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**Japan Society
Presents**

“Contemporary Dance Festival: Japan + East Asia”

**Friday, January 14 &
Saturday, January 15**
Performances @ 7:30 PM

Featuring the North American Premieres:

- ***Complement*** / Choreographed & Performed by Choi x Kang Project (Korea)
- ***Touchdown*** / Choreographed & Performed by Hao Cheng (Taiwan)
- ***A HUM SAN SUI*** / Choreographed & Performed by Kentaro Kujirai and Barabbas Okuyama (Japan)

Japan Society
(333 East 47th Street)

New York, NY, December 2, 2021 – In January 2022, **Japan Society’s Contemporary Dance Festival: Japan + East Asia** brings groundbreaking artists from the other side of the globe to New York audiences, in two performances only: **Friday, January 14** and **Saturday, January 15** at **7:30pm**. Presented as part of **Japan Society’s 2021-2022 Performing Arts Season**, the **Contemporary Dance Festival**, features three North American premieres from Japan, Taiwan and Korea, in a highly selective program assembled by the Society's Artistic Director, Yoko Shioya.

Japan Society relaunches a proud tradition with this biennial event, which was last slated to appear in New York in January 2021, but was necessarily postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The upcoming festival marks the much-anticipated return of contemporary dance from a vibrant slate of international choreographers and performers. This festival, which over the course of two decades enjoyed 18 action-packed installments, celebrates defining artists of the present moment.

The 2021 **Contemporary Dance Festival: Japan + East Asia** features 3 North American Premieres:

- Duo **Choi x Kang Project** twitch and jerk like windup toys to the sound of a ticking clock in their comical and technically-daring piece **Complement** [Korea].
- In **Touchdown**, mathematician-turned-choreographer **Hao Cheng** uses the stage as his chalkboard in a solo that explores quantum physics through repetitive circular motion [Taiwan].
- Butoh artists **Kentaro Kujirai** and **Barabbas Okuyama** embody the philosophy of yin and yang in their haunting duet entitled **A HUM SAN SUI** [Japan].

These three premieres will be presented in two performances: **Friday, January 14** and **Saturday, January 15 at 7:30pm**. On both nights, audiences are invited to arrive by **6:45pm** to watch a special solo performance in the Society's lobby titled **FreeSteps – NiNi**, choreographed by **Wei-Chia Su** — the founder of one of Taiwan's most-celebrated dance companies **HORSE**. Attendance is limited to a maximum of 120 observers at this time; no admission is required.

Tickets & Information:

Performances are **Friday, January 14 at 7:30pm*** and **Saturday, January 15 at 7:30pm†**.

Tickets are \$30 / \$25 Japan Society members.

* followed by a *MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception*

† followed by an Artist Q&A

Tickets can be purchased online at www.japansociety.org or by calling the Box Office at 212-715-1258 (M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm). Japan Society is located at 333 East 47th Street, between First and Second Avenues (accessible by the 4/5/6 at 42nd Street-Grand Central Station or the E at Lexington Avenue and 53rd Street). In compliance with CDC, New York State, and New York City guidelines, visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination and wear a proper, secure-fitting mask at each performance. View our current visitor policies and safety protocols [here](#). For more information, call 212-832-1155 or visit www.japansociety.org

2022 Contemporary Dance Festival Featured Works and Artist Biographies:

Complement / Choreographed & Performed by Choi x Kang Project

North American Premiere

Described as “a whimsical fantasy which kept the brain fully engaged” by Philip Gowman (*London Korean Links*), **Complement** is a technically-daring piece that layers the two dancers' live performance with handheld footage captured by a third person. As subsequent video recordings of the live performance are played back on monitors behind the dancers, the subtle differences between each successive recording depict the intricacies of the dancers' gestures unravelling into chaos. Choi x Kang Project's piece won the Jury Prize at the Yokohama Dance Collection Competition in 2018 and was invited to be performed at The Place in London, UK, and Flora Theater Festival in Olomouc, Czech Republic. In 2019, *Complement* was selected to be performed at STEP UP — a repertoire development project by Korea National Contemporary Dance Company — and premiered as a developed piece, titled *A Complement Set - Disappearing with an Impact*.

Choreographers/Performers: **Choi x Kang Project** (Choi Min-sun and Kang Jin-an)

Stage Manager: Eujin Jo

Producer: Sin Ae Park

Choi x Kang Project is a project group based in Seoul, South Korea, and was founded by Choi Min-sun and Kang Jin-an in 2015. The group's mission is to look for intuitive ways to create motion and focus on the process of connecting external devices to the body through diverse experiments. After dancing with the Korea National Contemporary Dance Company from 2010 to 2016, Choi and Kang started working together as their own group. They were quickly acknowledged for their potential, receiving various awards and opportunities for projects supporting young promising choreographers, such as the Best Choreography Award from Seoul Dance Collection for their piece *Basic Dance* in

2015. These opportunities further solidified the unique style and direction of the Choi x Kang Project both in and outside of Korea.

Touchdown / Choreographed & Performed by Hao Cheng

North American Premiere

Touchdown is a solo performance combining monologues and dance, performed by mathematician-turned-choreographer Hao Cheng. The work, first performed in 2019, uses quantum physics as an analogy for life in its portrayal of the choreographer's personal struggles and breakthroughs. In *Touchdown*, Cheng's unique background in mathematics gives him perspective on both the abstract concepts and flesh-and-blood performative elements of this dynamic solo — a quietly thrilling meeting of popular science and the poetry of motion. Featuring a blackboard-like surface and chalk, Cheng ceaselessly charts his nimble, emotive movements; his dance gradually transforming the space into a visual art installation. A highly personal and intentionally low-tech examination of the seemingly unresolvable contradictions of being alive, this elegantly-conceived show gives quantum physics and the uncertainty principle fresh meaning and a human face.

Choreographer/Performer: **Hao Cheng**

Dramaturge: Yu-Chun Chen

Lighting Designer: Ke-Chu Lai

Sound Designer: Chao-En Cheng

Stage Manager: Chih-Wei Tseng

Hao Cheng established Incandescence Dance in Taiwan in 2019. His company creates contemporary dance works that explore the poetry of motion with scientific and mathematical thinking. Science and art are often seen as two separate cultures, yet the founder Hao Cheng's pursuit of science and art both stem from his curiosity towards the world. That curiosity is the drive behind all human activities. Beyond the complicated language of physics and mathematics, the poetry of science can be as accessible and enjoyable as the art, and the company Incandescence Dance wishes to reveal that through dance.

A HUM SAN SUI / Choreographed & Performed by Kentaro Kujirai and Barabbas Okuyama

North American Premiere

Embodying the dialectic struggle of yin and yang, Kujirai and Okuyama emerge and recede in and out of the stage lights in their haunting duet **A HUM SAN SUI**. With an eerie sound design by FUJIIIIIIIIIIITA, the two butoh performers twist and writhe at time like a singular being and at other times as two transient entities traversing the stage. Their duet is punctuated by shifts in tone and costuming inspired by their respective butoh styles as their frenetic movements in near darkness transform into those of airy, ethereal creatures in the second half. Initially conceived as a solo piece, Okuyama performed in and Kujirai choreographed *A HUM SAN SUI* for their first production together in 2018. Hailed as a breath of fresh air on the butoh scene, in April 2019, the pair launched KENTARO KUJIRAI & BARABBAS OKUYAMA—a project seeking new possibilities in butoh for the next generation of practitioners. This led to showcasing a co-choreographed duet, *HI NO SHI DU KU*, at the J-K (Japan-Korea) Duo Dance Festival in Saitama, Japan in May 2019 and at a festival in Seoul, South Korea in November of that same year. In between those events, the artists were also invited to stage *A HUM SAN SUI* in August 2019 at the prestigious ChangMu Performing Arts Festival in Seoul, where their stylish and energetic contemporary butoh was enthusiastically received.

Choreographers/Performers: **Kentaro Kujirai, Barabbas Okuyama**

Music: FUJIIIIIIIIIIITA

Set Design: T O J U

Costume Designer: Mika Tominaga

Kentaro Kujirai, born in 1980, Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, began studying butoh under Akira Kasai, one of the progenitors of butoh dance. Four years later, he was selected as the main dancer and eurythmist in Kasai's famous Tenshikan (Sant'Angelo) company, which led to many subsequent performance in local and international festivals. To further his career in butoh, he founded the dance unit CORBUS

with his colleague at Tenshikan, Makoto Sadakata and later on, founded his own company KENTARO KUJIRAI Konpeito in 2015. His works have received several awards such as the Newcomer Prize in the annual Dance Critics Awards in 2018, for *A HUM SAN SUI*, and the Miyagi Prefecture Art Encouragement Award Dance Section Newcomer Award in 2019.

Barabbas Okuyama, in 2001, joined Dairakudakan (meaning “Great Camel Battleship”), the internationally-known and legendary, large-scale butoh company founded and led by Akaji Maro. Aside from taking roles in all of Dairakudakan’s main productions, he has choreographed and performed his own original works including *Sagram-Boy* (2009), *Crucifixion* (2013), and the solo piece *U TSU SHI MI* (2016). In April 2019, Barabbas and fellow dancer Kentaro Kujirai started a project named KENTARO KUJIRAI & BARABBAS OKUYAMA, in which they staged their dance-duo work *Hi no shi du ku*. Barabbas has performed in butoh and contemporary dance programs, and at several international dance festivals in South Korea, Hungary and other countries.

FreeSteps - NiNi / Choreographed by Wei-Chia Su / Performed by Yu-Ting Fang

FreeSteps – NiNi is a piece that Wei-Chia Su created in the sixth year of his ten-year-long choreography project to create dance outside of the confines of a theater. In this project, audiences encounter dancers under street lights in the city, where all of the elements, including the temperature, lighting and landscape at that time as well as passersby, become materials for the dancers’ creation. The dancers’ physical bodies stretch and curl in merriment or pain depending on the surrounding stimuli. Like a living sculpture garden, the dancers’ differing physiques and movements are highlighted by the stark shadows cast on their bodies. For Japan Society’s presentation, ticket holders and the general public are invited to arrive at 6:45 pm to watch a solo performance of **FreeSteps – NiNi**, performed in the Society’s lobby. Attendance is limited to a maximum of 120 observers at this time.

Choreographer: Wei-Chia Su

Performer: Yu-Ting Fang

Lighting & Stage Designer: Chia-Ming Liu

Sound Designer: Yannick Dauby

Producer: Wen Huang

Wei-Chia Su, born in Kaohsiung, in 2004 co-founded HORSE. His numerous choreographies and collaborations include the group-created work *Velocity*, a winner of the 6th Taishin Arts Awards; and the autobiographical piece *2 Men*, a collaboration with Wu-kang Chen, and the First Prize winner and Audiences’ Choice winner of the 2013 Kurt-Jooss-Preis. His ongoing *FreeSteps* project, launched in 2013, explores the relationship between contours, movements, characters, rhythm, music, and light; a performance at Les Hivernales - CDCN d’Avignon was described as “a succession of shocks that drive the imagination into obscure and delicious depths.”

About Japan Society's Contemporary Dance Festival

From 1997 – 2019, Japan Society’s Contemporary Dance Showcase acted as a vital incubator for Japanese and East Asian choreographers, introducing them to the U.S. during the annual Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) Conference and serving to launch and support their international careers. A leading platform for the introduction of Japanese choreographers and companies, the Dance Showcase expanded in 2008 to include artists and works from the broader East Asian region, including Taiwan and South Korea. Many Dance Showcase “alumni” have gone on to perform in major venues such as Jacobs Pillow Dance, Walker Art Center, The Kennedy Center, The Joyce Theater and others. Through dozens of debuts and premieres, the Dance Showcase has introduced Kota Yamazaki, Jo Kanamori’s Noism, the late Ko Murobushi and his Ko & Edge Co. and chelfitsch Theater Company, among many artists who rose to international acclaim. Now, twenty years later, this popular event in Japan Society’s Performing Arts Program appropriately has changed its name in 2019 to **Contemporary Dance Festival** to continue and further its mission to present artists and works that push the envelope of contemporary dance throughout Japan & East Asia.

About Japan Society

Japan Society continues a return to live, in-person performance with programs in the disciplines of theater, dance, music and more, slated for Fall 2021 and Winter/Spring 2022. In Fall 2021, Japan Society gave the spotlight to the local artistic community, with the timely and topical works of three NYC-based artists with deep ties to Japan and its culture – Suzi Takahashi's *The Story Box* (September 11 – co-presented and produced by HERE), Aya Ogawa's *The Nosebleed* (October 1 – 10), and Sachiyo Takahashi's *SHEEP #1* (November 4 – 7).

Looking ahead to Winter/Spring 2022, Japan Society welcomes back international artists including emerging Japanese playwright Shoko Matsumura with the play *Cooking Up* (December 6). Following January's *Contemporary Dance Festival*, in Spring 2022, the Society's Performing Arts programming will highlight indigenous art forms from Japan's northernmost and southernmost prefectures, Hokkaido and Okinawa, with two distinct programs to complete the season: *Waves Across Time: Traditional Dance and Music of Okinawa* (March 2022) and *OKI: Music of the Ainu* (May 2022).

Japan Society is the premier organization connecting Japanese arts, culture, business, and society with audiences in New York and around the world. At Japan Society, we are inspired by the Japanese concept of *kizuna* (絆)—forging deep connections to bind people together. We are committed to telling the story of Japan while strengthening connections within New York City and building new bridges beyond. In over 100 years of work, we've inspired generations by establishing ourselves as pioneers in supporting international exchanges in arts and culture, business and policy, as well as education between Japan and the U.S. We strive to convene important conversations on topics that bind our two countries together, champion the next generation of innovative creators, promote mutual understanding, and serve as a trusted guide for people everywhere who seek to more fully appreciate the rich complexities and abundance of Japan. From our New York headquarters, a landmark building designed by architect Junzo Yoshimura that opened to the public in 1971, we look forward to the years ahead, which will be defined by our digital and ideational impact through the *kizuna* that we build. Our future can only be enhanced by learning from our peers and engaging with our audiences, both near and afar.

This year, Japan Society is celebrating our heritage through the 50th anniversary of our landmark building with the launch of a new distinct modern logo and visual identity. The "JS" monogram is created via overlapping, interconnected lines and shapes, reinforcing the idea of *kizuna* and that Japan Society acts as a platform that connects across, cultures, people, and time.

Connect with us!

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/japansociety; @japansociety and #japansociety on Instagram; and @japansociety on Twitter.

Support for 2021-2022 Performing Arts Season

Lead Sponsor: MetLife Foundation. This season is made possible, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Major support is generously provided by Doug and Teresa Peterson, with endowment support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Endowment Fund and the Endowment for the Performing Arts, established with a leadership gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Additional support is provided by Helen and Kenneth A. Cowin, Dr. Jeanette C. Takamura, Dr. and Mrs. Carl F. Tausch II, Mr. Alan M. Suhonen‡, Sarah Billingham Solomon and Howard Solomon, Paula S. Lawrence, Dr. Stephen and Mrs. Michiko Levine, Marjorie Neuwirth, Hiroko Onoyama, Lyndley and Samuel Schwab, Nora and David Tezanos, and Nancy and Joe Walker. Transportation assistance is provided by All Nippon Airways Co., Ltd. Yamaha is the official piano provider of Japan Society. MetLife Meet-the-Artists Reception is provided by MetLife Foundation.

‡ In memoriam.

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