

# SAN DIEGO STORY

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DANCE REVIEWS

## Untangling Kota Yamazaki's Contradictory 'OQ'

by Kris Eitland 1 Comment February 4, 2016

Wiggly and still, chaotic and controlled, *OQ*, the Butoh-trained choreographer Kota Yamazaki's contradictory work is both elegant and exasperating.



*Fluid hug-hug Dance Co. performs "OQ" with choreographer Kota Yamazaki.*

With his company Fluid hug-hug, Yamazaki's *OQ* mesmerized with robotic isolations, odd walks on half-toe, and internal focus, at UC San Diego's Mandeville Auditorium Friday.

Yet the most ardent Butoh fans struggled to make sense of the work titled after the phonetic sound of the Japanese word for palace, and inspired by aristocratic poetry readings passed down from ancient Japan.

*Born in Niigata, Japan, Yamazaki founded Fluid hug-hug in New York in 2002. He received a Bessie Award for the work FAGAALA during his many residencies with Senegal-based Jant-Bi. He says a person has to keep flowing like water. His background in fashion and international dance collaborations are apparent in OQ. [Watch a trailer.](#)*

The intriguing and challenging dance featured excellent dancers from diverse backgrounds who avoided contact and familiar movements. A white parachute fabric suspended overhead suggested a roofless palace and billowing clouds, but moreover a metaphorical anchor to connect contrasting themes.

Delicate Mina Nishimura pulsed and isolated limbs with robotic precision that was often so slight you might miss it. One minute her pose suggested a tattered porcelain doll, the next she was a deranged urchin, her grin twisting into a gruesome gaping mouth.

A smoldering Lauren Cox wobbled her head slightly and stared down the crowd like the ghost of Judy Garland. Julian Barnett and Yamazaki shifted their arms and rolled, usually in the background.

Most regal was Silas Riener, his hair tied in a bun and silky blue shirt



swirling. He traveled to the stage edge by shuffling his feet. He

**Silas Riener was a member of the Merce Company Dance Company until it closed in 2011. He garnered a Bessie Award (2012) for his performance in Cunningham's *Split Sides*. He was named one of Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch" in 2013.**

balanced on one foot with the other flexed and outstretched as if crossing a river. We could appreciate the difficulty of freezing that mid-step.

*Butoh (boo'to) developed in postwar Japan. The dance form rejects Eastern and Western dance conventions, expresses intense emotions through slow, controlled, and distorted movements.*

Yamazaki calls the two-part production kyo – imaginary, and jitsu – real, but we couldn't perceive a difference, except for a costume shift from flowered prints to plain pedestrian clothes.

During a rare point of physical contact, Riener the almost Emperor scooped up Mr. Barnett and one may have inferred a relationship, perhaps father and son. Among strange wiggles were slivers of familiar movement, such as Riener who seemed to comb invisible hair.

Masahiro Sagaya's score mixed traffic and jet sounds to conjure noisy cities and airports then shifted to hints of piano. Most intriguing was the twirl of a radio dial and resulting static. One could imagine people all over the world spiraling together.

Kathy Kaufmann's light design created a sterile kingdom, washed the stage floor green, and later warmed skin and fabrics like sepia-toned photographs.

As the 70-minute production neared the end, a restless crowd began to cough and rearrange in their chairs, and then came the loud squeaks.

Dancers repeated soft hand-to-arm gestures as soft piano seeped in. We savored extreme balances, pleasing shapes, and fluid bodies but the work needed stronger resolution. Annoying squeaks on top of piano emanated from auditorium speakers and broke the spell. Nobody knew or cared if they were intentional.

Kota Yamazaki/Fluid hug-hug dance company's *OQ* was presented by [ArtPower](#). Jan 29, 2016.