

# Slide to A View of Mind, Open A New Field — "Floating Horizons"

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舞蹈 2017-09-11

Performed by Taipei Dance Circle

Time: 2017/09/02 19:30

Place: Experimental Theater (in The National Theater, Taipei, Taiwan)

Taipei Dance Circle is associated with an approach to dance from a particular period, based on choreographer Shao-Lu Liu's singular personal interests, characteristics, and incredible efforts. His vision peaked within his mature company, for which he became a legendary model in Taiwanese dance history. It is not easy for later generations to reenter and surpass the existing techniques and forms at the root of Taipei Dance Circle, but Cheng-Chieh Yu's *Floating Horizons* is fresh, and truly enlightened, in respect to looking back at the *Body Oil Series*, created by Liu.

The *Body Oil Series* opened a new vision for the dance field in the 1990s, but since there has been no other comparison, none seem to be as breathtaking. Now with an alternative generation and stage consciousness, the uniqueness to exceed Liu's style has been realized. A trendsetter himself, Liu left a difficult question of how to dance and choreograph within this oiled body, immersive, natal-environment. Facing this challenge, Choreographer Cheng-Chieh Yu and the dancers used their bodies to experiment with various choreographic methods. They also committed themselves to investigate the body oil condition without any hesitation in each fresh approach. They fought with it, compromised with it, and saw the uncertainty as an inevitable process in the way of dance experimenting. They tried to find a new world in their exploration; therefore, opened a new visual aesthetic with the immersive post-natal oiled environment, other than Liu's.

Shao-Lu Liu's works using body oil were muscular. He hid the difficulties of body control and physical techniques during the dance, and that gave the dances in his series an interesting and spectacular technique. He led the audience into engrossing displays to forget the danger of dancing covered in oil. In comparison, Cheng-Chieh Yu's body oil work has a powerful new female physicality, in a mysterious, and poetic aesthetic, which entrances the visual and auditory senses. Yu's dance was fascinatingly ethereal, dreamy, and emphasized the instability of dancing with body oil in an implicit gender resonant atmosphere. Watching Liu's work, dancers could inspire the audience to conjure up their kinetic feelings during the performance; whereas Yu's work enveloped subliminally, and in the end left the audience with unlimited imagination and lasting reflective sensations. Yu used body oil as a condition to choreograph through, but developed her audience's perspective, to explore the possibilities of how the dance was created and now viewed. She created movement techniques with a poetic quality of the situational picture. She led the audience to pull further out on a visual and auditory focal length, as if one is watching the view of the stage from a faraway place and time. Sometimes it seems like looking at the plankton living under the surface of the water; sometimes it is like a scene of selfmurmuring and longing for the past, and then sometimes it feels like watching the earth from the universe, unfolding, mysterious and hazy.

Cheng-Chieh Yu's choreographic technique demands a humility and reflectiveness, and yet is mesmerizing. She is very skillful in utilizing the complimentary movement with-oppositional forces of Yin and Yang, fabrication and real. She presents direct and reverse perspectives to portray stage images. Especially in the design of live video projection, that contrasts with the real-time performance on the stage, between the projected and the real. Usually, the horizon is the connection where land or ocean meets the sky. "Floating Horizons" therefore demonstrates the interactional zone of two spaces, such as the inter tidal zone of the rising and ebbing of the waves, the space between the surface of the water and the bottom of the ocean, the border of the surface of the earth and the universe. These boundaries are not stable or split into parts. Instead, it is a volatile, unstable multiple media. This space is full of variation and chaos, and it opens the door to multiplicity.

The dance is structured in three parts. A video serves as a medium to connect the two "dance worlds," of the first and second half. These halves are defined by the dry floor and the oiled one. A piece of white long plastic sheeting is the primary interface for dancers to respond to/interact with. While dancing on the plastic sheeting already reduces the stability of dancing on the stage floor, this state of instability becomes even more evident when they dance on the immersive oiled surfaces.

The sound, with wave-like acoustical rises and fallings, connotes the dancing image of current, and the sound similar to tide produced by the plastic sheeting, together these sounds open the prologue of the dance. The white plastic sheet is like a wave cresting, frothing towards the beach during the rising tide, or like the white bubbles of the wave that rolls back during the ebbing. Dancers are moving on it like the living creatures in the intertidal zone dancing with the waves; every activity is visible. The surface of the ocean unwittingly moves the direction of the stage, silently, without letting anyone notice. And then, dancers dance under the plastic sheeting and lead the audience into a dark world under the surface. Organisms activate in the darkness and silence underwater. The live video projecting on the screen shows an upside-down image of the stage, the floor on the top and limbs floating freely beneath, just like jellyfish floating with the wave, fascinating imagery. Above and under the sheet, day and night, the rotation of Yin and Yang, all happen simultaneously.

The second half starts with an open stage without oil. Dancers dance into it, being able to control themselves with ease. When a white oiled plastic sheet was flipped open, dancers slide, flip, turn and roll on it. However, Cheng-Chieh Yu does not fixate the visual on the dancers; instead, she guides the audience to enlarge/pull away from the focal distance, and elevate the audience to look at the earth from the universe. The live video projecting on the screen presents a perspective from a corner of the stage, like the sight at the intermediate of a surface of the earth and the universe. Looking down to the earth from the universe, "horizon" is no longer a border between ocean, land, and the sky; it becomes the boundary of earth surfacing the world. The hand-held, ever moving, tilting image of the screen portrays standing people tipping off the earth. Dancers' interactions with the floor look like creatures dragged by gravity with energy exploded from them. However, they seem to want to pull themselves away from the gravity and throw their bodies into the murkiness of the universe.

"Floating Horizons" is a metaphoric dance which compels us to realize that horizons can be a measurement of vision. This measurement is not only floating but also allows one to see different sightings depending on the level of one's mind, similar to the woman in white who silently walks around the edge of the stage from the beginning to the end and controls the live-feed projection. She observes the consequential happenings done by herself in silent fixation. She witnesses, accepting and allowing all, whether it is balanced or unbalanced. She does not resist or get involved, only watches drifting along with the changing of views on the stage in this boundless world. Shao-Lu Liu's body oil technique "ways of dance" has been transformed, deconstructed and re-written under Cheng-Chieh Yu's creativity of alternating perspectives. One gets to see a dance play off of history, a kinesthetic memory, and brilliantly open a fresh embodied vision of an immersive new aesthetic.