

EDUCATION RESOURCE



A H+SS SECONDARY/WACE

U-THEATRE

BEYOND TIME

**PERTH
FESTIVAL**

perthfestival.com.au

Founder



Principal Partner



Department of
Education

Fogarty Foundation



BEYOND TIME

U-Theatre
Dance / Music
Taiwan

About the performance

Beyond Time is a dance work grounded in its social, cultural and historical context. The focus and control of the dancers and musicians provide students with an opportunity to explore the intersection between movement, ritual and music. Martial arts, dance and ritual transport you to another world.

A solar eclipse, a shimmering full moon and a torrential downpour descend on St James Theatre in the stunning visual spectacle *Beyond Time*. Step into another world, spun out of twirling bodies, projections of natural phenomena and live music that courses through you. Extraordinarily skilful performers who drum and dance move rhythmically in step with hypnotic and frenetic percussion. The work of Taiwan's U-Theatre is created out of meditation and the result is a poetic performance that combines martial arts, dance and ritual to explore our relationship to the universe. Mesmerising, mysterious and unforgettable, *Beyond Time* leads you on a breathtaking journey into a boundless mystical space. Dazzling, precise drumming and flowing, contemplative dance come together to create a captivating theatrical experience.

Cast and crew

Performers Huang Chih-chun, Huang Kun-ming, Su Yin-tsu, Huang Kuo-chung, Liu Ping-tsen, Liu Shu-chih, Ou Kui-lan, Li Yan-huei, Chiu Shang-che, Hsu Ching-fang, Yang Meng-ju, Niu Li-sha, Sun I-chin, Ku Wen-chuan & Tu Yu-fong

Artistic Director Liu Ruo-yu

Music Director Huang Chih-chun

Stage Manager Shen Po-hung

Master Electrician Lin Yi-chieh

Sound Engineer Wu Ching-yuan

Technical Director Su Chun-hsueh

Technician Chen Kun-kuo, Hung Chih-lung

Video Operator Huang Yu-huei

International Promotion Manager Chang Cheng-yi

Production Co-ordinator Peng Nai-yun

About the performers

U-Theatre

The pronunciation of the letter 'U' is similar to the word meaning 'excellence' in the Chinese language. In ancient China, the same word also meant 'performer'. The Zen masters in China over a thousand years ago had said that a true artist must combine 'Tao' (self-improvement) with 'skill' (the learning and maturity of art). The U-people believe that the combination of Tao and skill is the goal of their life and artistic creation.

Ruo-Yu Liu, Founder and Artistic Director

Born in 1956, a leading theatrical performer in the early 1980s and a native of Taiwan, Ruo-Yu Liu earned her MA in Theatre Arts from New York University, and was selected for a year-long master class under Polish director Jerzy Grotowski. Her year with Grotowski changed her entire outlook and approach to life and clarified her understanding that a piece of theatre work, in essence, was the expression of 'an individual's attitude toward Life.' It became her fundamental approach to performance art.

In 1988 Liu founded U-Theatre and introduced, together with Mr. Huang since 1993, novel facets of drumming meditation, and martial arts to create a series of original works integrated with a wide range of elements drawn

from music, literature, drama, dance and ritual. These aesthetic syntheses have not only added another dimension to the Taiwanese expression in modern art, they have also earned U-theatre much acclaim and many invitations to perform internationally. In 2008 Liu was awarded the 12th Annual Taiwan National Award for Arts: Best Art Performer.

Chih-Chun Huang, Drumming Master / Music Director

Born in Malaysia, Mr. Huang has been a drumming and martial arts practitioner for over 30 years, and is known for his mastery in synthesising these two disciplines into a new form of performing arts. After a number of spiritual journeys to India and Tibet, where he discovered an inner sanctuary through meditation and realised the wisdom of living in the present, he started to direct his strengths inward. His keen observations of everyday sounds and ability to transform them have enriched each performance with musical articulation that is both multi-dimensional and imbued with the energy of life.

Mr. Huang joined U-Theatre in 1993 as Drumming Master. His unconventional training regime of 'meditation before drumming' has both elevated the disposition of the troupe and laid down a solid foundation for a contemporary artistic expression uniquely characteristic of U-Theatre. Prior to joining U-Theatre, Mr. Huang performed with Taipei Folk Dance Theatre and Cloud Gate Dance Theatre.

Themes

Cultural representation through movement: *Beyond time* uses everyday actions to create the performance. What culturally symbolic movements are evident in this dance? How could iconic features of Australian culture be represented through movement?

Changing communities: Our communities change over time as new technologies, developments and global influences bring transformation and growth. What changes have you observed in your community? How has this impacted our wellbeing and lifestyles?

Tradition: Customs and traditions form part of our lives, perhaps without knowing the origin or significance. What important things do you do because you've always done them? How are the traditions in your family different to those in other families?

Key ideas to explore with students

Taiwanese culture and tradition: Explore the traditions and customs of Taiwan, drawing comparisons to Australia and other Asian countries. Consider how Taiwan has changed and is increasingly becoming more modern. Does this mean that tradition is lost?

Taiwan's contested history: The People's Republic of China has consistently claimed sovereignty over Taiwan, insisting it must be reunited with the mainland - by force if necessary. Australia's position towards Taiwan is largely based on the Joint Communiqué with the People's Republic of China signed by the Whitlam Labor government in 1972. Under this agreement, the Australian government officially adheres to the One-China policy in which Australia recognises the People's Republic of China as the 'sole legitimate government of China.' Is the historical context of Taiwan apparent in the performance? How do you think this history may affect artists living and working in Taiwan? How might Australia's official policy towards Taiwan might impact the reception of the performance in Australia.

Representing ideas through movement: The performance incorporates physical theatre, martial arts, contortionism. How has the performance been influenced by the social, cultural and historical contexts of Taiwan? What makes movement an effective way to convey ideas? How does the use of props effect representation?

Scenic overview

SCENE ONE — A DOWNPOUR

The clap of thunder has given a clear message
The gusty wind, in its impulsive ways
Chimes in with gusto
The lightning

Dragon-like

And in the high decibel of a baby's cry

All efficiently gathered round

The rolling black waves and sweeping breakers

Splattering on the shore with panache as in the

sky

The rain hurtles down, like foaming waves
Falling eagerly
Into the mortal world of bustling dust
No need for the purity of the enlightened eye
Just raise your head and look straight
To where the mountain ranges mingle and meet
But then there is one cloud-girded peak
Like a richly evocative white pocket in a Chinese
ink painting
Slowing coming down
In the form of a cascade

**SCENE TWO — REFLECTION OF THE MOON
ON A THOUSAND RIVERS**

I travel in the river of clouds, alone
After an afternoon thunderstorm in the Void
The bright sun's glare
Is frozen into the quiet of early morning
A wind blows
From the direction of the sun, like
The acacia woods' echo
Of the dreamy murmur of the sea waves
Infinite loneliness is beyond measure
I reach out for a star
And throw it at your window
Then you will find, by chance
The forlornness of being alone
Beyond Time
In the moonlight, a soft footfall
It wades through the water that mirrors the moon
And disturbs the magic realm of the pond

SCENE THREE — WADING THROUGH THE AIR

From a leaf I see your graceful demeanor
From the breeze I see you walking to me with
mincing
Steps
The azure waves have cleansed the wayfarer
To see you
I have flown through the window of the Earth
Travelled eons of time
From an age immemorial
Through the air
In the blooming flowers I see your formless face
You sit on a path washed by the bright sun
Enjoying your inner peace like the quiet fields
Time and Space have met up for tea
As they chat about epochs of the world
We sit, free from thoughts
I reach out, but fail to cup a handful of your
nothingness
The wind in the pine forest on the cliff chants of

your
Fragrance
The past, the present, and the future have been
infused
in one cup of tea

SCENE FOUR — THE ECLIPSE

Resting on the shoal of stars
And suddenly hear you calling, softly
From the other shore of the Milky Way
Ah, it is a song of dawn
The rhythm of the cosmos when Day and Night
Meet

So, picking up my oars
I row through the mist of stardust
To sail to your thought-free sea

SCENE FIVE — THE VORTEX

A shadow that comes from a distant past
Sweeps through timeless space
Across the vast realm
On looking back, no trace of eons of time is left
But like a wisp of smoke, it links one century
After another, of happenings
past and present
In the stars' gaze, one glimpse is a millennium
One cursory glance back
And Eternity sends whatever remains of Time
Into your eyes speaking of suchness
And the world now
Has totally, totally disappeared

SCENE SIX — BEYOND TIME

I have been fishing in the air
On the banks of the Milky Way
And by luck caught dance steps out of the water
Like rain, that splashes and tints the amorphous
Nebulae
The soundless music continues
Its soundless interpretation
In that infinite nothingness
Beyond Time
The River of Eternity flows with suchness
Flooding the boundless mortal world
All that cosmic vastness
Has been blown into the mustard seed by the
evening breeze
Now all it takes is a casual touch from your
pretty fingers
To release the boundless skies
The love-filled nights
I stand alone in boundless space
Snow is dancing in the silent air

And on the branch — a flaming cluster
Solitude, solitude
The earth is so at peace

At peace
Ah!

Resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIHQ4aCmrqQ>