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Horse plans to go the distance

The all-male dance troupe and their French collaborators have had to jump over a lot of hurdles to get their latest production ready

By Diane Baker / Staff Reporter



Starting this week, the men of Horse will be performing their new work Successor from Thursday to Sunday over three weekends at Huashan 1914 Creative Park in Taipei.

Photo Courtesy of Horse

Dance collective Horse (驫舞劇 場) is taking its biggest jump over the hurdles ever, with an ambitious three-week-long sound environment installation and dance project at Huashan 1914 Creative Park, titled Successor (繼承者).

Starting on Thursday, the troupe will perform a total of 12 shows spread out over three weekends, with each weekend featuring a very different program that includes specific challenges for both dancers and audience members. The second and third weekends build on elements of the first, but while Horse would love people to see a show from each weekend, the programs are also designed to stand alone.

Horse has once again enlisted Taiwan-based French sound artist Yannick Dauby to create the soundscape for the shows. Dauby recruited two old friends and collaborators from France to help out this year, Christophe Havard and Hughes Germain, along with team members from Volume-Collectif.

The first challenge was to take a 500m2 hall and turn it into a very personal, intimate space for dance, yet one that reflects the building's unique character and history. The second challenge was to come up with a show that engaged three of the four senses: sight, sound and touch, which meant creating free-standing structures that could both produce and amplify sound.

Horse co-founder and artistic director Chen Wu-kang (陳武康) said they must have been



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crazy to think they could pull something like this off — and not lose their shirts in the process. They got a grant to help produce the show, but it was NT\$500,000 less than they had asked for, he said.

This forced them to be more innovative in terms of staging — for example, seats have been built out of stacks of newspapers sourced from Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation recycling centers.

In addition to Chen, the other dancers/choreographers are troupe co-founders Su Wei-chia (蘇威嘉) and Chou Shu-yi (周書毅) — who now has a fast-growing company of his own — and newcomers (to Horse) Mauro Sacchi from Italy, former Batsheva dancer Shai Tamir, Chou Chun-peng (周浚鵬), Liu Guan-hsiang (劉冠詳) and Huang Yong-huai (黃詠淮).

Show number one, which premieres on Thursday, will see audience members enter the hall into a mini-maze of specially created steel and wooden objects, all of which were built to resonate with their own unique sounds. The audience will have to travel through the maze to find the dancers. Once the show begins, the dancers will split up and move to different parts of the hall to perform on their own — and members of the audience will have to decide who to follow. The audience will be free to move around to watch dancers, but there will be no "one version" of the show. Audience members' experiences will be based on which dancer(s) they follow and what sounds they hear. Another twist is that not all of the dancers will be performing in each of the shows.

The second weekend's shows will be more stationary, at least for the audience (which is where all those newspapers come in), though the dancers will still be using various parts of the hall as stages.

Performance Notes

WHAT: Successor by Horse

WHEN: Thursday to Nov. 27 on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays at 7:30pm

WHERE: Huashan 1914 Creative Park (華山1914), East Two Hall (東二館), 1, Bade Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市八德 路一段1號)

ADMISSION: NT\$600; available through NTCH ticketing, at www.artsticket.com.tw, 7-Eleven ibon kiosks or at the door

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The environmental landscape portion of the show will be open from 10am to 5pm Thursdays to Sundays from Thursday to Nov. 27. Admission is NT\$100; available as above

The third weekend will be more of a traditional dance performance, with the full troupe dancing together, Chen said.

More than ever, sound is key to the show. Dauby may be the only person ever to move to Taiwan because he fell in love with the sound of the island's crickets (and frogs, though that is another story). He said the almost industrial sound of male crickets in full cry fascinated him on his first trip to Taiwan; they were not like anything he had ever heard in France or elsewhere in Europe. Over the years of working first with Chou in collaborations for the Taipei Artist Village, and then with Horse, Dauby has created sound environments that mix the sounds of nature — insects, rivers, rain — with urban noise — traffic, industry, buildings, etc — and fragments of music.



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