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### A Flower of Butoh

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## A FLOWER OF BUTOH

## My daily dance with Ohno Kazuo (1995–2012)

*Maureen Momo Freehill***Budding**

Meeting the vital embodied presence of Ohno Kazuo for the first time struck me like a bolt of lightning, and I had no choice but to surrender that November night in 1995. Our small butoh company of four, led by Joan Laage, had just travelled from Seattle to Tokyo. I was sweaty and breathless as we reached the doorway of Ohno Kazuo Dance Studio in Kamihoshikawa, Japan. Apart from the airport immigration staff, the first Japanese person I met face to face was Ohno Kazuo, and it was love at first sight. His workshop that night amazed me and later that week, when I attended his live performance of “My Mother,” I wept in awe throughout, without knowing why.

After that initial meeting with Ohno Kazuo (also referred to as *Sensei*), everything about my life and career path came into question. My heart and soul cried out, “You must stay to live and study with this newfound beloved master,” while my logical mind replied, “What?!!” This was my first ever trip overseas and I had a reservation to return in 3 weeks, zero experience with Japanese language or culture, no financial resources, lodging, or job. Still, I ended up staying a year and a half. The loneliness and self-absorption that I felt being foreign to the Japanese culture, language, and landscape, along with the intense soul searching inherent in practicing butoh, became essential material for my dance. Sensei lived and expounded the value of non-separation between one’s dance and day-to-day life, as well as the need to extract beauty from the most dark and painful aspects of body and soul. I was a complete outsider who longed to emulate his mastery and experience this profound process myself. Since the Ohnos’ family life was inseparable from their butoh pedagogy, the only way to create and teach in the Ohno butoh lineage was to fully immerse in the ordinary *nichijo seikatsu* 日常生活 (daily life activity) of this extra-ordinary family.<sup>1</sup>

Sensei’s classes were open to all irrespective of national origin, language, performance experience, or physical capacity. Even if people could not pay, everyone was welcome to join and regularly invited to dine at the Ohno family dinner table.<sup>2</sup> Sensei was an inventor who would enter about 30 minutes before class with his leather bag packed full of loose papers covered with magic marker scripts, notes, arrows, and lines that he’d been poring over that day in his bedroom. I would also arrive early to clean the studio floor around him with rags as he’d shuffle through the pile, gazing and contemplating. At 8 p.m. we’d circle around, transfixed as he transmitted a 30 to 60 minute non-stop cascade of verbal information, sometimes punctuated with his dancing for us, about what was currently “up” in his soul process, his daily life, imagination, dreams,

and passions (Ohno 2004).<sup>3</sup> Common images were nature-based, like flowers, salmon, and bears. Family members, ghosts, or artwork also inspired him along with special places he had visited. Sensei would ask his beloved manager Toshio Mizohata to play some music based on its ability to inspire memory and emotion (often Western classical or popular music chosen from piles of well worn CDs and cassettes), and call out to us, “Now dance freely!” or “Freestyle!”

Every day and season with Sensei brought fresh teachings as his intimately personal images would ignite deeply moving explorations for us as well. These included a crazy old woman and a willow tree in a storm (inspired by paintings of Edo-period artist Soga Shohaku); memories of bears and salmon of Kamchatka; his mother dying like a flounder on the bottom of the sea; his sister being killed by a train while his mother served him dinner on a tiny table; seeing his war comrades buried at sea among the jellyfish; walking hand in hand with his father over a bridge, and so on. He never asked us to dance like he did physically, instead he reminded us how useless set techniques or thoughts are when dancing *butoh*. Ohno-sensei wrote,

It became clear to me once I started giving gymnastics instruction and rhythm gymnastics at school, to which I added my own take on dance, that if I was to teach anything, it was ultimately how to discover oneself. If dance is an art form, then art is not something that can be taught.

*Ohno 2010, 146–147*

After witnessing a segment of our unstructured movement exploration, he'd reflect on what he saw with poetic verbal or physical responses. It was profound wisdom we could apply to both dance and life. These cycles of free movement and coaching would continue for a couple hours. I usually left either in a state of ecstasy or deeply disturbed and feeling incapacitated to fulfill his ambiguous and ephemeral promptings. There were often witnesses at Ohno-sensei's classes not physically participating, so each class resembled a mini-recital and would often close with him dancing for us again at the end, followed by a collective bow and teatime.

I was intimidated by the lack of explicit direction in Sensei's workshops. I'd attended many years of both Western and Asian technique classes for dance and theater where I was taught to perform with technical perfection. My mind would anxiously scroll through its automatic insecurities: What was I supposed to be doing? Was what I was doing good, bad, wrong, right? Was I “getting it”? Why didn't he give me any direct feedback? Sensei often said, “You must find your own dance by yourself. In dance, the soul always moves first and your body follows.” New students, impressed by his *avant-garde* presence, often mistakenly tried to imitate his physical “style,” ending up as far as one could be from what he taught. In class, he would never dictate a technique or choreograph a specific movement sequence, and this invitation to be freely creative was not easy for us. A dance that is authentically one's own must be discovered through tireless searching of body and soul to discover each step, and can take a lifetime. In fact, his “method” did closely resemble the creation of the universe, arising from a mysterious source and developing spontaneously in accordance with nature.

Gradually over months of uncomfortable self-inquiry, spontaneous waves of catharsis began to course through my body, mind, and emotions. In the safe space Sensei created for our introspective nourishment, I had ample time to struggle with my inner and outer demons and shadow aspects. The combination of daily synchronistic events, deep personal and transpersonal insights, and the sheer delight I felt every time I attended class, began to quell my confusion and doubt. Each time I witnessed one of Ohno-sensei's performances, I'd still find myself in tears. I'd never cried at any other dance performances and could never explain just why I was weeping. It is the kind of mysterious experience one always hopes for, and yet so rarely has in the theater. Yoshito

regularly reminded us that it would take at least seven years of training before one began to “get it,” so I committed myself to go for that. I was drawn into a dreamlike world of my body sensation and imagination as my prior identity began to dissolve into a liminal “space in between.” As I contemplated what Sensei shared about his own voyages in between dichotomies of the inner world of imagination and outer aspects of day-to-day life, private and public identities, female and male aspects, cycles of life and death, my soul began to gradually reveal itself on a journey through my flesh.

### **Blossoming**

Sensei’s creative process had always featured cycles of overcoming suffering and deep sadness alongside celebrating the spiritual blessings of enduring a human life. He loved the Christ story and shared it often as it exemplified his own philosophy about how our worst pains can “force” our bodies and souls to blossom into a brilliant dance of beauty, love, and light. While many dance for reasons of aesthetic beauty, skillful execution, or physical fitness, Ohno-sensei has a much loftier purpose. He danced mainly because he wanted to embody the creation of the universe. No simple task, or maybe it is very simple. Ohno-sensei believed that within the cells of every human being lies the same material and information as in all of creation. Thus, dance is his way to explore life’s mysteries. Where did we come from? What is love? What lies between life and death? Who am I? In his dance, and life, he aspired to always be in a state of inquiry. His preparation for performance was a detailed process of deciding on costume, setting, image, music, lights, etc. Still, he insisted he never knew just what he would do each time he performed. In this way his dance, although he often repeated the same themes and stories, was always fresh and full of surprises.

All this freeform creativity and embodiment of universal creation could initially appear quite insane. On one occasion, Sensei painted his full body white, teased his shoulder length hair into an afro and wrapped himself in only an obie (the wide belt used to tie a kimono). With a huge bow at his waist and his legs and chest bare, he appeared to be an over-sized, leather skinned babe in golden diapers. In another piece, he donned a formal black suit and romped to his current favorite Elvis Presley tune. Next, we’d see him in an exquisite vintage lace wedding gown with a train that fanned across the entire stage. In his unique attempt to embody universal creation, he also happened upon a way to synthesize some of the greatest paradoxes of art and life. His presence was at once formal and irreverent, young and old, male and female, comical and tragic. Sensei was a living example of how butoh artists can embrace and include the full spectrum of our human condition while maintaining the integrity of an individual soul on a mysterious voyage through this embodied life. The exquisite journey of each soul was honored as a flower-like gift worthy to offer to our greater human family through performances. And, Sensei and Yoshito taught us to celebrate and reveal all three days of this flower’s journey: its bud full of possibility, its lavish blossom, as well as its passing on into death.

Working with his hands was an essential part of Sensei’s creative process, especially with “mundane” tasks, such as cleaning, maintenance, gardening, and cooking, usually in the service of others. The kitchen was a favorite creative space for both Sensei and Yoshito, and they were as talented there as on stage. Some of my most memorable experiences with the Ohnos took place when I was invited to join them at their great family table. Ohno-sensei sat across from me, while Yoshito danced graciously between stove, sink, and fridge, and Yoshito’s wife Etsuko presided at the head of table. A worldly guest like a dancer from Pina Bausch company, or butoh artist Ashikawa Yoko, or academic Sondra Fraleigh could be on one side of me, with a neighborhood friend or grandchild on my other. The magic would ensue as a gift of some rare culinary delicacy

to sample with eyes, nose, mouth was delivered by hand or mail from Ohno's many admirers and friends. All senses expanded and my attention sharpened with this daily feast of novelty and multi-cultural exchange. It was an enthralling performance and complex dance of serving both Japanese and worldwide cuisine as I basked in the engaging company and lingered as long as possible. As the wine and beer flowed freely, so did Yoshito's engaging stories and Etsuko's intense and insightful critiques of recent rehearsals and performances she'd attended. I was in awe of the generosity and inclusivity extended to me while I also felt entirely inadequate and ashamed about my lack of skill (with Japanese language, housekeeping, cooking, etiquette, aesthetics, butoh dance, etc.). I longed to participate and be of service. And since the cat begged to be fed, the dishes to be washed, the garden to be weeded, the floor and toilets to be cleaned, I could usually manage those tasks, even if my efforts were awkward or caused more interference than assistance.

After each workshop we would bring out tea, nibbles, and often more wine and beer. We'd spend an hour chatting about workshop content and recent events or listen to more of Yoshito's compelling stories about Ohno-sensei, Hijikata, and other historic aspects of butoh. This was such a valued part of butoh education for me that I'd often miss the last train. Thus began a practice of sleeping over at various other student's homes where I immersed in the real-life intimacy and *ura* (private face) of many Japanese six tatami mat apartments and tiny family homes.

During the eight years that I attended workshops, I had a wide range of living situations, from home stays with Japanese families, to my own little house in the mountains, to an apartment just down the road from the studio. For the first couple years of this regimen, I commuted 4 hours round trip, not returning home until 1 a.m. at least 3 times-a-week. Then, I'd head out early the next morning to teach English to my daily audience of 500 junior high students in the tiny town near Mt Fuji called Yamakita. I was spending over \$200 and 18 hours or more a week on commuting and workshops.

I was the only non-Japanese person living in Yamakita, and apart from the remedial English of a few Japanese teachers I worked with, my loneliness inspired me to learn the language as quickly as I could. As my Japanese improved, so did my understanding of Sensei's workshops. I was invited to join local Japanese groups to practice such cultural traditions as tea ceremony, *taiko* drumming, dance (*nihon buyo*), theater (*noh*, *kabuki*), and kimono wearing. I attended pilgrimage walks with Buddhist monks and *Shinto* shamanic ceremonies with local mountain *Yamabushi* who still honored nature-based spiritual rituals, all of which helped me become more familiar with my beloved teacher and his Japanese art of butoh.

My happiest times in Japan with the Ohnos blossomed after years of commuting. At last, I established a stable *nichijo seikatsu* that perfectly suited my needs. I lived within walking distance of the Ohnos' home and could participate in simple day-to-day activities without hours in transit. An essential foundation of Sensei's pedagogy was this: "Please begin each workshop by telling yourself that dance isn't something remote from your day-to-day lives; let that be your starting point" (Ohno 2004, 298). A favorite typical day was waking up around 9 a.m. in my 12-tatami mat apartment with reading and journal writing, changing my sleeping room into a living/dining room and ritually cleaning the tatami mats and entire tiny house with a rag to remove every speck of dust. This clearing meditation served to empty my mind and integrate lessons from the prior night's workshop. Then, a brunch of rice, egg, natto, and salad, a 30-minute walk to the studio on a tiny back road, a couple hours of weeding and planting in the Ohnos' garden, one to two hours of personal butoh practice in the studio, an hour of English tutoring for Sensei's great grandson, and an hour of dinner with the family. Before living with the Ohnos, routine activities like these seemed menial or unimportant, now they were rich with mindfulness. The day closed with our two-hour workshop and hour of post-workshop conversation, then a walk home around midnight. I savored the precious simplicity and intimacy of this daily ritual, inspired by

the Ohnos' own routines, and found it fulfilled my body, mind, and soul. With only a few essential possessions, appointments, and relationships to attend to, no internet connection, and such a small space to care for, most of my moments were entirely focused on the embodied present.

Occasionally, a small group of regular students would spend a couple days with the Ohnos' manager remodeling the studio into a venue and preparing refreshments for Sensei's most intimate live performances and family gatherings. After a special event, long low tables would fill the studio and all would gather for a feast followed by a stream of spontaneous performances from students, guests, Yoshito, Ohno-sensei . . . anyone who felt called to offer something. Some of the most stunning butoh I ever saw was at intimate events like these. In 1997, when Sensei's beloved wife Chie passed, the entire studio was filled from end to end and floor to ceiling with flowers surrounding her delicate body lying in repose. At one point, as guests filed through paying our respects, Sensei spontaneously picked up some flowers and broke into an unforgettably vital dance next to her as the entire room began tenderly sobbing.

The following year, we hosted Pina Bausch and her company as they were presenting a new work in Tokyo. Pina and her dancers were in love with Ohno-sensei and Yoshito as much as we were. So this became a pivotal time for many of us to exchange dance, philosophy, and passions, as well as recognize the vast influence that our teachers had globally. Before that, it had been an intimate and personal journey, and at this point I began to understand how this butoh path could become a lifelong vocation and professional and global movement that could transform the world's ways of dancing and making performance forever.

That same year (1998), I began to accompany (and sometimes perform with) the Ohnos on their tours in Japan, then overseas. As I'd observed Sensei's performances, I saw revelations and reflections of a day-to-day inquiry into the most meaningful aspects of life and death, imagination, relationships, personal and collective history, ancestry and soul. While I was participating daily in the Ohnos' life and community, many small performances would arise with very short



Figure 45.1 Maureen Momo Freehill with Ohno Kazuo on tour in Venice. Courtesy of the author.

notice. I would get a phone call in the morning inviting me to come over and get a costume or figure out logistics. These performances were an extension of an ongoing daily practice of body and soul searching and development of our *butoh*. Every few months, a major performance would happen. The theme for a performance would become the theme of our classes during the months leading up to an event, serving somewhat like rehearsals. Those of us who were deeply involved in the Ohnos' day-to-day life would be invited to join the event as staff or performers. Since we usually never knew till opening day who would dance on stage, we practiced as if we would perform. As much as I longed to be chosen, I had to trust Ohno-sensei's teachings and Yoshito's directorial sense about who would be most appropriate for any given situation.

In October 1999, I joined the Ohnos on tour to the Venice Bienalle, and then to New York City for Sensei's overseas finale that December. Traveling with him had become quite challenging; at 93 he still enthusiastically took to performing onstage, while offstage he needed continuous care and support to dress, eat, and walk. Yoshito eventually assumed the bulk of teaching as Sensei attended and looked on as a witness and sometimes offered his dance seated or lying on the floor.

I continued to immerse myself in the Japanese culture that strongly delineated between outside (*omote*) and inside (*ura*). So, this type of ongoing adoption into the Ohnos' Japanese *ura* (private face) was a rare and challenging privilege. Sensei reveled in public exposure of his inner face through his art. When photographers or interviewers would come, he would light up and allow them full access to his soul. No subject or story seemed taboo, and he taught us to bare our deepest "inside face" of the soul as well. I allowed my identity to become fluid, like an ever-shifting alchemy of opposites for my dancing body to respond to. Focusing on my dream-like inner world helped fuel my creative process. However, I was no master yet, and sometimes I lost track of my personal boundaries and cultural foundation, literally forgetting I wasn't Japanese. Day-to-day existence became surreal. Upon returning to the United States for visits, people would regularly ask if I was Japanese. I'd find myself confused about who I was or where I belonged and was often overwhelmed when immersed in large groups of Americans. I was trying to follow Sensei's important lesson of "Not thinking, only soul," yet sometimes it felt like I was losing my mind. There was a need to re-establish my central axis and core stability. I needed to learn to embrace the shadows of my body and soul, and trust in my own brilliance and mythos. Yet this would take far longer to mature.

### Passing on

As painful and difficult as the dying portion of a life-cycle may be, Sensei always insisted on celebrating all three days of a flower, knowing that death was in fact a blessed part of nature and a new beginning. However, when you are living it, it can be excruciating.

A most joyous highlight of my life with the Ohnos was my traditional Japanese wedding and *butoh* dance reception. My new husband was a pivotal member of the Ohnos' creative team as assistant director and sound operator for performances. At our wedding in April 2000, Ohno-sensei, Yoshito and his wife Etsuko, their children, my mother, and many of our beloved *butoh* dancer friends gathered to celebrate and perform. This deepened our sense of family and promised a life of *butoh* yet to come. It also ushered us into 10 years of profound pain and challenge when, in November 2000, Sensei had a serious fall that left him requiring round-the-clock care. One month later, my husband left our marriage and soon broke communications with the Ohno family for an extended period.

This loss and my grief about the palpable unravelling of all aspects of family identity we'd grown to love, was so intense that I seriously contemplated suicide. My husband's leaving put particular stress on Yoshito, who'd depended upon him like a son. I was deeply torn: Should I stay?



Figure 45.2 Maureen Momo Freehill with Ohno Kazuo on her wedding day. Courtesy of the author.

How could I ground myself? Who was my family? With Toshio's wife, my dear friend Mina, to support me, I began to establish my boundaries and core stability again by standing firm that I would remain in my Japanese home, close to my teachers and "family." Sensei's health and mental condition continued to deteriorate further with Alzheimer's. Months after my husband left, I bent down to tie Sensei's shoe since he could no longer reach his feet. He whispered to me in plain English, "He took the flower and left." This was the first time I'd ever heard him speak a full English sentence to me. I silently broke into tears knowing how deeply we all were grieving while at the same time realizing that we had no choice but to dance through this gateway of death.

The family garden had been Sensei's realm for years, and when he was no longer able to tend it, I volunteered as a way to contribute and re-establish connection after the divorce. Many ideas for butoh pieces came while I worked there, including "The Garden Path: Weeding in Process" (2001), the final of three original full-length butoh performances I presented at theaters in Tokyo. The rich and intimate experiences I had on that narrow path between the Ohnos' studio and house taught me the value of balancing butoh dance philosophy and practice with simple task-based physicality. The Ohno butoh process could be so ephemeral and dreamlike. So, this work beyond the studio and stage provided me integrative self-contemplation that naturally comes with being outdoors, close to the earth, and using my hands for a creative task. During this time of grieving, the simple sense of accomplishment when seeing tangible results was healing and grounding. When interpersonal issues brought anxiety or confusion, I'd settle into weeding the garden path for discernment and integration.

In June 2001, I began to reorient my life back to my home country and family in the states. I kept my Japanese apartment, with the intention that it would be available to me and others for shorter visits. It was heartbreaking to leave, yet I trusted what Sensei had always told us, that death came hand in hand with a new beginning.

A couple years later, I recognized that the soul/body fluidity and surreal connection between daily life and butoh that I'd established so strongly in Japan was fading. In order to maintain my butoh artistry in Sensei's lineage, I knew I needed to re-commit to a daily practice. Yet I lacked the context of day-to-day support I'd enjoyed with the Ohno studio family. I recalled a time when, in his late fifties, Sensei became "lost" about his dance performances. He stopped performing for 10



years and began experimenting with film (Ohno 2004, 144). I sensed how film gave a performer the opportunity to self-reflect and explore in ways that live contexts could not.

First, I arranged to travel solo across the country with a video camera, back to where I'd grown up in Connecticut. I visited locations with strong body memories for me, especially the most traumatic ones. This became a profoundly healing soul retrieval of sorts, wherein specific landscapes would trigger me back in time and while the film was rolling, I would dance my way home to the present and later witness the video to help integrate the process. Next, I returned to Japan and made a short film called *A Question of Family*<sup>4</sup> about the Ohnos' intimacy between dance and family life. It features footage of Toshio and Mina's infant son juxtaposed with Sensei performing in his wheelchair and a tender dance I shared with Sensei and his assistant Kato-san while he was bedridden after his fall.

The years I spent working, living, and performing day to day with Sensei and his family are undoubtedly the most treasured and influential of my life. Simply said, in Sensei's presence, I fell in love, I woke up, I transformed, I was moved. My work with Ohno Kazuo and Yoshito now imbues all aspects of my teaching, performance, and daily life. In January 2009, to honor the 50th anniversary of butoh and further establish the integration between my daily life and butoh, I committed to make and film a butoh dance every day for a year. I devised a way to be accountable by carrying the camera everywhere and posting these films online as evidence.<sup>5</sup> Each day, I waited for a particularly moving moment; when it came, I'd "stop, drop and dance butoh" right then and there: in a grocery store, my bedroom, a mountain stream, wherever. At the time, I had no clear understanding for how I maintained my passion for this odd undertaking that often took 5–8 hours each day. Now, I realize it was, in the lineage of Ohno-sensei, a way of honoring my own *nichijo seikatsu* and revealing my private face to my greater human family and, more importantly, to myself.

Sensei's passing felt imminent, so I returned for final visits to Japan in both June and October 2009. I carried my camera as usual when I entered the Ohnos' living room to see Sensei lying there in a hospital bed on his 103rd birthday. The room felt as full of his stunningly inspiring presence as it had been that first night I'd met him 14 years before. But this time his face and body were skeleton-like, his breath was a labored moan through his toothless gaping mouth, as a tube fed some creamy white liquid through his nostrils. Without a doubt, this was that day's most moving moment. A friend held the camera as I began to dance. I'd been taught by Sensei that dying is a new beginning, that butoh is about day-to-day life wherein all aspects of our private face and soul's pain are revealed through dance. However, for Etsuko this face was too private to be revealed, and when she heard what I'd done, she sent me out of the house. I felt so sorry for upsetting her and yet deeply moved by that last dance I shared with Sensei, which I considered so beautiful. I posted the video as usual that day, but unlike most other days, this one drew attention. So, to honor her feelings, I removed it.

My final "Year of Butoh" Daily Dance happened the day Ohno Kazuo died. After completing the first year of postings, the practice had become such a fulfilling and integral part of my life that I'd decided to continue for a second "Year of Butoh" in 2010. This time, I included a daily written blog to accompany each dance.<sup>6</sup> On Memorial Day, I was invited by my local Veteran's Resource Center to offer a butoh piece as part of their annual presentation. The center's director had seen my butoh and was so taken by hearing of how Ohno Kazuo's experience as a war veteran had influenced his life and artistry, she wished to feature that in their program. Just as I was completing my dance, I felt a sudden energetic "wind" from behind me. It hit me with such a force that it blasted me to leap off the stage and race up the aisle of the large auditorium and out of the building. Later that day, I learned that Sensei had just died in Japan and felt as if part of his spirit had taken wings through my body.<sup>7</sup>

The last two times I met Yoshito and Etsuko Ohno were in spring of 2009 and 2012 when they came to the Pacific Northwest to perform and teach at the Vancouver International Dance Festival.<sup>8</sup> Our connection remained strong, yet our interactions were strained and polite during the 2009 visit. I was so relieved to see the honest warmth and happiness on their faces when we met again in 2012. It had been two years since Sensei's death and the intensely stressful years when he needed home care 24/7. This time they invited me to support them in their master class and dine with them that evening. For many years, it had been in my heart to make one essential inquiry of my dear Yoshito-sensei. There are very few on earth who focus exclusively on transmitting the essential stream of the Ohnos' *butoh* pedagogy and philosophy. I had recently completed my MFA thesis on this subject at the University of Hawaii and was dedicated to this path for the rest of my life. I sensed this was the time to humbly request Yoshito's blessing for me to continue to perform and teach in the Ohnos' lineage. To my delight he smiled widely and replied with a bow, *Yoroshiko onegaishimasu* (Please, do me that favor.). With my heart budding with fresh joy and possibility, I responded with a bow, *Hai, wakarimashita* (Yes, I understand). This simple exchange provided the gateway and fertile ground to cultivate my primary vocation of mentoring those who feel called to train, offer performances, and live in a way that fosters the eternal flowering of the Ohnos' exquisite lineage of *butoh*. My teaching has evolved into a unique synthesis of Ohno Kazuo and Yoshito's approaches, interwoven with my passion for dance in the natural landscape. In 2011, with the help of family and friends, we built a large nature-based movement arts studio in the forest lands adjacent to my home. So, thanks to the Ohnos, I could open this sanctuary and my home to all to dance freely with us at Butopia<sup>9</sup> on Whidbey Island in Washington State, United States.

In closing, I offer this brief quote from Ohno-sensei's vast wisdom:

The sufferings of others have, without our ever fully realizing it, been engraved in us . . . We survived only because others died in our place. We owe our existence to the sacrifices made on our behalf. Don't rest on your laurels; it is utter nonsense to believe that you are life's be-all and end-all. Each and every one of us has gradually evolved through the good grace of the dead: yes, each and every one of you, novelists, dancers, whatever you are; you're alive thanks to the sacrifices others made on your behalf.

*Ohno 2004, 299*

Yes, dear Ohno-sensei, thank you, I love you, I am.

## Notes

- 1 It is often said *butoh* arose out of various horrors of post-World War II in Japan, but mostly I see the Japanese emergence of *butoh* as a natural process of reconciling extreme opposites and integrating the dichotomies of art and life. Specifically, the *butoh* lineage of Ohno Kazuo and his son Yoshito is about an endless yin/yang dance between the dynamic opposites of *omote* and *ura*. For more about *omote-ura* see: [www.nakasendoway.com/omote-ura-public-and-private-faces/](http://www.nakasendoway.com/omote-ura-public-and-private-faces/) and [www.myokucenter.com/myoku-training/concepts-in-martial-art/omote-ura](http://www.myokucenter.com/myoku-training/concepts-in-martial-art/omote-ura)
- 2 As I write this in 2016, workshops are still happening at the studio twice a week with Yoshito Ohno instructing. [www.kazuooohnodancestudio.com/english/lesson/index.html](http://www.kazuooohnodancestudio.com/english/lesson/index.html)  
I value him as a master and teacher equal to his father and always considered him to be the third "founder" of *butoh* since he was center stage at just 21 years old, co-creating that first Kinjiki performance in 1959 with Hijikata, before his father joined those early *butoh* collaborations.
- 3 Some excellent examples of these stream-of-consciousness lessons are in part 2 of Ohno Kazuo's *World from Without and Within* by Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, published by Wesleyan University Press, translated

in 2004 by John Barrett. It was a great honor to help edit the early drafts for the English translation of this book, first published in Japanese as *Workshop Words*.

- 4 Web link to *A Question of Family* video: <https://youtu.be/x26eHSpC45w>
- 5 Title of the project and YouTube channel with nearly 600 short butoh films is “YearOfButoh” [www.DailyDance.net](http://www.DailyDance.net)
- 6 Web link to DailyDance and Life Art Mastery blog: [www.lifeartmastery.com](http://www.lifeartmastery.com)
- 7 Web link to Memorial Day 2010 performance video: <https://youtu.be/nwQETuSnTbU>
- 8 Web link to Vancouver International Dance Festival History: [www.vidf.ca/history/](http://www.vidf.ca/history/)
- 9 Web link to the Butopia website: [www.butopia.net](http://www.butopia.net)

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