

## Kun-Yang Lin is “Home”?

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photos by Steven Weisz for The Dance Journal

On a Saturday afternoon, before a handful of guests in their studio, Kun-Yang Lin and dancers performed excerpts from his newest work in development, *Home! S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street*. This is perhaps one of Lin’s more ambitious undertakings as he attempts to address the issues of identity, community, immigration, the notion of “American-ness”, and ultimately one’s own concept of home.

Lin, himself an immigrant from Taiwan, has resided in the United States for the past fourteen years. His current “Home” on 9<sup>th</sup> street, where the

CHI Movement Arts Center is located, has historically been an entry corridor for newly arrived immigrants looking to settle in Philadelphia. This diversity of cultures continues today, and is reflected in the surrounding community, made up primarily of those of Italian, Vietnamese, Mexican and Chinese heritage.

At the core of his previous works, Lin has drawn upon his Eastern philosophy, spirituality and training, while expanding and incorporating this base in to his own vocabulary of Western contemporary dance. With *Home*, he has departed from his established choreographic process and is utilizing community engagement methodologies adapted from the Cornerstone Theater Company based in Los Angeles. Lin and dancers (KYL/D) have given life, through movement, to stories provided by their neighbors. In turn, the community has provided direction and inspiration for their new work.

Lending further to this collaboration, KYL/D commissioned Corey Neale, a recipient of the American Association of Community Theater Sound Design Award, to develop an original score for *Home*, which will include voices from interviews with area residents. David O’Connor, a teaching artist and director with Philadelphia Young Playwrights, has also been engaged to develop the theatrical elements in the piece.

As *Home* develops, KYL/D is sharing the piece in a series of work-in-progress showings throughout Philadelphia. The most recent showing was at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in conjunction with an exhibit of photography by Paul Strand, who like Lin, examined the question of what it means to be American. Additional planned showings include the Temple University Dance Faculty Concert on January 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, an open dialog at CHI Movement Arts Center on April 18<sup>th</sup>, and several showings in May, including at the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Italian Market Festival.

Lin adds, “the process is organic, why did I choose this location? (Referring to 9<sup>th</sup> street). I continually observe the community and new questions begin to unfold and form the seeds for this dance”.

After, providing an introductory framework, a single chair is presented in the middle of the stage and removed in an imaginary blackout as lighting has not yet been set. Six dancers then present in both solo and as a group, each with a chair, folding and unfolding, building, stacking, creating constructs – perhaps obstacles, walls or even borders. The phrases and movements are distinct, yet fragmented, adding to the feeling of struggle and being uncomfortable in new surroundings. At times, the chairs seem like extensions of both the inner and outer self of each dancer or perhaps pieces of a puzzle trying to come together as a community, breaking a part, being re-born and each trying to find their own place, their own home.



In a post talk with dancers, Jessica Warchal-King, Evalina Carbonell, Rachel Hart, Liu Mo, Helen Hale and WeiWei Ma, it was made clear how each of them had lent to the movement with their own stories, some as immigrants themselves and others as members of a family that had their own immigrant journey. At the same time, the dancers expressed their huge responsibility in having been entrusted with the stories of others, which they now express through their own movements.

As Lin struggles to define his meaning of Home, he questions, “is it time to say goodbye to Taiwan?” And yet, he continues to find himself “at middle points, that grey area – half east, half west” and then adds “but half my life has been in Philadelphia”.

The world premiere of Home: S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street will be presented by Philadelphia’s FringeArts in the Fall of this year. For more information about upcoming showings and performances, visit [knyanglin.com](http://knyanglin.com)

### **SNEAK PREVIEW**

A video clip of the work-in-process is available here: <http://vimeo.com/116775450>