**Ishii, Baku (b. 25 December, 1886, Mitane-cho, Akita Prefecture, Japan; d. 7 January, 1962, Tokyo, Japan)**

**Training**

Baku Ishii is widely regarded as the creator of Japanese modern dance. He was born in Mitane-cho, Akita Prefecture in 1886. Despite his difficulty adapting to school-life in his early years, he moved to Tokyo at the age of twenty-four to study literature. Eventually, he began studying the violin at the Imperial Theatre. During the course of his violin studies, however, Ishii, moved by his exposure to opera, decided to focus on dance. While he remained at the Imperial Theatre, his new focus led him to study ballet under Giovanni Rossi, a ballet instructor who previously worked in the UK, but who had been invited to teach at the Imperial Theatre by the then managing director Keinosuke Nishino. Ishii also performed in the operas Rossi produced at the Imperial Theatre.

Ishii eventually resigned from the opera as a result of an argument with Rossi. After leaving Rossi, Ishii studied *rythmique* (Eurhythmics) with Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. Later he began to choreograph his own work.

**Contributions to Modernism**

Influenced by *Shingekijou Undō*（the new theatre movement) led by Osanai Kaoru (who was active in Jiyu Gekijou Undō free theatre movement for theatre and film), Shochiku Cinema, *Tsukiji Shou-Gekijou Undō*（Tsukiji Small Theatre Movement), and Yamada Kosaku, Ishii created a new dance style, *Buyō-sh Undoi* (Dance Poem Movement). Ishii performed *Meian* (*Light and Darkness*), a dance choreographed in his signature style,in 1916. In addition to his choreographic work, he was active in the Asakusa Opera Movement, which was a popular mass culture phenomenon at the time. In 1922, he travelled for shows with his sister-in-law, Ishii Konami. His dance was also featured in the film *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheitposter* (*Ways to Strength and Beauty*, 1925), which was directed by Wilhelm Prager in Germany.

**Legacy**

One of Ishii’s significant contributions is his establishment of the first modern dance school in Japan. He also influenced other dancers and contributed to the development of modernist dance in Japan in part by teaching *rythmique*, ballet, and modern dance, using his own method based on *rythmique*. He educated many talented dancers, such as Ch’oe Sŭng-hŭi from Korea, Lee Tsia-oe from Taiwan, Ishii Midori, Kurosawa Teruo, Midorikawa Jun, and Ishii Kahoru. Lee Tsai-oe and Choi-Seung Hui helped to disseminate Ishii’s influence throughout Asia.

In addition to mentoring a new generation of dancers, Ishii was also active in a wide range of areas, from book publication to dance journal publication. We can witness his influence not only on modern dance but also on children’s dances and education, such as at Tamagawa Gakuen, elementary education organization (Tamagawa University, at present.).

His other innovations include the Ishii Baku Modern Dance Company, which performed in a camp show tour.. Although most of his works were short pieces, he presented his masterpiece, *Ningen shaka* (*Story of Gautama*, 1953), which was influenced by the postwar ballet boom in Japan.

For his extensive contributions to the academic and artistic development of Japan, the Japanese government awarded Ishii the first Purple Ribbon Medal in 1955. Ishii is also the father of contemporary composers, Kan Ishii and Maki Ishii.

**Yoshida Yukihiko**

**List of Works**

*Meian* (*Light and Darkness*, 1916)

*Nikki No Ichi Page* (*A Page of Diary*, 1916)

*Shokuyoku Wo Sosoru* (*Arousing Appetite*, 1925)

*Yamawo Noboru* (*Climbing Mountain*, 1923)

*Shujin* (*Prisoner*, 1923)

*Nishikaze No Mitamono* (*The World which Western Wind See*, 1937)

1953)

**Publications**

Ishii, B. (1955) *Odoru baka*, Tokyo: Sangyo Keizai Shinbunsha.

Ishii, B. (1947) *Buyō zanmai*, Tokyo: Umonsha.

Ishii, B. (1951) *Watashi no Buyō seikatsu*, Tokyo: Dainihon Yubenkai Kodansha.

Ishii, B. (1939) *Kogun Imon Hokushikara Chushihe*, Tokyo: Nihon Kyoiku Shiryo Kankoukai.

Ishii, B. (1933) *Buyō Geijutsu*, Tokyo: Tamagawa Gakuen Shuppanbu.

**Moving Image Material**

Kusaka, S, ed. (1988) *Nihon gendai buyō no nagare, daiikkan, DVD to BukkurettoVol.1,*, Gendaibuyo kyokai kokusaibu.

**References and Recommended Readings**

Ishii, K. (1994) *Buyō shijin*, Tokyo: Miraisha

Hasegawa, R, ed., (1986) *Ishii Baku Kenkyu: Nihon kindai buyō no reimei*, Tokyo: Dance Work.

Midorikawa, J. (2006) *Buyōka Ishii Baku no shyōgai*, Akita: Mumyosha shuppan.

Yoshida, Y. (2011) ‘Lee Tsia-oe and Baku Ishii before 1945 - Comparing Origin of Modern Dance in Taiwan and Japan’, Pan-Asian Journal of Sports & Physical Education Vol.3: 56-64.