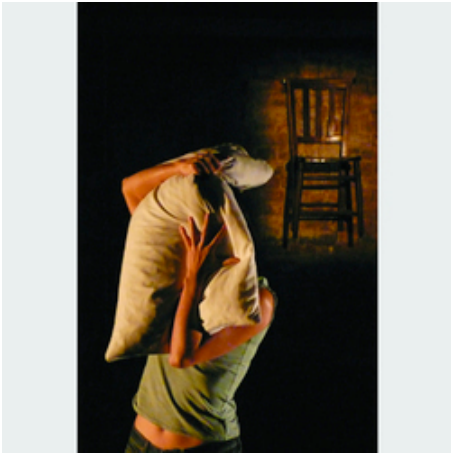


Cutting the Cord



WRITTEN BY AMIEL CLARKE | 11 AUGUST 2011



The Brighton-based performance company Flying Eye focuses on delivering pieces that explore real and heartfelt human issues, which resonate with the audience beyond the final bow. In this fashion, *Cutting the Cord* follows Sachi Kimura as she makes the life-altering journey from Tokyo to London.

This show is a lyrical piece about leaving and belonging, inspired by the genuine experiences of the artistic directors of Flying Eye - Sachi Kimura from Japan and Kristin Hjelm from Sweden - and augmented with material from interviews of people from various cultural backgrounds living in Britain today.

The delivery of this solo piece of physical theatre is beautiful and immensely pleasing to watch. With live music accompanying her every whim and fancy, Kimura's performance feels all the more spirited and expressive. From bright humour to remarkable sadness, she eloquently captures both the excitement and burden of integrating into British society, as well as the pain of leaving loved ones behind.

The show is full of quirks and surprises and is seamlessly constructed, using the full space of the cavernous venue to great effect. My only real quibble is that, in a rush to get her words out, Kimura often forgets to enunciate sufficiently and thereby loses precious pieces of the narrative in a hurried slur. This is a poignant piece of theatre that is sure to impress. It was a sell-out at the Brighton Festival, so to avoid disappointment here, I'd book your tickets now.

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Cutting the Cord



BY BEN JUDGE | PUBLISHED 09 AUGUST 2011

Leaving home, pitching up somewhere new and starting life afresh is never easy. It's more difficult still when moving to a vast sprawling city with a strange culture and an unfamiliar language. Exploring themes such as contemporary loneliness and what it means to be at home in a place, *Cutting the Cord* follows the life of a Japanese immigrant living in London as she tries to find her place in the world.

This latest offering from experimental theatre group Flying Eye is an affecting and cleverly constructed piece. From the moment the audience is brought into the theatre and herded onto the stage, a little confused and disoriented as the action darts from corner to corner, one can't help but share in the alienating experience of finding oneself in a new environment, or a new country, for the first time.

While certainly experimental theatre, it is by no means completely esoteric. There is a coherent narrative strand running throughout proceedings, focusing on performer Sachi Kimura's character as she settles in to life in the UK. Kimura perfectly blends together the sense of excitement and enthusiasm of being in a brand new country and starting a brand new life with a sense of nostalgia and longing for the place and people left behind. It's a subtly melancholic performance that becomes genuinely powerful as tragedy strikes back home and Kimura finds herself more and more alone in London.

Empathetic and humane, *Cutting the Cord* is a cross-continental journey that is immersive, thought-provoking and haunting: exactly what experimental theatre should be.

Cutting the Cord

Flying Eye

Underbelly, Cowgate

At one point in this poetic one-woman show Sachi Kimura stands on a well-stuffed pillow to symbolise being on a long-distance flight from her new home in London, back to her family in Japan. By the end of this beautifully moving show, you too will feel like you are walking on a cloud.

The experimental play, imaginatively directed by Matt Spencer, opens with the audience dotted around the stage and Kimura milling around between them asking questions and highlighting idiosyncrasies about Japan and her chosen home, the UK. “In Britain I am much more Japanese than in Japan, but I also have to be much more British than the British,” the actress says before testing the audience on impossible questions from the UK’s citizenship exam. But *Cutting The Cord* isn’t a Brit-bashing session. Kimura and her fellow writer Kristina Hjelm, from Sweden, are clearly fond of their new home. The emotional tug pulling them back towards their family is always there like a taught red thread, though, and family keepsakes are held close to the heart. Anyone who has moved to a new city or country will instantly recognise the way Kimura feels, although few of us could express it quite as beautifully as she does.

Review by **Lauren Paxman**

Published online at 14:10 on Wednesday 24 August 2011



Cutting the Cord

Venue: Underbelly, Cowgate

Where: Edinburgh

Date Reviewed: 20 August 2011

WOS Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Intriguing and interactive, *Cutting the Cord* traces the experience of emigrating to Britain with its highs and lows. Told from the point of view of performer Sachi Kimura, it explores what it's like to be miles away from your place of birth and whether you can ever feel truly at home.

An array of theatrical devices are employed to convey the sense of wanting to belong. You immediately become part of the piece, quizzed before entry about where you've been and where you've going. For me, in Fringe mode, I spoke only about the theatre I had been to and the show I was going to next, but others offered less literal responses.

Upon entering the room, the audience first shares the stage with Kimura - an unexpected and initially uncomfortable moment until the performer works her charm on you, making you feel as if you've just met a new friend. Daniel Marcus Clark's musical accompaniment adds to the dreamlike atmosphere and the contemplative nature of this hour-long performance. It's a journey well worth taking.

- Paul Ewing

Claire Cahill on Cutting the Cord ★★★★★, 'Sachi performs with energy and clarity throughout. Her intricate physicality transforms the most benign of objects with speed and accuracy. Through intonation, anecdotes and impersonations Sachi uses language to highlight the immediate, and on going, differences one faces when submerged in a foreign environment; a foreign tongue.' [no link]



As we wait outside the auditorium a small informal announcement is made '*the first fifteen minutes of the performance are promenade, then you will be invited to take your seats*'; immediately a current of excitement/fear (delete as necessary) runs through the audience as we ponder what we will see when we enter the theatre and of course the ultimate question... will anything be expected of the audience? A trademark of the traditional British audience, we can have a tendency to be un-obliging when it comes to interactive theatre; an overwhelming desire to sit back and be entertained tends to wash over us. However, there was no need to fear. Sachi, begins her performance as gently, and with as much care as the delicate chalk flower she has drawn on the black theatre wall.

Cutting the Cord is the first performance from Brighton based theatre and performance company Flying Eye; the artistic collaboration of performer Sachi Kimura and lighting designer Kristina Hjelm. Presented in association with Tristan Bates Theatre and performed by Sachi Kimura, Cutting the Cord explores what it is to move away from your country of birth, and if it is possible to feel truly at home anywhere else.

We enter Sachi's life at her arrival in Heathrow, and from that point onwards we embark on a journey meeting flat mates, ex-boyfriends (English and Japanese) and family members alike. The performance uses every possible area of the Tristan Bates Theatre and we skip between London and Tokyo effortlessly. With a stage comprising of a chair, a ladder and a small cupboard we are transported to bedrooms cafes, cars, parties, exam halls and once to the bottom of the ocean! The script itself is taken directly from Sachi's own experiences and you truly feel that you are witnessing something special as she retells her story. Full of heart-warming monologues, Cutting the Cord, holds up a mirror to those familiar characters in life that we all recognize. Without placing judgment on either location we see the internal struggle as a young woman begins to carve her path in life, and as an audience we gently explore what it actually means to *move countries*.

Sachi performs with energy and clarity throughout. Her intricate physicality transforms the most benign of objects with speed and accuracy. Through intonation, anecdotes and impersonations Sachi uses language to highlight the immediate, and on going, differences one faces when submerged in a foreign environment; a foreign tongue. The attempts at regional English accents provide a poignant taste of how challenging a transition this must be.

The use of visual imagery within the performance is beautiful. Image after image is created seamlessly and we are given time, as an audience, to absorb and share the moment with the performer. It is my pleasure to say that nothing about this performance is self involved or indulgent. The focus is always on sharing the story with the audience; an achievement so many one person shows fail to deliver. Special mention goes to Daniel Clarke for outstanding musical accompaniment throughout the performance using what seemed like tens of instruments.

Concentrating on producing energized, visually captivating, relevant theatre combined with the highest standard of set design, music and choreography Flying Eye are a breath of fresh air in a field that can so easily be defined by convention. I look forward to seeing their next project!

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ED2011 Theatre Review: Cutting the Cord (Flying Eye)



From the outset, Sachi Kimura wrong-foots the audience by asking them to mill around on-stage; they're immediately captivated and ready to hear the story of a Tokyo-girl in London, a composite tale built from several real migrants' stories. Sachi is a solid brick of goodwill, and immensely likeable. Her affected accent is occasionally faulty, but the rough English is vital to the character and she rapidly improves. There are so many tiny things executed well, including an extended metaphor where she – as a hermit crab – is stuck between two shells. The show is most poignant in its depiction of the harsh hypocrisy of immigration: "I am more Japanese here, but I must also be more British than the British".

Underbelly, 4 – 27 Aug (not 15), 6.45pm (7.40pm) £8.50 – £10.50, fpp253. tw rating 4/5 [gl]

Sections: by Gavin Leech - ED2011 Theatre Reviews

The Brighton Magazine

IDENTITY UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: TALE OF A JAPANESE GIRL FAR FROM HOME SHINES @ THE BASEMENT

Flying Eye (*Cutting the Cord, Basement, 17th May*) is not the kind of theatre group to have their hands tied by theatrical conventions.

Yet neither does it fall into the kinds of traps that so many others do, instead it focuses on the **core values** of **inspired** acting, choreography, set design, script, music and lighting with a small sprinkle of **digital** help.

In addition there is more than a little use of **metaphor** and **humour** (no po-faced pomposity here).

As the performance begins we are herded into the Basement's, well...basement as actor **Sachi Kimura** appears highlighted on the stairs, silent staring and static.

Later she will walk around the room addressing, nay, **mingling** with audience before beginning her story. As she does so we sometimes lose sight of her, or just catch a **glimpse** here and there as she questions us about who we are and where we come from.

This is simply not *'art for art's sake'* as we are all asked some **questions** by Sachi that all new citizens of our country are expected to know and find, as a group (for we are now somehow more than just an audience) that we do not know the answers.

In fact what it represents, for me, is an **investigation** of our **identities** in terms of our contexts, the place we came from, the place we are and the place we see ourselves going.

A **Japanese girl** lives in the UK, she is *'more Japanese here than she is in Japan'*, she misses her family and this is her story.

We are different people in different contexts, **Flying Eye** seem to say, and add into that mix our ever evolving **identities** and **aspirations** and our relationships with others (both past and present) and their lives and deaths and there is plenty to talk about.

Sachi Kimura is a very **engaging** and **talented** actor and tells her story with wit, subtle grace and charm.

This is one of the **best performances** of alternative theatre I have seen for some time, and I have seen quite a bit in my time and am a fan of such modernizing and engaging efforts.

For this is just the kind of theatre that will keep theatre itself alive in the future; it cannot be done on a computer screen and you cannot get it on your I-pod pad phone-player for you actually **need** *'to be there'*.

This is the kind of theatre that **engages** and **touches** its audience long after they leave the venue and is just the kind of thing we should all be encouraging across the city.

It must be **strong contender** for a **festival award** this year.

by: Howard Young (Arts Editor)