

CARLOTTA IKEDA  
COMPAGNIE ARIADONE

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**UCHUU-CABARET**

**PRESS**

Contact :

Samuel DESSENOIX / Aurélie FAVRE  
64, rue Surson - 33 300 Bordeaux  
Tel (33) 05 56 39 16 77 - [ariadone@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ariadone@wanadoo.fr)  
[www.ariadone.fr](http://www.ariadone.fr)

## LE DAUPHINE LIBERE Wednesday 19 february 2008

### **Ikeda Circus**

Sunday evening in the Salle Benoît XII. All aboard for a voyage to a world of dreams, magic and fantasy in Carlotta Ikeda's *Uchuu-Cabaret*. Drawing from the source of her Bûto and from the atmosphere of the times, the choreographer invents a series of portraits, scenes or mirrors portraying the universe and arousing the mind... Carlotta Ikeda makes no sacrifices to aesthetics and presents her circus with a touch of humour and a surprising, disconcerting and quite entertaining result!

**Sophie Bauret**

## LA PROVENCE Wednesday 19 february 2008

### **With Carlotta Ikeda, Butô dreams of taking off**

Feet glued to the ground and body suspended in mid-air (buttocks and breasts powdered and bared or covered with feathers and glass), the high priestess of Butô likes nothing more than to push back the limits. She gave a masterful demonstration of this at the *Hivernales* in 2005 and 2006, and after an encounter with trapeze artist Mélissa von Vépy, the provocative Carlotta is back once again in full flight, throwing the bodies of her six dancers through the air.

She also stays true to one of the great temptations of her spectacular shows, presenting a sequence of music-hall style "acts" in which Butô mingles with Greek statuary, Baudelairian drunkenness, Japanese hip-hop or French cancan, science-fiction and sadomasochism... There is something for all tastes (good and bad alike) in this sumptuously mad, baroque *Uchuu Cabaret*, interrupted twice by a solo by Carlotta Ikeda as she reverts to childhood, pushing a ball full of dreams around in front of her. Sublime!

**Daniele Carraz**

## 24 heures - Lausanne February 2008

### **Hanging Around with Carlotta Ikeda**

**Clowns or *femmes fleurs*, contorted creatures or *femmes fatales*, in *Uchuu-Cabaret* presented on Tuesday at the Octagone in Pully, six most singular dancers sway between worlds. Fascinating.**

They float in the airs, hanging from fine threads from above. Clinging to each other six foot above the floor, the six performers form a constellation hovering somewhere between electric cloud and cosmic monster. This first scene of the extravagant cabaret opened by Carlotta Ikeda plunges into the meanders of time and space, of reality and phantasmagoria. Not only does the show play on the music of the spheres, there is also a more-than-passing reference to an encounter of the third kind. The acts go by the names *Turning space inside out like a glove* or *Flying without leaving the ground...* and in them, everything is possible. Surrealistic, delicate and suggestive scenes succeed each other, with darker incursions of Berlin-style cabaret and tortured eroticism.

### **Enchanting fluidity**

Sublimely baroque and poetic, this brand new creation by Carlotta Ikeda takes us on a voyage into her imagination, humour and profoundest urges, Expressing ambiguity in a constant to and fro between inside and out, and sometimes reaching a sort of folly close to ecstasy. The Japanese choreographer and dancer appears at the start and the end of the show as a tormented, yet resourceful pixie, And her solos are as poignant as ever, reaching into our most intimate depths. The white-powdered dancers also adopt the techniques of Bûto, moving with enchanting fluidity and changing personality within the same eternal organic movement. From animal to *demi-mondaine*, twins suspended to crawling on the floor, grotesque creatures to floral beauties, Carlotta's world is a dark lake teeming with burlesque fantasy.

**Corinne Jaquery**

**CARLOTTA IKEDA**

**A CABARET OF METAMORPHOSES TO ENTERTAIN THE GODS**

**Carlotta Ikeda's female Butô takes place "in a place where imaginations float in space". In Japan, after all, the first dance was invented by a divinity.**

It is an amusing detail. That it should be within the walls of Avignon, the City of the Popes, that Carlotta Ikeda created her latest show, *Uchuu-Cabaret*. A cabaret, indeed, that even dares an irreverent take on the French cancan, although it is far removed from the striptease à la Moulin Rouge, with its succession of scenes in which the body goes through many a metamorphosis, from Medusa in the initial sequences through to Gorgon, embodied by seven performers. Elves or pixies from some metaphorical reservation become grotesque dolls with red-heeled shoes, and then beribboned and somewhat bawdy geishas. "Uchuu is a place where imaginations float in space", says Carlotta Ikeda. But for those familiar with the itinerary of the Butô dancer and choreographer, Uchuu is also the (perhaps more settled) spectre of the beginnings of the shadow dance, when its inventor Tatsumi Hijikata would part finance some of his creations by enrolling his dancers to work in the erotic cabarets of Shinjuku in Tokyo.

So it does seem somewhat comical that such a creation should see the light of day in a venue named after Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342) of Avignon, when Paul Bourcier, the dance historian, reminds us that in the Christian church "dance has been the target of repeated condemnations since the earliest times". "Where there is dancing, there is the Devil" warned John Chrysostome, patriarch of Constantinople, in reference to the dance of Salome.

**Dance and divinity**

Nietzsche had Zarathustra say "I would only be able to believe in a God that could dance". It is no coincidence that one of the major shows of Carlotta Ikeda, created in 1980 and recently reprised, was entitled *Zarathustra*. It shows a world swarming with savagery and chanted by a choir of furies. How tumultuous are the ties between dance and divinity! The modernity that set up the figure of the artist-creator (and therefore a kind of anti-God) gave rise to the awakening of the (under)ground considered in the classical illusion merely as a foundation for elevation. The resulting release of bodily forces, as if from a corset, turned to the waves of nature (Isadora Duncan) and the bedrock of the subconscious, with the legendary *Witch Dance* of Mary Wigman. Devoid of religious legitimacy, it was with the rising sap of spring that dance celebrated its *Rite*. Since Nijinski and Stravinski in 1913, the tenacious *Rite of Spring* has been an initiation for many a major choreographer, and Carlotta Ikeda was no exception to the rule, with her *Haru no Saiten* in 1998, although her *Rite* not only dispensed with the music of Stravinski, but also ignored the theme of the sacrifice of the chosen one.

In Butô, however, there is an obvious sacrificial dimension, as embodied magnificently by Hijikata himself, with his Christ-like appearance always evident in the films and photographs that remain of his works. When Hijikata gave form, at the beginning of the 1960s, to the "Dance of the shadows", it was with regret at the western lifestyle taking over in Japan under the American occupation after the Second World War. One of his most important shows, *The Revolt of the Body* in 1968, was subtitled *Laboratory of the Japanese Body*. Hijikata's aim, in fact, was to find the form of an ontologically Japanese body in the entrails of the dance. So what is the relationship with the sacred?

In Japan, one of the prime roles of the theatre was referred to as *kami asobu* which we could translate by "entertaining the gods". Japanese dance has kept the term *kagura* to refer to dances offered to the gods in their temples. But today's rites in Shinto places of worship to "chase evil spirits" bear little resemblance to the exasperation of trance and exaggerated burlesque of the beginnings. In the mythological traditions of Japan, the first dance was invented by a divinity, *Ame-no-uzume-no-mikoto*. To bring the goddess of the sun, *Amaterasu-ô-mi-kami*, out of the celestial cavern where she had been hiding away after being offended, she went into a trance and bared herself, thereby causing deafening laughter from the "eight hundred myriads". When we remind Carlotta Ikeda of this legend, she smiles, but if you take a look at a photo from one of her very first shows, *Erotic Soul Dance*, with the body bared and breasts bedecked with iron instruments, we can very much imagine her as the distant descendant of *Ame-no-uzume-no-mikoto*.

## MOUVEMENT April - June 2008 (suite...)

Carlotta Ikeda does not wish to intellectualise the sacred (or transgression) element of her dance. In her own words "When I dance, there are two me's: one is no longer under control and is in a trance, while the other is watching the former quite clear-sightedly. Sometime the two me's meet in a sort of blind folly close to ecstasy. This is the state the Butô dancer must be in search of. I dance to experience this special moment". For Carlotta Ikeda, dance is this place, this mystery where what she gives is not only her presence. Can we use the term sacred to describe this ecstasy (here, white makeup creates a neutral surface, making the body abstract and depersonalised of its affects, a blank page where life and death, presence and absence exchange their densities) that Butô celebrates in the dreamlike paganism of a cabaret of metamorphoses.

**UCHUU CABARET WAS CREATED AT THE HIVERNALES D'AVIGNON ON 17 FEBRUARY 2008**

**CARLOTTA IKEDA IS CREATING SORA NO AO - THE BLUE OF THE SKY, A PIECE FOR THREE DANCERS, MUSIC BY KAMAL HAMADACHE AND ALAIN MAHE, FROM 14 TO 7 MAY AT THE SALLE DES EAUX VIVES (ADC), GENEVA, THEN ON 27 MAY AT THE PHENIX, SCENE NATIONALE DE VALENCIENNES.**

**Biography:** Carlotta IKEDA started dancing in Tokyo at the start of the 1960s. She encountered contemporary dance with pupils of Mary Wigman and Martha Graham. After seeing Tatsumi Hijikata, she turned to Butô and set up the Ariadone Company in 1974, composed exclusively of women. She is now based in France, in Bordeaux. Among her major shows: solos (*Utt*, 1981 and *Waiting*, 1996) and group choreographies (*Last Eden*, 1978; *Zarathustra*, 1980; *Haru no Saiten*, 1998). She has just created *Uchuu-Cabaret* at the Hivernales d'Avignon

**Jean Marc Adolphe**

## Danser - May 2008

### **Uchuu-Cabaret by Carlotta Ikeda**

How funny Butô can be! In *Uchuu-Cabaret* at least, where we are perhaps closer to a surreal pastel-shaded review. Carlotta Ikeda, the only Japanese performer on stage, opens the ball draped in gold and playing with a ball, as we find ourselves in a timeless fairytale world. Less symbolic than their choreographer, the six European dancers, including Anna Ventura, Mathilde Lapostolle and circus performer Mélissa van Vépy, are the ideal embodiment of a Dadaist, unbridled and fanciful universe. No, this cabaret does not take us far from Butô, for it refers back to its origins in expressionism, political awareness and erotic cabaret. In this genuine "Butô-kiri", the founder of Ariadone also slips in references to the ethereal femininity of Kazuo Ohno. From the world of Freaks to burlesque striptease, from Nijinski to Chinese circus acts, ballet to cancan, rap to traditional masks, the whitened bodies and faces as if from another age offer unity between the components of the show, even its erotic scenes. As Dadaist as you could wish, the fifteen stunning scenes pay homage to the imagination. And while it does seem less beautiful than the Butô of the 1960s, this cabaret is just as free-spirited in a boundless inner "ushuu" (cosmos). If a few hitches in the rhythm and gesture could just be ironed out, *Ushuu-Cabaret* would be up there with the best by Ikeda, on a par with *Zarathustra* and *Language of the Sphinx*.

**Thomas Mahn**