

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Courtesy of the artist

Constructing a Ballet Dream: KCBC's Contemporary Ballet Performance in 2023 Fringe

by Ziying Cui

The rhythmic plucking of strings and the tinkling of piano warm up the massive space of the Cherry Street Pier. Dancers of different ages from the [Klassical Contemporary Ballet Company](#) (KCBC) wear socks with bare legs and flock to the edge of the Marley dance floor, a specific and temporary stage for the dancers. Atop their black leotards a group of young dancers sport Morandi-colored satin skirts and mesh chiffon lemon tops that accentuate their elegant and uplifted ballet bodies. Watching their balletic strides and smooth glides across the floor, and the occasional high leg extension known in ballet as *arabesque* or *développés*, I enter my kinesthetic comfort zone as a ballet and contemporary dancer. I relish the harmonious collaboration between classical music and dance, the codified footwork and the flowing skirts.

The low saturation of the dancers' costumes and the synchronized, ever-changing formations and sequences, reminds me of the French painter [Claude Monet's](#) series "Water Lilies." [Kimberly D. Landle-Corbett](#), the director of KCBC, explains that the title of the piece, "Komoberi," is a Japanese word which describes the image of sunlight streaming through trees.

The second piece "Beautiful," resembles polyphonic music, where ballet, modern dance, jazz, and improvisation are all highlighted independently while also flawlessly amalgamated together. Accompanied by the vibration of the harp strings and the melodious piano, the dancers wear individual colored and textured dresses that match their distinctively styled solos and seamlessly evolve into symphonic group dances. Their fluid turns and swings contrast with the hard steel roof of the pier, softening the extensive industrial space while also complicating my spatial sensation as a spectator.

While the adult dancers' movements and stage expression are seasoned, I am more captivated witnessing the young dancers devote themselves to pursuing their ballet dream. Looking at the young dancers' nervous yet determined faces, I recall my childhood dream of

becoming a ballerina when I practiced *tendu* beside a barre. Although I am pleased to see dancers with diverse body types and skin colors pursuing their dreams on stage, I also wonder about other types of diversity that I do not see onstage. Where are the boys? Why are the majority of ballet aspirants white girls? I acknowledge that these questions, which linger in dance studies, may not be the central focus of KCBC or other ballet companies, but watching these young dancers, I cannot help but wonder how a ballet dream is constructed.

[KCBC X KCBC II: Summer Series](#), Klassic Contemporary Ballet Company, Cherry Street Pier, Philly Fringe Festival, Sept. 10.

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