



40th Anniversary Season

La MaMa Experimental Theater Club ~ 74A East Fourth Street ~ New York, NY 10003
Ellen Stewart, Founder/Artistic Director ~ Box Office (212) 475-7710 ~ www.lamama.org
Jonathan Slaff, Press Representative ~ (212) 924-0496 ~ js@jsnyc.com ~ for immediate release

Yoshiko Chuma stages The School of Hard Knocks in "PI = 3.14: Hiroshima-New York-Belgrade-New York-Sarajevo-New York-Kabul"

March 14 to 31

La MaMa E.T.C. (The Club), 74A East Fourth Street

Presented by La MaMa E.T.C. in association with The School of Hard Knocks

Wednesdays at 8 pm (March 20, 27)

Th-Sat at 10:00 pm, 5:30 pm Sun, \$15 or \$12 members/tdf

\$12 previews Thursday & Friday, March 14 & 15

Box office (212) 475-7710

Please list: DANCE

NEW YORK, February 11 -- "War is like having a sick child," says Choreographer **Yoshiko Chuma**, headmistress of the modernist dance collaborative known as **The School of Hard Knocks**, adding, "you either keep doing your job or not." She did her job when she and The School of Hard Knocks traveled to Sarajevo in 1999 to perform at the MESS Sarajevo International Theatre Festival in Bosnia with a piece called "Footprints of War." The show went on, but getting the set back from Sarajevo, in time for an engagement at the Joyce, was a drama in itself: a 2½ month administrator's nightmare of miscommunications, frayed emotions, botched promises, excuses and cultural challenges.

The mountains of emails and correspondence relating to this set became the starting point of the script for "**PI = 3.14: Hiroshima-New York-Belgrade-New York-Sarajevo-New York-Kabul.**" The math part of the title stands for "endless, continuous circles of life and war," according to Chuma. The resulting production turned into a spoken and choreographed work that deals with large issues of war, displacement, and the parallels between Chuma's youth in postwar Japan and the lives of the performers, who have all had wartime experiences of their own. They include **Tea Alagic**, an expatriate artist from the city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Ivan Talijancic**, a Croatian-born actor, **Jim DiBiasio**, an American actor who has lived through three wars, and **Wazma Osman**, a 27 year-old Afghan woman who walked over the Pakistani border to freedom in 1980, yet returned in 1999 and met Taliban repression face-to-face. Chuma wants to bring out the parallels between hers and each person's story--between 1945 Japan, 1995 Sarajevo and 2002 Kabul.

The texts and movement are all staged in a set with a "store window" motif which resembles a radio show going on behind a large sheet of plate glass. On stage there are two video monitors and eight black chairs. The texts are rendered like a chat room with movement. The performers interact, but not directly: more like you would in a radio show. Interspersed are '30s and '40s newsreel tracks--they make the icy cool pastel surroundings atmospheric and evoke parallels to time and history passing. The show was workshopped last May at Dixon Place, but with a different cast except for Chuma and Jim DiBiasio. The flavor of the piece may be recognizable from the workshop; other than that, it's completely changed.

The School of Hard Knocks, founded in 1984, is a collaborative effort of choreographers, dancers, actors, singers, musicians, designers, and visual artists working under the Artistic Direction of Yoshiko Chuma. The company has created and performed original works in the US, Europe and in Asia, continuing to expand The School of Hard Knocks "pipeline."

Over the course of the company's history, more than 1,000 people have performed under Chuma's direction in situations ranging from theatrical dance concerts to street performances, parades, and large-scale spectacles.

Yoshiko Chuma was born in Osaka, Japan and has lived and worked in the United States since 1978. Chuma has created more than 45 full-length company works, and as commissions and site-specific events for venues across the world. Her work has been presented in New York in venues ranging from the Joyce Theater to the legendary annual Halloween Parade; and abroad in such varied locations as the formal National Theater of Sarajevo, to the perimeter of the Hong Kong harbor to an ancient ruin in Macedonia. She is comfortable creating work in nearly any environment that challenges perceptions of performance to both audience and participant. Ms. Chuma is the recipient of several fellowships and awards for choreography and career work from: John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, NEA, NYFA, Japan Foundation, Meet the Composer Choreographer/Composer Commission, Philip Morris New Works, and received a 1984 BESSIE award for choreography and creation. She has led workshops and master classes in East and West Europe, Asia, Russia and the U.S. In 1992 at La MaMa, she choreographed "Jo Ha Ku," a work performed to a score by Tan Dun. In 1997, she was choreographer of "Golem" by Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theater, which had music composed, arranged and directed by Frank London (The Klezematics) and following its La MaMa debut, was subsequently featured in the 1998 Jim Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater.

"PI = 3.14..." is conceived and directed by Yoshiko Chuma. The text is by Yoshiko Chuma, Bonnie Sue Stein and the Company. Video is by Nihad and Sead Kresevljakovic. Sound design is by Jacob Burckhardt. Lighting design is by Pat Dignan. Costumes are by Gabriel Berry. Set design is by Tom Lee. The performers are Tea Alagic, Jim DiBiasio, Yoshiko Chuma, Wazmah Osman, Ivan Talijancic, Maggie McBrien and Jenny Smith.

The production is funded in part, by New York State Council on the Arts/ Dance Program, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, and Phillip Morris Companies Inc.

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CRITICS ARE INVITED on or after MARCH 16.

**Listings editors please note:
"CRACKS" HAS BEEN POSTPONED TO APRIL 18-28:**

Originally March 8-10, **now April 18-28**
La MaMa E.T.C. (Annex Theater), 74A East Fourth Street
(presented by La MaMa E.T.C.)
Fri & Sat at 7:30 pm, Sun at 2:30 pm and 7:30 pm; \$20
Box office (212) 475-7710, runs 1:15
PLEASE LIST: PERFORMANCE ART

DESCRIPTION:

A visual performance art multimedia installation by **Companini**, a performance art company led by **Issey (Itzik) Nini**. The installation will feature works by **Amanda LePore, Jonathan Nossan, Rick Beech**, and 35 other performers.

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