

Odori project 'kinda weird,' but kinda wonderful, too

On stage

Odori: The World of Kabuki Dance

Where: Frederic Wood Theatre, UBC

When: Saturday and Sunday, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$15 to \$25 at 604-822-2678

BY STUART DERDEYN
ARTS REPORTER

If you were chasing down the hot ticket in Tokyo circa 1880, chances are you were catching kabuki.

The most popular theatre form during the Edo period (17th to 19th centuries), kabuki is still a regular ticket to this day. Within its historical subject matter is an entire vocabulary of movement known as Odori. The unique dance form has its own repertoire rarely seen outside major Japanese urban centres.

Colleen Lanki fell in love with Odori during her college years and now has founded Vancouver-based TomoeArts

to explore and introduce Odori to Western audiences.

She willingly admits that her latest project is "kinda weird," but is excited to bring three Odori masters to town for the show. Izumi Tokuko, Fujima Monyo and Fujima Shogo are no strangers to international stages, having toured their art form around the world. But having Shogo on hand is an extra thrill. She is Lanki's teacher.

"I was always drawn to Japanese art and aesthetic, and when we did a little bit of non-Western content in my theatre training at UBC, I really was interested in Japanese Noh theatre," says Lanki. "And since it was really challenging to study it here, I decided it was for me and went to Japan for a year to teach English and study."

"Then I saw kabuki, which I didn't really find that interesting story-wise. But there was this dance component with fans and costumes that was this amazing, beautiful transformative experience."

That was seven years ago. What kept her in Japan studying was her teacher Shogo, who she says is an incredible inspiration and is more than willing to instruct peo-

ple from anywhere who are interested to learn her traditional art form. This enthusiasm was catching enough that Lanki has devoted herself to the style.

"Odori is so lively and spirited and really gorgeous in terms of fancy costumes and wigs and makeup and intense sets," says Lanki, who is not only producing the shows but also performing in them. "It's quite different from anything you've seen and truly spectacular when it's a full production."

For this weekend's performances, there will be a narration before each piece to give novice audiences background knowledge to better understanding the characters. Financial constraints being what they are, the music will be canned. But the set and costumes are originals brought over from Japan.

In fact, there is a costume exhibit at the UBC Museum of Anthropology Saturday afternoon. To some aficionados, the garments are almost as key as the exacting movement of the dancers. Additionally, there will be a Q&A session on Friday and some performance workshops.

For more information, visit tomoearts.org.



Colleen Lanki found Odori an amazingly beautiful transformative experience.

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