



# Yuki Tokuda

Photo by Galen Higgins

## Yuki-Onna 雪女 (The Snow Woman)

Yuki Tokuda is a ballet dancer, choreographer and teacher in the Twin Cities, originally from Japan.

Tokuda is a recipient of 2023 McKnight Dancer Fellow and 2022 Generating Room Artist. Her passion is connecting ballet and live music to create dynamic new works with classical movement.

Yuki Tokuda presents a ballet based on Japanese folklore called *Yuki-Onna* 雪女 (*The Snow Woman*) with Piano Sonata in B minor by Franz Liszt, played by Rie Tanaka.

Two woodcutters named Minokichi and Mosaku take refuge in a boatman's hut during a snowstorm. Mosaku is killed by a yuki-onna (snow-witch). When the yuki-onna turns to Minokichi she remarks that he is a handsome boy and takes pity by sparing him because of

his youth. The yuki-onna warns him to never mention what happened or she will kill him.

Minokichi returns home and never mentions that night. One day while cutting wood he comes across Oyuki, a beautiful young woman traveling at sunset. She tells him that she is on her way to the city, as she lost her family and has relatives there who can secure her a job as a lady-in-waiting. Minokichi offers to let her spend the night at his house and Minokichi falls in love with her. The two marry and have children, living happily.

One night, Minokichi recalls the yuki-onna and sees a resemblance between them. He tells her about the strange encounter. It is then that Oyuki reveals herself to be the yuki-onna, and a snowstorm comes over the home. Despite the fact he broke his word, she refrains from killing him because of their children. Oyuki then leaves Minokichi with the children, warning him to treat them well or she will return and kill him. She disappears into the snowstorm, leaving Minokichi heartbroken. Because Oyuki does not fulfill her curse in killing Minokichi, she resigns herself to her own death and spares the only family she has ever loved...

## Choreographer

**Yuki Tokuda** is a ballet dancer, choreographer and teacher, based in the Twin Cities. She is originally from Japan and was trained under Mikiko Dei, Hideo Fukagawa and Jun Ishii, internationally recognized dancers, teachers and competition judges. She moved to the US in 2000 to continue her training in New York at the Joffrey Ballet School. Ms. Tokuda has danced professionally with USA Ballet, Peoria Ballet, Metropolitan Ballet and she was the principal dancer at Continental Ballet for 7 years. With diverse training in classical, contemporary, modern and jazz, she is an international guest dancer and collaborator with many companies, including James Sewell Ballet and Minnesota Dance Theatre. While training in New York, Ms. Tokuda's instructors included David Howard,





John Prinz, Fabrice Herrault, and Michael Vernon. At Steps on Broadway in New York she was one of the first International Visa Program students. She has, also, trained with Boston Ballet and Connecticut Ballet. She has performed many principal roles, most notably in: Le Corsaire, Don Quixote Pas de Deux, Les Sylphides, Pas de Quatre, Agnes de Mille's Rodeo, Princess Aurora, Lilac Fairy and Princess Florine in The Sleeping Beauty, the Sugar Plum Fairy and Clara in The Nutcracker, Odette and Odile in Swan Lake, Coppelia, A Midsummer Night's Dream and the title roles in Romeo and Juliet, and Giselle. She has performed at The Walker Art Center, The Ritz Theater, The State Theatre, The Tek Box, The Ted Mann Concert Hall, The O'Shaughnessy, The Pantages Theatre, The Intermedia Arts, The Lab Theatre and Peavey Plaza.

Ms. Tokuda is a faculty member at University of Minnesota, James Sewell Ballet, Ballet Co.Laboratory, Community Movement Collective, Center Stage Dance Studio and a certified STOTT Pilates Instructor. She has taught many master classes in Japan and the US including at Cathedral Dance Festival, Interlochen Center for the Arts and the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point.

Her choreography was chosen for Choreographer's Evening at The Walker Arts Center and commissioned by Macalester College, Wayzata Symphony Orchestra, Wooddale Church, Cerulean Fire, Japan America Society of Minnesota, Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and Threads Dance Project. She is a recipient of 2023 McKnight Dancer Fellow, Minnesota State Arts Board and St. Louis Park Arts & Culture Grant. She is a co-director with Rie Tanaka of Mirage Performing Arts where their mission is envisioning, enriching and enhancing both the cultures of Classical Music and Ballet.

She is the owner/designer of YukiTard, a custom dancewear company, as well as, the director of Tokuda Ballet. [www.yukitokuda.com](http://www.yukitokuda.com)



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## Performers

**Rie Tanaka (Piano).** Dr. Rie Tanaka, a native of Osaka, Japan, enjoys a multifaceted career as a performing artist, educator, and artistic director. She has been praised for her “brilliant performance” and “lyrical tone” (‘Chunichi Shimbun’ Central Japan News) and “lovely sensitivity” (Pioneer Press). She is a prize winner of international and national competitions in Japan and the U.S. She won the MTNA Young Artist Competition in the West Central Division, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Schubert Club Competition (1st), Chautauqua Piano Competition (Finalist, Commissioned Piece Award), New York Piano Festival and Competition (Finalist), Rosenstock International Piano Competition (Special Judge’s Award), to name a few. She has been featured in Minnesota Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Radio, StarTribune, Chamber Music America, and Fox9 News.

An active performing artist, she enjoys working on a collaborative project with other artists. Rie most often collaborates with her husband and cellist Jesse Nummelin as Duo Ihana. She has performed with members of the Minnesota Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Phoenix Symphony, Minnesota Opera and many other notable musicians. She is also a co-founder of “Mirage Performing Arts,” a collaborative group of musicians and ballet dancers, and directed and performed nine programs at a variety of venues including sold-out concerts in Japan.

A devoted music educator, Rie has been teaching Piano to students of all ages and levels for 14 years. Currently, she serves as the interim lecturer in Piano at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point. Prior to that, she taught applied lessons, group piano classes and keyboard skills at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College. She has given masterclasses and lectures at the University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, University of Minnesota - Duluth, and Rebecca Penneys Piano Festival. Rie has been

an advocate for musician’s wellness, and is a certified Yoga instructor with an RYT 200. She has led Yoga classes and lectures at the Rebecca Penney’s Piano Festival, Green Lake Chamber Music Camp, Saint Paul Chamber Music Institute, and Minnesota International Piano Camp. She presented at various Music Teachers Associations in the states of Minnesota, South Dakota, and Washington.

Rie received her MM and DMA in Piano Performance from the University of Minnesota, studying under Professor Alexander Braginsky, and her Bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, studying with Dr. Raffi Besalyan.

Learn more at her official website;  
<https://riepiano.com/>

**Andrew Lester (he/him)** is an award-winning artist who has been a staple of the Twin Cities dance community for almost two decades. Both a professional ballet and contemporary dancer, Andrew has called Shapiro & Smith Dance his artistic home for over ten years. He was also a full-time company member of James Sewell Ballet for six seasons. As a guest artist, he has danced principal roles with a variety of well-known Minnesota companies, including Twin Cities Ballet of Minnesota, Metropolitan Ballet, Eclectic Edge Ensemble, Ethnic Dance Theatre, Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, and the Minnesota Opera. Beyond Minnesota, Andrew has performed in New York City as well as toured internationally to the Toronto Film Festival, Festival del Pitic (Hermosillo, Mexico), and the Festival de Danse (Cannes, France). He’s also had the good fortune to work with an array of celebrated choreographers over the years, including Anna-Marie Holmes (former Artistic Director of Boston Ballet), Gabrielle Lamb (Pigeonwing Dance founder and 2020 Guggenheim Fellow), Darrius Strong (2021 McKnight Choreographer Fellow), and many more. Most recently, Andrew created and starred in “When You Hear the Chime” with his wife, local writer and vocalist Nichole Carey at



the 2023 Minnesota Fringe Festival. He's thrilled to be working with his good friend Yuki again and is excited to share this beautiful story with you.

**Masanari Kawahara 川原正也 (he/him/his)** is a Butoh doer, theatre artist, puppeteer, and arts educator. He recently performed in Lelis K. Brito's *A Binding Strangeness* as part of *Isolated Acts* at red eye theater, Valerie Oliveiro's *SOFT FREEDOMS* as part of *MERGE* at the Cowles Center (2022). His solo piece *8'46"* (movement for healing), featuring a soundscape by Sho Nikaido, was performed as part of *Offerings: BareBones 2020*, and was recognized in *StarTribune's 2020 Artists of the Year* edition. Previously Masanari was a member of the Butoh group *Nenkin Butoh Dan*, which received a 2015 Sage Award for outstanding dance ensemble for *Fu.Ku.Shi.Ma*. Other dance projects include: *Anthea Hamilton's Cabbage Four Ways* (2021) as part of *Paradox of Stillness* at Walker Art Center; *Throw Open The Heavy Curtain* (2018) by Sharon Picasso Projects; *Census* (2016) and *Every Other* (2015) by Aniccha Arts. In the summer of 2023, he will be part of *prairie/*

*concrete* with Aniccha Arts as part of St. Paul Triennial. Masanari is currently the Director of *Naked Stages* program as well as a Resident Teaching Artist at Pillsbury House + Theatre. Masanari is a Playwrights' Center McKnight Theater Artist Fellow 2018-2019 and 2010-2011.

Reia Beh and Summer Chai  
(Center Stage Dance Studio)

## Music

**Franz Liszt** — Piano Sonata in B minor.

## Lighting Design

**Mike Grogan**

## Special Thanks

Special thanks to the Cowles Center and Generating Room who made possible work with my mentor, Masa-san. And, to Center Stage Dance Studio and University of Minnesota Dance Department for use of their rehearsal space.

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