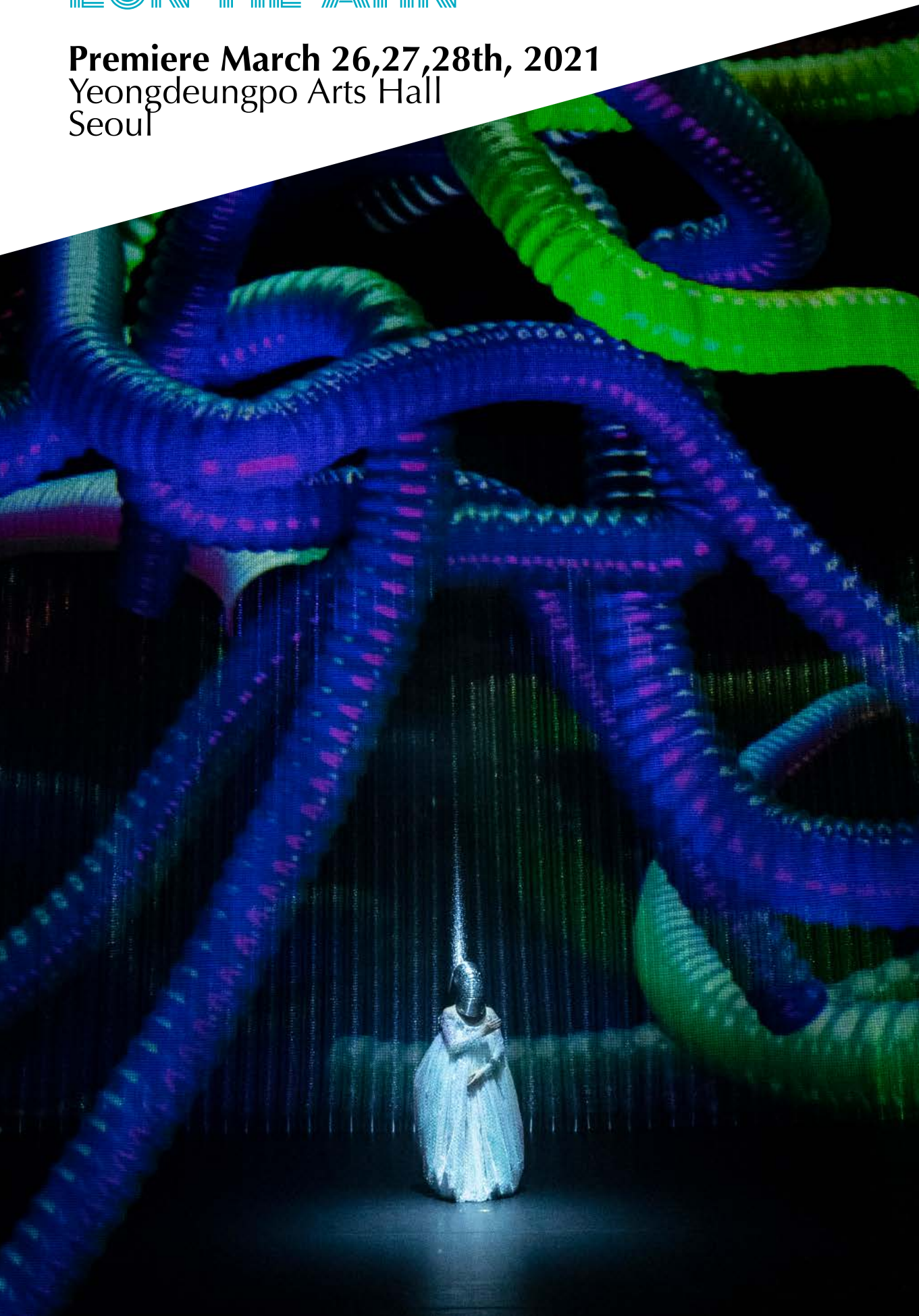


DRAGONS

EUN-ME AHN

Premiere March 26,27,28th, 2021
Yeongdeungpo Arts Hall
Seoul



DRAGONS

Choreography and artistic direction: Eun-Me Ahn

Music: Young-Gyu Jang

Costumes and set design: Eun-Me Ahn

Lighting design: Jinyoung Jang

Video direction: Taeseok Lee

Motion design: Taeseok Lee, Minjeong Lee (Addnine)

Creation technical director: Jimyung Kim

On stage: Eun-Me Ahn, Gyeongmi Hwang, Hyekyoung Kim, Jeeyeun Kim, Youngjai Choi, Uiyoung Jung, Kyungmin Kim, Hyeontaek Oh

On screen: Nur Syahidah Binti Hazmi (Malaisia), Akari Takahashi (Japan), Jiwan Jung (South Korea), Siko Setyanto, Dwi Nusa Aji Winarno (Indonésie), Guan Ting Zhou (Taiwan)

Production: Eun-Me Ahn Company, Gadja Productions

Coproduction: Yeongdeungpo Cultural Foundation (Korea), Busan Cultural Center (Korea), Théâtre de la Ville – Paris (France), Biennale de la Danse de Lyon (France), Festspielhaus St. Pölten (Austria), Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg (Luxembourg), Les Halles de Schaerbeek (Belgium), National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts – Weiwuying (Taiwan)

with the support of : Arts Council Korea, Indonesian Dance Festival, ASWARA - Akademi Seni Budaya Dan Warisan Kebangsaan, Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse N°1

Running time: 70' without intermission

Eun-Me Ahn is associated artist to Théâtre de la Ville - Paris



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DRAGONS

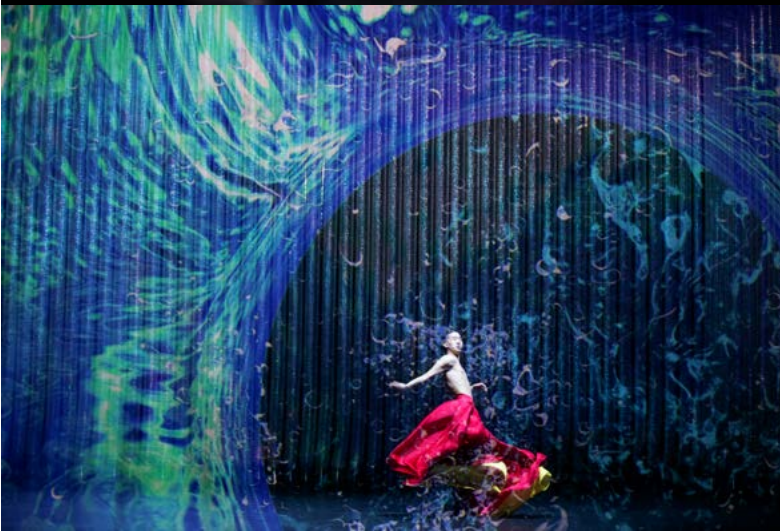
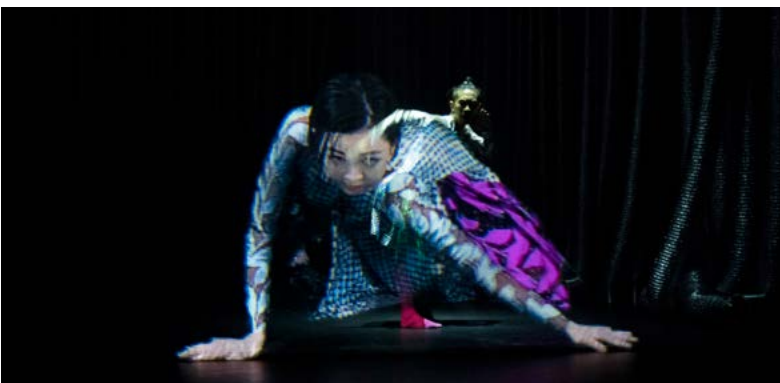
Eun-Me Ahn arrives in Europe with the dancers of her company and very special guests! After a series of mind-blowing shows that depicted all Korean generations, from grandmothers to teenagers, she invites five young dancers from five Asian countries.

All are born in 2000 and each unveil their hopes, their dances contemporary and traditional. Because in Asia, if the youth is ultra-connected, it remains attached to its cultural background, including Dragons !

They are feared in Europe? In Asia, they bring lightness, joy and optimism. So, the tone is set for a captivating, burlesque and sometimes weightless performance, like a kaleidoscope of shapes, colors and rhythms, in the extravagant style that is the trademark of the enfant terrible of Korean dance. Eun-Me Ahn, her company and their guests move through a criss-crossing of presences and holographic projections fruit of a creative storm.

In conclusion : In Asia, “Z generation” tackles future with energy and freshness. A source of inspiration.

Thomas Hahn



INTENTION NOTE

«A mythical creature, the dragon, whose form and significance has fluctuated over time, following the generational quirks and turns of human civilization, large and small; the dragons of the East, for example, have always been different from the dragons of the West, and there are regional distinctions—in looks and in personality—even among the dragons of the East. What remains consistent between all contexts is the beast’s bricolage origin, a cobbling-together of various animals to make up its major anatomical parts and special characteristics.

And when we look farther, actually taking apart the iconic structures of meaning around this compound image, what we find is twofold: first, the deep fear of fate, that which is too powerful for us to control with our merely-human strength; and second, the anticipation of and aspiration toward a construction of truly unlimited potential.

In any cultural landscape rooted in Christianity, of course, such a being could only ever be a monster to be eliminated—but in most other areas of the world, the dragon has long functioned as a symbol of transcendent authority and wisdom, able to bestow upon humanity the power and courage necessary to overcome great worldwide upheaval, not to mention the flexibility and resilience to adjust and thrive amidst rapid change.

Given these terms, then, how are we to understand the dragon? The “we,” that is, of today, who find ourselves disillusioned with the promise of shared prosperity through globalization; the “we” who fear not knowing what lies ahead; the “we” who have lost those sparkling twentieth century visions of the future. If we were to imagine a true dragon of the 2020s, say, looking ahead to the 22nd century, what should it look like? What if we could free ourselves from the molds of taxidermied tradition, those shackles of approval and safety that take the form of endless reinterpretation, and create an entirely new monster of infinite transformation, belching flames into the future — what might that be like?



During its early stages, we sometimes called this project—which was ultimately titled, simply, “Dragon”—the “Millenium Baby Project,” and in truth I have worked hard, researching many different regions of Asia to find and better understand dancers born after the year 2000 and come of age in a world already ruled by technology; dancers, in other words, that belong to Generation Z. And while the cultural homogenization that results from our shared reality of smart phones and globalization is undeniable, the fact still remains that the different regional traditions of dance across Asia continue to be passed down each in their own way, and that even seemingly similar contemporary vernacular dance cultures are actually each unfolding in singular fashion. I was determined to create, using the backdrop of these dancers’ vitality and irreproducibility, a new time-space of the dragon, guiding us into a future we have never before seen.

Five young dancers flown in from five different countries across Asia, gathering up the inherited legacies of their bodies and, through the process of projection onto each screen-body, actually exploring new strata and topographies to build a time and space of the dragon. At the point where the world itself overflows, where place becomes moment and moment becomes place—here, all things become possible.»

Eun-Me Ahn

TEASER

<https://vimeo.com/539454544>

THE MESSAGE OF THE DRAGONS

Before 2000, when the West brought up the news economic powers of Asia - including South Korea - we spoke of «tiger states» or «dragons» in a mixture admiration and fear. Because we have, through our legends, a negative perception of the dragon. In Asia, this is quite different.

Indeed, for us the dragon embodies a sacred and spiritual energy. They are composite animals, created by a higher will, and therefore almost multicultural creatures! Dragons embody power, longevity, and protection. Formerly, their symbolic power was reserved for kings. Today we are free to imagine them however we want. The title of our play therefore wants to explain that we have the power to decide for ourselves our lives and our future.

The idea that we can control our destiny embodies perfectly the spirit of this work, born in the midst of Covid-19. Due to the pandemic, the young dancers you selected from five different Asian countries were unable to join you in Seoul and are present in the form of holographic projections, while the permanent dancers of your company dance live.

To choose these young people, born in 2000, we went, me and all my dancers, to Indonesia, Thailand and Japan. We wanted to understand how these young people live and see the world: How are their studies going, how do you watch a show? Then the pandemic happened. We had to cancel our trips to Vietnam and Taiwan and continued the video work, for the auditions as well as for the creation.

These performers belong to the famous Generation Z for which there is nothing more natural than the internet and the smartphone. On the other hand, creating a choreography is a very old concept which relies on presence. And suddenly you had to go through the small screen. Dragons is therefore one of the creations most deeply impacted by the pandemic.

In addition, this generation is struck by the confinements, just as they become adults. They live in great instability, but are open to a lot of things. For my part, Dragons opened up to other ways of thinking about stage presence, whereas before I was not interested

in technology. We have learned and invented a lot. For example, it is not easy to create a dance in front of a webcam, when right and left are reversed! To make things more intuitive, we all danced with a glove on our right hand!

One could imagine that after the pandemic, millennials would join you to dance the play «face to face»..

*I think we'll do a new piece with them instead. When they have finished their university studies and are fully free and mature, we want to find them and maybe work on the possibility of overcoming the memories of this time which is quite dark for them. It will be interesting to keep *Dragons* in the repertoire as is, as a testimony to the particular conditions of its creation.*

With its inherent vitality and optimism, *Dragons* is exactly what audiences need to see right now. A real Asian dragon!

This is exactly what we told each other when we had finished the work. These young dancers come from very different religions, political situations and economic conditions, but all have a practice of traditional dances. Each thus created a gesture and transmitted it to the others, which formed a universal language, nourished by their respective cultures. Because only together can we overcome the current challenges!

Interview made by Thomas Hahn for Théâtre de la Ville - Paris program

sceneweb.fr

Philippe Noisette

30th of September 2021

Eun-Me Ahn or the year of the Dragon

South Korean choreographer comes back into the spotlight with Dragons, a multicolor fantasy taking the audience away.

We left Eun-Me Ahn, in 2019, almost upset. The creator just presented North Korea Dance in France, her most up for debate piece. Willing to reunite two fractured worlds, the choreographer stumbled over good feelings. Her new opus, Dragons, also deals with borders, but the result is different.

The starting point lies on auditions of dancers in five Asian countries. Eun-Me Ahn – with a part of her team- went to Japan or Indonesia with the will to understand their way of life. But Covid invited itself and everyone had to remain home. The Korean practiced zoom, dialogued despite the distance. Dragons reflects it and sometimes doesn't know where to stand. However, it doesn't matter that Akari, Siko, Dwi or Nur are present thanks to the magic of images. They are dancing with Ahn's company seven energetic solists. Her "neighbours" unveil themselves in a few words and talk about their discovery of dance, sometimes traditional dance, often modern dance. From these exchanges, Eun-Me Ahn took the movements that "contaminate" the show.

For the rest, this is Ahn's spitting image, crazy and colorful. Taeseok Lee's projection make inverted forests, clouded skies and magnetic rain come to life. In a quite clever pipe set, dancers are enjoying themselves, multiplying round dances and jumps. Don't look for choreographic innovation, Eun-Me Ahn creates with instinct. What she took away from these last two years is the will to share. In the end, after a solo by Eun-Me Ahn, splendid dancer, the group throw itself in a clapping concert, inviting the audience with them. That doesn't need to be ask twice to follow.

Dragons offers to the sight a palette of intense colors, the iridescent skirts underlining the pelvis work. Choreographer enjoys ungendering the costumes and situations. Even far from a manifesto the work carries good intentions in it. Eun-Me Ahn doesn't forget her guest dancers from Taiwan or Malaysia. She says she thinks about making another production with them. The movement imagined by each and transmitted to one another in this creation gives a glimpse of another world. After all, the dragon dance, in Chinese culture, is a sign of prosperity and happiness. Eun-Me Ahn chose plural: Dragons. Seeing her radiant face during the bows, happiness was already here.

Luxembourg Times

Sarita Rao

20th of October 2021

«Dragons» is more than K-pop meets Kabuki

A riot of colour, sound, non-stop movement and holographs as Gen Z performers combine modern and traditional dance styles

With Asian popular culture from musical acts BTS to Black Pink and Netflix dramas like «Squid Game» dominating world culture, a new show by avant-garde choreographer Eun-Me Ahn demonstrates how Gen Z is bringing traditional dance and ceremonies a place in pop culture.

The results of her show «Dragons» at Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg are fresh, inspiring and joyful. Five dancers born in 2000, the year of the dragon in the Korean zodiac, twirl and criss-cross the stage with incredible precision. Be prepared to be transfixed for an hour-long feast of colour, light, movement and sound.

The dance is both contemporary and traditional, and there are moments where hand movements remind you of Indonesian Kathak or Thai Khon dance. In the first set, there is even a feeling that you are momentarily watching Japanese Kabuki. Ahn herself dances in what appears to be a traditional South Korean dress, her hands intricately weaving in precise movements.

Live dancers joined by holographs

The dragons are joined on stage by holographs of five dancers from Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Taiwan, perhaps representing the more traditional aspect of the dance heritage in South Asia. We hear from the holographs (with English subtitles) about how they were first attracted to their profession and where they are training or dancing now.

The holographic, video and sound elements are simply stunning. Taeseok Lee and Minjeong Lee, responsible for the video direction and motion design, treat us to waterfalls, splashes of water, fireflies, flowers and even giant bubbles encircling the dancers all delivered with pin-point timing.

The sounds of birds, water, visual elements and non-stop movement can at times make you want to look away. At the same time, you are transfixed, almost hypnotised. It's a veritable kaleidoscope and an assault on the senses, as the dancers disappear through the long, silver, tube tendrils that hang from the ceiling above the stage. At times the silver tubes are part of the dancers apparel, attached to their arms, heads and legs.

In previous works, Ahn has not been afraid to challenge the audience and has been known to jump from a crane, attack a piano with an axe, or even dance a duet with a chicken.

Here, a cheeky humour is at play. In one section, the men disappear under the skirts of the women, their feet moving completely out of synchronicity to the top half of the figures – the female dancers – creating an almost puppet-like image.

The costumes (and the very fast costume changes) also pay tribute to tradition and the men and women often wear the same garb – skirts swishing as they twirl in pairs or alone.

Intricate lace tops, spangly spandex, dark and sombre long dresses are all on display, together with colourful odd socks (another bit of cheeky comedy). You cannot really tell which are the women and which the men, perhaps a comment on the modern culture of androgyny.

Old and new can coexist

Ahn was born in South Korea in 1963 and has lived in New York, explored shamanic traditions and had a deep friendship with Germany's dance pioneer Pina Bausch. Ahn's dance company has performed at

major international festivals, including the 2002 FIFA world cup in South Korea. Her 2018 performance “Dancing Grandmothers” – depicting Korean generations from teenagers to grandmothers - was a phenomenal success.

In “Dragons”, she partly pays tribute to the fact that South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore became known as the “four Asian dragons” because of their dynamic growth in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, Korea and Japan certainly take centre-stage when it comes to music and television.

Dragons are feared in Europe, but in Asia they are a sign of lightness, joy and optimism. Here we see that the future for the young people of the region born under the dragon sign is about honouring and remembering its thousand-year-old traditions whilst embracing the future.

For Ahn, the body says more than words. It reflects each dragon’s personal story and way of life. The young dancers have an energy and vigour not unlike their counterparts in the pop world.

However this is about embracing the past and the future, telling the reality of life in a country or continent which continues to live the dichotomy of old traditions versus new trends, but doing so joyfully. For once, old and new can coexist comfortably for this generation.

rbbKultur

Frank Schmid

14th of October 2021

Eun-Me Ahn: «Dragons»

Colorful dragons have landed in the Hans Otto Theater in Potsdam: «Dragons», the new piece by the South Korean choreographer Eun-Me Ahn, premiered in Germany at the Potsdamer Tanztage. A coup for the dance festival, which this year’s edition will run until December.

In «Dragons», Eun-Me Ahn calls upon the world of legends, myths and fairy tales and translates the mythology of the dragon into the present. The eight dancers on stage and the six who can also be seen in films on the gauze screen, all very young, all born around the year 2000, they are the dragons of modern times and that in the craziest possible stage worlds, costumes and dances. The focus of Eun-Me Ahn is on the understanding of dragons in East Asia, which has little to do with that in the West.

The dragons in East Asian and Western cultures

In the Christian West, the dragon stands for chaos and evil, is a terrible image and devourer of human sacrifices, was even a symbol of the devil in the Middle Ages, which has only changed somewhat through the influence of fantasy culture. In East Asian cultures, however, the dragon is seen more ambiguously, although it also has destructive powers, it is much more of a lucky charm and a rainbringer, a symbol of fertility, is imperious and protective. The Korean kings saw their ancestors with dragon deities and dragons were the symbols of the Chinese emperors - he is more of a deity than a demon. And in Korean mythology, dragons can transform into humans and humans can be reborn as dragons.

Eun-Me Ahn - many artistic influences

Eun-Me Ahn, one of the most important artists in South Korea, often referred to as the enfant terrible of the dance and performance scene, follows this tradition. She comes from traditional dance and shamanism and also studied contemporary dance in New York. She has not been a frequent guest in Germany yet, but has close ties to Wuppertal, especially to Pina Bausch, whom she often invited. Eun-Me Ahn combines many artistic influences and sources.

Colorful orgy - a spectacle of shapes and colors

«Dragons» is now like a motley orgy of literally fantastic ideas. The stage is bordered on three sides by many meters long, thick silver tubes - the dragon as a snake. The dancers are mythical creatures and fantasy creatures in brightly colored, neon-colored costumes borrowed from the costumes of traditional dances in East Asian countries. The meter-long skirts, in which they circling and whirling and flipping somersaults, shine silver and black, but mostly everything is brightly colored candy.

The dances are squeaky fun, are a curious mixture of traditional dances, especially in arm and hand gestures, of street dance, especially hip hop, of acrobatics and contemporary dance. It's all very camp, a spectacle of colors and shapes - you become a child when you look at it and marvel at the enormous number of ideas on stage that Eun-Me Ahn combines as a total work of art with the films on the gauze curtain.

Heavenly Palace and Underwater Dance

Stage and film are complementary units. Six other dancers can be seen in the films, lush, squeaky-colored plants and flowers, a kind of heavenly palace and, in one of the most beautiful scenes, an underwater dance. Eun-Me Ahn and her dancers float around each other underwater - she as an old shaman in the middle.

As a shaman, she also appears on stage towards the end and adds a tremendous tenderness to the extremely dynamic hustle and bustle. There were already these in dance: tenderness and great gestures. A trance mood is added here - before the dancers arrive at the end: inside as walking tubes with screen faces and dozens of internet dance videos.

Dragons as a symbol of transformation

Eun-Me Ahn obviously sees dragons as a symbol of transformation, incessant change and metamorphosis - past, present and future flow into one another, are always present at the same time. Everything is interconnected: the tradition and the digital globalized pop culture present and a future thought of as peaceful and playful.

This piece is fantasy and science fiction, arose from a completely free, unlimited joy of playing.

The young dancers are the dragons who bring happiness and joy and lead our world into the future. The dragon becomes a symbol for a joyful force and energy with which we can accept the changes in the world.

An astonishing, revue piece with a lot of penchant for adventurous humor and strange monstrosities and with a lot of sense for show spectacle.

Deutschlandfunk Kultur

Elisabeth Nehring

13th of October 2021

„Dragons“ by Eun Me Ahn Colorful escapism

In her dance performance «Dragons», shown in Potsdam, Eun Me Ahn draws on a wealth of resources: digital projections, imaginative costumes and dance that oscillates between Western and Asian. Unfortunately she forgot the content a bit about it.

In “Dragons” a lot comes together in terms of dance: Western classical dance meets ritual temple dances, Asian martial arts are paired with elements of traditional dances from Java. Eight dancers can be seen live on stage, eight more appear as digital projections.

The choreographer Eun Me Ahn made a virtue out of necessity: the dancers from Malaysia, Taiwan or Indonesia, who were not allowed to travel due to Corona, appear as avatars on a gauze curtain.

The stage is bordered on three sides by silver tubes that can be moved. These can also be found in the costumes: as holders for the arms or as hats. Sometimes they are reminiscent of proboscis, sometimes of worms, depending on the light, which is sometimes cold white, sometimes shimmering and then pungent silver.

The piece is extremely colorful, imaginative and humorous. Technically it is very complex, especially because of the projections. So not only the avatars can be seen on the canvas, but also hyper-realistic landscapes with plants or running plays of light and color.

Eun Me Ahn is devoted to beauty in a perfectionist way. “Dragons” is a festival, an exuberant fantasy that is lived out very exquisitely.

But because of the enthusiasm for the technical and dance possibilities, for being able to live out every idea, the content has been lost a bit. A case of the most beautiful escapism - in a positive way.

Un Fauteuil pour l'Orchestre

Denis Sanglard

04th of October 2021

„Dragons“ by Eun Me Ahn at Théâtre des Abbesses

Dragons, the latest creation by South Korean choreographer Eun-Me Ahn, takes a look at Generation Z, Generation 2.0 for whom nothing is more natural than the internet, the smartphone and its multiple applications. It was also the opportunity to bring a hell of a touch of technology to this choreography, as always, over-vitaminized. Impacted by the COVID pandemic, therefore not having been able to work “face-to-face” with young adolescents interviewed across five Asian countries, from Indonesia to Japan, for the initial project, a questioning of their apprehension of the world and of their practice of the dance, the dragon which is in them, it is by the small screen that everything is organized.

And on set it's their holographic projection that blends in with the «live» dance of Eun-Me Ahn's permanent troupe. It's amazing, it must be said. Eun-Me Ahn has fun, who explores and maliciously integrates into the choreography and the scenography, without ever abusing it, this new virtual potentiality. This in no way impacts the crazy energy that runs through this energized dance which integrates into the ever-swift movement as well the traditional techniques of Asian dances, acrobatic circus, contemporary dance, hip-hop included.

The art of confrontation and synthesis, the identity of this choreographer for whom dance in its diversity is a real source of inspiration but also of sharing. A true whirling, bubbling, sparkling kaleidoscope, the result is stunning and makes you dizzy. And happy with it. Always this pop and tangy side, these bright colors which fart, the rhinestones, these shimmering unisex costumes, and this revisited techno music which drums dry and leads to a trance. With that here a funny art of DIY by the singular use of pipes, silvery and flexible heating ducts, which transforms your body and dance ... And then the appearances of Eun-Me Ahn, between zany, pure beauty and strangeness and above all a lot, a lot of mischief. The whole is not exempt from gravity at times, which is reflected in suddenly dark costumes. But under the ample corollas of black dresses that appeared during a dance of hopping dervishes, the linings are as colorful as ever.

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An astonishing, revue piece with a lot of penchant for adventurous humor and strange monstrosities and with a lot of sense for show spectacle.

EUN-ME AHN



*« Laugh and grow
fat...
Dance and grow
fat... »*

Ah, the famous custard pie that is the confrontation “between tradition and modernity”...

How many creators have struggled to find the way to describe what is finally the lot of every artist : on the one hand to know, understand, integrate what the ancients did ; on the other to forget them, overcome them and hope to find something new. Quite a vast program...

On this level, Eun-Me Ahn that France discovered in 2013 and 2014 thanks to Festival Paris Quartier d’Été, has found new, unexpected and

exciting ways. This comes first from her own itinerary, marked as much by the learning and exploration of shamanic traditions as by the many years spent in New York or a profound friendship with the missed Pina Bausch (who invited her many times in Wuppertal). Korean and cosmopolitan, figure of the avant-garde but also choreographer of the very official opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup in Daegu in 2002 and presented in the most important international festivals, she knows how to improve the beauties of contrast, mix polka dots, stripes and flowers, how to play with the most pop colors before switching to the most solemn austerity, how to play with the most subtle shades of androgyny, or use slowness to make trance rhythm burst...

Educated at the school of rigor, precise, demanding and of a all Korean discipline, Eun-Me Ahn is also a daredevil performer, ready for all kind of piracies. One have seen her jump from the top of a crane, then attack a piano with axe and scissors, rip off herself her fairy dress made of white ties to distribute the pieces to the audiences while performing a teddybear dance, bury herself with a clown costume under a rain of balloons, locked up behind bars in a duet with a chicken, or dressed up as a mushroom... But one would be wrong thinking it is provocation. It is rather the affirmation of a curiosity and a freedom held by work and style pushed to their most unexpected limits.



EUN-ME AHN IN A FEW DATES

1963 - Birth in Republic of Korea

1974 - Begins to dance, initiates herself to Korean shamanic practices, discovers the work of Isadora Duncan and western countries contemporary dance

1986-1992 - Dances with Korean Modern Dance Company and Korean Contemporary Dance Company in Séoul

1989 - Graduated from Seoul E-Wha University

1994 - Departure for New York City. Graduated from Tisch School of the Arts

1999-2000 - Receives Manhattan Foundation for the Arts Award and New York Foundation for the Arts Award

2001 - After several visits to the Pina Bausch Festival à Wuppertal, she presents three solos from the *Tomb* there.

2001-2004 - Returns to live in South Korea where she is appointed Artistic Director of Daegu Metropolitan City Dance Company for which she creates, among others *The Little Match Girl* and *Sky Pepper*

2002 - Choreography of the Fifa World Cup opening ceremony in Daegu in South Korea

2007 - Creation of *Symphoca Princess Bari*, a choreographic adaptation of a Korean legend, that will be presented at Seoul ARCO Art Center in Korea, Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch Festival in Germany, BOZAR in Belgium, Edimburgh Autumn Festival in Scotland...

2011 - Creation of *Dancing Grandmothers*, a work inspired by the gestures of Korean old ladies.

2018 - Creation of *North Korea Dance*

Eun-Me Ahn becomes associated artist to Théâtre de la Ville-Paris