

Netta Plotzki

The Wonderland of Butoh

*I place my footsteps
carefully on the ground.
Each footstep has its own
weight and its own rhythm.
I am led by the sound
of music and all the pores
in my body
have been transformed
into ears.*

Welcome to Butoh: a very special, private, and universal experience. In front of me I see a mountain which I must climb. My words will be footsteps on the road that will take me to the top of the mountain where I will attain the fullness of my whole body.

All bodies hold within themselves all these elements:
Tears, sweat, urine, blood - all the liquids.
Delicate skin that embraces the inner organs -
heart, liver, kidney, etc.
Air dances throughout all bodily spaces, around,
in and out, in and out.
Bones that comprise the skeleton which dance
and release tension from the muscles.
Meridians which sing of the river of life.
Muscles that have the flexibility to stretch
beyond the day-to-day measure of expression.
Metals and minerals that transpose us
into children of the planet.

The body while it is dancing moves these elements and is hidden like an illusion, which the actor creates in his or her appearance. In dance all is relative and dependent on the seasons, the cycle of life and the level of emotional intelligence. Everything is hidden as if in a secret, faraway temple. It is waiting to be unveiled again and again.

The longing for a key to these sacred secrets and the expectation of revelation comfort me like a baby in a cradle, shakes me up like Jonah in the body of the whale or like a baby in the paradise of the mother's womb.

This feeling is so overwhelming that I don't want it to drown me. But there is a magic in the telling, and I am very grateful to be asked to share this experience with everyone who has already met Butoh and will meet Butoh in the future.

I place my footsteps carefully on the ground. Each footstep has its own weight and its own rhythm. I am led by the

sound of music and all the pores in my body have been transformed into ears. I hear whispers and shouts suddenly instructing me, sometimes softly and sometimes forcing me to the ground. I rise again and again.

Climbing up this magical mountain takes me higher and higher and suddenly I am on my back, and if I turn around in circles there is no way I can avoid touching the sky with the tips of my fingers and toes, one by one and altogether in harmony with my heart-beat. It has to be this way.

The heart is the leader of the Butoh dance.

There is a longing to sink into Mother Earth and be nourished and loved forever.

I am speaking from my belly now and I feel its contractions. Although I have never given birth to a child there is an urgency to give birth. And I have to be careful and pay attention to my breathing in and out, in and out, in a circle in order to liberate and deliver to you this confession by means of this page.

These are tools that were revealed to me in the first meeting with Butoh. The ones who opened this gate for me were Kazuo Ohno and his wife (the latter passed away two years ago). Now Kazuo Ohno is ninety-three and still I am nurtured by his teaching that lives within me.

I was introduced to Master Ohno by a Butoh dancer, Natzu Nakajima, and I was escorted to this destined meeting by an Israeli artist, a friend, Nourit Mason Sekine, who then lived in Japan. I feel blessed, and I am grateful to them for escorting me to this place where I experienced my initiation. For me this became a new level of a living rela-

tionship with my profession as an actress, on all aspects of feeling, thinking, acting and being.

I became a teacher and a guide to other actors who wanted to experience this level of work. In 1985 Ohno came with his son to Israel and watched my performance in *In the Defence of Joy*. He also observed my class of students at the actor workshop at the Nissan Native Studio for Acting, and he said: "I find myself here". Afterwards we went to the Dead Sea to dance on the salty hills. Out of this experience he created a new dance called *The Living Creatures of the Dead Sea*.

I would like to tell you about another magical moment when Ohno asked me to dance with my mother whom I dearly love. I was struck by an electric shock within my belly. Ohno noticed it and said: "Okay, okay, now dance with your father". Again it was as if a fist was hitting my insides. And then Ohno said: "Okay, okay, now dance with me". Only then could I start my new dance. I was released. I was amazed to discover this anger hidden so deep inside me. It released the Genie from the bottle of my insides.

But this is another story.

NETTA PLOTZKI (Israel) is an actress and is at the moment working on a character that is collecting an archive to remember the murder of Rabin. David Mayan is directing her in this project. Netta also collaborates with Acco Theatre.



Elizabeth Matinetsa Mongoma. Photo: Lars Colberg