese language of form.

L: Pretty traditional

2. Were there parts of the performance that you recognized as specifically Japanese, or specifically Western?

A: The tempo felt Japanese. It was peaceful in a liberating way, but still strong and dramatic. Fantastic mix between the electronic and the traditional parts in the music.

202I think this anonymous audience member meant Western art music

203 Street theatre for children, performed mostly by men in the 20th century. In order to survive, the story-teller also sold candy.

B: The expression and dramatization, and the props are very Japanese. The theatrical and linguistic parts feels very Western, and particularly Swedish. The special reinterpretation of the Japanese is in its way very Western.

C: The spoken text felt specifically Japanese for me, as it reminded of a story-telling style I hear in Japanese fairy tales or stories. Typically westernization was probably some of the instruments used. The language of the text, as well as the lighting and use of the space on stage.

D: I felt for some reason that it became westernized when the dancer was barefoot. Then I do not know about the group rehearsal was meant to be that way, but that part also felt more western.

E: Felt like that last part with the dance rehearsal was quiet Western, otherwise it felt Japanese.

F: Much of the ritually restrained in dancing and flute playing (and some in the electronics), I experienced as traditional Japanese. While the colloquial elements felt more European (at least typical of Western postmodern art). This included even the more naked and frail expressions in dance.

G: Most things I took to be Japanese. The dancing, the costumes, instruments. Also the electronic music equipment blend in well with the whole. Weaving the narrative into the piece, the legends of these traditions, and the audience becoming part of the performance, felt possibly Western.

H: I imagine one has taken/been inspired by a Japanese original text, and then placed, translated and performed it in a Western context. I imagine that the two overlap eachother.

I: The hands are always Japanese. And the synthesizer. (Yamaha, author´s comment)

J: The fairy-tale was very Japanese. When the dancer instructed the musicians in dance.

K: Tempo, the flow, the soundscape Japanese

L: Most of it felt very Japanese. Why? Because the arrangement was such - and once you started to think "Japan" from the beginning everything fit into that.

3. *Where did you sense that this story took place, geographically and spatially?*

A: In a way it felt like it was here and now. In another way, it felt like it was far away and long ago.

B: Outside of time, in a mythical all-time, or a mythical past.

C: Geographically, it felt like the story took place in a Japan of yesteryear, but spatially it felt very here and now. A combination of a meeting with the old and the new, and the audience and ensemble with references to today.

D: It was pretty non geographic for me. The room was in some parts a city, otherwise anonymous.

E: Focused mostly on the words and the sounds, did not think so much of the story.

F: I felt that there was a framework that had no specific geographical location (possibly the 3rd floor in Gothenburg), while the small events felt like they took place in Japan.

G: ----

H: In a Japanese environment in different situations / contexts.

I: Here and now.

J: The Emperor's palace in Japan.

K: Here and now

L: Japan - in a temple or monastery, or a dream, a memory

4. In what time did the performance take place?

A: Maybe far away and long ago, revived here and now.

B: Outside of time. The performance felt much shorter than one hour.

C: Difficult to say. My previous answers suit here.

D: Timeless but of ancient lineage.

E: Now, but not here.

F: No time, alt. over the course of 800 years.

G: Medeival time in Japan.

H: In modern times, with references to historical events.

I: Contempory time. Now.

J: An undefined past.

K: Undefined, moved quickly in between different times.

L: All times - the memory of time.

5. Would you like to share something else from your experience of the performance?

A: Atmosphere, atmosphere and again atmosphere. I did not even notice when the smoke (dust) faded. An unprecedented focus and intensity from the stage that created a curiosity and serenity in the room. It was special, in the best of ways. The light, the music, the dance and the speech created a whole. It felt both surprising and obvious/right.

B: I do not know about the "rehearsal" of the performance was intended, but I liked it. The magic is broken in a peculiar way.

C: ----

D: The part where it "became the capital" stood out a bit. Nice piece! Great music! Well played!

E: Very nice intro. The other part was also fine. (drawing of a smiley person)

F: It moved between very different stylistics (from unclear to clarity, abstract to concrete etc) but never really returned to any of the foregoing, as I might have wished.

G: Nice form composition with the performance for the Emperor as final. Nice to hear about the legends.

H: --------

I: A petition on the premises for dance, addressed to the Empress Adelsohn![204]

J: The performance gave a dreamy feeling. The performance became more lively and engaging when there were more people dancing on the stage.

K: Filmic cuts between times and worlds

L: A bit slow, maybe over-explained. Very beautiful!

Appendix 4

As Appropriate, the monastery rules written by the Zen priest Myoe

•06:00 - 08:00 PM, Liturgy: *Yuishin kangyō shiki* (Manual on the Practice of Contemplating the Mind-Only)

•08:00 - 10:00 PM, Practice once. Chant the *Sambōrai* (Revering the Three Treasures).

•10:00 - 12:00 AM, Zazen (seated meditation). Count breaths.

•12:00 - 06:00 AM, Rest for three [two-hour] periods.

•06:00 - 08:00 AM, Walking meditation once. (Inclusion or exclusion should be appropriate to the occasion). Liturgy: *Rishukyō raisan* (Ritual Repentance Based on the Sutra of the Ultimate Meaning of the Principle) and the like.

•08:00 - 10:00 AM, *Sambōrai*. Chant scriptures for breakfast and intone the *Kōmyō Shingon* (Mantra of Light) forty-nine times.

•10:00 - 12:00 PM, Zazen. Count breaths.

•12:00 - 02:00 PM, Noon meal. Chant the *Goji Shingon* (Mantra of the Five Syllables) five hundred times.

•02:00 - 04:00 PM, Study or copy scriptures.

•04:00 - 06:00 PM, Meet with the master (Myōe) and resolve essential matters.

Etiquette in the Temple Study Hall

•Do not leave rosaries or gloves on top of scriptures.

•Do not leave sōshi [bound] texts on top of round meditation cushions or on the half tatami-size cushions [placed under round cushions].

204Sweden´s cultural minister from 2006-2014. Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth will not go to history as someone involved with excellent cultural politics. Her suggestion was to stop to call culture culture, and instead call it entertainment. (Author´s comment)

•During the summer, do not use day-old water for mixing ink.

•Do not place scriptures under the desk.

•Do not lick the tips of brushes.

•Do not reach for something by extending one's hand over scriptures.

•Do not enter [the hall] wearing just the white undergarment robes.

•Do not lie down

•Do not count [pages] by moistening one's fingers with saliva. Place an extra sheet of paper under each sheet of your *sōshi* texts.

Etiquette in the Buddha-Altar Hall

•Keep the clothes for wiping the altar separate from that for wiping the Buddha[-statue].

•During the summer (from the first day of the fourth month to the last day of the seventh month), obtain fresh water [from the well] morning and evening for water offerings.

•Keep the water offerings and incense burners for buddhas and bodhisattvas separate from those for patriarchs.

•When you are seated on the half-size cushions, do not bow with your chin up.

•Do not place nose tissues and the like under the half-*tatami* size cushions.

•Do not let your sleeves touch the offering-water bucket.

•Do not put the [altar] rings on the wooden floor; they should be placed high.

•Place a straw mat at your usual seat.

•The regular sutra for recitation is one fascicle of the Flower Ornament of Sutra (or half a fascicle).

• The three sutras should be read alternately every day.

• When traveling, you should read them after returning.[205]

Appendix 4

Video documentation of the performance *20 x Lamentation*, performed in Gothenburg 2013

published at GUPEA, https://gupea.ub.gu.se

Postdramatic Japanese body theatre by Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt

Length: 80 min

Performers: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt and Janni Groenwold Tschanz

Script and choreography: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt

trad. choreography: Nishikawa Senrei sensei

Light design: Åsa Holtz

205 Mark U: Shingon Refractions: Myoe and the Mantra of Light, Wisdom Publications, 1997, p 153

Music: Palle Dahlstedt, Nero, Kadokura Yuki, Kanze Nō, trad. jiuta-mai, Thomas Tallis, Z. Randall Stroope Sebastien Le Camus, the Heart Sutra
Stage manager: Finn Pettersson
Costume: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, Kristin Johansson-Lassbo
Video: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, Sara Svärdsén, Gunilla Röör
Song: Elisabeth Belgrano
Photo and documentation: Laila Östlund
Edited by Rasmus Ohlander
Hair and Make-up: Anette Pooja
Joinery: Thomas Magnusson
Rehearsal of trad. choreography: Nishikawa Senrei, Nishikawa Kayorei, Emiko Ota
Trad. text: Murasaki's Diary and the Pillow Book with the permission from Ellerströms Förlag, Book of Lamentation/the Old Testament/Bible, the Heart Sutra
Produced with the support from Gothenburg City Arts Council, 3:rd Floor, and the Academy of Music and Drama at Gothenburg University
Thankyou
3:rd Floor, Nishikawa Senrei sensei,Takae Hoshino, Emiko Ota, Jonah Salz, Senreinokai, Gunilla Röör, Karin Nordling, Jan och Kerstin Skånberg, Toste och Egil, Inger Dehlholm, Kyoto Art Center, the Göteborg-Opera Wigdesign, Ellerströms Förlag, students and teatchers at the Master programme of acting and contemporary performative arts at Academy of music and drama

Appendix 5

Video documentation of パフォーマンス *Pafoumansu/Performance*, performed at the Academy of music and drama in November 2013, published on GUPEA, https://gupea.ub.gu.se.
Soloists: Ragnheidur Bjarnasson, Frej von Fräähsen, Aloun Marchal, and Janni Groenwold Tschanz.
Suriashi walkers: Karolin Ankarcrona, Joachim Berntsson, Robert Bolin, Catja Larsson, Robert Lyons**,** Susanne Suwi, and Kimona Wrede
Music: Per-Anders Nilsson on live electronics
Hyoshigi/wooden clappers: Tove Wiréen
the goddess of the performing arts, Ame no Uzume/Okame: Cecilia Milocco
the godess of creation and death, Izanami : Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt
Photo: Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt and Thomas Magnusson
Edited by Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt

Appendix 6

Questions to the solists of *Pafoumansu/Performance* on how they perceived suriashi and Kuro kami:

1. If all learning is a form of change, the achievement of new knowledge and also a new Zero point, the reeducation of muscles - where would you see the change in learning or relating to Kuro kami and suriashi?

Performer A: I have a changed my approach to dance, to what is considered "difficult," and how emotions can be heard. One cannot imagine that small movements would demand so much energy, but they do. I become extremely concentrated, and I sweat, from the inside. The body had to get used to the unusual body posture - the leaning backwards, the arching of the back, and the deep knee bending, and the parallel or inwards rotated legs and feet. There is a change in emotions. They are there, in body, but they may not come out. It is a trapped experience, but also a sense of reaching a free space in the soul. This is my space, and nobody else can reach it. This is a liberating, and good feeling! The sorrow in Kuro kami can spread to the skin at times, which made it hard for me to breathe sometimes.

Performer B: When I relate to suriashi, I can feel my inner tighs. They have gotten more sensitive, and their sensitivity help me to feel my balance in a new way, when I am in Suriashi. And also my back is not used to be contracted backward that way. It feels like I can make a carapace appear when I contract it, actually, I never tried to contract it that way before. It is quite painful and exhausting for the back.

Performer C: I think that the practice of walking in suriashi and of dancing Kuro kami provides an excellent and vital challenge to contemporary people. Walking and dancing very slowly goes in the opposite direction of where we, as a global community, are heading. Resting in the slow movement and finding a centre there allows us to develop some kind of resistance against the contemporary lifestyle of stress and consumerism. In a way I think moving slowly is one of the few subversive acts that are left for us to use to protest against the hegemony of economic growth. Moving slowly repatterns the nervous system and creates change on a bodily level. Regularly coming back to this practice, I imagine, allows us to physically resist advertisement and propaganda as moving slowly invites us to contemplate before acting.

Performer D: I would say that the slow, simple and delicate movements are what somehow indicate the change or the Zero point. For Western dancers that are taught, and are used to

release and open up, and travel in space and fill out the space - the learning of doing the opposite opens up to other parts that are maybe present in their training but still not focused up on. So, for a change they will find out why their balance is not so good or why the injury hasn´t gone away yet. By articulating the body in different ways, with different movement, other aspect will be shown.

2. Describe any physical or psychological experience with these movements, this physical language. I give you some inspirational keywords: Muscular. Emotional. Spatial. Energy. Focus. Mechanism of positions (opposition of turn out). Images. Kinaesthetic. Informational processing/extraction. Conveying. Discovering. Sensing. External versus internal. Representation of skill. Quality of mental or physical skill. Deskill. The choreography of mind and thought. Verbal and non-verbal mind. Does it speak to you?

Performer A: I have used different muscles than I am used to. The first time I tried on a kimono and put the dance fan inside the obi, it felt like I entered a different dimension. I suddenly became very tired. To get grounded, to get into deep breathing made me, usually a high-energy person, realise how I actually felt. Just like when I do my yoga. There are some similarities with the Japanese dance and Yoga. Turning inward and knowing from the inside. Learning to NOT catch the audience with charisma and looks.

Performer B: Suriashi is like meditating. It allows me to keep track of how my concentration is evolving in connection with the environnment. I can very clearly follow a thought entering my awareness, and leaving it, and the space in myself it leaves while leaving. Breathing, feeling my inner tighs, my weight shifting, my back hurting, a musician playing, so many sensations, and meeting other performers, their business is very different they are solists or not. It is easier to connect with the soloists, some very nice moments of being together. The space speaks to me more strongly, the area next to the red wall gets meaningfull, I can feel the attention of the audience passing over me, coming and leaving, as if the air would get more dense for a while.

Performer C: Firstly, I think it is important to mention that performing suriashi and Kuro kami is not at all easy. The physical tension is considerable and to sustain the required mental focus can be quite exhausting. However, I notice that this practice does create som kind of internal change or shift in consciousness. Concentrating on performing each movement "right", and to keep the balance in walking somehow quiets the mind. There simply isn't enough space to concentrate on the body and, at the same time, allowing one's thoughts to run around. The mind and body somehow merges in a

unified experience where the discursive mind isn't the primary mode of learning. This opens up for a kind of shamanistic learning of direct experience, rather than calculating a route of learning and then traveling it.

Performer D: Again for me it is the slowness and the minimum space taken in. I enjoy it a lot as in my training it was all about taking, or capture as much space as possible, and to be fast, quick and to travel through space, so the space started to move with the dancer. The delicateness of the movements I find interesting, but also very difficult. I have problems to remember the small movements, as my brain is trained not to focus on the details, but on the big picture. The smallness, slowness I found interesting, as I was NOT good in it, and I have difficulties actually focusing on something that small and that delicate for a longer periode of time. Then it´s all about training again and the more often I practice, the more focus and more memory I gain.

3. If we consider ourselves in opposition to certain techniques that we might have loved or hated in our dance educations and if we consider ourselves as experienced performers, where we already deskilled ourselves from the skills school wanted to provide us with, how do you deskill someone who is believed deskilled already? Could Japanese dance provide with some deskilling? Or is it a new skill?

Performer A: I think one has to put it aside, one's previous knowledge, before embarking Japanese dance. To be open-minded, to set aside one's preconceptions and thoughts about dance, what dance is or could be, one's own requirements and motivations. To learn a new skill, it is sometimes required to put things away, but does not have to mean remove. I think, having different sections for new learning is important. Japanese dance requires that one is open, daring to think differently and perform movements in a different way. Then I see Japanese dance as an art form. If I would see it simply as something "to show the oppression of women, women lower than men, it gets difficult. I feel I need to immerse myself more, in order to take a position on that. But everything is posible to express through dance, whatever it is about. An artist needs to be prepared, always. I have a basis from a school with an open mind. I have not felt limited by that. This basis, my take-off, is just getting wider and wider. This is how you have to think to become a good dancer/actor, I think.

Performer B: When I was suriashing, each step I was taking started with a turnout I had to disengage. When I was improvising Kuro kami, many projections of release technique appeared, but I had to resist the impulse of indulging into release. It was like letting all the exit doors disappear to

finally simply find myself there, very animalistic at the end. Is being an animal a skill ? Have I then deskilled from my own animality?

Performer C: Skills and deskilling are locked in some kind of relationship. One practice advocates this, another practice advocates that. There are many opposing ideas of doing something and the preference of one may automatically mean deskilling from the opposite point of view. What do you mean by the idea of deskilling? Is it negative or positive? Coming from a Zen practice I tend to enjoy the idea of deskilling as it implies to me a process of unmasking or peeling away layers of conditioning. This idea implies an original source of knowledge that one can rest into when the mind is quiet. I actually liked the training part of classical ballet. Well, parts of it anyway. When I relate to the barre, for example ,I come to the practice much the same way as when I perform Kuro kami. It is a practice of noticing and expanding inwards with each movement and the mental chatter dies away. Of course there are aspects of classical ballet that I certainly don't agree with: Hierarchy, codified gender roles, mechanistic understanding of the body etc. but I think one can engage in the material with a "Kuro kami-body/mind", and discover new things. In terms of deskilling it does require quite a lot of effort and training and so I believe it is a skill in itself. There is a definite difference between someone who has never trained ballet learning the Kuro kami compared to a ballet dancer learning it. The non-dancer has no deskilling to undertake (in terms of dance training) but is expected to perform with a lesser degree of embodiment compared to the ballet dancer. The dancer has to override old patterns and knowledge they acquired in their training, this takes some conscious effort to de-learn.
Performer D: Well it´s difficult to make someone do something he/she considers is conceded. I think that you can never make someone do something. In order to gain or get the most out of the learning is to be open and willing to change, or let other things influence you and be part of your life. You can never say to a nicotine addict to quit, he/she has to quit on their own and on their own terms. So No. Japanese dance can be used as a deskilling, but the skills that you had before will never truly leave your body, it will only go into the memory lane of the body, in order for new skill to enter. I would say that I do not believe in deskilling, but I believe in knowing and learning various skills and these skills are always part of you. It´s like biking, once you´ve learned, it´s easier to learn again.

4. What is your dilemma in your own art practice? What would be your dilemma in this performance?

Performer A: I don´t have any dilemma anymore. I love to learn new styles, new skills, new thoughts, and see if it is something I can work with as a dancer. But I still love to work really pysically, in the way of sweating:) But not anymore to the cost of the body. My perspective has changed there through the years, I take care of my body much, much more. The older the wiser...:)
Performer B: In this performance, I did try very hard to concentrate on simple life sensations, like breathing, standing, feeling my body and perceiving my environnment. In my art practice, I am today trying to explore different states of being, when not thinking. That is where I want to go. I have no idea if that is interesting to share, how, why? Which of those states ?
Performer C: I think moving slowly is a dilemma in itself. We are constantly flooded with messages of speeding up, working more, and buying more. One dilemma though could be to resist the urge to "add" something rather than resting into, and trusting, the construction and choreography. The minimalistic execution of the movements are difficult to achieve for the Westerner (in this context: me) as we are trained to DO things and MAKE things happen as it were.
Performer D: I would say that my body is constant dilemma in my practice. It´s not a perfect dance body and I have a lot if issues around that. But if you have a dilemma, it will only help you become better than the ones who don´t have any, since you have to work extra hard and defend you practice all the time. It´s hard work but in the end it will be worth it, and be heart work. In this performance my dilemma is to learn, and to know what I´m doing. To recognise all the details and see the dance as an whole. I haven´t got to that part yet. But I want it to SO badly.

5. How does one know or sense when a dance is national or ethnic? I mean, how would you read Japaneseness into Japanese dance? Is it there at all?
Performer A: It could be ethnic if it has to do with a special group of people. Japanese dance is a lot about Japanese lifestyle, how women should act, what is considered feminine in Japan. The body hidden in clothing, tightly wrapped, the domination of the male. All of this is there, inside the Japanese dance. Like old traditions. So I experience Japanese dance as both ethnic and national. But, maybe I do not know enough yet...

Performer B: When performing, I did not think once about Japan or Japaneseness, neither did i recognise any on my co-performers. I mainly perceived slowness, suspended time, dilatated time because of concentration. Maybe I did perceive Japaneseness in the sound of the two woodblocks hits. And of course, it was just my projection, but i guess that Japaneseness in Japanese dance is what I want to project as Japanese on that dance.

Performer C: I am not sure. Bodies are biologically structured the same way, but may well be culturally constructed differently. I think the lowered gaze, slow movements and a certain composure in the dance helps the reading of it as "Japanese". I tend to be skeptical towards nationalistic ideas of ownership of certain concepts or movements. Yes, these phenomena may very well have risen from a specific culture but in these days and times we have to strive towards a universal ownership of knowledge of our collective cultural heritage. Of course there is something Japanese in this dance, it did after all originate in Japan, but does that mean that only Japanese people can perform it perfectly? No, I very much doubt that.

Performer D: I would say that the skills that come from each cultural region has something to do with the culture that it´s part of. For me, having the experience of living in Japan, I would say that the Japanese dance is reflecting the society. This is somehow how everybody behaves but of course exaggerated. I would say that it´s all there, but then in Japanese society, as in every other society, you have outcasts or other forms of "norm". So in general YES, but you can not generalise it.

Appendix 7 - A dialogue on Suriashi, philosophy, and physical arguments

The Ami and Disa Dialogue Feb 28th 2014, at the Nordic Summer University Wintersymposium at the Lithuanian University of Educational sciences, Vilnius

Ami: I have invited you to share my daily practise of slow walking. This is the basis of Japanese dance and theatre called suriashi

We walk paralell on bent legs, we try not to lift our heels, knees and thighs are squeezed together. We are grounded and respecting the floor. Then we pull shoulders back and down, tip the pelvis backwards, to try the feminine construction, to make shoulders small and create a certain feminine shape

Disa: Like this?

Ami: Do you feel more feminine?

Disa: A bit, yes.

Ami: How do you feel? Where do you feel it?

Disa: I'm concentrating on the feet, actually, the upper body posture feels straight and for me it's very good. I like to walk with my back straight.

Ami: It looks really calm and simple and it quietens the mind but it is very strainful physically. Muscles and the skeleton get a squeeze.

Disa: That is also what I noticed. You could walk for quite a long time, it's really meditative.

Ami: Do you walk with your body as a whole? Is it a unity or are you separated in upper, lower, left, right.

Disa: I'm trying to feel my body as a whole, but sometimes my thoughts go to one foot, or knee that is not bending or straightening fast enough.

Ami: In Gothenburg, in November I invited people to walk this suriashi.[206] I could not walk myself because I was too injuried. However, Christina Molander[207], who watched us walking, told me there was this leader of Sankai Juku[208] group who came to Sweden and taught people a similar slow walk, but for hours and days. People quit their jobs, left their companies. The most important was to find space for this slow walk. So then one can say suriashi could be subversive.

Disa: I can understand this. Slowing down your daily pace is really healthy. Your body knows what is a good pace for you.

Ami: And then there is this: People want to own a physical construction and put a name of it. For some this is Sankai Juku. To me this is suriashi, owned by noone. Structured by many. This has been performer training since 800 years, even longer, but I have learned this from Nishkawa Senrei in Kyoto.

Disa: I can understand the need to name things and at the same time I'm also disturbed by it. It's good to know the origins for the movement and also know that many people try to name the same things after their own beliefs.

Ami: But there are religious elements. This posture gives space for gods and goddesses to enter the body. Can you feel it?

Disa: No

Ami: Can you imagine it?

Disa: Yes

206 I am referring to the performance at Academy of Music and Drama in Nov 2013

207 Christina Molander is a Swedish producer, curator and teacher, born 1956

208 The leader of the famous Butoh group SankaiJuku is Ushio Amagatsu (b 1949)

Ami: I think it comes from the belief that gods and goddesses are here and now, they are not up in heaven, a totally different thought than in monotheistic religions.

Disa: Like in the Shinto religion?

Ami: Yes. God is nature, trees, stones, people. But then who owns that thought? I read it from Barbara Sellers Young, but she learned it from her teacher Fujima, I think. And they got it from Japanese priestesses.

Disa: If we could only know and remember all the origins of our thoughts, the books we have read and the people we have met, the teachers we have had.

Ami: I think Suriashi could contain dogma and religion. You can invite the god/desses into your spine or you can stop all that, and accept we are walking here and now. More Zen. It is a structure that can hold us. It is also a structure that can control us.

Disa: And a structure can also give us freedom and energy through it.

Ami: It seems peaceful, but we are building strength that we can use as violence.

Disa: Yes, the power of healing and destroying are the two sides of the same coin.

Ami: I can choose to put more or less effort and see how tension builds up. Tension is a force. I know it could make me violent. Can you experience something like that as well?

Disa: Yes, I could.

Ami: I am against obsession, punishment and authority. But it has been a lot of that in my education. How about yours?

Disa:I think that my training has been more forgiving, and for some reason I have been intrigued by the strong authourity that Suzuki-training for example contains. But it is the authority that you put on yourself. You are your own authority.

Ami: I like to think I am in control. Do you think the ancestors or the monks and nuns would scold me for that?

Disa: I doubt that. But I like this thought of dancing to our ancestors that you opened up in your documentary *the Dance of the Sun*. I think that this line of continuity, practicing ones art for someone else than yourself, honouring your ancestors, it is a strong thought.

Ami: I think so too, if you like your ancestors. If there was a paradigm shift in classical ballet and I promoted the importance of parallel, opposed to turn out, Suriashi would shake the world and make all academies tremble with anger. I would be called an idiot, ignorant and stupid. I would love to have such an argument for the body.

One of my dilemmas have been that I am alone doing Suriashi. With you walking by my side we share my dilemma. And I am not alone anymore. Thankyou.

Disa: Thank you Ami for sharing your thoughts and walking with me. It has also been a return to the Suzuki-training that I have experienced and trained. As a Japanese actor training method, it is also based strongly on the lower body and different ways of walking. I would like to try out some of them with you. Is that ok?

Ami: I cannot wait. I am sure my mind can do anything, but my left foot might protest and make a revolution.

Disa: The first thing that I want to make clear is the idea of the body-posture in Suzuki. It is created as a posture for moving and speaking at the same time. So the lower body is supporting the upper body, which should be free to speak and move more freely. Mr. Tadashi Suzuki, who is the "creator" of this method, has combined the kabuki and Nō-traditions to contemporary theatre and many of the walks have been created in co-operation with his actors. So there is a dialogue in these walks, it' s a dialogue with the actors who have tried and studied these walks on stage before. First we start with the feet. What if you had a long skirt - or trousers like the Shirabyōshi - and you should move your feet in order not to tremble or fall? How would you walk?

Ami: For Shirabyōshi, I would walk firmly, and kick the trousers a bit forward, by lifting my toes inside the fabric, like the suriashi done in Nō theatre. Nō actors lift their toes. For a long skirt, I would use the young girl construction, Musume. Toes inwards and then walk the tightrope with tiny steps. It is constructed for kimono in order to keep the fabric calm.

Disa: Suzuki calls this suriashi, the sliding step, because it is created by the kabuki and Nō-actors with their beautiful costumes. Your feet are not in parallel any more, but they are turned in and right foot is behind the left. Knees are bent and you can imagine that you could hold a dollar-bill between your thighs. You slide the right foot on a curve in front of the left and this way you don't step on your costume, but you push it away. Can you imagine that?

Ami: Yes. This is actually used in Kabuki to portray a high-ranked courtesan, called Hachimonji.

Disa: Really? I did not know that. Next question is, what happens if you started to walk on the outer side of your feet? You don't need to push the costume anymore, just concentrate on the feet. I love the Japanese traditional costumes and the esthetics, I have to say. I have never been to Japan myself and watching your documentary, the Dance of the Sun, was a truly joyfull journey to me. I wish to go there one day. How is your body now?

Ami: so so so so so so so

Disa: When I walk on the outer area of the foot, the upper body posture changes too. It's kind of like riding a bicycle. Your upper body is slightly bent forward, knees are bent a bit more, they are also pointing outside and your feet are making a little circle under your body. How does that feel in your body?

Ami: This is fun and a bit dangerous. My physiotherapist would like it and be nervous. I think this walk is used for old and fun characters, lower classes. Male, since the feet are turned out.

Disa: For me this is very difficult walk. There are several walks in the Suzuki-method and we are just looking through few of them to create this dialogue. I am training with some actors in Tampere with this method and I asked also them about how they felt while doing these walks. They thought it was very hard.

Ami: When I present the slow suriashi to professionals I always think they will find it too easy because we don´t do cartwheels or splits. I am always amazed how exhausted they get and how much they sweat, because it looks so peaceful.

Disa: The opposite of walking in the outer area of the foot is walking in the inner area of the foot. It creates a different dynamics in the walk and is really hard to do slowly. But we can try. Your feet can't be next to each other, but your knees are together. Then you imagine a wall right next to you. Put the right foot on the wall. It doesn't go very high, but the more important thing is that you find the right place for the foot. Then the foot comes down next to the left foot and the left foot goes to the wall on the other side. Your back is straight again, you can put your hands behind your back and try to keep your hips movement in minimum. Make a stop on the wall in each movement.

Ami: This is the little girl again. Playing with butterflies.

Disa: This is a demonstration on how I think that the Suzuki-method has been created. Of course I have learned all of these things from my master, Ellen Lauren, who is a company member in Suzuki Company of Toga (SCOT) and also in Saratoga International Theatre Institute (SITI) Company in New York. For me this way of thinking about the body, through the center of gravity and the

different ways of walking and how it affects my speaking, has been mind-blowing. As a young theater-director and researcher I have not seen this way of acting or training anywhere else. I am so glad that I have met you Ami, because I feel that there is a common goal for us that we both share in our own ways.

Ami: and I am happy I have met you and really hope and plan for us to find ways to walk together more!

Disa: In a way, what is different in the suriashi and Suzuki-training is first of all the costume. I love the way of training that you show in your DVD, the Dance of the Sun, with your sensei. In Suzuki training we don't use the traditional costumes, but look at the feet as they are hidden inside the costumes. That's why I'm still in my training outfit, I'm still training and learning to one day put on the costume and perform.

Ami: In Japanese dance you hide your feet and arms. It is all done to create shapes inside the kimono. So this is the first time you wear a yukata! I am happy I could offer you this experience because it adds something to the walk. Now, does this make the walks more nationalistic, this is also an interesting question.

Disa: The other big difference is in the tempo. Suriashi is slow walking, as you described. In Suzuki, the aim is more dramatic to put together stillness and very fast movement. I think that there is a continuum in these things, because eventually there is also a training called "Slow 10" in Suzuki, where we walk very slowly with a great energy, keeping the center of gravity moving at the same speed all the time. This is more demanding than it seems. This is the more "sophisticated" use of the energy that is created by the Suzuki training and I think that in this way the streams are coming together and floating as one river. I have to work with high speed to be able to walk slow. Maybe you have experienced that too?

Ami: Actually I tried to adjust when I began to teach Japanese dance in Sweden. I composed a class based on warm-up. I also included slow and fast steps to traditional music, like Gagaku, Nō and Kabuki. We stomped while saying TON YA TON YA, going faster and faster. But then I decided to return to suriashi, because that is the most deviating movement in our society. Right after suriashi we work on the choreography. This is how a class is composed in my teacher´s studio.

Now. Let us invite people to the floor.

People come up on the floor, to try the suriashi. Ami and Disa help them to find the construction.

Walking in the young feminine construction, Vilnius 2014, Photo:Vaida Mieldažienė

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