

Zan Yamashita

Zan Yamashita was born in OSAKA, 1970, started to dance at the age of 19. He studied modern dance and classical ballet at several dance studios, while giving street performances in Osaka.

In 1990, Yamashita joined a performance group, Monochrome Circus in Kyoto as a dancer. In 1993, he choreographed his first piece “Music” for the Monochrome Circus, which was performed at the ALTY Buyoh Festival of Kyoto Prefectural Hall. He choreographed this piece as if composing a piece of music through body movements of 6 performers without using any music.

In 1994, he directed a performance work “The poetry reading” first time as an artistic director, and presented it for the Kyoto Performance Carnival. This piece was presented in a gallery space with its entire walls covered with books where the performers and the audience were placed in a nested structure. Yamashita created scenes from precisely depicting performers’ subtle and detailed behaviors, movements, and the incidents that happened simultaneously throughout the space as each performer read his favorite books.

Yamashita began his career as an independent artist in 1995. His first project was “Family” in 1995, a year long project performed in the former Meirin Elementary School, the forerunner of the Kyoto Art Center (Kyoto), Toyoshina Modern Art Museum (Nagano) and Art Space Mumonkan (Kyoto). In this project, he brought the interaction with close people to the stage without altering what were already among them. After the “Family” tour, he continued to present various experimental works at theaters and galleries mostly in Western Japan.

In 2002, Yamashita presented “It is written there” at the Itami Ai Hall (Hyogo), with which the trilogy working on the relationship between language and body began. In this piece, the audience were constantly invited to turn the page of the book given at the entrance, as the stage host called the page number backward, and to enjoy switching their gaze between what was going on the stage and written on the page.

In 2004, Yamashita created “Invisible man”, which was presented at the Tokyo International Art Festival. And in the same year, he received the Kyoto Art Center Theatre Award for “It is just me coughing”, the last piece of the trilogy.

He made an actor debut in the theater piece, “Can you hear.....?”, written and directed by Shogo Ohta in 2005.

In thinking of reproducibility of the choreography, Yamashita presented “The sailors”, in 2005. The performance took place on a raft-like stage shaking under the weight of 4 performers at the BankART(Yokohama) and the Kyoto Art Center (Kyoto).

In 2007, he presented “Animal Theater”, a choreography focused in freedom and restriction, produced by the Kyoto Art Center Theatre Project.

In 2008, Yamashita remade and performed “It is written there” at the Kyoto Art Center Theatre Project (Kyoto), Fukuoka Theatre Arts Series (Fukuoka), KunstenFESTIVALdesArts (Belgium).

In 2009, he presented ‘It is just me coughing’ at Annex Gareilly in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), and ‘It is written there’ at Istanbul International Contemporary Dance & Performance Festival (Turkey).

In 2010, he performed ‘It is just me coughing’ at Postmainstream Performing Arts Festival (Tokyo). In February 2010, he performed as an actor in ‘Ikishima – breath island’ directed by Yukichi Matsumoto, produced by Seika theatre (Osaka). In April 2010, he choreographed and presented a new performance ‘Daikouzui’ at St Spot Yokohama. In August 2010, he performed a remake of “Yokohama Stay” in the TBA Festival in Portland after a month of creative residency there. Yamashita performed in a performance by Pichet Klunchun which was presented in the Kyoto International Performing Arts Festival in November 2010. In 2011, he performed, “It is just me coughing” and “Yokohama stay” as a double-bill performance at the Esplanade theatre studio (Singapore). Experimenting in original forms of communication through words and body, Yamashita presented his new performance, “It is something like a garden,” co-produced by Itami Ai Hall, Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media (YCAM) and St Spot Yokohama.

Yamashita received a Senior Fellow Grant from The Saison Foundation in 2011, 2012, 2013. A part-time teacher of Kyoto University of Art and Design from 2013, and Kyoto Seika University from 2016

Recent works

2017 A Grand March / Durub AL Tawaya Abu Dhabi

2017 Road to Evil Spirit / Salihara Jakarta

2017 Flush the water twice at Mumonkan / Atelier Gekken KYOTO

2017 Namaeganai / ÉDIFICE WILDER Montreal

2018 A Grand March / ASSEMBRIDGE NAGOYA

2019 GE14 / TPAM YOKOHAMA

2019 Yago / ASSEMBRIDGE NAGOYA

2020 Invitation / THEATRE E9 KYOTO

2020 Café Figaro / Café Figaro KYOTO

2021 It is written there / ArtTheater dB KOBE