Itō Michio’s (1893-1961) creative endeavors spanned dance, theatre, and film, just as his career spanned the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, however, his life as a creative artist was one of WWII’s international cultural casualties. After decades of work with people such as William Butler Yeats in Ireland, the Washington Square Players and Martha Graham in New York, and the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, Itō was repatriated to Japan in 1943 where he continued to teach and choreograph until his death. The first son of an old samurai family whose parents encouraged their children to pursue any avenue of interest, Michio was the elder brother by eleven years of Itō Kunio, aka. *shingeki* theatre director Senda Koreya.

Itō collaborated with Yeats on his *Plays for Dancers*, and is probably best known for creating the role of the Guardian of the Well in the 1916 *At the Hawk’s Well*. His work as a dancer and choreographer in the U.S. is not as well-remembered because almost none of that extensive body of work was preserved. He was to choreograph the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, but did not live to see that project materialize.

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Itō left Japan for Europe in 1912 to study voice. Once in Germany he was disillusioned with opera, but entranced by the dance of Isadora Duncan, Pavlova, and Nijinsky. He decided to study modern dance, and entered the Dalcroze Institute in 1913. Much of his later work is influenced by eurythmics.

At the outbreak of WWI, Itō left Germany for London where is public and private performances of what he called “harmonized Europe-Japanese” dances in 1915 brought him to the attention of Yeats and Ezra Pound. Inspired by Pound, Yeats saw a connection between Irish folklore and the appearances of spirits of the dead in Japanese *nō* plays. The cross-cultural collaboration succeeded even though Itō had no formal training in *nō*, and with only a little in kabuki dance. The play was well-received in England, then later in New York and Los Angeles.

Itō moved to New York in 1917 where he gradually made a name for himself in the growing modern dance movement alongside people such as Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. Itō envisioned his dance as a medium in which the music and movement are one, and created works that were more abstract like Humphrey’s rather than mimetic like Graham’s.

A 1929 U.S. tour with his company finished in Los Angeles where Itō established a dance school and began performing at small venues for groups of art-lovers. He also began choreographing large-scale symphonic dances at places such as the Rose Bowl and the Hollywood Bowl. Unfortunately, none of these successful large ensemble pieces still exist.

Before WWII, Itō made several trips to Japan trying to avert war between two countries he loved. Arrested immediately after Pearl Harbor as a Japanese spy, Itō was repatriated in a prisoner exchange. Itō’s unrealized vision for the 1964 Olympics was dance that celebrated peaceful cultural exchange.

JOHN SWAIN