



International
Presentations of
Music & Dance

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Court Dance Theater and Music
From Okinawa

MINORU MIYAGI, *Director*

Dancers

Minoru Miyagi
Masaichi Akamine
Susumu Taira
Katsuya Niizaki
Koja Hiroko
Kimiko Kakazu
Sanae Miyagi

Sonomi Miyagi
Sugako Miyagi
Kazuko Kinjo
Junko Shikiya
Akemi Nagahama
Yoshitake Kamiya

Musicians

Susumu Taira, *ban*
Manzen Aragaki, *singer, sanshin*
Kenhachi Matsuda, *singer, sanshin*
Yoshitake Kamiya, *taiko*

Yoshimitsu Kohama, *fue*
Seiko Arashiro, *kokyu*
Tokie Takara, *koto*

WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1981, AT 8:00
POWER CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

P R O G R A M

Winagu Kuti Bushi (Women's Dance)

This dance, to the song *Kuti Bushi*, was originally a scene in the play *Ufakawa Tichiuchi*. The young woman Utadaru surreptitiously enters the castle of her enemy seeking vengeance. Her charm and her dancing distract her enemy's protector, the Lord of Tancha. She contrives to obtain the lord's war fan and dances with it. As is common in such plays of revenge, the song text disguises the dancer's true sentiments:

Because of my lord's great benevolence, all people in all regions,
Both high and low, without exception, look up to and revere him.

Ze

The *zei*, originally a wand used by generals in directing their armies in battle, here symbolizes the celebration of peace—as befits the pacifist Okinawan culture. The dancers representing young boys are clad in *bingata* (stencil-dyed robes). Boys of the nobility often dressed much like women. The song accompanying this dance is *Esa Bushi*:

The fragrance of aloe incense permeates the festive hall:
As I dance, my sleeve is perfumed delightfully.

Shudun

Shudun is considered the classic of women's dance. It expresses the anguish of unrequited love and unremitting longing. *Shudun* is cast in the typical tripartite form of women's dance: entrance (*njihwa*), main dance (*naka-udui*) and exit (*irihwa*).

Movement in women's dance is kept to a minimum: emotion must be expressed abstractly and with the sense that powerful feelings are being held in check. Even if seen as an example of the Asian "art of quiet," *Shudun* is particularly motionless. Because of this, however, each movement which does escape suppression has a sharp edge and engenders a concentrated sense of tension. Such expression of emotion, called *umui-iri*, is the essence of women's dance.

The height of expressiveness in *Shudun* is said to be the technique known as the "triangular eye movement." During the first half of the line of "You and I sharing a pillow," the dancer stands facing front, a distracted look on her face. Awakening from a dream—but still hoping it is real—her hopes fade with the sinking moon. Here her body is entirely motionless: only her eyes dance. Still in a dreamlike trance, she looks about for a sign of her lover: in front of her, then to the right, then up to the left. The "look" is more than that. It is an expression filled with longing and overwhelming sorrow.

Immediately following this is the "pillow gesture," as the hands move poignantly; then, as if drawn by the sinking moon, the dancer also sinks subtly into a slight crouch. Finally, the main dance ends with the "embracing gesture" as, overcome by despair, she reaches for her lover's memory.

Such graphic moments appear suddenly in the midst of the otherwise placid and non-realistic choreography. The transmitted feeling of quiet is the result of long training; the positioning of the center of balance, the subtle twistings of a pliant body, ceaseless "internal movements," all blend elegantly with the expression of emotion (*umui-iri*).

Entrance: *Nakama Bushi*—Though suffering the pangs of love, could I share my feelings with another? Drawn by your memory, I must secretly steal to see you.

Main dance: *Shudun Bushi*—You and I sharing a pillow—how heartless, it is but a dream. The moon sinks in the west in the middle of a winter's night.

Exit: *Shongane Bushi*—After parting, if thoughts of me should come to you, take solace from them; for my fragrance, from our nights of intimacy, now clings to your sleeve.

Shisa-moi (Lion Dance)

The *shisa-moi* is performed in the countryside throughout the Okinawan islands at village festivals and on numerous other occasions. The *shisa* of Okinawa is a mythical beast resembling a lion; in its hairiness it resembles the Balinese *barong* or the lion of the Chinese lion-dance rather than the *shishi* of mainland Japan. As the symbol of strength, the *shisa* also serves as a guardian against evil spirits, both in dance and in the form in which it is most frequently encountered: as a ceramic figure perched on the tiled roofs of many Okinawan houses. In dance, the *shisa* is shown both as a powerful, dynamic beast and in a more comical light.

Karate Dance

Karate was born in Okinawa, and its influence can be clearly discerned in various male dances of both classical and folk origin. In this arrangement, to the vigorous accompaniment of traditional Okinawan drumming, several karate routines are strung together much as they might be at some village festivals.

INTERMISSION

Kumi-udui (Combined Dances): Nido Tichiuchi ("Revenge of the Two Sons")

Kumi-udui is a dramatic form uniting song, speech (or chant) and dance. Patrons of the last century spoke of going to "hear" rather than "see" *kumi-udui*, indicating the relative importance of the musicians' songs and the actors' speeches over the dancing. Still, in terms of "seeing," the movement in much of *kumi-udui* shares the features of women's dance: a slow-moving simplicity of expression conveying great depths of emotion.

The first performance of *kumi-udui* (Combined Dances) took place in 1719, for the entertainment of the Chinese envoys sent to attend the investiture of the new Okinawan king. "Revenge of the Two Sons" was one of the two *kumi-udui* presented that year and remains the most frequently performed work today.

The story of "Revenge of the Two Sons" (1719), by Tamagusuku Chokun, is as follows:

To avenge Lord Amaui's murder of their father, Lord Gusamaru, the two sons, Tsurumatsi and Kamiju, disguised as dancing boys, penetrate Amaui's defenses during a spring outing, entrance him with a performance, then take advantage of his drunken state to kill him. (Hence the play is also called *Gusamaru Tichiuchi*, "The Gusamaru Vendetta.")

The first high point in this play comes during Amaui's opening monologue, as he speaks of his craving to overthrow the king and rule all Okinawa. In the so-called "seven eye movements," the strength of his desire is made visible as his eyes peer greedily in all directions.

In the following scenes, as the brothers enter and then meet with their mother, there is hardly any movement. The dialogue serves mainly to advance the plot: it is left to the songs to express the tender emotions of the mother and her sons as they part, perhaps for the last time. To heighten the emotional pitch, the singers often begin a few syllables before the end of the actor's speech.

At the climax, the actor portraying Amaui must not simply act drunk, he must project that mixture of naturalness and formalism which is the essence of Asian drama. And even in his drunkenness he must not lose his warrior's character. Instinctively he becomes suddenly suspicious of the boys' behavior and intentions, then relaxes as he decides his fears are groundless. It is at this instant that the brothers strike. They chase Amaui offstage and exact their revenge, returning shortly, swords in hand. They dance and exit, singing the song, *Yarikunushi Bushi*:

"To what shall I compare the happiness of this day?
It is like a budding flower touched with dew."

Chijuya (Plover)

Chijuya is one of the masterpieces of the category of *zo-udui* (literally, "miscellaneous dances"). The theme of this dance is the loneliness and homesickness of the traveler. So familiar and beloved is *Chijuya* among Okinawans that any native who hears this tune or sees this dance, no matter where, will likely be filled with emotion and be unable to suppress a feeling of nostalgia for home and family.

The costume is a kimono without waist-sash, woven of plant fiber in the distinctive Okinawa *kasuri* style (related to Indonesian *ikat*). The hairstyle is one once widespread among women of the commoner class, dressed with a silver hairpin and a long purple headband.

Away from home, I sleep on the beach, leaves of grass for my pillow.
Even in sleep I cannot forget the time passed at my parents' side.
The plover on the shore cries *chui chui na*.

Waking suddenly in the night, I listen silently.
As I recall the days gone by, the night turns sorrowful.

Though an ocean lies between us, the moon that shines above is the same.
Is my love gazing at it too, in the nighttime sky? The plover. . . .

Yutsidaki (Four Bamboos)

This cheerful dance of celebration is perhaps the most strikingly beautiful of all Okinawan dances. Each dancer wears a magnificent "flower hat" in addition to the usual *bingata* (stencil-dyed) kimono. In each hand are two slightly curved fragments of bamboo which are clacked together much like castanets, except more slowly and elegantly. The dance itself is not considered technically demanding, being directed more at pleasing the eye.

Udui-kwadisa is the name of the accompanying melody:

Sound them, sound them loudly, sound the *yutsidaki*
This day in the festival hall—oh, what joyous merriment!

Kurushima Kuduchi (Kurushima Song and Dance) and Kachashi (Free-form Dance)

Minoru Miyagi has linked *Kurushima Kuduchi* in a suite with two other elements. The suite begins with a lively drum solo followed by *Kurushima Song and Dance*.

Kurushima is a tiny island in the Yawyama archipelago at the southern end of the Okinawa chain. This song and its dance, bursting with vitality, portray various yearly highlights in Kurushima.

Throughout Okinawa, the characteristic of the type of song known as *kuduchi* is the contrast between a relatively stately part sung by the musicians in rather poetic and formal language, and the more colloquial part (sometimes omitted) sung rapidly by the dancer(s). This is the liveliest and most comical of all *kuduchi*: even its "stately" part delivered at full speed.

The first three verses in particular are typical of much Okinawan folk song, as they describe the prosperity which is hoped for in the coming year—as if singing will ensure it. But the mixture of such semi-ritualistic texts with verses totally secular in content is also typical.

This dance was choreographed in the early 20th century by a Kurushima native (the text dates from the early 19th century and the tune from much earlier). The costume is usually a robe of banana-fiber cloth (*basaa*), a common lightweight fabric in the southern islands.

Kachashi is free-form dancing to very fast accompaniment; it is commonly danced by all present at parties and to close certain other festive occasions. Until recently, young people would gather in the evening on the beach or in a clearing and dance *kachashi* for hours while pursuing mutual romantic interests. Playing *kachashi* tunes is the ultimate challenge for the instrumentalist. The chorus of drums and verses is improvised on the spot by the musicians.

The Miyagi Troupe is made up of prize-winning Okinawan dancers and musicians who have toured Japan, the Soviet Union, Poland, South America, Europe, and Hawaii. Minoru Miyagi, who was trained by his father, established the Okinawa Kabu-Dan (Song and Dance Ensemble) in 1969 to further the dissemination of Okinawan culture. Mr. Miyagi supplied program notes for tonight's performance, translated and supplemented by David W. Hughes.

The tour of Court Dance Theater and Music from Okinawa is sponsored by The Asia Society in cooperation with The Japan Foundation, and is made possible by additional grants from the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission, Mr. John Goelet, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Weatherhead Foundation, the World Study Museum of Kyoto, Japan, and Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation.

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