

POST-ORIENTALIST EXPRESS

EUN-ME AHN

Premiere 02nd-04th of May 2025
Sejong Art Hall, Seoul



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East Meets West Again? Why and How?: Ahn Eun-me's Colorful Rebellion - Forbidden Orientalist Fantasies Reimagined.

Who better than the pivotal figure in the Asian/Global dance scene, to try to answer these questions?

Rooted in shamanic rituals and trained in contemporary dance both in Korea and the United States, Eun-Me Ahn has created a distinctive artistic language that bridges East and West.

For her new creation, *Post-Orientalist Express*, Ahn delves deeper into Asia's rich traditions and fluid movements. In the continuity of *Dragons*, this piece places a greater emphasis on challenging and reimagining the representations of Asia. These representations, often romanticized in the West and sometimes eagerly adopted or even distorted within Asia itself, prompt a search for a new cultural identity that goes beyond traditional and modern dichotomies.

By walking the line between post-colonial guilt in the West and sometimes revanchist ideology in the East, Ahn's work seeks a middle ground. Legends, costumes, music movements and pop-culture are as many pretexts for Eun-Me Ahn to tackle clichés head-on, only to twist and exaggerate them into absurdity, highlighting their inherent contradictions.

Post-Orientalist Express is an invitation to collectively explore what a shared cultural and choreographic identity could look like, to uncover a common language, a space where diverse perspectives can meet, and redefine the encounter between East and West in a joyful and colorful explosion.

The Post-Orientalist Express is about to leave the station. Are you ready to board?



POST-ORIENTALIST EXPRESS

Choreography and artistic direction: Eun-Me Ahn

Music : Young-Gyu Jang

Lighting design: Jinyoung Jang

Video Direction: Taeseok Lee

Set and costume design: Eun-Me Ahn

Creation Technical Direction: Jimyung Kim

Meta-Dramaturg: Geun-Jun Changwoo-Michael Lim

Costumes production: Yunkwan Design

Props production: Dongyoung Kim

Production assistant: Sungbin Kim

Dancers: Eun-Me Ahn, Hyekeyoung Kim, Yongsik Moon, Doohee Lee, Deokyeong Kim, Gaon Han, Jeonghwan Oh, Hyeonse Lee, Seyeon Kim

Intended running time: 75' without intermission

Production: Eun-Me Ahn Company

Co-Production: Sejong Center for the Performing Arts, Berliner Festspiele, Théâtre de la Ville - Paris, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, Théâtre d'Orléans / Scène Nationale, Sydney Festival



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gadja
PRODUCTIONS

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INTENTION NOTE

Post-Orientalist Express : A Language That Dances Beyond Boundaries

I am currently travelling beneath the banner of the “Post-Orientalist Express,” crossing layered cultural thresholds to reframe the body’s expressive language throughout the East. This endeavour overturns the once-accepted label of the “Orient” and recognises Asia not as an exotic museum curated by outsiders, but as an endlessly evolving crucible of languages—emerging, receding, and merging anew. In this dynamic space—where Okinawa’s waves meet the Philippines’ inscrutable rhythms and Indonesia’s spiritual undercurrents—I find myself asking: now that we have moved beyond the prefix “post,” where might we be heading? Which sentences can a new dance construct, and by what means shall those utterances traverse the borders of nations and continents, languages, and cultures?

The bodily lexicon I have gleaned from traversing many corners of the East cannot simply be catalogued like a dictionary. Rather, it draws upon scorching sunlight, sudden showers, swirling winds, beads of sweat, unspoken gazes, and the cool, indifferent grins of youths dancing offhandedly in busy streets. Might I carry these fragments onto the stage, rearranging them into a fresh context? Once more, I am reminded of the almost mythical notion that “the entirety of existence is composed of language,” and so I allow it to shimmer anew. If the body is a sentence and dance its language, then deconstructing and reassembling this expansive, many-layered text called “Asia” becomes a deeply humbling pursuit. In truth, I do not know how it may unfold. Thus, I keep walking, tumbling, colliding, turning—and dancing.



Embarking upon the voyage of the “Post-Orientalist Express,” I once again see in Asia a cosmos of dragons, each with its own secret pattern. It strikes me that this journey may never truly end. Yet, perhaps the physical language of dance will in time serve as a surprising “yeouiju, a jewel held by a dragon” of encounters—a hidden pearl yielded by these meetings. A faint, electric sense courses through my toes, suggesting that by continuing in motion, we are forging the next shape of Asia’s unbounded dance.

Eun-Me Ahn
(Artistic Director)



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, amongst 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

2021 - Creation of *Dragons*