The Japan Society Review 99

Book, Stage, Film, Arts and Events Review

Issue 99 Volume 17 Number 3 (June 2022)

The June issue of *The Japan Society Review* reaches you more eclectic than ever, featuring reviews of books on Japanese design and mythology, literary fiction, and contemporary dance.

Sarah Teasley's academic monograph *Designing Modern Japan* takes us on a revealing journey exploring the history of design in Japan from the middle of the 19th century to the present day. Weaving together the stories of people who shaped Japan's design industries with social history, economic conditions, and geopolitics, the book offers an engaging and fascinating understanding of this important aspect of Japanese society.

The second review of this issue is dedicated to T*he Japanese Myths* by Joshua Frydman, a book examining the rich tradition of Japanese mythology, from the earliest written myths in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, to medieval tales of vengeful ghosts, through to modern-day reincarnation of ancient deities as the heroes of manga, anime or J-horror films.

This issue also includes reviews of two Japanese novels recently translated into English, *All the Lovers in the Night* by Kawakami Mieko and *The Hole* by Oyamada Hiroko. Both writers are well-known authors in the UK due to the success of previous works, Kawakami's *Breasts and Eggs* and Oyamada's *The Factory*. According to our reviewers, both of these new novels continue to explore similar topics and writing styles affirming their authorial signatures.

We close the June issue with a review of a contemporary dance show performed by Japanese choreographer and dancer Teshigawara Saburo at the festival Electric Japan 2022 celebrated in London. Reimagining the story of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Teshigawara presents a technically and visually compelling one hour performance depicting the tragedy of romance from the original work.

Alejandra Armendáriz-Hernández

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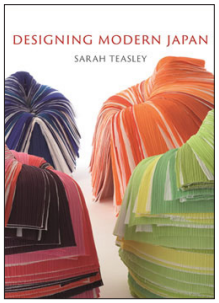
Image: detail from the cover of *Designing Modern Japan* by Sarah Teasley

Designing Modern Japan

by Sarah Teasley

Reaktion Books (2022)
ISBN-13: 978-1780232027

Review by David Tonge



Sarah Teasley introduces *Designing Modern Japan* with a recollection:

> 'Early in the autumn of 1991, I walked into a bookshop in Osaka and my world changed forever. I had been in Japan for a few weeks. I had only meant to browse but found myself transfixed by a metres wide expanse of magazines, all to do with architecture and design.' (p.9)

This opener brought a smile to my face and triggered a memory of finding myself in Aoyama books in Tokyo for the first time in the mid-90's, only to be confronted with rows of hefty and, as Teasley puts it, 'achingly beautifully' architecture and design journals, alongside magazines on every topic imaginable servicing the Japanese desire for information and consumption.

Let me say upfront, if you are looking for a coffee table book with photographs of the latest trends in Japanese design and architecture to impress your visitors, this is not the book for you. While considering Japanese design from an aesthetic viewpoint, Teasley's focus is to explain design's role and influence on Japanese culture, business, education and government policy. It's a 'under the hood' look at an industry which had become one of Japan's globally recognised soft powers and is to my knowledge the ONLY book of its kind.

Designing Modern Japan is jargon free, easy to read and a thoroughly researched book, packed full of great illustrations that take us on a journey from the middle of the 19th century to present day. Organised chronologically into five chapters, through human stories, Teasley paints a picture of the relationship of design to people, their lives and their community's survival.

While this book can certainly be read from beginning to end, I have been dipping into the topics and time periods which have personal interest. And in that sense, for me, this book is a perfect – random access – companion to other reading you might engage in to further your interest in Japanese design.

For example, I was immediately drawn to chapter two – '100 yen cultured living' from page 77. Perhaps this is because of the popularity of 100 yen stores in Japan! or because I have a passion for design which impacts real people and their lives rather than the kind of design which is only for those in the know, and with the means to afford (of which we sadly see a lot these days).

But more than these, it was the engaging photograph of a young married couple which caught my attention. In 1934, photographer Kageyama Koyo decided to capture himself, his wife, Shizuko, and their possessions while seated for breakfast. The photo beautifully documents the ubiquitous influence of design on life in Japan at that moment in time, and surely was a precursor to our modern-day obsession of sharing the minutiae of our daily lives via Instagram etc. Teasley deftly describes the significance of the photo, the objects captured and the social context within which it fits –

> '...breakfast was buttered toast and black tea, the former toasted on a portable electric grill, the latter brewed in a large ceramic teapot, strained and drunk from Art Deco patterned porcelain teacups with handles. A jaunty lamp sits above the desk. Someone has taken care to distinguish these particular brands of butter and tea from their competitors through logos and packaging design.' (p.77)

In this short excerpt we learn much about where Japan was at its capture, including the growing influence of the west and the recognition of designs ability to differentiate and sell commodity items. She goes on to explain how the Kageyamas life exemplified the growing influence of the social reformer's use of design, to change how people lived –

> '...In their work and everyday habits, the Kageyamas were participants in a self-consciously urban, planned life and its promotion to others, produced largely through design.' (p.78)

And it was in this context that '100-yen cultured living' meant a carefully planned life, produced largely through design. Not the kind of life, achieved through excessive consumption at 100 yen stores which we can see in modern day Japan!

Joking aside, what I find fascinating about this chapter, as a designer working with Japanese companies, is that the early 20th century was a turning point for people's interest in everyday items such as aprons, bookshelves, lamps and toast. All of which would have been, hitherto, overlooked and undesigned. As this interest grew, retailers and manufacturers recognised a business opportunity and

focused more attention on product development, branding and advertising. And particularly interesting according to Teasley is the Japanese Governments interest in promoting design

> '...Politicians and civil servants too continued their campaign to strengthen manufacturing firms earning power by teaching design, particularly for export markets but also for the growing domestic market.' (p.78)

This government involvement in design in Japan is interesting to compare with the UK or US where design is by and large left to the private manufacturer to educate themselves about how and what to design for where. But this 'long arm' of government can still be seen to promote Japanese culture and design overseas today, through collaborations with foreign professionals and exhibitions overseas. And at the regional level where local manufacturers of ceramics, lacquerware and so on collaborate with overseas and local designers to both promote their products and educate their teams.

As mentioned, my own connection with Japanese design started in the mid-90s and has more to do with the names, brands and activities highlighted in the epilogue than the chapters proceeding it. But reading this book has uncovered, corrected and clarified so much of what I thought I knew about the history of design in Japan and how modern-day Japanese design and society relate to it. It's done nothing less than given me a foundation on which to place my own experiences.

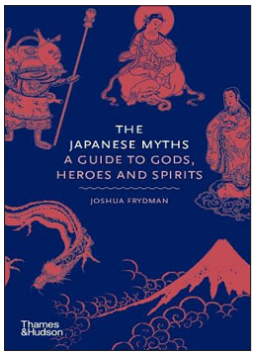
They say context is everything don't they? Throughout every chapter of *Designing Modern Japan* Sarah Teasley describes the complex jigsaw of Japanese design in the context of society, business, government and real people in a way that, for this reader, is engaging and fascinating. As I said at the beginning, if you want a coffee table book of the latest Japanese design trends this is not for you. But if you really want to understand why design matters to Japan, this is a great place to start and is highly recommended. §

The Japanese Myths: A Guide to Gods, Heroes, and Spirits

by Joshua Frydman

Thames and Hudson (2022)
ISBN-13: 978-0500252314

Review by Renae Lucas-Hall



This illustrated book by Joshua Frydman is well-written, thought-provoking, and visually engaging. Flicking through the pages, the text may seem dense and difficult to understand but it's actually gripping and captivating to read.

The first page begins with a tribute to the writer, teacher and translator Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) who travelled to Japan in 1890. He wrote several books, including a short story collection *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, introducing Japanese mythology to the West.

The order in which Frydman chooses to introduce each subject is clever. It starts all the way back during the Age of the Gods and works its way through time, making it easier for one to understand each religion, myth, deity and spirit. He opens with a definition of Japan and the predominant Japanese faiths, Shinto and Buddhism. But he also explains there are elements of Confucianism, based on morality and philosophy, and Daoism which is another school of thought centred on harmony with the universe and Chinese astrology.

Frydman's exoteric explanations provide a clear understanding of Japanese myths which can be traced back as far as the 7th century CE. He elaborates on the two oldest historical chronicles which are the *Kojiki* (The Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihonshoki* (The Chronicles of Japan). These accounts are the best interpretations of early beliefs. Frydman explains the *Kojiki* is the story of how the imperial family came to be, why they came to be, and it stresses their rule over the court is natural (p. 28). The *Nihonshoki* is made up of 30 books covering the reign of the first 46 emperors, but these days scholars think both chronicles were political propaganda used to prove everything is related back to the emperor.

Frydman goes on to introduce the last generation of the gods of creation, Izanagi and Izanami. Followed by Amaterasu, the sun goddess who ruled heaven, Tsukuyomi, the moon god who ruled night and Susanowo who was associated with the sea. The author points out they're all mythical ancestors of the imperial line and important representations of natural forces in early Japan. We then come to Jinmu, the first of fifteen legendary emperors, who dominated the land and the

sea. Jinmu is a mortal man, but his existence is often questioned as he has no tomb.

Anyone with an interest in manga will appreciate the chapter on 'Living *Kami* and Divine Humans' which looks at humans who have transitioned into *kami* to become gods who are worshipped. They're historical people who actually existed. For example, Prince Shotoku was the first Japanese defender of the Buddhist faith. He still makes a significant contribution to modern culture and appears in several popular manga such as *Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi* (Prince of the Land of the Rising Sun, 1980-1984). Sugawara no Michizane, or Tenjin, also gets a mention. Michizane is popular with young students who pray for help with their exams. Minamoto no Yoshiie, or Hachiman, the patron god of warriors, is also touched upon. Even today, there are a lot of shrines dedicated to Hachiman in Japan.

Fans of Japanese horror films will be captivated by the chapters on evil onryo or goryo. These are spirits of humans who have been betrayed or have a grudge with the living. They were prolific during the Heian period (794-1185), and they're mentioned in the classic work of Japanese literature *The Tale of Genji*. They can cause natural disasters like floods and earthquakes or possess a human being. They're also called shiryo or dead spirits if they have been unfairly condemned to death. The 1998 film *Ring* and the 2002 movies *Dark Water* and *Ju-On: The Grudge* are well-known flicks involving vengeful spirits and yurei or ghosts.

Japanese literature buffs and romanticists will enjoy the chapter on 'Angelic Beings and Astral Romances'. Frydman tells the story of *The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl* which is associated with the Tanabata holiday celebrated in Japan on the 7th of July. He also recounts *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*. They both have moral implications which are still relevant today.

The Seven Gods of Luck are mentioned in the chapter on 'Household, Epidemic and Directional Deities'. They are common subjects for *netsuke* which are small decorative toggles, usually made of wood or ivory, worn by Japanese men during the Edo period to hang swords, tobacco, or other items on their kimonos. There are over 2,300 *netsuke* at the British Museum in London and a collection of 75 *netsuke* are currently on display until September at the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery.

A lot of tourists or foreigners who live in Japan have attended the world-famous Gion Matsuri Festival in Kyoto. Frydman says this may have originally started as a festival to appease Gozu Tenno in order to protect their city. Gozu Tenno or Ox-Headed Emperor is a deity who threatens urban citizens. He can bring epidemics in the form of diseases like smallpox and measles.

Fans of Japanese novels, live-action films, television shows, anime and manga will be captivated by the section on *Onmyoji* or imperial diviners who were officially government workers assigned to the Bureau of *Onmyodo* or Yin-Yang Magic. Frydman tells us they're the Japanese equivalent of wizards from Western Fantasy and the cause of legends. One of the most famous being *Onmyoji* by Yumemakura Baku, a novel series which began in 1986 that continues to this day.

Yokai or spirits found in the Japanese countryside also feature heavily in Japanese film and novels. These spirits often take the form of *oni* or ogres, *tengu* or goblins, *kappa* or water imps, *ningyo* or Japanese mermaids, and *yamanba* or mountain witches.

Modern and historical Japanese stories and films are also full of animals and objects that can transform into supernatural creatures. Frydman goes into detail on this subject explaining how foxes are famous for being evil shapeshifters, sometimes turning into beautiful women who swindle men. The *tanuki* or raccoon dog can also shapeshift, but they usually mean well.

Dragons and snakes feature in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*. Dragons can be destructive and represent floods or volcanoes. Cats have featured as far back as Sei Shonagon's famous tale *The Pillow Book*. These creatures can be a form of good luck in Japan. The *maneki-neko* or inviting cat figurine is often seen in Japanese restaurants as a talisman of good fortune. There are also sections in this book dedicated to turtles, cranes, rabbits and catfish. Frydman explains how some people believed catfish were the cause of earthquakes in the Heian and early Kamakura (1185–1333) period!

The final section on 'The New Mythologies of Modern Japan' propels the reader into the 20th century. It emphasizes the way State Shinto was used as propaganda until it was demolished during the American Occupation from 1945 to 1952. Frydman also explains how the 1950s was considered the Golden Age of Japanese cinema after censorship was stopped and there's a section on the rise of the manga industry at this time. Frydman also dedicates a small section to *kaiju* or strange beasts such as the 1954 film *Godzilla*, Tezuka Osamu's *Atom the Mighty*, and *Gigantor*. PlayStation gamers will recognize the video

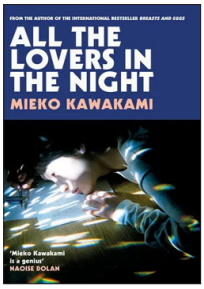
game *Okami* or Great God. It engages with the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* myth cycles and Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

Overall, this book is a wonderful guide to an enduring fascination with stories and the supernatural in Japan. Frydman's explanations prove mythology acts as a compass to guide past, present and future generations.

Japanese myths offer an allegorical narrative that gives so much hope to humans. It shows a 'transformative power of storytelling. Legends, when set free, can transform a prince into a saint, and an exiled criminal into a prophet of the wilderness'. (p. 118)

Having read Frydman's book it's wonderful to know we're preserving these spellbinding mythologies and allowing them to evolve within our modern realm of creativity and understanding. This gives the Japanese culture even more layers to unwrap and appreciate. §

All the Lovers in the Night



by Kawakami Mieko
translated by Sam Bett and David Boyd

Picador (2022)
ISBN-13: 978-1509898268

Review by Cameron Bassindale

There was a great deal to like in Kawakami Mieko's debut English translation, *Breasts and Eggs*. Chiefly, her razor-sharp precision in dissecting what it means to be a woman in modern Japan, and the multitudes of differences within the female experience. There is a reason why literary great Murukami Haruki names her as Japan's most important contemporary novelist. That being said, *Breasts and Eggs* was not without its flaws. For one, at times the tempo of the narrative was too slow, and you got the sense that Kawakami was getting wrapped up in her own (admittedly intoxicating) prose. In *All the Lovers in the Night*, English speakers can enjoy a novel which is tighter, more focussed with the same indelible Kawakami style of surgical introspection.

As is often the case with Kawakami novels, the protagonist Irie Fuyuko is a reclusive, fundamentally unhappy woman approaching her forties. Her only pastime, if it can be called that, is taking a walk around the city at night on her birthday every year. Working as a proof-reader, initially in a typically Japanese workplace, Fuyuko wastes no time in telling the reader about how inept she is at dealing with social situations, a temperament she has had since school. She describes how she was ostracized from her office, bullied for what she perceives as being too diligent and hard-working. This she cannot understand.

Throughout the novel, Fuyuko is basically unable to understand others; what motivates them, what their intentions are. This misunderstanding applies to herself, ten-fold. Her internal monologue is often so bereft of what I think to be natural, well-adjusted emotional logic, it genuinely made me laugh out loud at points. This is a testament to Kawakami's character-building prowess. The same is not true when (tries) to speak to the limited cast of characters around her, however. At times I got the very real urge to reach through the pages, grab her by the shoulders and ask her firmly to spit it out. Truly it is totally frustrating to witness Fuyuko fumble, mumble and nod her way through conversations which seem so easily navigable. However, this is clearly by design. Fuyuko's inability to talk meaningfully with those around her is indicative of a major motif in Kawakami's work; atomized characters leading atomized lives, yearning for connection and being wholly unable to do so.

Inspired by her only friend, Hijiri, a glamorous, self-obsessed manager who keeps Fuyuko around to make herself seem better in comparison, she turns to alcohol. This comes as a real surprise. Normally, when one thinks of alcoholics in literature, characters like Marmeladov of *Crime and Punishment* come to mind; vicious, unrefined and loudly suffering. Timid, meek and unloathsome, Fuyuko doesn't quite seem like the type. This is what gives this novel, in my view, its greatest selling point. Her descent into alcoholism is rapid, and total. In the space of a chapter, she begins to work beer and sake into her routine with unnerving ease, having had only one drink before this chapter in her life she seems to be making up for lost time.

The first major warning sign is when she visits a community centre in hopes of signing up for some adult education classes. Armed with her flask of sake, she waits to be called and gradually gets drunk to the point of vomiting all over the ladies bathroom. She then promptly falls asleep for 3 hours. Amongst this pitiful scene is where, fittingly, she meets her love interest. Mitsutsuka is an unassuming, polite physics teacher in his late fifties. Although he doesn't let on and she doesn't seem to notice, you get the sense that

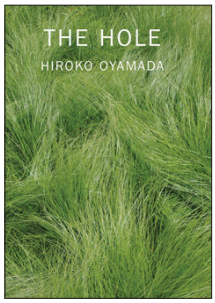
Fuyuko's drunkenness is immediately apparent to him. From this point onwards Fuyuko's life, to this point solely revolving around her work as a proofreader, adopts a new preoccupation; meeting Mitsutsuka every week for coffee.

It could almost be labelled "charming", if she didn't feel the need to get totally intoxicated every time they meet up. It is through this drinking that she hopes to be able to verbalise what she feels inside. The only problem is, of course, she doesn't know *what* she feels inside. She spends most evenings, drunk, pining for a man whose first name she doesn't even know. When she tries to speak truthfully to him, between hiccups, nothing comes out. And so a cruel cycle of meet-ups, empty sake bottles and endless proofreading of manuscripts plays out, with Fuyuko achievinging nothing from any of these. Clearly, this novel is not a frothy, light read.

It reaches a nadir in tone when Kawakami produces a chapter detailing sexual violence which is so visceral and believable it will leave those weak of temperament wondering why they ever picked up this book. That is to say Kawakami has truly outdone herself, surpassing even her own lofty expectations of creating a narrative which is immediate and realistic; this English translation is a gift to anyone wishing to understand life for the modern Japanese woman, and the perils and hardships many women face. Of course, no two human experiences are the same, and that point is apparent in the contrast between the female characters in the novel; however, the space between men and women in the book tells the state of gender relations in Japan. It is up to the reader to draw their own conclusions.

On the whole, *All the Lovers in the Night* is a novel which will draw you in with its poetry and prose, and make you dissect it line by line in much the same way as its protagonist does in her work. English translations of contemporary Japanese authors are thankfully becoming more and more common, and they bring with them a heightened understanding of the Japanese literary zeitgeist. With this of course it comes the danger that readers will grow over familiar with them, spotting cliche a mile off. Thankfully, this is not the case with All the Lovers in the Night. Kawakami offers a novel which is fresh and unique, albeit imperfect. This is not a great Japanese novel about womanhood, nor is it just a great Japanese novel. It is simply a great novel. §

The Hole



by Oyamada Hiroko
translated by David Boyd

New Directions (2020)
ISBN-13: 978-0811228879

Review by Alex Russell

When discussing the work of Oyamada Hiroko, it is difficult to escape the adjective "Kafkaesque", a word too often thrown about without much consideration to describe anything verging on the absurd. Reviews of Oyamada's 2013 debut work *The Factory* are replete with the term, its bureaucratic setting and unorthodox structure undeniably reminiscent of the works of Franz Kafka and his literary originalities. *The Hole*, Oyamada's next novella published the following year, and published in a translation by David Boyd in 2020, further develops this trademark bizarreness, combining the precision and mundanity of daily life with the fantastical and incomprehensible to a suitably confusing effect.

The Hole focuses on Asahi, or Asa, a young woman who has agreed to a move to her husband's hometown after he has been transferred to a local branch of his company. Not only is it her husband's hometown, but they move into a house owned by his parents, who also happen to live in the house next door. Asa gives up her temporary job to make the move, given the lack of job opportunities in the new rural location, to the chagrin of her colleague who is envious of her ability to stop working and become a housewife. Her move to the country is vividly brought to life by Oyamada, whose descriptions of the new setting root it firmly in the physical world; the pouring rain on the day they move in, which gives way to the sound of cicadas so prevalent in Japanese literature and so symbolic of summer, the oppressive heat which further intensifies Asa's lethargy and boredom. In contrast to the fantastical and confusing narrative, Oyamada's descriptive style is natural and experiential, taking the reader along on Asa's move.

Settling into her boredom as a housewife, Asa is one day tasked with depositing a large sum of money in the local convenience store by her mother-in-law, Tomiko. Setting out on this errand, she is distracted by an unidentifiable, large black animal, taking a detour down via the river where she accidentally falls into a hole that she realises is almost perfectly

her size. When she eventually escapes, it is with the help of a neighbour, who identifies her as "the bride". This is perhaps the most straightforward example of the clear definitions of individuals in the world Oyamada creates, with each person existing in a clearly distinguished niche. Asa, having forfeited any self-identification through her move to her husband's hometown is defined to others by her marital status, labelled merely as an extension of her husband. Asa's husband and father-in-law are barely present, defined by their work and role as breadwinners, even if they are almost entirely absent from the households they supposedly support. Tomiko, even though she is employed, maintains the stereotypical divisions of gender through her assumption of the household responsibilities in addition to her work.

A later encounter with this animal leads only to more questions, as she meets a man making the startling claim to be her brother-in-law, self-admittedly concealed by his family for his refusal to conform with societal expectations and engage with the outside world in the expected ways. Upon hearing about Asa's fall into the hole he mockingly asks if she thought she was Alice in Wonderland, looking for some adventure to whisk her away from her humdrum life. He assures her that she is no Alice, and she is not on any adventure, but the bizarre and surreal sudden turn of events since encountering the mystery creature raises questions over what is real and what is imagined.

Despite his challenging temperament and undeniably strange behaviour, Asa's experience of her new life has clear parallels with that of this newfound relative's. Asa is isolated, almost imprisoned by her life as a country housewife, living on the periphery of a clearly introspective rural community with few opportunities to socialise. Her brother-in-law by contrast willingly retreated from the community into isolation, admitting almost with glee his retreat from society 20 years prior. His isolation conveniently adds to his mystique, as Asa is unable to verify his existence with others, having been warned not to tell her husband or her mother-in-law about their meeting.

Asa's supposed brother-in-law's interest in the animal is in direct contrast to hers; while she followed it in hope of finding answers as to what it was, tried to discuss it with her husband, and even searching in vain on the internet for any further information that could identify it, he simply accepts that it exists, understands what it is through his encounters with it, and accepts that it does not need any further formal definition or identification.

When confronted by a work such as *The Hole*, which simply ends more than it concludes, leaving many of the reader's questions entirely unanswered, we are naturally inclined to respond like Asa, seeking definitive answers as to what it all means. Frustrating though it may be, we are left with little option but to take the alternative approach and accept *The Hole* for what it is; a perplexing, challenging story that offers itself up to countless interpretations. However, once we accept this approach, we are free to even take pleasure in the fact that it is not a work to be understood in any definitive sense of the word. When we exempt ourselves from the expectation of answers, we can simply enjoy the detail and vibrancy of the ever-so-real world that Oyamada creates, and allow ourselves to react naturally and without inhibition to the events of the work. §

Tristan and Isolde

coreographed by Teshigawara Saburo

Electric Japan 2022 at the Coronet Theatre
2-10 June 2022

Review by Alice Baldock

In Teshigawara Saburo's reimagination of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, our lovers are never quite touching. Near the very beginning of the piece (which is ambitiously stripped back from a three-act opera to one hour dance piece), we see the characters become increasingly fascinated with each other, drawing closer and closer as the piece builds. The story behind the duet between KARAS dancers Teshigawara and Sato Rihoko is of two lovers who should not be together, but who fall recklessly in love after imbibing a love potion.

The simplicity of the setting, the complexity of the lighting, and condensed character and length of the piece, all contribute to creating a dance that highlights the tragedy of romance, as the two lovers end up dead by the end of Wagner's story. The piece features only two dancers, Sato and Teshigawara, who have been working on dance projects together for 26 years. Their knowledge of each other's movements made the characters of Tristan and Isolde appear convincingly infatuated with one another. Their movements – which, in the post-performance talk, Teshigawara and Sato revealed to be part-improvisation, within the frame

of timings and music – were at some moments slow and controlled, at others whirling and out-of-control, at others their limbs and fingers were shaking with the pressure of some immense emotion. The movements of each dancer always miss each other – in one scene, dancers rush from one segment of a cross on the floor of the stage, moving into a different section just as the other dancer escapes it.

In another striking scene, Isolde is on the floor, unable to get up, as Tristan extends her hands towards here, fingers enticing her and dragging her by her gaze around the little box of light her body is confined too, but never touching her and letting her have what she is craving. When the two lovers finally touch, and their eyes meet just for a second, the abject terror both their faces portray, which matches the music perfectly, showed the audience a kind of love that is overwhelming, and not necessarily happy.

* Production Photos ©KARAS

Lighting augmented this intensity. At the beginning of the piece, Sato moves her arms sinuously, a ripple of movement connecting from the tip of one hand, along her arm, across her chest and over to her opposite fingertip. This extended line is highlighted by Teshigawara's lighting design and lighting operator Thomas Leblanc, which made her arms look like snakeskin – beautiful and enticing at once. Use of lighting to highlight individual characters suspended in darkness highlighted the impossibility of their connection and made the otherwise empty stage appear much fuller.

This reimaging was technically and visually compelling, with one hour seeming to pass in seconds. As Teshigawara and Sato explained in their after-show talk, when you dance you have the power to play with time. The music, costume, lighting and movement all coalesced to create an incredibly fervent and intense piece which should not be missed. §