

Company Derashinera, LEE Ren Xin (Malaysia),  
LIU Juichu (Taiwan), and Jung Young Doo (Korea)

## “Hourglass”

### Second Report: Rehearsal to Showing

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#### Creating a “Drama” Depicted by the Body

The first time I visited the intensive workshop by Company Derashinera was on the afternoon of December 13, 2022. In the rehearsal room prepared upstairs at the venue where the showing would be held, a large box-shaped set made of a level platform and metal pipes stood ready. The performers from Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea arrived in Japan on December 11, just prior to the workshop. Two of them, LEE Ren Xin and LIU Juichu, have been involved since last year’s *Toge*, while Jung Young Doo, who is participating for the first time, has experience creating works in Japan. This put the team in a relaxed mood that one wouldn’t expect on the second day of a workshop.

To my surprise, at this point, the contents of each scene were already taking shape. When ONODERA Shuji, who also directs, calls out, “Let’s do what we did in the morning,” everyone quickly pairs up and acts out the relationship of being inside and outside the walls of the aforementioned “box.” They depict a state where they are touching it but can’t get out, or the boundary itself is distorted. The scene titled “Sanatorium” in the script has “I” arrive at a sanatorium in the suburbs to visit his father and proceed down a corridor, checking the room numbers. Only “I” and a female ward clerk appear in the original story, but here six people in three pairs move simultaneously. This creates an effect where the actions of two people in the past, present, and future overlap, and conveys the closed-off and labyrinthine nature of the sanatorium, with its dozens of doors and no way to grasp its overall picture.

Upon inquiry, it seems that the images and parts of movement for each scene had almost been completed as a result of the cast bringing together and developing ideas in response to the themes that Onodera presented beforehand. Therefore, the subsequent workshop was devoted to adjusting how to show the relationships between the performers, their positions and timing on stage, and what to show through deformation. Watching the same scenes repeated over and over again under the direction of Onodera, who is responsible for adjusting the entire work, gradually makes one aware that the drama on stage continues, including the moments when the performers don’t move. Of course, it’s essential that they move smoothly and express clearly, but what is required here is probably to express the worldview of the work, the space on the stage, and a sense of distance, all of which must first be firmly contained in the body. In our preliminary interview, it gradually made sense that Onodera raised the exploration of Derashinera’s unique “body language” as a project theme, and expressed their work as “non-verbal theater” rather than dance or performance.

Two days before the showing, when I visited the rehearsal site again, the work was almost perfected. A lot of time was being spent confirming whether there were any hiccups in the overall flow and making adjustments. As it is a work-in-progress performance, there was a possibility of performing extracted scenes, but the run-through rehearsals showed that all scenes in the script, albeit in a fast-paced manner, were skillfully composed into a single, complete work. In particular, the way in which the work depicts “time” is unique, with multiple performers playing

“I,” “Father,” and the “doctor” in the sanatorium, repeating the same sequence, and with the prologue and epilogue scenes also being repeated. This is why the performers must understand and express that sense with the body. Here, the body is akin to a pen that creates the worldview, and movement creates the phrases.

Communication during the workshop was conducted in Japanese and English with an interpreter. Even with a focus on bodily expression, halting exchanges wouldn’t be enough to share the image of the work. Moreover, in Derashinera’s works, even slight differences in nuance hold significant meaning. IWASAKI Mark Yudai, who has been an interpreter for this



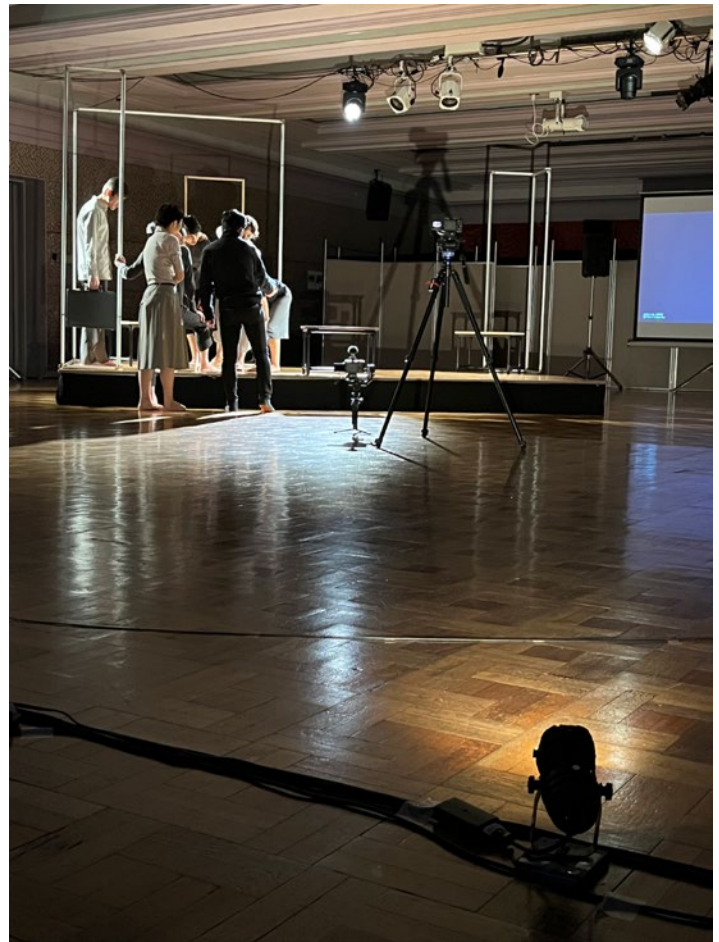
Rehearsals

project since 2021 and is also an actor himself, was impressive in handling communication with the overseas participants while sharing the overall picture of the work and movements for transitioning to the next scene.

The day of the live show arrived. Before an audience of over 100 people, some of whom were standing, each performance was enhanced with lighting, sound, and other effects, creating even more contrast and variety. The decision to reveal the bare space, which can also be used as a banquet hall, and to have a man with a flashlight enter from a corner door at the start, brought a strange sensation that this peculiar world exists contiguous to our everyday life.

During the post-performance talk, when asked about the relationship between their cultural backgrounds and physicality, comments like “There might naturally be differences, but I didn’t focus on it. Here, the body is a path, and through it, expression was born.” (Lee Ren Xin), and “Bodies are different due to local climates, but this experience made me realize that physical expression is also a ‘method’.” (Liu Juichu) were made, which is intriguing considering the theme of this project, “body language.”

Onodera, while asserting that “how to bring out the appeals of being human is the basis of theatrical expression,” dreams of the set boundaries between “dance and theater breaking down, melting, and changing into a new form of expression.” The fact that this project was so successful despite the short period is largely due to Derashinera’s preparation and attitude toward communication, as well as the result of gathering performers who have already received specialized training and are technically and mentally independent. When Onodera’s vision of the future begins to take shape in reality, what skills, training, and creative environment will be needed for the performers who follow? These are themes that go beyond the activities of a single company.



During rehearsals on the day of the performance, everyone checked video footage that was shot separately for streaming.