

The body is universal

THE Butoh dance-theatre originated in Japan at the beginning of the 1960s. The new dance movement and form, rooted in Japanese culture, focussed on traditional movements of the body. Students of the illustrious Japanese Butoh dancer Min Tanaka, Tess de Quincy from Denmark and Stuart Lynch from United Kingdom recently performed "In Time", an experimental butoh dance-theatre, at the Max Muller Bhavan under the auspices of the Goethe Institute and British Council.

Sounds of water and the chattering of birds awake the seminude Tess, wrapped in an olive green overcoat with buttons in the rear, and the bare-bodied Stuart. Tess creeps up stretching and quivering. To the accompaniment of the scream of wild animals, Stuart waves his hands, while standing. The dancers prowl and gradually move towards each other. Soon Tess leaves Stuart and runs. As Stuart stumbles and falls, Tess clutches the X-ray projection of a bent human figure.

The music switches to classical strains, then Japanese pop. The dancers execute slow movements and then, standing with their bodies stretched backwards, try to create an image of the rain drenching the body.

The slow and pulsating movements mirror a life moved by social forces. In the Japanese butoh dance, the movements over large areas highlight the universality of the body. The performance has deep sculptural influences from Europe. Both dancers are students of sculpture.