

Tuesday, October 14, 2003

DANCE REVIEW

'Offering' goes to the very heart of mourning

By SASHA ANAWALT
Special to The Times

What a pleasure to be asked by performers to concentrate on pure seeing. That was the request that Eiko & Koma, veteran movement practitioners and true artists, made Sunday at twilight as they gave the Los Angeles premiere of "Offering" in a vast outdoor lily pond at the Skirball Cultural Center.

"Offering" began with Koma creeping down into the water bearing a torch. His face, hands and legs were painted white, and he was wearing brown sackcloth that, when wet, draped on his body in breathtaking sculptural shapes. The sky was half-lighted. The music — which included a raw, vibrating sound score by Japanese composer Rentaro Taki and two songs commissioned from the male a cappella ensemble Chanticleer — filled the space with resounding heart.

Koma forged his way to a small platform submerged about 2 inches beneath the surface. Crouched, he extinguished the flame, and — doing this all much more slowly than it takes to read about it and with great attention to shape — departed for the pool's edge.

In his wake, Eiko entered in an ivory kimono with her eyes shut (and they remained shut throughout, as if in dream or death). She eventually lay on the platform by coming out of an extreme fetal curl with the speed

and natural dexterity of a blossoming lotus.

The audience was invited to move around the pool, and from one vantage point, Eiko's reflection provided a complete other Eiko, who, strangely, looked more clear and precise than the one in the air. One of her legs had a gold, shimmering outline, yet if one looked at the real woman, she appeared as white and cool as a Michelangelo marble.

Then, in a moment of almost unspeakable tenderness, Koma struggled though the water and rested his head on her open palm. Now one could see both their reflections. The mounds of them. Lovers. Mountains. Japanese garden. Small and large at the same time. Bright and dull. And the water around them never still. The paths they made vanished. One would be hard put not to think — even unprompted — of the dead whom one misses.

"Offerings" is saturated with mourning but also with uncommon splendor.

Eiko & Koma

Where: Fine Arts Building
Performance Lab, Room 166, UC
Riverside, 900 University Ave.

When: Tonight, 8 p.m.

Price: \$22

Contact: (909) 787-4331

