



DAVID HOU

The newest Canadian hybrid: Jeng Yi, the Korean drum-and-dance ensemble based in Toronto continues to grow beyond its cultural origins.

Hats off to a Korean class act

DANCE

Jeng Yi
Isabel Bader Theatre
In Toronto on Saturday

REVIEWED BY **PAULA CITRON**

One of the most intriguing aspects of the arts in Canada is the development of new forms arising out of

the fusion between Eastern and Western cultures. Jeng Yi is a case in point. The Toronto-based drum and dance ensemble is dedicated to creating original works anchored in the Korean performing-arts tradition. As proof that they represent the new Canadian hybrid, their concerts are reaching out beyond the Korean community to attract a multicultural audience, and deservedly so.

Jeng Yi, founded by composer

Hong Chul Hwa in 1998, is slick, polished, talented and vastly entertaining, and they understand how high production values can turn a concert into a class act. Stephan Droege has bathed them in striking lighting, while the group has worked hard to create seamless transitions between numbers.

The ensemble has five male percussionists who perform on two different drum types and various gongs. With only two basic instruments, the musical interest is not in the sound they make per se, but in the complex and subtle rhythms they weave together. They mostly sit cross-legged in a semi-circle, with little obvious communication. How they keep count is a marvel, constantly changing the dynamics from soft to loud, and playing with synchronization, moving from five different rhythmic journeys to an exciting, blood-racing, solid wall of sound.

Hwa's percussive music is certainly influenced by jazz syncopation, but there are folk elements as well, and together they make for a very modern, sophisticated sound generated from ancient instruments. Two delightful numbers were performed by the six talented young boys of Hyun Mu, the student company of Jeng Yi, who matched their elders in rhythmic dexterity.

The only way to describe the difficulty of the showpiece *Pyong*, created collectively by the members of

Jeng Yi, is the old trick of trying to pat your head and rub your stomach at the same time. Garbed in traditional Korean ceremonial dress, the men wore hats that were integral to the dance.

Four had long ribbons attached to the hats by wires, so not only were they creating physical patterns with their bodies as they moved rhythmically in time to their drumming, they also nodded their heads in unison to make the ribbons form circle patterns in the air. The fifth man's hat had what looked like a feather duster, and his specialty was making it open and close like a flower by moving his head back and forth.

Lovely dancer Kwon Soojung was one of two winsome young women who brought feminine grace to the performance. The other was Kim Joo Hyung, who plays a long zither called the *kayagum*.

Hyung and drummer Hwa accompanied Soojung in *Sanjo*, choreographed by Hwang Mu Bong, a charming piece that required the dancer to execute beautiful, graceful arm movements, gentle turns and soft undulations of the body. The Jeng Li ensemble performed with Soojung in the spirited *Occasion*, choreographed by the dancer and composed by Hwa. In this exciting, symbiotic battle, Soojung thrust her body into dramatic jumps, lunges and bends, mirroring the power of the drumming as the men closed around her.

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REVIEW

Fresh moves in the museum

Paula Citron

The Globe and Mail

Published Tuesday, May. 11 2010, 12:00 AM EDT

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Museum Dances (Ancient Inspiration, Contemporary Interpretation)

- CanAsian International Dance Festival
- At the Royal Ontario Museum
- in Toronto on Sunday

Dance meets history! CanAsian International Dance Festival 2010 is based on a clever idea by artistic director Denise Fujiwara. She invited four dance companies to create original pieces to original music inspired by different galleries in the Royal Ontario Museum.

The show is attracting huge crowds to the ROM. Particularly gratifying to the creators must be the fact that the many young children in the audience, including infants and toddlers, are captivated by the dance. In other words, no distracting screaming and crying.

The show is site-specific; an MC leads people to the various performing spaces. Brief descriptions of each piece precede the dance, which makes the event user friendly. The museum thoughtfully supplies folding stools for audience members to carry along.

The most successful dance site is the Ming Tomb of General Zhu Dashou and his sons. The exhibit is in a special room that rises three stories to a skylight. The massive size of the monolithic limestone pieces inspired *Koong*, choreographed by Chengxin Wei of Vancouver's Moving Dragon Dance Company.

Wei and partner Jessica Jone wear the clothes of today as the movement takes them in and around the ancient gate, the giant statues, and the rounded tomb itself. The choreography includes athletic explosions interpolated by passages of slow controlled motion.

The dance is propelled by Michael Vincent's exciting, percussive score, performed live by Vincent and TorQ Percussion Quartet. It combines humming and chanting and echoing, pounding drums.

Because the dancers are dwarfed by the towering structures, Wei succeeds in showing contrasts -

permanence and impermanence, life and death, past and present. The title is a Chinese character that means air or emptiness. The dance briefly animates the space, then the overpowering artifacts return to their silence.

Soojung Kwon's *Lines & Composition* was inspired by a vase of the Goryeo dynasty in the Korean Gallery. This dance takes place in the ROM's beautiful mosaic rotunda. The score by Charles Hong and Joo Hyung Kim is performed live by the Opaque Ensemble and Jeng Yi.

Loud blasts of a tuba announce the dance before the quieter string instruments take over. The energetic drums come in at the end. The dance itself is ritualistic, but at the same time, the four women convey the roundness and curves of the vase.

The dance steps circle as bodies gently undulate. The beautiful silk overskirts on top of wide tulle petticoats swirl and sweep in consummate feminine grace. When the heavy drums come at the end, the dance intensifies, but never loses its inherent beauty.

Alexander MacSween has given choreographer Natasha Bakht an appropriately mysterious electronica score for her dance *Dafeena*, set in the Gallery of Minerals. The many display cases contain exhibits ranging from monolithic pieces of marble and crystal to tiny gemstones.

Bakht's two dancers move up and down the length of the gallery in the narrow, central alleyway. Her choreography is anchored in South Asian bharatanatyam, and its stamping feet, wide pliés and forward lunges convey not only the pull of gravity, but the original subterranean home of the exhibits.

MacSween's score contains sounds of strain, and breaking apart, mirrored in the dancers' widely placed arms and feet. Julia Tribe's clever costumes are a series of different coloured diaphanous tunics, one over the other, evoking strata in the Earth.

Kwon and Bakht repeat in the second weekend. The third piece is by the hip-hop group F.A.M., inspired by samurai artifacts from the Prince Takamado Gallery of Japan .

Museum Dances continues at the ROM May 14 to 16. The show is free with admission.

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Ten must-see shows at Nuit Blanche 2018

This year, the all-night art festival expands to Scarborough and takes over the Ontario Science Centre for the first time

BY **ROSEMARY HEATHER**

SEPTEMBER 25, 2018 5:00 AM



Cheol Joon Baek

Nathan Phillips Square isn't the only game in town during Nuit Blanche now that the art event is expanding to Scarborough.

NUIT BLANCHE all over town, Saturday (September 29), sundown to sunrise. Free. nbto.com.

The city as art museum – that's the basic premise of annual all-night art event Nuit Blanche. Now in its 13th year, and no longer with a big bank title sponsor, Nuit Blanche continues to thrive. This year it's happening in the wake of the new MOCA's debut in the Junction, an important milestone for the city's art scene. Arguably, by showing a broad range of temporary art installations in free yearly events, Nuit Blanche helped create the overflow crowds that enjoyed MOCA's free opening weekend.

For the first time, Saturday's event will see a portion of its festivities happening in Scarborough, including a series of artist installations on the Scarborough RT Line (up until October 8). Going city-wide is an excellent way to diversify the ethos of bringing art to the people. This Nuit Blanche is creating the better megacity that Toronto needs right now. Here are 10 must-see exhibitions.

7. MODERNISM ON THE GANGES: RAGHUBIR SINGH PHOTOGRAPHS/#METOO & THE ARTS/THE HOUSE THAT WHITENESS BUILT – DIVYA MEHRA AND AMY FUNG

Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park

A chance to do your own Night At The Museum. On view are the ROM's current exhibitions – about Singh, and a show that considers his work **in the context of #MeToo accusations** against him. The evening also sees debut performances of a collaboration between Fung and Mehra (a writer and artist respectively) that brings an intersectional focus to the iconic Anne Of Green Gables story.

8. ONE SKY – MATT RUSSO AND SYSTEM SOUNDS

Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Toronto, 50 St. George

Even if the skies are not clear come Nuit Blanche evening, audiences will be able to hear this project. Astrophysicist Russo **is also a musician** and collaborates with his SYSTEM Sounds collective to translate the intensity of the stars (brightness and colour) into volume and pitch.

9. STAR MOON WATER STONE – ENSEMBLE JENG YI

Church of the Redeemer, 162 Bloor West

An all-night shamanistic performance by this Korean performing arts company and their friends from the Korean and Japanese performance-art worlds. A combination of theatre, music, drumming and dance evoke traditional Korean rituals of thanksgiving, asking the spirits for their blessings in advance of the coming winter months.

10. GHOST SCHOOL – ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

74 Wellesley West

A member of the Toronto Catholic School system, St. Joe's is using the occasion of Nuit Blanche to reflect on its history. Images of the school as it existed in its earliest form will be projected onto its former site across the street: the buildings of the MacDonald Block, sleek examples of a late-1960s

CULTURE

A massive Lego sculpture, a rave on Bay Street and six other exhibits to see at Nuit Blanche 2018

BY WILL SLOAN | SEPTEMBER 28, 2018

For its 13th year, Nuit Blanche returns to the streets of Toronto with “You Are Here,” a theme that invites artists and attendees to consider the city’s shifting identity, the divides that still exist and the communities that live here.

Here’s a guide to the best bets across the city:



Photo by David Hou

A theatric drum ritual

5 In Korean culture, all-night performances are an important part of honouring the dead and fostering community. The Korean-Canadian music and theatre troupe Ensemble Jeng Yi will turn the Church of the Redeemer into an all-night drumming and dance session, inspired by the Korean shaman rituals. They'll be joined by special guests throughout the evening, including Japanese music group Nagata Shachu and JM Dance Collective. [162 Bloor Street West.](#)



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SOOJUNG KWON (PICTURED IN A THEATRE) PUTS A SPIN ON KOREAN DANCE IN MUSEUM PIECES.

MUSEUM DANCES choreography by Natasha Bakht, Moving Dragon Dance Company and Soojung Kwon (CanAsian Dance Festival). At the Royal Ontario Museum (100 Queen's Park). May 14-16. Free with ROM admission. [See Listings](#).

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THEATRE REVIEWS

Museum Dances

REAL GEMS

BY GLENN SUMI

When in ROM... check out a dance show?

That's the brilliant idea behind this year's CanAsian Dance Festival program, which turns choreographers and dancers loose among the Royal Ontario Museum's treasures, resulting in a thrilling hybrid. Think Step Up meets Night At The Museum.

Last weekend's program included three works, two of which are being repeated this final weekend.

Soojung Kwon's *Lines & Composition* takes place in the museum's airy, spacious rotunda. Inspired by a maebyeong, a Korean vase from the Goryeo dynasty (a shame it wasn't there to look at), the piece sizzles with drama.

Blasts of a tuba announce something ceremonial as four dancers enter, faces hidden by fans. The music (by Charles Hong and Joo Hyung Kim and

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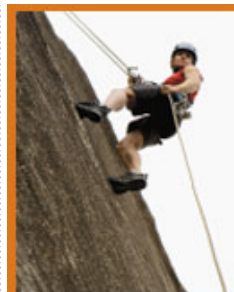
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performed by the Opaque Ensemble and Jeng Yi) changes mood, becomes more contemplative, and the dancers pick up speed, hypnotizing us with their circular movements, colourful skirts swirling as they navigate the area.

Natasha Bakht sets her piece, Dafeena, in the ROM's crystal room, and you're encouraged to walk around to get different views – much as you'd walk around a gem to see it sparkle from various angles. Dancers Aarti Joseph and Atri Nundy initially proceed down two aisles, stamping their feet dramatically or quietly lunging forward. Alexander MacSween's electronic score clangs and drips, suggesting hidden caves.

Chengxin Wei's Koong takes place in the program's most majestic setting: the huge Ming Tomb, with accompanying stone gate. In contemporary dress, dancers Jessica Jone and Wei himself separately enter the site, dwarfed by the structures. Gradually they meet, their sudden, shifting movements an attempt to make their mark amidst so much history. Michael Vincent's score, performed by TorQ Percussion Quartet, resonates beautifully in the space.

A breakdancing piece performed by F.A.M. replaces Koong at this weekend's performances.

NOW | May 13-20, 2010 | VOL 29 NO 37

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April 5, 2012 at 3:21pm

CONCERT REVIEW: Jeng Yi, Korean Drum and Dance Ensemble

 By [Paloma Capanna](#)

Comments (0)

Wednesday night, the audience at Kilbourn Hall was treated to a high-energy performance by Korean drum and dance ensemble Jeng Yi. The performance was part of the World Music Series, hosted annually by the Eastman School of Music.

The program notes explain that "jeng yi" translates to "virtuoso" or "go-getter," "a person who executes something with great expertise, bravado, and flair, and a touch of good-natured mischief." Jeng Yi's performance lived up to its name.

Jeng Yi is a troop of eight musicians who play various percussion instruments, including two types of leather drums called the "janggo" and the "buk," metal gongs called the "jing" and the "kkwaenggari," cymbals, and more. Also featured was a "kayagum," which is a 12-string zither, a long stringed instrument played from a seated, floor position.

Dressed in traditional garb of black and white tunics over pants, with red, yellow, and blue chest and waist ties, the Jeng Yi performance included the "pyong," a dance with a ribbon attached to the tip of a hat, being spun and twirled in a highly choreographed manner, by the movements of the head and neck of the dancer.

For more than an hour, Jeng Yi performed percussion-driven music in rhythmic patterns that frequently ended at a heightened pace. On several occasions, the audience clapped and cheered during the performance, taken up by the spirit of the music. Every one of the percussion pieces had a powerful drive to its tempo and structure. ♦

The two pieces featuring Joo Jyung Kim playing the kayagum, as performed with janggo drum, were soulful, searching, and to me suggested mist-clouded mountain tops. Kim's delivery was technically, emotionally, and aesthetically complete. She is a true artist.

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