

Doors of perception opened by multimedia

By ERIC PRIDEAUX, Staff writer



Viewfinder - A multimedia event to be held in Tokyo next week will encourage audiences to see the world in a new light.

The plaza at the United Nations University in Tokyo, typically so serene, will be awl with activity next week when a large international cast performs "Seeing the World Through Different Eyes," a multimedia extravaganza that seeks to stimulate the senses through music, dance and light -- and in so doing, achieve a higher social purpose.

During the 70-minute work, the audience will journey through sonic and visual landscapes, ranging from the contemplative chanting of Buddhist priests at the opening of the show to the jarring racket of an American percussionist banging on iron pipes, and from the dreamy undulating of dancers to the disturbing image of children putting on gas masks in anticipation of chemical attack.

The goal is not to titillate or shock, but to compel the audience to think deeply about perception itself, something the creators hope will foster cultural openness and help people address their own prejudices.

That is largely to be achieved through symbolic references to the act of looking, as in when a chorus of cherubs peer through binoculars (provided by lens maker and main sponsor Carl Zeiss) before lending them to the audience to, in effect, share their innocent world view.

What it all means, in the end, is purposely left open to interpretation.

"I want people to use their imagination. I don't want to force them in one direction," said the creative director of the production, Monique van Kerkhof of the Netherlands, a former dance student at New York's Merce Cunningham Studio whose previous works include a contemporary opera held in an empty reservoir in Chiba.

"It's your choice whether to be blind by covering your eyes. That's what I want to show."
"Seeing the World Through Different Eyes": Show time is from 6:30 p.m.-7:40 p.m. on Oct. 3-4, or Oct. 17-18 in case of rain. The UNU campus is in Aoyama, Shibuya Ward, a 5-minute walk from Omotesando Station on the Chiyoda, Ginza and Hanzomon lines. Admission is free, but donations gladly accepted. Some proceeds will go to charities.