

Director Hoon-Sook Moon drawing the blueprints of the future of Universal Ballet

Yun Ki Choi
February 28, 2017



[Munhwa Ilbo] 'The Future of Ballet' By 1st Generation Korean Ballet Star

If one is not a true ballet enthusiast, it may be difficult to select the appropriate representing ballet company. However, there are very few who do not have heard of the following two people. As 1st generation living legends in the ballet industry, these two became prominent leaders of premier domestic ballet companies. They are one other than Hoon-Sook Moon, the head of the Universal Ballet (Left), and Su-Jin Kang, the head of the National Ballet. Both organizations cannot be missed when one speaks of Korean ballet dancers assuming leading roles in world-famous ballets and sweeping international competitions. Such good-willed competition between the two over the past decades became a solid foundation for such accomplishments. We took the time to hear about the "Korean era of ballet" from these two figures. As a senior and junior from the Sunhwa School of Performing Arts, they both share the same experience of studying under Marika Beso Brasova.

"In order to make the dancers that are performing overseas return, the market of performances must grow, and the line of work must become more diverse."

"The evidence of the development of Korean ballet is clear. During my time, it was a generation where one had to study abroad to learn. However, it has become an era where studying abroad is unnecessary. That in itself is profoundly amazing. Now it seems the reverse is the case, and many people are taking interest in domestic ballet education within Korea."

At the 3rd "Seoul Arts Center Award" that took place on the 17th, in the Concert Hall of the Seoul Arts Center in Seocho, Seoul, the ballet "Shim Chung" of the Universal Ballet received the grand prize, making the members of the ballet shed tears of joy. Shim Chung, a feature domestic ballet performance celebrating its 30th anniversary, goes hand-in-hand with the development of Korean ballet, and promotes the history of the Universal Ballet itself, which supported the program completely. In the midst of all of this, there is Director Hoon-Sook Moon.

In 1986, Director Moon, who, at the time, was the premier principal dancer of the ballet, could not forget the scene where Shim Chung deliberately fell into the Indangsoo Sea. At the Universal Arts Center in Kwangjin, Seoul, on the 20th, Director Moon said, "This is a piece of work that was created during an era where people had to jump down from a height of a two-storied building without any safety equipment," and added, "I am very proud that Shim Chung could be performed for 30 years, and that the ballet industry has developed enough for people call the ballet a modern marvel." At the time, the audience were not accustomed to the curtain call. It made us feel embarrassed when they did not give an applause, so we always exited by stepping backwards, as if saying, 'We will disappear quickly.' I find it astonishing how the first art directors created pieces of work that were Korean."



Last year, Director Moon had mounted the stage for the first time after retiring at a special 30th anniversary performance of Shim Chung (Left in photo below). Her role did not include much dancing, but just by mounting the stage as a 1st generation ballet star, at over 50 years of age, she became a role model to everyone. Does she wish to go on stage again? Director Moon said, "I had to concentrate just not to step on my skirt," waving her hands. However, there is still space for that feeling of longing. The time goes back to last year, to a performance in Korea by the world-famous ballerina Alexandra Perri (54), who is the same age as Director Moon. Perri mounted the Korean stage as the lead role in "Romeo and Juliet" choreographed by McMillan, and her smooth and graceful movements captured the hearts of the Korean audience, making it impossible to guess her age. Director Moon confessed, "That piece of work always was in my mind as a piece that I wanted to perform before retiring. Watching Perri practice, I thought: I want to do that, too.' There has been a ballerina that danced until the age of 60, but not with performances as prominent as Perri's, so I thought that it would be nice for our fans of ballet to see it. It was also a performance where I could show my juniors that jumping high is not everything, and what real acting is like."

Director Moon has been drawing the blueprints of the future for the next 30 years. This included performing "our" ballet and training "our" ballet dancers. Moon made a retort by saying, "Dancers that are working abroad are doing a very good job, but wouldn't the Korean ballet market truly flourish if they were to be in Korea?" That is why she is putting marked effort into popularization by "performance commentary." "The performance market must grow. More concerts need to take place, and the diversity of performances must broaden. It truly matters on which platform our artists stand. There still exists the obligation to create such an environment."...