

Director's note:

In the education that I have received, we always look up to the strong, the beautiful, the infinitely sustained body. However, in reality bodies are always fragile, prone to decay. In this escaping reality of ours, I saw a type of beauty. This beauty is constrained by our living environment, not understood.

To present this kind of beauty, we have to reject, reject the existing way of viewing, the inevitable connection, the representation of the reality. In this work, I want to accept the being as it is, receptive to fragile body, to the self.

I believe the presence of a kind of "invisible body". It connects the body's own intelligence, also channeling to whichever dance we can imagine.

Dramaturg's note

What it means to be aging in dance is a taboo subject in a Euro-American dance context. In the field of ballet, beauty is in flexible, agile, young dancing bodies, full of power and stamina. People say that if ballet dancers had any kind of conscience, they would retire from dance by the age of forty-five. The very fact of physical deterioration affects dancers' careers in a far more profound way than that of any other kind of artist. Old dancers become choreographers, dance teachers, and producers. Coming back to dance has historically not happened: They say farewell to dance.

In contrast, in some Asian contexts, professional dancers continue dancing until a late age. Not only traditional dancers (who are respected as a representative of intangible national heritage), but also ballet, modern, and contemporary dancers like Kazuo Ohno in Japan, all celebrate a longer career. Emancipated from the existing dance technique, their embodied, bodily knowledge is more powerful and beautiful than what is visible on stage. The historical past appears through the present, aging body on stage.

Influenced by the international debuts of these aging dancers, the recent trend in contemporary dance and performance by German choreographer-director Pina Bausch, French choreographer-dancer Jérôme Bel, and Yvonne Rainer in American Postmodern dance, has been to create an atmosphere to highlight the longer lives of dancers. Along with global population aging, people are paying more attention to the previously invisible

part of dancers' lives.

When one deals with performers who did not previously exist in the theatrical framework, one needs a new approach. As Pina Bausch started working with diverse kinds of performers, she made her own artistic endeavor and her piece assumed a new form of dance, "dance theater," which eventually prompted an epistemological turn in performing arts.

Mengfan Wang has worked with diverse bodies of performers. By expanding the idea of aging as the process of growing older, she has delicately worked with children in her previous piece, *The Divine Sewing Machine*. This time, she works with the movement quality and body memories of retired ballet-trained dancers, Cao Zhiguang and Liu Guilin. What was modern in terms of the dancing body in China is depicted as the aging bodies of two dancers. The form of ballet was introduced to China for the purpose of modernizing Chinese Dance. And it served as socialist ideology in the form of revolutionary ballet like White-haired Girl and the Red Detachment of Women. While the trace of revolutionary ballet is no longer visible in these dancers, the ghost of the past appears as Giselle of Romantic ballet, which was forbidden during the period of the Cultural Revolution. The spirit of ballet comes back in the aging, modernist dancing body in China.

导演的话：

在我所受的教育中，我们总要看向强壮的、好看的、可以无限持存的身体。但现实中的身体往往是脆弱的、容易衰退的。在人们想要逃离的这些身体现实中，我看到一种美。这种美被我们生活的环境压制，它不被理解。

想展现这种美，必须要去拒绝。拒绝固有的审视，拒绝必然的联系，拒绝再现现实。

在作品中，我想要接受人、接受脆弱的身体，接受自己。

我相信还有一种“看不见的身体”的存在。它联结着人体本身的智慧，也通往我们可以想象到的任何一种舞蹈。

舞蹈戏剧构作的笔记：

舞者的衰老在欧美舞蹈语境中是一个禁忌的话题。在芭蕾领域，“美”意味着灵活、敏捷、年轻的具备力量感和耐力的身体。芭蕾舞者一般在45岁的时候就会自觉地退役，身体能力的退化对于他们职业生涯的影响要比任何其他门类的艺术家深刻得多。年老的舞者会退居成为编舞、舞蹈老师或者制作人。重返舞台这种行为史无前例：可以说，他们是与舞蹈永别了。

相比而言，在一些亚洲国家，专业舞者一直到高龄都还在舞蹈。不仅仅是那些备受尊敬的、在传统舞蹈方向已经成为国家非物质遗产的舞者；还有芭蕾舞、现代舞和当代舞蹈方向的舞者，例如日本舞踏家大野一雄，都会赞颂更长久的职业生涯。从既有的舞蹈技术中解放出来，他们融入肢体的智慧以及对艺术的认知程度变得比舞台上可见的东西要更加有力。历史的过去通过现在得以彰显，通过舞台上衰老的身体得以彰显。

当艺术家开始在剧场的框架中处理以前从未出现过的一些表演者时，他们就需要开发新的方法。正如皮娜·鲍什开始和众多不同类型的表演者合作的时候，她将自己的艺术尝试和她的作品推到了一种新的舞蹈形式上：“舞蹈剧场”，并最终迎来了表演艺术认识论层面的转向。

随着这样年老的舞者开始出现在国际舞台，由德国编舞-导演皮娜·鲍什、法国编舞-舞者杰宏·贝尔所引导的新近当代舞蹈和当代表演潮流，以及由伊冯

娜·雷纳代表的美国后现代舞趋势都开始营造一种能延长舞者舞龄的创作氛围。

随着全球本身的老龄化趋势，人们开始更加关注舞者以前不曾为人留意的片面。

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王梦凡与众多具有不同身体质感的表演者合作。如果把“衰老”的概念扩展为“长大-变老的过程”，她在上一个作品《神圣缝纫机》中是和孩子们一起细致地工作。

而这次，她面对的是退役芭蕾舞者——曹志光和刘桂林——的行动质感和身体回忆。

中国舞蹈身体的“现代”是由这两位退役舞者的衰老身体去描绘的。芭蕾被介绍进入中国，是为了实现中国舞蹈的现代化。革命现代芭蕾舞剧《白毛女》和《红色娘子军》等的出现，是服务于一种社会主义意识形态。当革命芭蕾的痕迹已经不再出现在这两位舞者身上的时候，回忆的鬼魂却以《吉赛尔》的形式出现在了舞台上，而它也是在文革期间被禁排的浪漫主义芭蕾作品。在他们开始舞蹈的时候，浪漫主义芭蕾的精神又回归到了那个被构建为中国现代舞蹈的身体上。

为了唤醒两位舞者舞蹈中的美，王梦凡打开了他们关于芭蕾的记忆、重新建立身体与精神之间的联系。当一位芭蕾艺术家掌握了一种真正的美，即使它枝叶已很少，已成为老木、却仍有“花”盛开在上面。通过这个作品所提供的一个新的美学框架，梦凡带我们在当下的时刻感受演员身上历史所留下的美。这也恰恰说明了，即便是衰老的身体，我们还是能感受到舞蹈的美。正如《仲夏夜之梦》中的织工波顿从他的仲夏夜之梦中醒来，梦凡也将一种不可见和不可言说的美在我们中间唤醒：该你上场的时候，叫你，你会回答。