

**Real Reality**

Choreographed by Mikuni Yanaihara; performed by Emi Oyama and Jun Morii

**Lay/ered**

Choreographed by Yukio Suzuki; performed by Yukio Suzuki and Fuyuki Yamakawa

**25 August 2015 | 8pm/8.45pm | Tanjong Pagar Railway Station**  
**Reviewed by Chu Qiao**

The double bill of *Real Reality* and *Lay/ered* dialogued on the relationship between technology and the body, emerged with some unexpected turns of phrase.

Featuring dancers Emi Oyama and Jun Morii, Mikuni Yanaihara's *Real Reality* explored corporeality in a fragmented hyper-reality mediated by technology. In the cavernous main hall of the now-defunct Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, the key tenor of disillusionment was established by Keisuke Takahashi's looming video projection – a wall of normcore-wearing urbanites hanging by the noose, uttering a self-effacing litany: "I have no story... I have no culture... I can't remember... I can't forget... I really don't know anything."

Against this statement of despair, we saw the frailty and vitality of the dancers in the tenuous vignettes that followed. Oyama and Morii lunged and grappled with each other in a manner that felt heroic but ultimately futile amidst the onslaught of audio-visual razzmatazz.

On the other hand, they conveyed a searing intimacy in their intense pas de deux and frenzied solos – an eloquent testimony to the human figure and the urgent desire for connection. Later, sans video projection and sound, the relentless serves of a badminton player and the rigorous manoeuvres of a rhythmic gymnast returned the focus to the primacy of the body and its capacity for a precise vocabulary. By this juncture, whether this vocabulary of repetition was rooted in a reality of meaning and context was a question that left no easy answer.

During the intermission, viewers schlepped their white plastic chairs to the waiting platforms of the railway tracks (woe to those in cocktail dresses) for Yukio Suzuki's *Lay/ered*, which Suzuki performed with Fuyuki Yamakawa, a fine artist and Khoomei singer.

Clad in just body-hugging jeans and truckloads of attitude, the two men created a testosterone-laden force field as Suzuki plucked and clawed at the strings of an electric guitar – reminiscent of Jimi Hendrix playing a Fender Stratocaster with his teeth – whilst Yamakawa yelped in reply with equal measure of feral power, before mesmerising the crowd with his throat singing.

Stand-out sequences included Yamakawa drumming his nails on a shovel, the sound amplified by the cables coiling around it. His high-octane improvised percussion was punctuated by his kicking the hi-hat cymbals. Suzuki, however, exuded a more languid energy as he paced the parameters of a tatami mat.

The performance reached its crescendo in the melding of flesh and metal. Wiring his head with bone conduction microphones to amplify the vibrations in the skull, Yamakawa delivered his *pièce de résistance* as he tapped his skull in shamanic reverie. Suzuki joined in this climax of raw power as he clawed the air, eliciting a piercing shrill of distortion and feedback with each gesture: the body as sound.

In contrast to *Real Reality*, *Lay/ered* ruthlessly stripped away the trappings of lighting and music design to effectively foreground the material reality of bodies. The result? Seemingly desultory, yet unpredictably thrilling.

