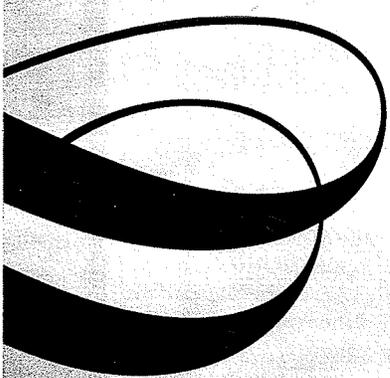


Article from:
City Arts
Eastside
January 2010



**RESOLUTIONS
2010**



→ THIS YEAR I WILL...

**SEE
DANCE
IN A
NEW
LIGHT**



Developments

*Choreographer Aiko Kinoshita lays out a blueprint
for growth in the Bel-Red Corridor*

BY SETH KOLLOEN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY YOUNG LEE



B

BELLEVUE-BASED DANCER, choreographer and teacher Aiko Kinoshita talks about her town the way she might speak of a promising student. “We’re young,” she says. “Bellevue doesn’t have the edge Seattle has, but we’re getting there.”

Bellevue might not have that edge yet, but it does have something that is helping Kinoshita push the process along: artistically unexplored public spaces to which she can bring contemporary dance. Kinoshita and the dancers of her production company, acornDance, have already developed and performed site-specific pieces at Crossroads Mall and Bellevue Downtown Park as part of their Site Series of dance in public places.

This year Kinoshita will take dance to an even more unlikely place. Supported by a grant from the Bellevue Arts Commission – the first of its kind – she is planning another piece at Bellevue Skate Park in the Bel-Red Corridor. But this time she won’t just be performing for the public – she’ll be including the public in the dance.

This summer she and her acornDance colleagues will work with the skateboarders who populate the park to create a collaborative dance performance combining the two passions. Think *Xanadu* on skateboards, except not terrible.

“The goal is for us to learn to skateboard, and for them to learn how to dance,” says

Kinoshita. It's not an impossible dream, in her view. Both skateboarders and dancers "share a similarity in momentum," she says. Still, involving non-dancers in the dance performance represents a new venture for her.

"I've collaborated with musicians before on the Site Series work but other than that, this will be the first time," she says. "I have worked with beginning dancers, but not in such depth."

Bellevue Skate Park includes both outdoor and indoor spaces. The outdoor space mimics an urban landscape, with all the stairs, railings and drops that skateboarders love. The only break from reality is the omission of the officious security guard to chase skaters away. The indoor space, which park staff say is the oldest skate park in the Northwest, has the traditional ramps and pipes you'll recognize from the X Games. Kinoshita hopes to perform in both spaces.

While Kinoshita's previous site-specific performances have taken place in well-trafficked areas of Bellevue, one of the goals of this piece is to draw people to the skate park and to the Bel-Red Corridor, an industrial area near downtown Bellevue that will soon be the site of a massive redevelopment. Scheduled to begin when the economy picks up, the new high-density, mixed-use development will occupy a nine-hundred-acre site once pitched as a possible new home for the Sonics. It will also feature a network of parks and paths and encourage transit use.

Just as the new Bel-Red development will open area residents' eyes to the possibility of daily life without an automobile, Kinoshita's work aims to open minds to the possibilities of art. "The series broadens people's perspective on what art can be," she says. "Dance isn't always pretty." In addition to performances in Bellevue, Kinoshita's Site Series, sponsored by 4Culture, has been seen at Victor Steinbrueck Park on Seattle's waterfront, at the Issaquah Farmers Market and at Fall City Days, where "we danced down the highway," remembers Kinoshita.

A self-described "small-city girl," Kinoshita was raised in the Midwest and got her MFA in dance from the University of Illinois. After she "tried the New York thing," Kinoshita moved to the Seattle area in 1998 when her husband got a job at Boeing. "It's metropolitan enough, but small-city enough for us," she says. "The city is young, with potential and lots of energy."

As a contemporary dancer living in Bellevue, Kinoshita makes a lot of trips across Lake Washington. In addition to her choreography and performance with acornDance, she collaborates with dancer Aaron Swartzman under the name of UMAMI Performance. She and Swartzman performed with live music by Seattle composer Amy Denio at the Chapel Theatre

"THE GOAL IS FOR US TO LEARN TO SKATEBOARD, AND FOR THEM TO LEARN HOW TO DANCE." AIKO KINOSHITA

Aiko Kinoshita founder of acornDance; (opposite page) Kinoshita with Wylin Diagle, Kelly Sullivan and Aaron Schwartzman.



in Wallingford's Good Shepherd Center in December. She also teaches at Velocity Dance Studio on Capitol Hill, where she was managing director until 2005.

"There's not a lot of contemporary dance in Bellevue," she says. "It's definitely still in the development stage." Kinoshita isn't even sure yet where she'll practice the Bellevue Skate Park piece, as studio space is scarce on the Eastside.

Still, Kinoshita is excited for her new project. But she adds a warning. Even though her skate park audience will be far more familiar with Lady Gaga than with Martha Graham, she'll challenge rather than pander to the crowd. "I'm not dumbing it down," she says. •

Visit acorndance.org for updates about acornDance's Bel-Red Corridor project.

