

## **KYL/D Company tells the South 9th Street immigrant experience through dance in HOME**



Kun-Yang Lin Dancers in HOME/S. 9th St. Photo: Frank Bicking

By Nicole Contosta  
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Does home represent a specific memory or a particular location? How does the concept of home change for immigrants trying to preserve their cultures while assimilating into a new one?

Kun-Yang Lin's world Premier of HOME this week explores those themes beginning this Thursday, November 19th. Presented by the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, HOME runs through November 21st at 140 N. Columbus Blvd.

For those not familiar with the KYL/D companies work, its inventive choreography pushes the limits of national identity. Artistic Director Kun Yang blends Eastern philosophies and contemporary dance in his performances.

And the world premier of HOME/South 9th Street proves no exception.

"Research for this project goes back to 2013," explained Ken Metzner, the Executive Director of KYL/D from the studio's headquarters at 1316 S. 9th Street. Throughout our early morning interview, the music and movement from local

neighbors taking a Zumba class in the next room punctuated the conversation. KYL/D for those not in the know—offers a host of classes for both professional and non-professional dancers.

Seeds for HOME were planted during a 2013 trip to Indonesia, Metzner continued of the journey he, Kun Yang and Dr. Nancy Watterson, of Cabrini College took.

"We like our work to be challenging," Kun Yang explained, adding, "We often invite scholars to participate in the practice because we want to create a culmination of body, mind and spirit. This is called Chi awareness."

For HOME, part of the piece's Chi Awareness came directly from the South 9th Street community.

The neighborhood has always remained rich with immigrants. And as Kun Yang and Metzner realized through their research, there's a very logical explanation. From 1860-1913, there was a miniature Ellis Island Station at Washington Avenue where it intersected with the Delaware River. Historically, immigrants flooded the South 9th Street neighborhood for that reason. And in recent decades, they have continued to do so due the immigrant populations already there.

Because the neighborhood has remained a home for immigrants, Kun Yang and Metzner interviewed 65 immigrants from the neighborhood for HOME.

"We wanted to create a collective voice," Kun-Yang said. "But how do you translate that into dance...how do you put 65 voices into one voice?" Kun-Yang continued, explaining, "Dancing is an abstraction of that...It gives a visual to the feeling you cannot explain."

Subsequently, HOME does not tell a narrative story. "It's not linear, and it does not tell a particular culture's story either," Metzner explained. Rather, "it travels between the past, the future, the present and back again."

The immigrants weren't just interviewed and pushed out of the process, Metzner noted. Instead, they participated in community dialogues and attended shorter performances of the piece as it developed at venues such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Temple University as well as at the Italian Market Festival last May.

Throughout HOME's formation, practice and execution before audiences, Kun-Yang has stressed the importance of Chi Awareness.

"It's a philosophy," Kun-Yang said. "It's how we open ourselves and our energy so there aren't any boundaries. People who don't have Chi awareness, that's when you feel like there's a wall between people."

Kun-Yang also asks his dancers to cultivate Chi awareness. "The company is very demanding of our dancers and their ability to tap this energy."

It's an energy the company would like the audience to experience as well.

KYL/D's Artists include Evalina Carbonell, Brian Cardova, Annielille Gavino-Kollman, Helen Hale, Mo Liu Wei Wei Ma, Grace Stern and Jessica Warchal-King.

The performances will run at the Fringe Arts, 140 N. Columbus Blvd, 11/19-11/21 at 8 p.m. with a 3 p.m. matinee on 11/21. Tickets range from \$15-\$29. For more information about the show: 215-413-1318, [www.fringearts.com](http://www.fringearts.com). For more information on KYL/D: 267-687-3739, <http://kunyanglingin.org>.