

Amazed to hear these words, the priest turned the girl away with a joking answer. That night, he crept out into the darkness and came to the temple Dojoji, imploring the abbots to hide him. Having nowhere else to hide him, they lowered the bell and hid him inside. Soon the girl followed, swearing she would never let him go. At that time, Hitaka River was swollen to a furious flood and the girl could not cross over. She ran down the bank, wild with rage, until at last her jealous fury turned her into a venomous snake, and she easily swam across the river.

The serpent glided to the Temple of Dojoji, and searched here and there until her suspicions were aroused by the lowered bell. Taking the metal loop between her teeth, she coiled around the bell in seven coils. Then, breaking smoke and flames, she lashed the bell with her tail. At once, the bronze grew boiling hot and the priest, hidden inside, was burnt alive.

#### From Nanako Nakajima (Dramaturg)

Noh theatre is recognized as an "Important Intangible Cultural Property" of Japan; however, it is difficult for a contemporary audience to appreciate classic noh without some background knowledge. The texts are written in the form of verse and include quotations from ancient literature. The restricted performance style also includes cultural conventions. Even if the audience does not understand what the form means, they are supposed to appreciate the value with which this traditional Japanese form is invested. In order to provide access to Dojoji for all the people, this project develops a hyperlink to our contemporary life.

*mech[a]OUTPUT* consists of three sections in two dimensions: a temporal and spatial structure. *mech[a]OUTPUT* carefully follows the temporal structure of the original Noh play by creating *mech[a]part 1, OUTPUT*, and *mech[a]part 2*. *mech[a]part 1* copies the original first half of the Noh play. After a protagonist drops the bell, *OUTPUT* begins. Instead of telling the history of the Dojoji temple, *OUTPUT* shows a montage of archived images of women's desires to live fully as women. This part symbolically takes place inside of the dropped bell, in which the time goes beyond linear time. Out of a temporal structure, the women's grudge is crystallized into the bell, which is a video pendulum swung by physical emotion. In *mech[a]part 2*, the protagonist appears as a snake woman, coming out of the bell. She transforms herself by attaching the video pendulum to her body. Now she captures the archival memory of Dojoji into her body, changing her state of being on stage.

In terms of the spatial structure, the performance space consists of three areas: video spaces, a diagonal stage space, and the 3D game space. The performance style of noh includes symbolic conventions. When a noh actor looks slightly upward, it suggests that the moon should appear in the story. This time, koosil-ja uses a 3D virtual image in order to realize the world of Dojoji. Adding to that, koosil-ja's movements trigger the projection of the 3D image. Now the 3D world becomes not only visual subtitles of Dojoji but also an interactive game space, which is spatially separated from but temporally connected to our actual living space.

In order to translate Dojoji play of noh, koosil-ja integrates sources of elements into the technological network. In *mech[a]OUTPUT*, various video monitors show noh actors performing Dojoji. Noh actors are not physically present on the stage; however, they function as the original source of information. At the moment of distribution, koosil-ja copies this information, decoding it into her own movement vocabulary. This is her "Live-Processing" as a model of learning. The bodily techniques of the noh actors are archived, stored and transported onto those video monitors, and koosil-ja incorporates that information to create her dancing body through the archival process.

The archival process implies a separation of knowledge from the knower. This process is the act of separating the technique from the performer to share that information taken from the previous knower. In this process, the knowledge is shared not only by performers, but also other non-performers. Anyone can use the technology because it is no longer concealed inside one's body: it has already been given to all of us. In *mech[a]OUTPUT*, the information is distributed not only to koosil-ja as a performer/viewer but also to the people outside of Japan as non-performers/viewers. By sharing the knowledge of the traditional Japanese culture, the secret of noh is demystified and appears as an opened database. It no longer matters who retains the knowledge. Now that the value of the traditional becomes flat for a radical experiment, all of us equally depart from not-knowing when *mech[a]OUTPUT* opens up a new field of knowledge.

The secret of noh becomes also the restriction of noh. Using technology as a political tool, koosil-ja's modernization of noh makes the form less esoteric and more democratic. Reinterpreting ancient Japanese myth in terms of modern anxieties bridges divergent spatio-temporal structures. It no longer matters where we are now.

Now it matters where we think we are.

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**KOOSIL-JA** (Choreographer, Performer) was born in Osaka, Japan, of Korean parentage. After moving to New York in 1981 to study dance with Merce Cunningham, she was a member of the Wendy Perron Dance Company from 1987 to 1989. Koosil-ja has received five National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer Fellowships and two New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships. She has provided residency activities at Harvestworks in NYC, The Yard in Martha's Vineyard, the American Dance Festival in Durham, NC, and in Mexico through the National Endowment for the Arts' International Program and the Mexican government. Her work has been presented in New York by such venues as the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center, The Kitchen, La MaMa E.T.C., Aaron Davis Hall, Performance Space 122, The Performing Garage, Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors, Central Park SummerStage, Whitney