Looking for Harmony

Woodside dancers make sense of a distorted world in ‘ascendence’

Photo courtesy Todd Richmond and Topaz Arts
Dancers Paz Tahuquet and Chia Ying Kao appear in “ascendence” at Topaz Arts in Woodside this weekend.
Woodside dancer reflects on state of world after 9/11

BY ADAM PINCUS

Dancer Paz Tanjuquio received inspiration from an unpublished manuscript called “Soundless Music.” It was written in 1962 by a teenage Yoko Ono, the Japanese musician and artist who famously married John Lennon as the Beatles were breaking up, as a response to the atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan at the end of World War II.

Tanjuquio, 40, used Ono’s narrative to start a work in progress called “ascendance.” Tanjuquio and dancer Chia Ying Koo will perform it this weekend at the Topaz Arts theater space in Woodside. It is the second performance toward an anticipated premiere sometime later this year or next spring.

“Rather than focus on the actual text for this version, I am working on creating my own ideas,” Tanjuquio said. In “Soundless Music,” “there is a lot of imagery of distorted images ... for me it feels the same after 9/11. For us in dance, we are trying to find balance in this distorted world, so a lot of the movement and imagery is about finding balance,” she said.

“The imagery is there as far as how to pick yourself up,” Tanjuquio continued. “That could relate to a nation or a building.”

Topaz Arts, located at 55-03 39th Ave. in Woodside, is a nonprofit formed in 2000 by Tanjuquio and her husband, composer and filmmaker Todd Richmond, 45. The couple live in Woodside.

Topaz Arts is a multidisciplinary arts organization that offers performance space, technical advice and residency opportunities for artists. The weekend performances include music by Richmond and lighting by Mark Simpson, as well as a movie before the dance. Also exhibited over the weekend will be a site-specific art installation by Richmond, Tanjuquio and Simpson.

“The installation in our gallery creates a certain space the audience walks through, created by a shifting environment ... different shifts in space,” she said.

“Ascendance” will be performed the nights of June 15 and 16 only. For more information or to reserve tickets, call 718-505-0440 or go to www.topazarts.org.

Reach reporter Adam Pincus by e-mail at apincus@timesledger.com or by phone at 718-229-0300, ext. 154.

Photo courtesy Todd Richmond

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Paz Tanjuquio
Choreographer, dancer

IF YOU GO

“ascendance”
When: Saturday, June 15, and Sunday, June 16
Where: Topaz Arts, 55-03 39th Ave., Woodside
Cost: $80 suggested donation
For more: 718-505-0440, rsvp@topazarts.org