

# the DANCE insider

Brought to you by

*Body Wrappers*



the New York manufacturer of fine dance apparel for women and girls. [Click here](#) to see a sample of our products and a list of web sites for purchasing. With Body Wrappers it's always *performance at its best.*

## Flash Reviews

### Go Home

Out of the Fog, 10-27: Painting Pictures  
Cloud Gate in Black & White; Makuakane's 'Daughters';  
Yaelisa's 'Imagenes'

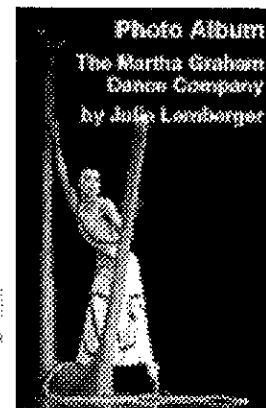
By Aimee Ts'ao

Copyright 2006 Aimee Ts'ao

SAN FRANCISCO – Yes, I am guilty of terpsichorean gluttony. Three dance concerts in three days, not to mention two orchestral ones earlier in the week. (I have a soft spot for Shostakovich, not just because it's his centenary year, but because I have loved his music for eons. So I went to hear his 10th and 11th symphonies played by the Kirov Orchestra and the San Francisco Symphony, respectively. (When I advocate for live music, there IS a reason for it.)

This past weekend two of the three very different companies I went to see shared one important element: a visual focal point. In the case of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, that turned out to be one of the strongest parts of the company's performance. With Yaelisa & Caminos Flamencos, although the scenic element was exceptionally striking, the dancing and music demanded such intense attention that we could have been outside in the parking lot and I would not have even noticed my surroundings. On the other hand, both Cloud Gate and the San Francisco-based Hawaiian company, Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu, shared one particular stellar attribute, but more about that later.

On Friday, October 20, I sink into my blue upholstered seat in Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall, once again thanks to Cal



*click!*

DANSPACE PROJECT

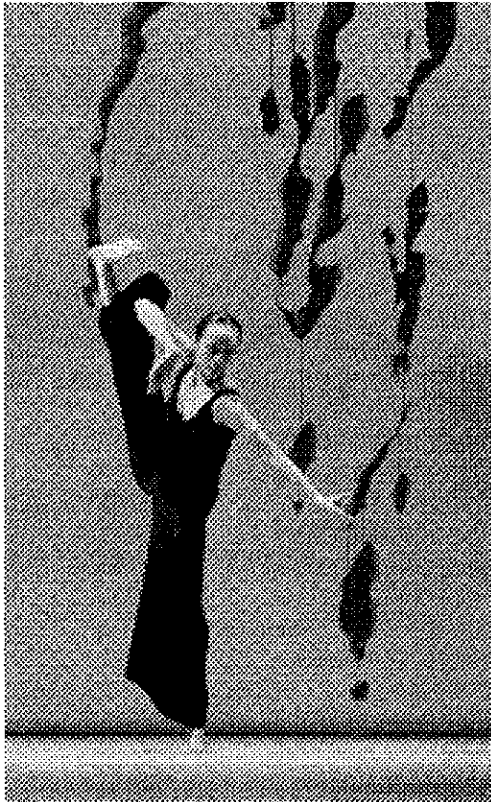
Performance  
Schedule



Graham  
Technique  
in  
San Francisco  
Taught by  
Karen Burgin  
and  
David Chase

Performances, while regretting that I missed Cloud Gate when it was here in 2003 as I had heard very good reports about the troupe. (I was in Europe checking out Sasha Waltz and Tomi Paasonen.) The company performs "Wild Cursive," the last part of founder and artistic director Lin Hwai-min's "Cursive: a Trilogy," a work inspired by Chinese calligraphy and martial arts. A spare black and white aesthetic informs the stunningly gorgeous backdrop for the choreography: Sammy Wang's simple costumes of flowing black pants for the bare-chested men and tank-topped women, Lin and Hung Wei-ming's wide rice paper strips descending and rising from above with real ink slowly seeping down and suggesting abstract Chinese characters, lighting by Chang Tsan-tao that subtly highlights the dancers and the paper or creates silhouettes on the paper when projected from behind. Even the music is a minimalist score from Jim Shum and Liang Chun-mei of sounds from nature and an occasional temple bell.

Don't get  
lost on the  
Internet



*Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan in Lin Hwai-min's "Wild Cursive." Photo: Cal Performances.*

Lin's visual compositional sense is astute and he transforms the stage metaphorically from a breathtaking landscape, to an insightful portrait, to a sumptuous still life, to a raging battle scene, then to a calming seascape, all done through the positioning of the dancers in space and the varying qualities of

their movement. Starting with a group of dancers standing tightly together in a corner, after a few moments he magically moves them out across the stage into a tableau of varying levels and body positions. His use of contrasting textures of movement, particularly the meltingly slow adagio arms and lightning-quick kung fu kicks and jumps, points up the very high technical level of the dancers. These same performers show some of the greatest ensemble work I've seen in a while -- breathing together, moving together, establishing a group rapport that makes them become one entity unto itself.

After 70 minutes without an intermission I find the actual steps of the choreography becoming too repetitive and the visual groupings recycling as well. A heavier editorial hand could tighten this piece up, making it even more powerful. Reading the program notes at home (my lesson after last week was taken seriously), I learn that the first two parts of the trilogy each have a very different quality from this one and each other. Perhaps Lin could shorten all three parts of it to around half an hour each and combine them into an evening-length work. What a feast that would make!

The next night, Saturday, October 21, I'm at the Palace of Fine Arts Theater for Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu's premiere of director Patrick Makuakane's "Daughters of Haumea," based on a book of the same title by Lucia Tarallo Jensen, an exploration of women's roles in Hawaiian history. As it is opening night there are a few glitches: memory slips for some of the narration, overly long delays during scene changes.... But this happens in live theater; I don't mind. Like most of Makuakane's shows, this one follows the usual format of being an entertaining educational narrative with dancing almost always accompanied by live music. He is committed to preserving Hawaiian culture and teaching its history through hula. A master in traditional hula, he also continues to develop his own style of "hula mua," or contemporary hula which takes this dance form places you never dreamed it could go. Makuakane's particularly fertile imagination has produced evenings ranging from dealing with the effect of foreign missionaries and capitalists on Hawaii and how its culture was very nearly wiped out, to a hilarious hybrid of Hare Krishnas and hula.

Even though the pace of the evening seems a bit slow, the dancers, the women in particular, are spectacular. If I think the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre corps is impressive, I'm not sure I can find adjectives to describe these performers. Not only are they perfectly synchronized, but their movement comes from the heart and rides the wave of the music, not merely using it to

mark the beat. I am mesmerized. Only the Bolshoi and Kirov Ballets have ensembles that can rival these women in their esprit de corps. This show continues tonight through Sunday but beware, Na Lei Hulu can sell out five performances in a 1000-seat theater without any advertising, a testimony to the support of the Bay Area's Hawaiian community and local hulaophiles.

One might think that by now I would be ready to stay home, work in the garden or read that book I just checked out of the library. On the contrary, I am eagerly anticipating seeing *Imagenes Flamencas*, the latest presentation of Yaelisa & Caminos Flamencos. I almost never go to matinees because I'd rather be outdoors in the sunshine, so it speaks even more highly of this company that I don't feel more than a flicker of resentment about being inside.

Yaelisa has consistently produced programs of exceptional quality, winning the Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Best Company Performance in the 2003-04 season. She is the co-founder and artistic director of the New World Flamenco Festival, held regularly since 2000 at the Irvine Barclay Theater at the University of California Irvine campus. There, this past August, she directed "*Sin Fronteras*," featuring her collaboration with Tony Award-winning tap dancer Savion Glover. (Tap dancers seem to be popular for various crossover projects with San Francisco artists these days.) Best of all, she brings a variety of outstanding guest artists to supplement the home team.

Walking into the lobby of the Cowell Theater Sunday, October 22, I see a group of paintings by Roberto Zamora, projections of which will be the background for *Imagenes Flamencas*. I soon see that they also have inspired the costumes and choreography. These paintings of flamenco dancers and singers have an intensity that is explained by Zamora's parallel career as a flamenco performer. The afternoon show opens with the whole company in "*Jardin de Suenos*." Yaelisa and Juan Ogalla, who also guested in last season's concert, start dancing in silence. These two are truly magnetic artists individually, but together they are riveting. The guitarists, musical director Jason McGuire ("*El Rubio*") and Pedro Cortes, another invitee, take their turn, but when guest artist Felix de Lola begins singing "*Dos Gardenias*," a well-known bolero (a song most recently introduced to a new audience by the late Ibrahim Ferrer's rendition for "*The Buena Vista Social Club*" CD) by the Cuban composer Isolina Carrillo, I am delighted to discover a non-traditional element.

The show continues with a different projection of a painting for each section. In "Bulerias," Cortes and McGuire play as if on fire, fingers like flames licking the frets, hot and fleeting. Melissa Cruz and Briseyda Zarate, both guest artists, have the chance to show how versatile they are in "Aires de Cadiz." Zarate is crisply focused and very energetic, while Cruz is warm and lyrical. "Martinete" has Manuel Malena singing with power and emotion. Yaelisa's "Taranto" is a revelation, a veritable pas de deux between a dancer and a singer, as de Lola circles around the stage and Yaelisa as he sings. Her footwork is glorious, delicate yet firm, like silver filigree, truly another instrument weaving rhythms together with the musicians. The choreography for Cruz and Zarate in "Bamberas" is excellent and they do it justice.

With a highly compelling presence, Ogalla takes the stage in "Siguiriyas." Everything he does is immaculately clean, the finishes razor sharp, the footwork clear even at supersonic speed. Just watching him slowly raise both his arms while standing still center stage is thrilling. The audience gives him prolonged applause and cheering. Then Yaelisa returns in "Por Solea" to show her other facets. Over the past few years, she has matured and has deepened her interpretations. She utilizes more nuances and her arms have grown more poetic. Next to the younger Cruz and Zarate she proves that in flamenco, experience is everything. With the finale the entire company returns and we have the opportunity to acknowledge these truly fine artists with a standing ovation.

*For information on advertising on Out of the Fog, Aimee Ts'ao's new weekly column from San Francisco, e-mail [paul@danceinsider.com](mailto:paul@danceinsider.com).*

[Flash Reviews](#)  
[Go Home](#)