

Work It! **Bio of Participants**

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Cynthia Ling Lee (Taiwan/USA) instigates thoughtful, friction-filled dialogues between American postmodern dance and North Indian classical kathak, creating intercultural, interdisciplinary choreography performed at theatrical venues and alternative sites throughout the United States and Asia.

Always straddling cultural worlds and deeply engaged with feminist issues, Cynthia's choreography excavates the political layers, syncretism, and gendered complexities in her dance-forms' histories to understand the implications for her own body. Her strategies for dealing with gender and sexuality include working with parody and cultural stereotype, choreographing imagined dialogues with subaltern historical figures, reconfiguring a tradition of performing eroticism for a female gaze, and autobiographical performance. Her choreographic inquiries are supported by her scholarly writing on gender and sexuality in relation to South Asian dance in postcolonial, culturally hybrid, and diasporic contexts.

Cynthia creates performance work through intimate collaborations with artists of diverse backgrounds, rigorously integrating live music, text, and multimedia into her work. She is a member of the Post Natyam Collective, a web-based coalition of women artists dedicated to critical and creative approaches to South Asian dance; her other artistic collaborators include choreographers Sheetal Gandhi (dance-theater), Anusha Kedhar (Bharatanatyam), Ery Mefri (West Sumatran); musicians David Cutler (jazz/new music), Paul Livingstone (Ragajazz), Lenny Seidman (world music), Loren Nerell (electronic/Indonesian); and visual artists YaYa Chou (sculptural installation) and Carole Kim (multimedia performance).

Cynthia was the recipient of a 2002-3 Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, a 2006 Asia Pacific Performing Arts Exchange Fellowship, a 2008 Swarthmore Project Residency, a 2010 Taipei Artist Village Residency, and a 2010 Durfee ARC Grant. Her most influential teachers and mentors include Simone Forti, Eiko & Koma, Judy Mitoma, Bandana Sen, Kumudini Lakhia, Anjani Ambegaokar, and the contact improvisation community. Cynthia holds an MFA in choreography from UCLA.

Naomi Srikandi (Indonesia) was born in Yogyakarta in September 1975. Her directorial debut *Shakuntala*, adapted from a character in Ayu Utami's novels *Saman and Larung* – the first version was performed at Lembaga Indonesia Perancis Yogyakarta (2007); and the second version was performed in Festival Salihara at Teater Salihara Jakarta (2008) – has received critical acclaim that convinced the jury of EWA (Empowering Women Artists) 2010, a Kelola Foundation's program for selected Indonesian women artists supported by HIVOS, The Ford Foundation and Biyan. The EWA program granted her two years exclusive supports for her theatre project *Medea Media* (2010), a loose

adaptation of Euripides' *Medea* and Heiner Muller's *medeamaterial* and her research on media reactions on actual murder cases by violated women in Indonesia. Her most recent work is a horror project *Goyang Penasaran* (2011), adapted from Intan Paramaditha's prose trying to build the discourse of sexual politics and religion in Indonesia.

As an actor Naomi started at very young age and was been awarded Best Actress at the 1993 Yogyakarta High School Theatre Festival. She has played in numerous Teater Garasi productions presented in Indonesia, Singapore, Germany and Japan. Naomi has involved in international collaborations in Japan, the Netherlands, and Indonesia. Naomi also writes fiction, is a member of Indonesian Playwrights Forum, and is a teacher/speaker and facilitator working on trainings and workshops with applied theater.

Donna Miranda (Philippines) is a choreographer-critic living and working in the Philippines. She studied Anthropology at the University of the Philippines and received specialized training in contemporary dance in Manila and Europe, participating in several exchange programs, intercultural dialogue and multimedia collaborative projects in parts of Asia and Europe. In 2000, she co-founded the multidisciplinary art space organization Green Papaya Art Projects, facilitating experimental platform for young and emerging contemporary dance artists in Manila. In 2007 she received the Jury Prize Award at the Yokohama Dance Collection-R Solo x Duo Competition for her solo "Beneath Polka-dotted Skies" and was nominated for the Rolex Mentor Protégé Arts Initiative the same year. At the moment she is producing works that delimit the notion of the choreographic through critical engagements with the institutions of dance and the body. She makes a living as a freelance writer-editor for development organizations in the field of public health and occasionally writes critical text in Philippine dance and visual arts.

Joavien Ng (Singapore) was born in 1973. She began her choreographing and performing career in 1997 after graduating from LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. Her works have been presented at various Singapore and international organisations such as TheatreWorks (Singapore), Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay (Singapore), Singapore Arts Festival, Kampnagel (Hamburg), Contemporary Dance Fort Worth (USA), Little Asia Dance Exchange Network, Alcantara (Portugal) and Singapore Art Museum.

Joavien's artistic interest revolves around the construction of identity. Her most recent work, *a LIFE performance* (Esplanade, 2012), mischievously attempts to disrupt and alter the constructions of meanings, creating bodies that move between recognisable familiarity and disconnected awkwardness. *The Diary of Alice* (2011) in collaboration with Paloma Calle (Spain), investigated the fascinating universe of identities — fact, fiction or otherwise — that the name "Alice" holds. In 2011, Joavien was appointed Associate Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, where she has presented *The Diary of Alice* and initiated a choreographic lab, *The Screw of Thought*.

Her other works include *Body Swap* (Singapore Arts Festival, Kampnagel- Hamburg 2009), *LAB* (Esplanade, 2008) and *Body Inquire* (Singapore Arts Festival 2008).

Doris Uhlich (Austria) was born in Upper Austria in 1977. She earned her diploma in Paedagogy for Contemporary Dance at the Conservatory of Vienna. A founding member of theatercombinat, with whom she worked from 2002 to 2009, she has been developing her own projects since 2006. As a dancer who does not fit to the current image of a thin and highly trained body, she questions conventional ideas and clichés on the feminine dancing body in productions like *Spitze* and *mehr als genug*. In 2008 Doris Uhlich was mentioned as Remarkable Emerging Choreographer in the Yearbook of Ballettanz 2008 and won the dance prize of the Ministry of Education, Art and Culture (bm:ukk) for *Spitze* in 2008.

Mia Haugland Habib (Israel/Norway), holds a B.A. degree from the Choreography Course and a one-year study in Dance Pedagogy at the former State College of Ballet and Dance in Oslo, 1999-2003. She has choreographed, danced and researched in several European countries as well as in Brazil, Madagascar among others. Gendered Identity, religious and cultural convergence, and the individual in relation to oppressive structures and regimes are recurring themes in her work. Habib sees the journey as an integral part of her work and have several times visited areas of conflict as part of the research to upcoming productions.

Geumhyung Jeong (Korea) is a rising Korean artist who is re-negotiating the relationship between the human body and the things that surround it. She works with ordinary objects bringing them to uncanny life in a highly charged and disturbing interaction with her own body. Jeong has transformed her training as a dancer and choreographer into a unique and riveting performance practice. She fuses puppetry, dance and stagecraft to create a captivating choreography of mind and body. Her works include *Oil Pressure Vibrator* (2009). Jeong graduated from Hoseo University with a B.A in acting in 2003, and from Korean National University of Arts with a masters in dance performance in 2006.

Un Yamada (Japan) is a dancer and choreographer who founded Co. Yamada Un in 2002, and has performed in 27 cities in Japan and 20 cities in 12 other countries. With her physicality that is both joyous and pathetic, and her witty conceptions, she has been working on multifaceted projects including collaborations with musicians and choreography for theatre and opera, drawing not only dancers' and choreographers' but also mathematicians' and physicists' attention. <http://yamadaun.jp/>

Cuqui Jerez (Spain) was born in 1973 in Madrid. She lives and works in Madrid and Berlin. She studied dance in Madrid and New York. In 1990 she graduated in classical ballet at Real Conservatorio de Música y Danza of Madrid. Since 1990 she has been working as a dancer and performer in several companies, films and productions. She created the following pieces: *Me encontraré bien enseñada solo me falta la respiración*

(1995), *Dígase en tono mandril* (1996), *Hiding Inches* (1999), *A space odyssey* (2001) (2001), *The Real Fiction* (2005); *The Rehearsal* (2007) as part of the project *The Neverstarting Story* in collaboration with Maria Jerez, Cristina Blanco and Amaia Urrea; *The Croquis Reloaded* (2009); *The Nowness Mystery* (2011) and *Crocodiles and Alligators* (2012).

She works in the creation of a choreographic language through the body in relationship with the space, time and objects; the production of signs and meaning through choreography; the transformation of meaning through repetition; the manipulation of the space and time references; the expectation and experience of the audience in a theatrical context; the memory and the limits of representation.

Rita Natálio (Portugal) was born in Lisbon in 1983. She studied History at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Choreography at Université Paris VIII, for which she received a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. As a performer she studied at Forum Dança, completing the Choreographic Research Program in 2006 (Lisbon).

She is primarily active in the fields of dramaturgy and accompaniment of artistic and research projects. She has collaborated with João Fiadeiro, Vera Mantero, Cláudia Dias, Guilherme Garrido, Pieter Ampe, António Pedro Lopes, Marianne Baillot, and João Lima. Since 2008, she has been developing her own work. With the video-performance artist Ivo Serra she co-created *Screen* for the Temps d'Images Festival in Lisbon and the short-film *Looking back into the future* (Honorable Mention at FICAP Portugal 2008). She also directs an improvisation project called *Nothing of what we have said so far had to do with me*, which premiered at Fundação de Serralves in Porto and is developing the project *I don't understand and I am afraid of understanding, the world scares me with its planets and cockroaches*. She recently directed and wrote the group piece *You can't see me but it's a portrait*.

Rita has also worked at RE.AL, an organization created by João Fiadeiro, coordinating and assisting training/research projects around Real Time Composition, and has taught in the Choreographic Creation and Dance Research Training Program at Forum Dança in Lisbon. She collaborates in documentation projects connected with performing arts. Rita Natálio is part of Sweet and Tender Collaborations, an international network and platform of artists (www.sweetandtender.org).

Mislina Mustaffa (Malaysia), actor and activist, has been shedding tears, sweat, and blood representing all sorts of women characters with different histories and socio-economic backgrounds in her 16 years of performing on stages and screens. She has appeared in, among others: (films) *Karaoke* (for which she was nominated for Best Actress at the 23rd Malaysia Film Festival 2010), *Talentine*, *Mukhsin*, *Anak Halal*, *Bernafas Dalam Lumpur*, *Kurus*, *Bukak Api*; (theatres) *Look Back in Anger*, *Till Death Do Us Part*, *Off Centre*, and *Waiting For Godot*. Her roles have showed her that the body alone is not enough to define her as a woman. A woman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in this becoming that her possibilities should be defined. In

raising the question of her capabilities, she should not be reduced to what she has been or to what she is today. This nature of transcendent action means that no one is able to close the book till the time comes for it to close by itself.

She is currently embarking on the self-funded project 'Homeless by Choice', a journey that questions the importance of 'marriage & home', the institution of Malay/Asian women and womanhood around the world. For this project, she is basically homeless with only a small knapsack of very basic needs to last for a year. See <http://mislinamustaffa.wordpress.com>.

RESEARCHER / OBSERVER

Margarita Tsomou (Greece/ Germany) is a writer, performance artist and researcher. Born in 1977 she is part of a new generation of feminist activist and writers that critical questions the feminist heritage of the 1968 generation. She studied Applied Culture Studies at University Lueneburg and classical dance at John-Cranko-Schule Stuttgart and Maja-Sofou-Dance School in Athens. She is co-funder of the magazine *Missy*, a feminist magazine for young women, and radio journalist for Westdeutschen Rundfunk (WDR). She also works as a performance artist and curator, including on the exhibition 'Genderpop' and a festival on gender in Athens.

PRODUCERS

Anna Wagner (Germany), a Berlin based dance dramaturg and producer, studied Theater Studies in Berlin and Paris. Since 2007 she has been assistant curator and production manager at Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin). Working for international festivals like „Tanz im August“ and choreographers and dance companies like Public Movement and Jeremy Wade, Anna is experienced in leading complex projects.

She has started exploring Asian performing arts and transcultural encounters during her studies. Her master thesis proposes a critical reading of choreographies by Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Akram Khan using postcolonial and gender theories. Driven by the wish to widen her knowledge about artistic practices in Asia, Anna has been working as dramaturgical advisor and production manager for choreographers like Hiroaki Umeda and Jecko Siompo. She curated the festival „Leaving the Comfort Zone“ (Asian-Pacific-Weeks 2011), part of which is Matchpoint, a creative encounter between choreographers from Asia, Europe and the Pacific.

Various conversations and encounters in Asia and Europe seeded Anna's wish to deeper explore the heritage of the 70's feminist movement in today's performing arts and to initiate an international network for female choreographers and art workers.

Bilqis Hijjas (Malaysia) directs the dance program at Rimbun Dahan, and is president of MyDance Alliance, the society supporting dance in Malaysia. She lectures in dance history at University of Malaya, produces contemporary dance works, and was artistic director of MyDance Festival 2011.

Bilqis received her Bachelors from Harvard University in Social Studies with a focus on developing nations, and produced an honours thesis dealing with socially constructed gender roles for Malaysian women. In 2011, she participated in the Atelier for Young Festival Producers, the genesis of International Festival Circle, a network for festival producers in Asia and Europe. She also attended the Case Studies #1: Performing Arts Festivals in Asia meeting/presentation in Kobe, Japan. She previously worked for the International Women's Development Agency in Melbourne, Australia, and holds a Masters degree in applied anthropology and participatory development.

Fumi Yokobori (Japan) works at NPO Dance Box in Kobe. Dance Box is one of the leading theaters for contemporary dance in the Kansai area. It produces and features local choreographers and performance collectives that have gain an international reputation, like Un Yamada and contact Gonzo as well as international collaborations and guest performances. It hosts among others annually the Asia Contemporary Dance Festival that presents artists like Jecko Siompo and Pichet Klunchun. With this festival Dance Box stimulates the artistic exchange in Asia. Beside of that it initiates various community based projects and integrates groups that are normally put at the social margin like physically challenged dancers. Dance Box offers also a class programme addressing dance professionals and amateurs.

Fumi Yokobori graduated from the Indonesia Department of Tenri University in 1999, when she joined NPO Dance box. She received a grant from Asia Cultural Council under the Rockefeller Foundation to research the dance communities in Asia and New York. Her inspiration comes from the late playwright Koharu Kisaragi, who produced the Asian Women Theater Network, and Fumi hopes to continue building networks of presenters and performers, specifically women, across Asia.