

# Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers



**Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers** is the most avant-garde dance company in Japan. Our works explore people's physicality in contemporary society by adopting choreographic methods from Butoh by Tatsumi Higikata.

Artistic Director: Kakuya Ohashi

Dancers: Reina Enatsu, Yukari Kakiuchi, Masazumi Minaki, Natsuko Furutachi, Ayumu Yamada, Naoko Maeda, Akino Miyao, Nagako Tomaru, Takafumi Nakagawa, Mie Ito, Shiori Tada

Managers: Sayaka Sango, Yuno Yamamoto, Shigeru Ueda

[Works]

**Black Swan** (50min 4dancers 2008)

**Black Dog** (25min 2dancers 2008)

**Empire, Aerial** (70min 14dancers 2008)

**Chain of Clarity** (110min 10dancers 2008)

**Clarity is Only a Point before the Eyes.** (65min 6dancers 2006)

[Contact]

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# Black Swan

## Over view

There are two women, two men and four chairs. Noise in town, Fluorescent light. Men and women who lost sight of themselves in chaotic daily life begin to turn the target of the desire without the place to go to others. New work by Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers that exposes uneasiness and the desire to lurk in daily life of people who live in Tokyo today by the minimum element arranged in an orderly manner. You can find the features of the choreography method of Kakuya Ohashi in it, which explains the relationship behind each item by not giving relationship among them. It is a work with the possibility of inventing a new meaning by the presentation place either in the theater or in the open air. The title shows "Event not predictable to nobody" witch moves our daily life of unconsciousness.

## Technical requirements

|                                | [Black Swan]                      |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Times (min)</b>             | 50                                |
| <b>Dancers</b>                 | 4                                 |
| <b>Acting area<br/>(m × m)</b> | 8 × 8                             |
| <b>Music</b>                   | N/A                               |
| <b>Lighting</b>                | 4 fluorescent light + 4 PAR light |
| <b>Prop</b>                    | 4 chairs                          |
| <b>In the open air</b>         | Possible                          |
| <b>Preparation</b>             | 1 day                             |

# Black Swan



# Black Dog

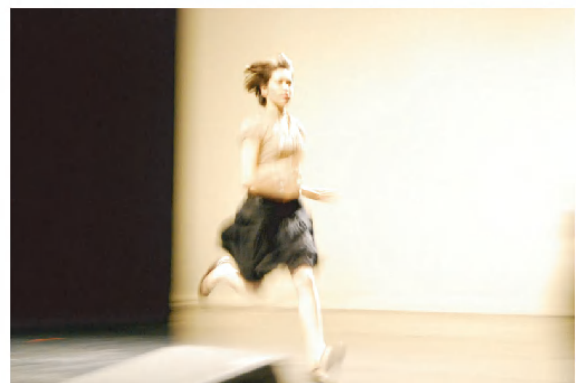
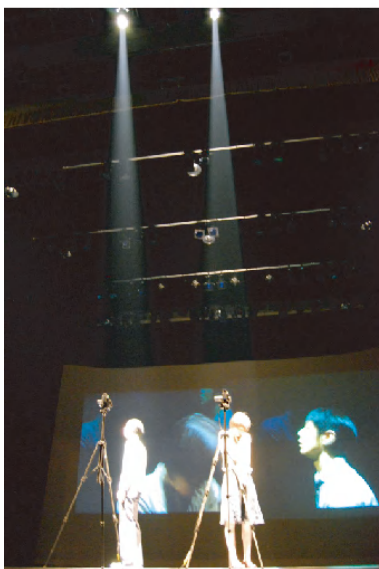
## Over view

There are two video cameras, a man and a woman on stage. The fear and uneasiness of the two who cannot make any contact despite of standing next to each other, are exposed by live filming displayed on the screen back stage. By alternating glances between the screen and dancers, the audience starts to become a part of the dancer's violent bodies. The vast distance that lies between men and women has always been an important theme for our company. We try to describe that distance even more clearly by showing dancers and their visual images shown on the stage at the same time. It is a unique and simple structured duet with live visual images. The music with frequent use of repetition resembling a siren increases the tense atmosphere.

## Technical requirements

|                                | [Black Dog]  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Times (min)</b>             | 25   |
| <b>Dancers</b>                 | 2  |
| <b>Acting area<br/>(m × m)</b> | 4 × 4 ~ 10 × 10  |
| <b>Music</b>                   | CD   |
| <b>Lighting</b>                | 12 PAR light   |
| <b>Video projection</b>        | 2 Video camera, 2 Video projector,<br>Screen (Substitute for a Horizont Curtain) |
| <b>Preparation</b>             | 1day   |

# Black Dog



# Empire, Aerial

## Over view

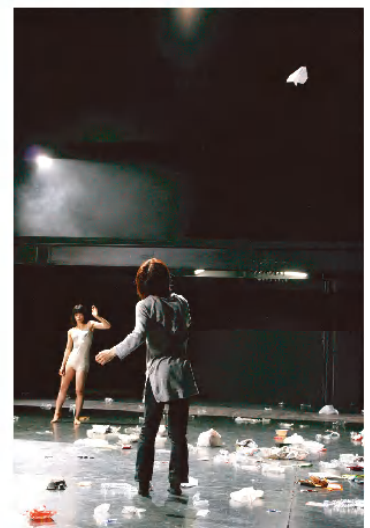
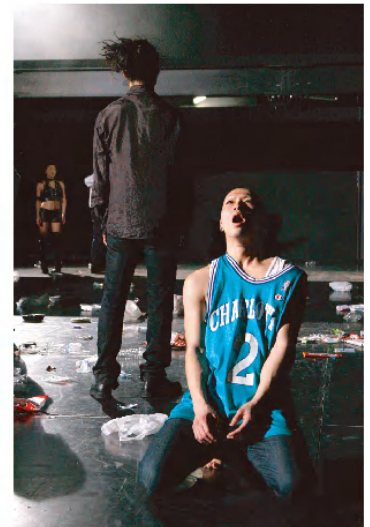
There is a scene, with scattered garbage, where people are indifferent of others, almost as though brought fresh from the streets of Shibuya, the centre district of Tokyo, early in the morning. The people deeply trapped in themselves remind us of stay-at-homes which is a recent social problem, and the bodies that suddenly go out of control recalls our memories back to the mass stabbing in Akihabara 2008, which shocked the nation. *Empire, Aerial* is a work that shows how bodies exist in contemporary society, by using 14 dancers and actors with varying backgrounds. For music, we have welcomed Atsuhiko Ito, a worldly famous contemporary artist who has been invited to Venice Biennale and other international scenes, and drummer HIKO who is a representative of hardcore punk music in Japan. The extreme live music of the two shakes the space. The title describes the relationship between “Empire” which is a global force that controls today’s world coming from the book by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, and “Air”, an unseen force that controls the mass which is unique to Japanese society.

## Technical requirements

|                                | [Empire, Aerial]   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Times (min)</b>             | 70   |
| <b>Dancers</b>                 | 14 Dancers, 2 Musicians  |
| <b>Acting area<br/>(m × m)</b> | 12 × 12  |
| <b>Music</b>                   | Drum,<br>OPTRON (an original musical device use of fluorescent lighting) |
| <b>Lighting</b>                | 30 PAR lights, 4 HMIs, 5 flashes   |
| <b>Prop</b>                    | Household garbage  |
| <b>Preparation</b>             | 1 day  |

Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers

# Empire, Aerial photo: GO



# Chain of Clarity

## Over view

*Chain of Clarity* is a highly Japanese, highly present-day work of dance. In some aspects, this piece greatly differs from the expressions generally used in the Japanese contemporary dance scene. In addition to the 110minute, three piece composition (which is far longer than average), it has excluded, to the utmost, any elements of “dance” or “theatricality”.

At the same time, in spite of these differences, it very strongly represents the physicality in present-day Japan. This is because our methodology is derived from Butoh, a Japanese originated physical expression that questions the boundary between the body (especially the present-day body in this case) and the outside world. The stage effect such as lighting and the use of visual images too are aimed to show the ambiguity of this boundary, which we try to redefine in the performance. The main theme of this piece is the feeling of no way out, which many young people seem to have had since the stagnation of economy in the 1990s, and the physicality that exists in this present-day situation in Japan.

The title *Chain of Clarity* comes from the book *The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge* by anthropologist Carlos Castaneda, where he explains that the four enemies to obtain knowledge are “fear” “clarity” “power” and “old age”. It is the inescapable chain of “clarity” in contemporary society that we try to express through this piece.

As mentioned above, this performance is composed of three independent pieces. The aim of this is to show the common physicality that lies at the core of the three different pieces, but they can also be performed independently. In that case, it may be possible to emphasize the themes of each part more vividly. Apart from the stage performance, we have also created a film version, and this too can be shown independently.

### [Passers-by]

It is a piece that tries to depict the contrast between the extraordinary and ordinary, the world on the stage and in the streets, dance movements and daily gestures, by strongly controlling each dancer’s movements. It is a symbolic piece for our company which the main activity is to question and explore the meaning of dance. At the premium, we opened the doors at the back of the stage and connected the space to the street outside of the theatre. We are planning to perform it in an open air space in the near future.

### [Downward Spiral]

This is the core piece of *Chain of Clarity*, which portrays daily life that repeats itself with no way out. Both the choreography and music are based on minimal repetition of selected phrases. The uniqueness of this piece is that the movements are not inorganic (which often are in this type of dance), but connected deeply to inner emotions and physical senses. The monotonous atmosphere is deliberately created on stage to emphasize the impulses that suddenly emerge from the depth of daily life. The fluorescent lights and live music by the saxophone are important elements that create the atmosphere of this piece.

### [DOG]

This is a piece that explores, in a fairly direct way, the relationship between the body and visual images, the individual and the society, in our internet age. In spite of the video cameras and screens that are used during the performance, it is more than a technical experiment to create a spectacle on stage, for it explores in depth the relationship between the physicality and visual images. This gives a uniqueness that is not found in other multi-media performances. Each dancer has her independent space in the theatre during the piece; therefore there is no reason to limit the performing space to a theatre to explore the theme that this piece holds.



# Chain of Clarity

## Technical requirements

|                                | <b>[Chain of Clarity]<br/>Full Version</b>   | <b>[Passers-by]</b>   | <b>[Downward Spiral]</b>             | <b>[DOG]</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Times (min)</b>             | 110  | 20                    | 65                                   | 30  |
| <b>Dancers</b>                 | 10   | 2                     | 4                                    | 4   |
| <b>Acting area<br/>(m × m)</b> | 10×10  | Possible on any terms | 10×10                                | 5×5   |
| <b>Music</b>                   | CD+live performance<br>(saxophone & guitar)  | Not music             | CD + live performance<br>(saxophone) | CD + live performance<br>(guitar)                           |
| <b>Lighting</b>                | Fluorescent light 5~20,HMI,<br>Area Spot lights×4(special),<br>Par lights ×more than 4 | Possible on any terms | Fluorescent light 5~20,<br>HMI       | Area Spot lights×4<br>(special),<br>Par lights ×more than 4 |
| <b>Video projection</b>        | 4 video cameras,<br>screens or TV monitors<br>2 to 4                                   | Not use               | Not use                              | 4 video cameras,<br>screens or TV monitors<br>2 to 4        |
| <b>Prop</b>                    | 2 video screens  | Not use               | Not use                              | Not use   |
| <b>In the open air</b>         | Impossible   | Possible              | Impossible                           | Impossible  |
| <b>Preparation</b>             | 2days  | 0.5days               | 1days                                | 1days   |

A necessary element on a technical side is different according to the case to present 'Chain of Clarity' the full version and the independent presentation of each work.

# Chain of Clarity

## Review

### **Kakuya Ohashi and *Chain of Clarity***

Kakuya Ohashi holds a unique position in the Japanese contemporary dance scene.

His works completely exclude any elements of “dance”, and stick to the fact that the body exists here and now. What we see from this is suppressed impulses, irresistible violence and hopeless communication gaps between the genders, all hidden under the surface of “daily life”.

It is possible to see a type of physicality which was cultivated in Japanese Butoh and contemporary dance beginning with Tatsumi Hijikata.

However, what we must focus on is not only the physical movements, but the use of the contemporary stage which seems to be conscious of every inch of the theatre. When a quiver from a dancer’s body travels through the air and fills the space, the dancer becomes a prisoner of that quivering space, unmovable, losing his/her way of escape.

*Chain of Clarity*, a 110minute, three piece compositions, can said to be the pinnacle of these works by Ohashi.

In the first part, the doors at the back of the stage are opened towards the street outside the theatre, so the audience is witnessing a mixture of “fiction” where dancers move on stage, and “reality” where pedestrians walk on the street. In the latter half of the second part, after these doors are closed, what we see are the tense movements and subtle facial expressions of the female dancers on stage, and then in the third part, the female dancers’ are shown close-up on video screens one after another. When it comes to this point, fiction and narrative disappear and there is only the vivid image of bodies caught in a chain of split second flashes. It is already impossible to distinguish reality from acting.

Maybe it is both. Eroticism, violence, threats, loud laughter, and the fall.... It is up to the audience how to interpret or feel about the wild landscape created by these bodies. For, in Ohashi’s works, the audience is expected to sharpen its sense of creativity, within the mesh of reality and fiction.

Tatsuro Ishii (Dance Critic)

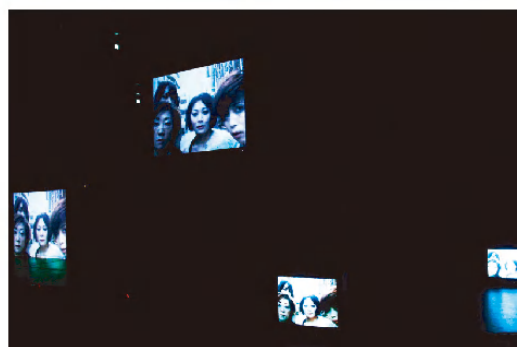
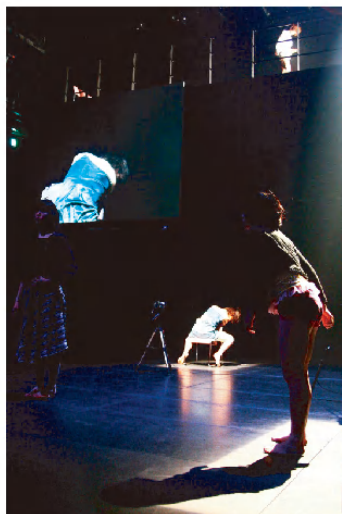
### **A Convincing Approach to Affirm and Love Dance and Daily Life**

Like the giant cube that suddenly falls down on stage, and the rows of fluorescent lights flickering above our heads, the dancers were also moving as one more "object" on stage. Their hollow bodies repeat the same trivial movements extracted from moments of daily life. In a way, this sight reminds us of ambient music, but from another point of view, it appears to be a grotesque display of the sacrifice of these bodies.

As I watched this performance wishing it would continue forever, I was also dazzled by the rich amount of information the dancer's movements carried, almost the same amount as in daily life. Ohashi's unique present-day interpretation of the essence of Ankoku-Butoh and American post-modern dance shows us a convincing approach to affirming and loving dance as well as daily life. This, I believe, is one of the peaks of contemporary dance, not only in Japan but worldwide.

Satoru Kimura (Dance Critic)

# Chain of Clarity photo: GO



# Clarity is Only a Point before the Eyes.

## Over view

This is a piece performed in 2006, which heavily uses images of live filming, a symbolic method frequently adopted by Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers. The video camera follows two dancers who crave for each other, into the audience, onto the stage and into the streets, and by his blurring the boundary of reality and unreality. There is a lost girl who covers her head with a tin pail, a woman continuously moving at a same rhythm and a couple that sticks together like Siamese twins where the violence is directed nowhere but inwards. By multiply placing these comic like characters, the piece exposes the lonely existence of people today. The music which features Yow Funahashi's live performance on his saxophone inflates the body to head inward, but at the same time becomes the key to the outer world.

## Technical requirements

|                                | [Clarity is Only a Point before the Eyes.]  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Times (min)</b>             | 65  |
| <b>Dancers</b>                 | 6 Dancers, 1 musician, 2 video shootings  |
| <b>Acting area<br/>(m × m)</b> | 8×8   |
| <b>Music</b>                   | saxophone, CD   |
| <b>Lighting</b>                | Lighting 8PAR lights, 1HMI, 4frashes  |
| <b>Video projection</b>        | 2 video cameras, 2 video projectors,<br>Screen(Substitute for a Horizont Curtain) |
| <b>Preparation</b>             | 1day  |

# Clarity is Only a Point before the Eyes.

## Review

### Running Along the “Edge” of Expression

Ohashi’s current work sparks profound emotions on a couple of levels – the first, from an ongoing view on Japanese contemporary dance; the second, from the perspective of Ohashi’s repertoire.

We live in a present that appears to have exhausted its various avenues of expression, an era in which it has become difficult to locate the “edge” of expression and figure just what it might be. As the domain of the taboo shrinks, deciphering what might be forbidden becomes ever more difficult. And claims that taboos are now out in the open would seem to judge the task one of little value nowadays.

Ohashi is one of the few auteurs who continues to experiment with the search for the “edge.” A lingering sense of suffocation and of impotence has plagued Japanese society throughout the lengthy economic recession that has followed a boom now decades gone. While a plethora of pop and kitsch art seems to signal a flight from this reality, Ohashi elects to burrow into the sense of stagnation, rooting around to locate the origins of our malaise and why we must dwell in it.

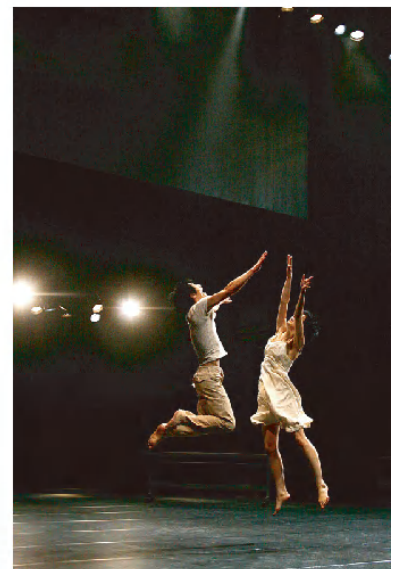
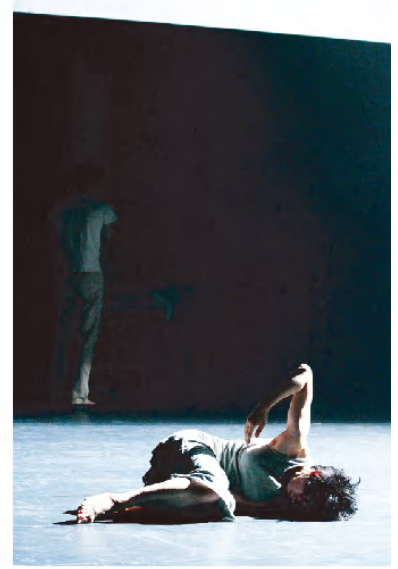
While there is continuity between the current work and earlier ones, it also has the makings of a shift to a new phase. Through its strength of expression, which projects a fluctuation along the border of reality and the imaginary; through its strength in composition, which ties together a variety of scenes; even more unambiguously than in its precedents, each and every expression works as though to generate a magnetic field that bonds together the whole and strengthens its impact. Furthermore, a world is molded in the admixture of two groupings (of dancers) to reveal a symmetrical dance between calm and motion. One grouping pairs the unquenched desire – tempestuous, raw – of Yukari Kakiuchi and Megumi Kamimura with Natsuko Furutachi’s serene dance, which is replete with an inner fortitude. An impulse first revealed in the delicate movements of Yukari Kakiuchi’s finger comes to convulse morbidly, until in an agony of self-immolation the urge pops during a mad dash through the theater. Live video images from a camera trained on the pair are projected in real-time; against this backdrop comes the placid dance of Natsuko Furutachi, ticking the moments as precisely as the turning of a clock’s hands. The second grouping is made up of Miu Miu and Masazumi Minaki Both embrace an introverted violence, neurotic; but where Masazumi Minaki suppresses its expression, imploding, Miu Miu release it outward.

Implicit in Ohashi’s endeavors to find the “edge” is a gaze fixed upon Japanese society’s roar and ruin. Deep within its eyes is an anger and sadness that knows not where to train the gaze. It looks not merely to find an expression of the “edge.” The strength of this work is born of the gaze it rivets upon (human) weakness. Might irony be at work here?

Observation date: August 27, 2006

Rumika Nishida (Dance Critic)

# Clarity is Only a Point before the Eyes. photo: GO



# Company's Profile

## Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers

Founded by Kakuya Ohashi, a choreographer and dancer who had studied butoh's choreography method. Through activities, they are pursuing the problem, "What is dance?"

Performers in their piece seem to be unrelated each other at first sight as if they are showing dis-communications. However, Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers is challenging to produce a novel way of communication, a moment of a birth of choreography basing on impossibility of communication.

That is quite contrast with lots of other contemporary dance piece which tend to produce relationships between performances without any doubt on possibilities of communication. Also, their works are influenced by contemporary social problems such as psychological or sexual abuse, and they are trying to transform aspect of the problems.

1999: Founded. 2000: Participated on the Yokohama Platform at Les Rencontres Choreographiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis (formerly the Rencontres Chorégraphiques de Bagnolet) but were judged unrepresentable due to the complete nudity of the performers. Hence suspended activity. 2003: Restarted activity. 2004: Presented "Wish You Were Here", and with the same piece received an award of Labo20 #16 event and entered the Toyota Choreography Awards 2004 Nextage (final screening). Presented "Sister Chainsaw" in the SPAC Dance Festival 2004. 2005: Participated on the Yokohama Solo x Duo <Compétition>+ Group Division with "Sister Chainsaw". Made their United States debut with "Wish You Were Here" in the dance program of The Kitchen, the noted art space in New York (the curator was Yasuko Yokoshi). 2006: Presented "Clarity is Only a Point Before the Eyes" which incorporated live video feed into the performance. In September 2006, toured Italy with the program "Journey Beyond the Clarity". 2008: Presented "Chain of Clarity" in February. Presented "Black Swan" in September. Presented "Black Dog" in November at Seoul Arko Arts Theatre. Presented "Empire, Aerial" featuring Atsuhiko Ito (OPTRON) and HIKO (drums) as musicians at New National Theatre, Tokyo.

## Kakuya Ohashi

Choreographer, Artistic Director of Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers

1967: Born in Yamaguchi Prefecture. 1985-1989: Studied business administration in Yokohama National University. 1989-1990: Studied film making at Image Forum Institute of Moving Image. 1991: Started performance activity in Vancouver, Canada. 1993-1997: Participated in Yukio Waguri + Kozensha's activities as a butoh dancer. Studied the butoh choreography method of Tatsumi Hijikata under a direct heir of Hijikata's original butoh. 1996-1999: Presented "Mizuchi" a collaboration work of dance, video and painting. 1998: Participated on the artists in residence program in Akiyoshidai International Art Village as the associate artist (the master artist was Ralph Lemon). 1999-2001: Performed in the film "The tale of the floating world" directed by Alain Escalle. 1999: Founded Kakuya Ohashi and Dancers and started presenting choreographed works.

photo: GO (from "Closures")

